Peter Brandes
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

translated by
Christian Steinmetz

"FEIN DEUTSCH MIT DER SPRACHE HERAUS": IRONY, MULTILINGUALISM, AND THE USE OF EARLY NEW HIGH GERMAN IN THOMAS MANN'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Abstract:

This article examines the significance of the so called 'Lutherdeutsch' in Thomas Mann's late novel *Doktor Faustus* while referring to the philology of multilingualism as a key term for the interpretation of the text. In Mann's novel multilingualism can be observed in ironized citations from Luther's letters and Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*. While calling this usage of literary quotes Lutherdeutsch, Mann creates a fictitious branch of Early New High German that can be read as a language of irony as opposed to the narrator's language of earnestness. The paper argues that Mann's text itself practices a philology of multilingualism by juxtaposing languages of seriousness and languages of irony, thereby deconstructing ideological concepts such as monolingualism and national philology. Note that this text is a translation of Brandes' German-language original, which also appears in this issue of *CMS*.

When philologists enquire into the possibility of a philology of multilingualism, they tend to take recourse to two prominent Biblical stories that address multilingualism and translation in their mythically etiological nature: the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis and the miracle of Pentecost from the Acts of the Apostles. While the account of divinely induced linguistic confusion aims to inform the reader about the origins of multilingualism, the story of the disciples speaking in foreign tongues explains, in turn, the miracle of simultaneous translation. These complementary mythological tales of multilingualism touch upon the foundations of philology: the reality of incomprehension and the desire for comprehension. Philology has thus always borne within it a "Verstehensversprechen" ("promise of comprehension", Dembeck 2014: 10). Seen from the perspective of the history of linguistics and religion, the phenomenon of linguistic confusion also raises the practical question as to how the religious contents of these texts, originally written in Hebrew and Greek, can be transmitted into a living environment characterised by multilingualism. The Bible translations of the Reformation surely did not replace monolingualism with multilingualism, but instead induced the substitution of the Holy Languages by national languages. Seen in this light, Luther's Bible translation, which seeks to transform a bilingual text corpus into a monolingual work, is itself a form of media-historical labor upon the dispositif of monolingualism. One must bear in mind in this context that Luther's translation of the biblical texts into German did not in any way resolve problems of linguistic comprehension. Only a short time after the publication of the Lutheran translation, dialectal factors rendered the creation of glossaries a necessity (Besch 1999: 18), such that one may already speak in this context of the multilingualism of monolingualism.

Jacques Derrida's expression—to the effect that one speaks but one language that is not one's own (1996: 15)—gains thus a broader sense: the one language of Luther's Bible

translation is neither the reader's own language; nor can it even qualify as one single language. One must be aware of this rather diffuse structure of monolingualism in Luther's translation of the Bible when enquiring about the Early New High German in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947). The designation *Lutherdeutsch* (Luther's Early New High German) is controversial in this context, as such a homogeneous standardized language coined by Luther has historically never existed (Besch 1999: 12). As I shall seek to demonstrate in the following, such a language is constructed as a fictional language in this literary work and introduced under the designation of *Altdeutsch* (old German)—a term that refers to the use of Early New High German and therefore should not be conflated with Old High German. In view of Thomas Mann's late work, this article aims to analyze the question of a philology of multilingualism through the optic of pseudo-monolingualism, focusing on aspects of the polyvalence of Early New High German as both a historical language, and as a narrated and fictionalized language.

Philology of multilingualism

The institution of philology is customarily associated with a concept of separate national philologies that target the literary works of their respective national language. In contrast, the methodological approach of a philology of multilingualism adopts a course that fundamentally challenges the concept of a national language. This has been elaborated in detail by Till Dembeck in his 2014 article "Für eine Philologie der Mehrsprachigkeit." Dembeck advocates for an awareness of the ornamental aspect of languages, which becomes perceptible amid certain historically and culturally constituted linguistic and colloquial standards as a deviation—be it dialectal, stylistic or exophonic. He challenges the assumption of a congruence among languages, peoples and national philologies. Such relies on a fiction of the countability of languages, which proves impossible given the essentially ambiguous nature of the term and notion of language—as referring variously to national language, mother tongue and dialect. The starting point for Dembeck's reflections is Stockhammer's concept of *Sprachigkeit* (lingualism)—a term aligned with Saussure's notion of "*langue*" (tongue, language), but which, unlike *langage* (speech ability), includes "die Partikularität jeder *langue*" ("the particularity of each *langue*", Stockhammer, Arndt & Naguschewski 2007: 25): "Sprachigkeit wäre dann das Bewusstsein davon, dass das sprachliche Medium eine *Einzel*sprache ist" ("Lingualism would then be the consciousness that the linguistic medium is an *individual* language", ibid 26). Based on this concept of *Sprachigkeit*, Dembeck highlights the particular significance and relevance of historically constituted standardization processes, expressed

in their respective linguistic rule systems and grammars (Dembeck 2014: 13). From this point of view, multilingualism can be observed through aspects of grammatical, idiomatic and dialectal deviation.

