

## KAREL ČAPEK