As for the concept of monolingualism, Jacques Derrida's Essay *Le monolinguisme de l'autre ou la prothèse d'origine* (1996) is relevant in this context, inasmuch as the political and cultural constructs of French are deconstructed from the viewpoint of the Jewish-Algerian Frenchman. Derrida opposes in this way the understanding of a language as a mother tongue, wherein language is intertwined with categories of authenticity and ownership. Johann Gottfried Herder's work is exemplary in defending the paradigm of the individual's own language. Herder proclaims the necessity of the mother tongue of poetry in his contributions *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur (On Recent German Literature)*: "[W]enn in der Poesie der Gedanke und Ausdruck so fest an einander kleben: so muß ich ohne Zweifel in der Sprache dichten, wo ich das meiste Ansehen, und Gewalt über die Worte […] habe […]: und ohne Zweifel ist dies die Muttersprache." ("[w]hereby thought and expression stick so strongly to one another in poetic expression: and I must undoubtedly express myself in poetry in the language in which I am most well-versed and wherein I have command over the words [...] which obviously is my mother tongue", Herder 1985: 407)

In his article on "the roots of a linguistic archeology," David Martyn (2014) has described Herder as the founder of native language poetry. Herder is surely only considered a symptom of a discourse-historical turning point in poetry and linguistic theory that, Martyn highlights, brought forth the concepts of multi- and monolingualism. In a textual example taken from Martin Luther's *Table Talk*, Martyn illustrates that in the Early Modern Period a difference between multi- or monolingualism, as we understand them today, did not exist (Martyn 2014: 46). Martyn elaborates that Luther's text, parts of which are written in Latin and parts in German, is not a multilingual text because it belongs to an oral praxis rather than to a grammatically structured language. This observation is substantiated among other things by the fact that Luther's text is a lingual document prior to the invention of a linguistically defined language-as-system (*langue*).

Given these literary and language-historical indicators, it becomes apparent that a multilingual philology can neither be considered as the adding up of various national philologies nor a combination of internally bordered language unities. This has led Dembeck to suggest that multilingualism can be described through recourse to the

category of standards, in the sense of conditions for lingual stabilization (Dembeck 2014: 25). Multilingualism will then become observable in the form of an utterance distinct from established linguistic standards, which then can potentially establish new standards of its own. Thus multilingualism unfolds from a contingent and potentially open-ended interplay of differentiation and standardization. As Dembeck emphasizes, the crucial factor here is the notion of language as way of speaking (*parole*) and, as such, there is increased focus on the so-called vernaculars—and not on the sacred languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew), whose transmission is primarily to be observed in the form of written languages. It follows, I suggest, that a philology of multilingualism requires an evaluation of, and reflection upon, its various reading process against this background of the opposition between sacred and vernacular languages. Such a reflection is also media-historically significant: vernaculars do essentially owe their success to the invention of the printing press. This is particularly true for Luther's Bible translation, which was able to be disseminated widely by means of print. It is precisely this German, albeit somewhat stylized and modified, that played a crucial role in Thomas Mann's late work *Doktor Faustus*.

The narrator as philologist

Thomas Mann's plans for a Faust novel can be traced back to the year 1901. The so-called three-line plan ("Drei-Zeilen-Plan"), upon which Thomas Mann refocused his attention in 1943, already contains the general focus of the project: As noted in the *Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, it is concerned with "die diabolische und verderbliche *Enthemmung* eines [...] Künstlertums durch Intoxikation" ("the diabolical and pernicious *disinhibition* of an [...] artistry by means of intoxication", Mann 2012a: 18). The story, as it emerged during the course of this ongoing working phase, involves an exceedingly talented musician who signs a pact with the devil by knowingly letting himself be infected by a syphilitic prostitute. He is thus able to compose outstanding music whilst being forbidden to love. The novel does not end, as in Goethe, with the salvation of the protagonist, but with the spiritual and physical collapse of the protagonist, reminiscent of Nietzsche's biography.

In the *Entstehung des Doktor Faustus,* Thomas Mann cites some of the many texts he read while preparing to write *Doktor Faustus,* beyond the chapbook (the 1587 *Historia von D Johann Fausten* published by Johann Spies). Among others, he mentions Luther's letters (Mann 2012a: 21–23). Although Mann's daily routine in the 1940s in Pacific

Palisades was certainly marked by the experience of bilingualism, *Doktor Faustus* cannot be referred to as a multilingual novel in the classic sense of the word. Thomas Mann does however pay particular attention to the vernacular or rather the dialectal aspect of the language—as he had in his first work, *Buddenbrooks*. Mann began work on his project on 23 May 1943 and completed it in the spring of 1947. The book was published in Sweden by Bermann-Fischer in the same year. The novel was written as a fictional biography of an artist. The text elaborates the idea of a fictional writing scene, in which the narrator introduces himself as the biographer of the story's protagonist. Prospects for the eventual printing and publishing of the narrator's work is still uncertain at the time of its writing. This metatextual play with written media is a reference to the story's decisive historical context, the early modern period. This epoch, linked with great historical events such as the Reformation and the invention of the printing press, functions as a guiding lingual and medial principle that also alludes to the life of the historical Doktor Faustus.

In this way, the text announces the media transition from manuscript to the printed book. The presence of the printed word is however continually postponed; the manuscript remains the dominant medium that guides and outlines narration, as highlighted by Adrian Leverkühn's handwritten transcripts and letters, which the narrator plans to publish. Here a cultural-historical anachronism is accompanied by a medial anachronism. The narrator, whose writing of Adrian Leverkühn's biography lasts from 1943 to 1945, lives in his study secluded from worldly matters—as would a monk of medieval times in his retreat, dedicating himself to the transcription or translation of holy texts. In contrast to the medieval clergy, however, the narrator of *Doktor Faustus* writes his text in German.

The novel's text contains only a few passages in a foreign language, as opposed to a text such as *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain,* 1924). There are a handful of English quotations from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, a play that the protagonist Adrian Leverkühn sets to music, as well as a few short passages in Italian and a longer paragraph in which German is interwoven with French. Latin is afforded particular importance in the narration. This is not only because of the repeated use of Latin expressions or quotations, but above all due to the fact that the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, teaches Latin and Greek at the *Gymnasium* (high school). The narrator's educated middle-class background is of particular interest here, because he decisively influences the novel's narrative and linguistic structure.

Right from the introductory chapters, Zeitblom refers to his profession by highlighting the importance of the study of classical languages, as opposed to modern sciences. In doing so, he points out that the study of ancient languages is generally referred to as "*humaniora*", and that "die seelische Zusammenordnung von sprachlicher und humaner Passion durch die Idee der Erziehung gekrönt wird und die Bestimmung zum Jugendbildner sich aus derjenigen zum Sprachgelehrten fast selbstverständlich ergibt" ("the mental co-ordination of language and the passion for the humanities is crowned by the idea of education, and thus the election of a profession as the shaper of youth follows almost of itself out of having chosen philology as a study", 19; 9).[1]

By introducing his own biography, Zeitblom designs the novel's central oppositions: humanistic education versus scientific study, classical languages versus old German, philology versus magic. The fact that one learns little throughout the novel about Zeitblom's profession as a teacher and linguist directs the reader to the possibile insight that the text being read could itself be fulfilling an educational function. Indeed, the template for this novel, the chapbook from 1587, was exemplary in the genre of parenesis: a Christian cautionary tale that sought to convert people to adopt a God-fearing way of life (*Historia* 2006: 12). In Zeitblom's biographical project, however, philology takes the place of theology. His philological expertise, demonstrated in the novel's first chapter, is a component of his narrative strategy.

A true philologist, he concerns himself with the proper choice of words. He wrestles with the German adjective *genial* (genius), with which he characterizes Adrian Leverkühn in the very first sentence. In his explanation of the word genius, he sets the meaning of the Latin word *ingenium* (congenital ability) against that of the word *genius* (guardian angel):

> Nun ist dieses Wort, „Genie", wenn auch über-mäßigen, so doch gewiß edlen, harmonischen und human-gesunden Klanges und Charakters, und meinesgleichen, so weit er von dem Anspruch entfernt ist, mit dem eigenen Wesen an diesem hohen Bezirke teilzuhaben und je mit divinis influxibus ex alto begnadet gewesen zu sein, sollte keinen vernünftigen Grund sehen, davor zurückzubangen, keinen Grund, nicht mir freudigem Aufblick und ehrerbietiger Vertraulichkeit davon zu sprechen und zu handeln. So scheint es. Und doch ist nicht zu leugnen und nie geleugnet worden, daß an dieser strahlenden Sphäre das

---

[1] Unless otherwise noted, German page numbers from *Doktor Faustus* (2012b) are given before the semi-colon, page numbers from the English translation by H. T. Lowe-Porter (1949) are given after the semi-colon.

> Dämonische und Widervernünftige einen beunruhigenden Anteil hat, daß immer eine leises Grauen erweckende Verbindung besteht zwischen ihr und dem unteren Reich, und daß eben darum die versichernden Epitheta, die ich ihr beizulegen versuchte, „edel", „human-gesund" und „harmonisch", nicht recht darauf passen wollen.

> Now this word "genius", although extreme in degree, certainly in kind has a noble, harmonious, and humane ring. The likes of me, however far from claiming for my own person with the *divinis influxibus ex alto*, can see no reasonable ground for shrinking, no reason for not dealing with it in clear-eyed confidence. So it seems. And yet it cannot be denied (and has never been) that the daemonic and irrational have a disquieting share in this radiant sphere. We shudder as we realize that a connection subsists between it and the nether world, and that the reassuring epitheta wich I sought to apply: "sane, noble, harmonious, humane," do not for that reason quite fit. (13; 4)

The narrator makes it clear that *genius*, a word that finds its roots in Latin, is characterized by an ineluctable ambiguity. The humanist Zeitblom's Latin thus shows itself to be infected by demonic semantics, which cannot be covered up by the adjectives *noble*, *sound*, and *harmonious*. Even the Latin quotation—*divinis influxibus ex alto*—refers to a dark side of the term genius, i.e., melancholy. The quotation is from the book *De vita libri tres* by the Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino, in which the concept of melancholy was formulated as an ailment of genius. Therefore, it becomes apparent—under the auspices of the Latin quotation, and the translation of a Latin word—that Latin cannot in any way be considered to be a purer or more humane language. Nonetheless, the ethos of a classical education continues to act as the antithesis of the religious and old Germanic spheres.

(Luther's) Early New High German

That the text's main focus of attention lies on the German language becomes apparent in the subtitle of the novel: *Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde* (*The Life of the Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*). The word German, here and in the narrated text, refers to German cultural and political history. This becomes particularly clear when Germany is personified at the end of the novel: "Deutschland, die Wangen hektisch gerötet, taumelte dazumal auf der Höhe wüster Triumphe, im Begriffe, die Welt zu gewinnen kraft des einen Vertrages, den es zu halten gesonnen war, und den es mit seinem Blute gezeichnet hatte." ("Germany, the

hectic on her cheek, was reeling then at the height of her dissolute triumphs, about to gain the whole world by virtue oft he one pact she was minded to keep, which she had signed with her blood", 738; 510.)

The text also insists on German as its lingua franca when, during Leverkühn's dialogue with the devil, Ludewig replies to "Chi è costà" with "Sprich nur deutsch! Nur fein altdeutsch mit der Sprache heraus, ohn' Bemäntelung und Gleißnerei." ("Speak only German! Only good old German without feignedness or dissimulation," 326; 223). Whereas the homodiegetic narrator Zeitblom speaks the standard German of the well-educated middle classes of the twentieth century, some of the characters' speech is characterized by Early New High German linguistic forms. This linguistic anachronism first surfaces in chapter XII, when the professor of theology Ehrenfried Kumpf, a Lutheran caricature, is introduced. Kumpf is popular amongst students due to his temperament and his "pittoresk-altertümlichen Sprachstil[es]" ("picturesquely archaic style", 142; 85), which the reader can clearly recognize as Early New High German. The narrator invokes some of Kumpf's typical linguistic anachronisms:

> Seine Art war es, um ihn selbst zu zitieren, eine Sache „mit deutschen Worten" oder auch „auf gut alt-deutsch, ohn' einige Bemäntelung und Gleißnerei", das heißt deutlich und geradeaus, zu sagen und „fein deutsch mit der Sprache herauszugehen". Statt „allmählich" sagte er „weylinger Weise", statt „hoffentlich": „verhoffentlicht" und sprach von der Bibel nicht anders als von der „Heiligen Geschrift".

> It was his way—to quote him—to say a thing "in good round terms, no mealy-mouthing" or "in good old German, without mincing matters." Instead of "gradually" he said "by a little and a little"; instead of "I hope" he said "I hope and trow"; he never spoke of the Bible otherwise than as Godes Boke. (142; 95)

Early New High German thus becomes an ironical feature of Kumpf's character. The Luther parody in Kumpf's manner of speaking becomes even more blatant in a scene in which he throws a roll at a demonic apparition, caricaturing Luther's famous throwing of the inkpot.

Thomas Mann's image of Luther is characterized by a profound ambivalence. Hans Wysling refers to Mann's reception of Luther as including an "Epoche spezifischer Luthernähe" ("a period of particular Lutheran proximity"; 1916–18) as well as an "Epoche ebenso entschiedener Lutherferne" ("period of equally decided Lutheran

distance"; 1945-49, Wysling 1984: 17). If Thomas Mann in 1918—at the time of writing *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (*Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*)—saw himself in the tradition of Lutheran thought, he nevertheless rendered his opinion of the reformer in 1945, in his speech "Deutschland und die Deutschen" ("Germany and the Germans"), as: "Ich liebe ihn nicht, das gestehe ich offen." ("I openly confess that I do not love him," Mann 1945: 6). The speech "Germany and the Germans" was written in the same context as the novel *Doktor Faustus* (the text explicitly refers to the material) and was not without its bearing upon it. In effect, the —absolutely stereotypical—characterization of Luther's persona in the text of the speech coincides with Kumpf's role in *Doktor Faustus*. The text has the following to say about Luther:

> Martin Luther, eine riesenhafte Inkarnation deutschen Wesens, war außerordentlich musikalisch. Ich liebe ihn nicht, das gestehe ich offen. […] Ich hätte nicht Luthers Tischgast sein mögen, ich hätte mich wahrscheinlich bei ihm wie im trauten Heim eines Ogers gefühlt und bin überzeugt, daß ich mit Leo X., Giovanni de Medici, dem freundlichen Humanisten, den Luther ‚des Teufels Sau, der Babst‘ nannte, viel besser ausgekommen wäre.

> Martin Luther, a gigantic incarnation of the German spirit, was exceptionally musical. I frankly confess that I do not love him. […] I should not have liked to be Luther's dinner guest, I should probably have felt as comfortable as in the cozy home of an ogre, and I am convinced that I would have got along much better with Leo X, Giovanni de Medici, the amiable humanist whom Luther called "the Devil's sow, the Pope". (Mann 1996: 266; translation by C.S.)

The image of Luther depicted here has much in common with the characterization of Kumpf in the novel, who was described by his students as a "wuchtige Persönlichkeit" ("powerful personality", 6; 7) and who, in Zeitblom's opinion, believed in the reality of the Devil. He is also called a "massiver Nationalist lutherischer Prägung" ("nationalist of Luther stamp, out of whole cloth", 141: 95). That the character of Kumpf is nothing more than Luther's caricature, is finally underscored by the fact that his Early New High German expressions and idioms, though reminiscent of Martin Luther's German, are mostly derived from Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus Teutsch* (1668), rather than from Luther's *Table Talk*. So, when the narrator Zeitblom says that he is quoting Kumpf himself, he is quoting quoted quotations that, seen through the filter of Lutheran caricature, are not recognizable as actual quotations but understood to be expressions of Martin Luther's German. This becomes particularly clear in the case

of Kumpf's expression mentioned in the title: "fein deutsch mit der Sprache herauszugehen" (142). This particular quotation has been taken from chapter XVII of book III of *Simplicissimus*, in which Simplicissimus comes upon a soothsayer, whom he questions about his parents and adds, "sie solte aber nicht so dunckel / sondern fein Teutsch mit der Sprach herauß" ("she should not be so dark in her sayings, but out with it in good German", Grimmelshausen 2015: 314; 1913: 251).

German is therefore attested to as being a particularly comprehensible language, distinguished by its clarity when set against the indeterminate intimations of a soothsayer. Simplicissimus is indeed a doubious source of judgement for linguistic nuance, being a character infamous for taking almost everything quite literally. It therefore cannot in any way be the supposedly authentic Early New High German of Luther that is invoked in the quotation, but rather the epitome of the hermeneutic interpretation of opaque or allegorical language. Kumpf's language is thus, in the most concrete sense, not his own. Nor is his language Early New High German, the language upon which his speaking is so implicitly predicated. It is thus not Luther's own use of language, but a decidedly more literary way of speaking that characterized the language of Early New High German satire.

Accordingly, this is less a criticism of Luther through the use of Early New High German within the context of Kumpf's narration, but rather of a ludic deconstruction of ownership, authenticity and the true nature of the German language. The alleged German of Luther turns out to be the opposite of a national or native language on the basis of which one might impute identity: it is very much the sign of a deconstruction of the paradigm of the mother tongue and, as such, functions as a parody. Historically, the concept of Luther's German is already imprecise, as Martin Luther did not found a language, in the sense of a grammatical system. He did indeed coin a certain literary style, which Thomas Mann translates into his own intertextual and ironic writing style.

In the novel, Early New High German takes centre stage in this manner on four occasions in particular. These are, in addition to the Kumpf sequence, Adrian's letter from Leipzig, the conversation with the devil, and Leverkühn's last speech before his breakdown. The letter in chapter XVI, in which Adrian reports of the first encounter with the prostitute Esmeralda, is the longest passage in the novel in which Early New High German is imitated. As Adrian's first documented contact with the demonic medium, incarnated in Esmeralda, this letter has a prominent position in the work, preparing the reader for the

pact. The letter recounts, in Kumpf's version of old German, Leverkühn's first day in his new school setting in Leipzig. In addition to describing the city and offering some digressions into musical theory, Leverkühn tells Zeitblom how a tour guide brought him to a brothel instead of to an inn, which Adrian only notices after entering the establishment. It becomes quite clear that the language of the letter is, within the context of the novel, an imitation or a stylistic parody. In his reflections on the incident, Zeitblom examines the use of Early New High German and interprets it to be *dissimulatio*, as pointed out by Bernd Hamacher (1996: 61–2):

> Sehr merkwürdig war mir schon bei zweiter Durchsicht, daß die Stilgebung, die Travestie oder persönliche Adaption des Kumpf'schen Altdeutsch nur vorhält, bis jenes Abenteuer erzählt ist, danach aber achtlos fallengelassen wird, so daß die Schlußseiten ganz davon entfärbt sind und eine rein moderne sprachliche Haltung zeigen. […] Dies war mir klar: wegen seiner historischen Affinität zum Religiösen war das Reformationsdeutsch für einen Brief gewählt worden, der mir diese Geschichte bringen sollte. Wie hätte ohne das Spiel mit ihm das Wort hingeschrieben werden können, das doch hingeschrieben sein wollte: „Betet für mich!"? Es gab kein besseres Beispiel für das Zitat als Deckung, die Parodie als Vorwand.

> Very remarkable to me, even on the second reading, was the fact that the style, the travesty or the personal adaptation of Kumpf's old-German, prevailed only until the adventure was recounted and then was dropped regardless, so that the closing pages are entirely uncoloured by it and show a perfectly modern style. […] So much was clear to me: on account of his historical affinity with the religious, the language of the Reformation – or the the flavour of it – had been chosen for a letter which was to bring me this story. Without it, how could the word have been written down that pressed tob e written down: "Pray for me!" There could be no better example for the quotation as disguise, the parody as a pretext. (212–3; 145)

Zeitblom plays the role of a commenting editor: he undertakes a philological reading of Adrian's usage of Early New High German. Zeitblom's philological approach is somewhat unconventional, since the interpretation precedes the textual criticism. The section of the text in which the brothel experience is described in the mode of a farce, as Leverkühn puts it, is read as the main part, which shocks rather than amuses the reader, namely Zeitblom. In view of this assumption, Zeitblom argues that the use of Altdeutsch (old German) constitutes a literary camouflage and thereby levels the seriousness of the

situation. The starting point of his argument is the thesis that Altdeutsch is only used to evoke the historical aspects of the religious sphere associated with this way of speaking. The quotation "Pray for me" thus represents the core labor of philological interpretation. This performative sentence, Zeitblom argues, could only make its appearance in the letter because it is introduced by means of old German, and is treated with irony in the same breath. To Zeitblom, Leverkühn's friend, it is however clear that this kind of linguistic playfulness serves the purpose of hiding one's emotions and yet also of intimating to the friend, by rhetorical means, that he should take this performative utterance seriously and indeed pray for him.

That the sentence "Pray for me" is a quotation of a quotation, i.e., a quotation of Martin Luther, and can be found in many of his letters as a closing greeting (Luther 1909: 18), remains unsaid. Ironically, a quotation as important as this is, in turn, a translation from Latin.[2] The quotation of Martin Luther used by Thomas Mann implicating Early New High German ends up being inauthentic. This quotation therefore reveals an incongruence in the discourse on Early New High German. Though the novel's Early New High German, moulded by Grimmelshausen's language, presents a linguistic anachronism in the linguistic reality of 1900, Martin Luther's quotation turns out to be a doubly foreign body in Adrian's ironic manner of speaking: It is, in Zeitblom's reading, a sign of religious earnestness linked to the Early New High German, even though the quotation neither coincides with the style of old German as mimicked in the letter, nor with Martin Luther's epistolary language. Thus, the quotation deconstructs and ironizes Zeitblom's seriously hermeneutic exegesis of the letter. The narrator's extremely solemn manner of speech is interlaced with an exceedingly ironic linguistic gesture, which can be observed in the quoted letter as well as in the biographer's erudite interpretation. This is noteworthy inasmuch as Zeitblom, in spite of all his affection towards his adored Leverkühn, can scarcely appreciate his sense of irony and humor. The novel sets this figuration of irony and earnestness in analogy to the opposition of good and evil. In doing so, the resulting conclusion, that the bourgeois-conservative Zeitblom scorns irony, whereas the brilliant-revolutionary Leverkühn is attached to it, turns out to be virtually a revision of Thomas Mann's dictum from *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* regarding the implied conservatism of irony: "Ironie und Konservativismus [...] nahe verwandte Stimmungen" ("irony and conservatism [...] closely related moods", Mann 2015: 634).

---

[2] While working on *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann made use of a two-volume book of Luther's letters edited by Reinhart Buchwald. In this edition, the Latin letters are also translated into German.

But the linguistic relation between irony and earnestness in *Doktor Faustus*, combined with the novel's fictitious Luther German, is rather complexly layered, as is made apparent by the use of irony in the enactment of the Early New High German, which extends well beyond mere rhetorical practice.

Languages of irony

As Stockhammer et al. have pointed out, there has always been an allolingualism (*Anderssprachigkeit*) implicit in literature, as literature is per se intrinsically *exophonic* due to its relationship with the written form (Stockhammer, Arndt & Naguschewski 2007: 21). As itself a language, the language of literature can generate its own lingualism with regard to the consciousness of its monolingualism, while integrating multiple languages, dialects or idioms into the narrative discourse. The novel *Der Zauberberg* functions in this manner, when longer French dialogue passages are inserted into the German text. The use of Old German in *Doktor Faustus* can be similarly understood. Achieved in this way, the novel's literary multilingualism takes a somewhat different turn, by virtue of the ironic coding of the Early New High German. The opposition between the ironic and earnest use of language that characterizes the novel becomes particularly apparent in its orchestration of linguistic opposition through the use of Early New High German. A solemn discourse—represented by the narrator's language—is opposed to an ironic discourse represented by Leverkühn's and the devil's character. Karl Heinz Bohrer used the concept of language to describe such forms of literary or philosophical usage. He does not refer to these as ironic or earnest *speech* (*Rede*), but as the languages (*Sprachen*) of earnestness and those of irony. According to Bohrer, the opposition between the languages of irony and the languages of earnestness can only be observed since the end of the eighteenth century (Bohrer 2000: 11). Bohrer claims that, above all, Schlegel's 1800 essay *Über die Unverständlichkeit* (*On Incomprehensibility*) can be considered foundational for the languages of irony, which distinguish themselves from contemporaneous languages of earnestness. What is new in this text, is, above all else, knowledge of self-referentiality of the lingual sign and of speech as performative action. In Schlegel's text, irony is not used as a rhetorical tool but as a medium for incomprehensibility. Schlegel pretends to elucidate his own incomprehensibility, but undertakes this earnest enterprise with playful undertones: "ich wollte zeigen, daß die Worte sich selbst oft besser verstehen, als diejenigen von denen sie gebraucht werden" ("I wanted to demonstrate that words often understand themselves better than do those who use them", Schlegel 1967: 364; 1971: 260). Against the comprehensible style of

philosophical thinkers such as Christian Garve, Schlegel positions the style of incomprehensibility. Bohrer says that, with Schlegel, the style becomes the "Vollzug des Theorems" ("execution of the theorem"), that seeks to undo "den Gattungsunterschied zwischen Literatur und Philosophie" ("the difference between literature and philosophy", Bohrer 2000: 16). Schlegel's irony, as Eckhard Schumacher has noted, constitutes not a rhetorical but an incomprehensible irony (2000: 91), and thus turns out to be a performative manner of writing. The ironic discourse of the *Athenaeum*, in which irony functions not just as the spoken medium of incomprehensibility but as its own language, finds its prominent opponent in the earnestness of idealist philosophy. It is not only Hegel's explicit critique of Schlegel's concept of irony (Hegel 1986: 93–95) that, according to Bohrer, clearly highlights the opposition between ironic discourse and that of seriousness; but it is also precisely in the linguistic manner of works such as Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) in which Bohrer sees the beginning of the end of the language of irony (Bohrer 2000: 27). Bohrer points out that idealist philosophy, propagated by the language of seriousness, has expelled joke and frivolity from language (Bohrer 2000: 34). The resulting language politics, marked by the increasing dominance of the languages of seriousness, eventually define the landscape of German discourse.

Bohrer's dichotomous model of the literary-philosophical linguistic arrangement around 1800, which seems to lead out into a bilingual philology, leaves only a restricted scope for rhetorically ambivalent, dialectal, idiomatic, and foreign aspects of language. Among other things, this could be attributable to the fact that his concept of language is oriented toward the idea of distinct and homogeneous national languages, but also to Bohrer's rather vague definition of the language of irony. The thesis that irony must be understood as a language is not unreasonable; but certainly, it needs a more accurate reference to Schlegel's concept of ironic language. Schlegel himself does not explicitly speak of a language of irony, but of a vision of a "reelle[n] Sprache" ("real language", 364; 261), a language that would encompass all languages and could thus achieve the pentecostal miracle in another—i.e., mathematical—manner. The "populäre Medium" ("popular medium", 369; 266) in which this concept should find its expression is the *Athenaeum*, explains Schlegel—hence the print medium that makes it its business to expose the incomprehensibility of the medium. Schlegel's text explains that the *Athenaeum* functions as would a foreign language in the philosophical-literary discourse around 1800, dominated by Goethe and German idealism. By linking ironic style to the medium,

Schlegel turns the rhetorical medium into a language: the language of the *Athenaeum*. Ironic discourse about the real language of comprehensibility becomes the condition of possibility for a discourse not only about the fundamental ambiguity of language, but about the multilingualism of literary language. Schlegel's "System der Ironie" ("system of irony", 369: 266), which distinguishes fine from extra-fine irony, oscillates between irony and seriousness and thus indexes the multilingualism inherent to irony.

The ambiguity of a language of irony—which is linked to the question of literary multilingualism in a particular way—thus offers an enriching perspective upon multilingual philology in general and the interpretation of Thomas Mann's use of Early New High German in particular. In regard to *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann's use of ironic style has often been associated with the concepts of parody and masquerade. The burlesque representation of manners of speaking is accordingly read as a disfiguration, as an ironic mask. Reinhard Baumgart describes Adrian's ironic manner of speaking as a "negativ verkehrtes Pathos" ("negatively inverted pathos", 1964: 171), and Inken Stehen describes Wendell Kretzschmar's stutter as a "Maskerade des Pathos" ("masquerade of pathos", 2001: 79). A similar reading is suggested by the narrator himself, when Zeitblom speaks of Leverkühn's epistolary rhetoric in terms of a "Parodie als Vorwand" ("parody as pretext", 213; 145). Reading irony as a parodistic mask, behind which a presumed pathos takes refuge, misapprehends the novel's ironic dimension, which distances itself from the supposed authority of the narrator and lets the linguistic ambiguity of the text emerge. In a later diary entry, Thomas Mann famously termed his ironic manner as "[h]eitere Ambiguität" ("humorous ambiguity", 1995: 127). In this phrase, one notices a certain proximity between Mann's definition of irony and Schlegel's idea of irony, a proximity that is of particular pertinence to the later Thomas Mann. Irony in the rhetorical sense is in no way ambiguous per se; it is, as Eckhard Schumacher highlights, very much characterized by an imperative of comprehension: "Die Ironie muß etwas zu verstehen geben wollen und muß, um als Ironie zu wirken, verstanden werden." ("Irony must intend to convey an understanding of something and must be understood as irony to fulfill its function", 2000: 91).

The function of irony in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* has been discussed in research on various occasions (see, for instance, Baumgart 1956). However, the question at stake here, whether the text involves ironic rhetoric (comprehensibility) or ironic language (incomprehensibility), has not yet been posed. With regard to the enactment of old German in *Doktor Faustus*, what has to be taken into consideration is that the mere use of

Early New High German will not turn it into a language of irony. Allemann's comments on the interaction of parodistic style and montage in *Doktor Faustus* (1956: 171) bear a great persuasiveness, as regards the ironic montage of textual passages in Early New High German. But the functioning of irony only becomes apparent in light of the quoted intertexts and the polarity of irony and earnestness induced by them. The irony-soaked satirical writing style of *Simplicissimus* is still committed to the rhetorical tradition, in which irony is apprehended as a stylistic medium rather than a language. It is only around 1800—according to Bohrer's hypothesis—that irony was considered to be a linguistic form and it was consequently possible to code dialects or historical languages so as to be read as irony. How much Thomas Mann refers to such a language of irony becomes clear by way of the characterization of Early New High German, which is itself in no way confined to the moment of parody. The enactment of Early New High German is instead very much characterized by a series of ambivalences. This can be seen, in particular, in the dialogue with the devil and in Leverkühn's farewell speech.

Throughout his dialogue with Adrian, the devil does not speak in Early New High German. He only explicitly quotes or refers to old German as a language, whilst treating Adrian's manner of speaking in many instances with irony. His speech, constructed to be very playful and humorous, culminates in a very serious subject: the pact. The solemn discourse regarding the matter of the pact is held, however, in a completely different language, a language that is imbued with philosophical earnestness. It is the language of Theodor W. Adorno, philosopher and musical theoretician, who accompanied Thomas Mann as his musical advisor over the course of writing *Doktor Faustus* and whose writings and comments influenced numerous passages of the novel (2012a: 36–41). The language of earnestness is thus intertwined with a discourse indebted to idealist philosophy. Ultimately, in the last chapter, such a discourse withdraws completely behind the presence of Early New High German.

In his speech in chapter XCVII about his last composition, Adrian continually makes use of old German. His manner of speech is initially misunderstood by the listener as a humoristic representational principle, whereas the narrator sees the speech as a solemn speech act. Towards the end of the speech, the text finally suggests that the Early New High German has to be read as an expression of insanity. During the course of the novel, the text stages old German in such a manner that one finds it difficult to decide whether it is the language of earnestness or the language of irony. The Early New High German in Adrian's speech becomes a sign of incomprehensibility. His audience does not

understand the speech, as they take the speech about the pact with the devil as a joke. The other listeners also find Zeitblom's exceedingly emotional reaction to Adrian's speech funny: "Aber dies, daß sie Tränen in meinen Augen sahen, belustigte die Meisten" ("But just the fact that you saw tears in my eyes diverted most of them", 718; 496). With Adrian's peculiar speech about his latest work *Lamentation of Dr. Faustus*, the text imitates Faustus' farewell speech in the chapbook, which is taken very seriously by his students (*Historia* 2006: 119–121). In Thomas Mann's adaptation of this scene, the speech oscillates between earnestness and amusement. Whereas the narrator points to the seriousness of the situation, the language spoken in the context of the scene is revealed in the performative execution of the speech as anachronistic lingualism. This accentuates an aspect of multilingualism that lies at the beginning of the mythic discourse on the multiplicity of languages, namely the tale of Babylonian linguistic confusion. The classical philologist Zeitblom reaches the limits of his humanist-philological competence. The biographer who is critical of religion concludes his narration with a prayer: "Ein einsamer Mann faltet seine Hände und spricht: Gott sei eurer armen Seele gnädig, mein Freund, mein Vaterland." ("A lonesome man folds his hands and speaks: ‚God be merciful to thy poor soul, my friend, my Fatherland!'" 738; 510)

The speech of the narrator, who thinks so much of his classical humanist educational ideal and thinks so little of the Reformation and its practices, is treated with irony in this closing performative gesture. If the narrative speech was consistently borne up by its aspiration to seriousness, which expressed itself particularly in the criticism of the humorous and jocular view of the religious sphere (i.e., Kumpf and Ludewig), this aspiration and the narrator's associated ethos are countered by the ironic image of the classicist in prayer. Furthermore, this gesture can be read as a reaction to the quotation of Martin Luther in Adrian's letter from Leipzig: "betet für mich!" ("pray for me", 209; 142)—without disvulging any conversion from the language of irony to the language of religious-national seriousness. Moreover, the opposition between German and Early New High German, humanism and protestantism, earnestness and humor is suspended. Ironizing prayer as the fulfillment of an action thereby functions as a readerly instruction, a philological guiding principle, which seeks to free the process of reading from the dogma of monolingualism. Ironically, this shift from literature to philology can be legitimized through Martin Luther who, in the 1518 *Sermon von Ablass und Gnade* (*Sermon of Discharge and Mercy*) describes the practice of prayer as follows: "Das Beten umfasst allerlei Werke der Seele wie lesen, mit dem Wort umgehen, Gottes Wort hören,

predigen, lehren und dergleichen." ("Prayer encompasses all sorts of spiritual works such as reading, dealing with the word, listening to God's word, preaching, teaching and the like," Luther 2016: 40).

In this sense, the novel itself constitutes a prayer, which leads us to read multilingualism in its own texture. The book—conceived as the biography of an artist, the printing of which at the end of the narrative report is still to be determined—not only turns toward another manner of speaking—i.e., prayer—but also to another genre: parenesis, the religious cautionary tale. A change of medium accompanies this ironic change of genre.

The fiction of a handwritten discourse that accompanies narration right from its very onset, and thereby legitimizes the philological method of the narrator, transforms itself into the fiction of a verbal invocation and can be read as a narration-ending prayer. Whereas the narrator uses philological techniques, the text can be recognized as a multilingual composition that orchestrates languages as historical and modern, narrative and performative. The narrator as a philologist opens up the field of literary hermeneutics, which breaks down the narrated events into dichotomous relations and makes them comprehensible. As a lingual composition, the text makes use of literary modes in order to deconstruct the linguistic standards and ideologies established by the narrator. The novel thus proves to be an interplay among practices and processes that, in the sense of a multilingual paradigm, tend more toward the Babylonian linguistic confusion than the Pentecostal miracle. From this standpoint, reading *Doktor Faustus* does not require a philology of multilingualism as such, as the text itself practices a multilingual philology. In this case, multilingualism can be read as the deconstruction of the standardization of national language and national philology, by means of the literary interaction between languages of earnestness and languages of irony.

Bibliography

Allemann, Beda. 1956. *Ironie und Dichtung*. Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske.

Baumgart, Reinhard. 1964. *Das Ironische und die Ironie in den Werken Thomas Manns*. München: Carl Hanser Verlag.

Besch, Werner. 1999. *Die Rolle Luthers in der deutschen Sprachgeschichte*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Bohrer, Karl Heinz. 2000. "Sprachen der Ironie—Sprachen des Ernstes. Das Problem." In *Sprachen der Ironie—Sprachen des Ernstes*, edited by Karl Heinz Bohrer. 11-35. Frankfurt am Main: Edition Suhrkamp.

Dembeck, Till. 2014. "Für eine Philologie der Mehrsprachigkeit. Zur Einführung." In *Philologie und Mehrsprachigkeit*, edited by Till Dembeck & Georg Mein. 9–38. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Derrida, Jacques. 1996 *Le monolinguisme de l'autre ou la prothèse de l'origine*. Paris: Éditions Galilée.

Grimmelshausen, Hans Jacob Christoffel von. 1913. *The Adventurous Simplicissimus*. London: William Heinemann.

———. 2005. *Simplicissimus Teutsch*, edited by Dieter Breuer. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.

Hamacher, Bernd. 1996. *Thomas Manns letzter Werkplan 'Luthers Hochzeit.' Edition, Vorgeschichte und Kontexte*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. 1985. "Über die neuere deutsche Literatur." In *Werke*. Vol 1, edited by Ulrich Gaier. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1986. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer & Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch.

Historia von D. Johann Fausten. 2006. Edited by Stephan Füssel & Hans Joachim Kreutzer. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Luther, Martin. 1909. *Briefe*. Vol. 1., edited by Reinhard Buchwald. Leipzig: Inselverlag.

———. 2016. "Sermon von Ablass und Gnade." In *Die 95 Thesen*, edited by Johannes Schilling. 40–46. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Mann, Thomas. 1945. *Germany and the Germans*. Washington: Library of Congress.

———. 1949. *Doctor Faustus. The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter. London: Secker&Warburg.

———. 1995. *Tagebücher 1953–1955*, edited by Inge Jens. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag.

———. 1996. "Deutschland und die Deutschen." In *Essays*. Vol 5, edited by Hermann Kurzke & Stephan Stachorski. 260–281. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1996.

———. 2012a. *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, edited by Herbert Lehnert. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

———. 2012b. *Doktor Faustus. Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde*, edited by Ruprecht Wimmer. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

———. 2015. *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, edited by Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

Martyn, David. 2014. "Es gab keine Mehrsprachigkeit, bevor es nicht Einsprachigkeit gab. Ansätze zu einer Archäologie der Sprachigkeit (Herder, Luther, Tawada)." In *Philologie und Mehrsprachigkeit*, edited by Till Dembeck & Georg Mein. 38-51. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Schlegel, Friedrich. 1967. "Über die Unverständlichkeit." In *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*. Vol 2, edited by Hans Eichner. 363–372. München: Schöningh.

———. 1971. "On Incomprehensibility." In *Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde and the Fragments,* translated by Peter Firchow. 259-271. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Schumacher, Eckhard. 2000. "Die Unverständlichkeit der Ironie." In *Sprachen der Ironie – Sprachen des Ernstes*, edited by Karl Heinz Bohrer. Frankfurt am Main: Edition Suhrkamp.

Stehen, Inken. 2001. *Parodie und parodistische Schreibweise in Thomas Manns 'Doktor Faustus.'* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Stockhammer, Robert, Susan Arndt & Dirk Naguschewski. 2007. "Einleitung. Die Unselbstverständlichkeit der Sprache." In *Exophonie. Anders-Sprachigkeit (in) der Literatur*, edited by Susan Arndt, Dirk Naguschewski & Robert Stockhammer. 7–27. Berlin: Kadmos.

Wysling, Hans. 1984. "Thomas Manns Plan zu einem Schauspiel 'Luthers Hochzeit.' Eine Dokumentation und einige Vermutungen." In *Hefte der Deutschen Thomas-Mann-Gesellschaft* 4: 3–23.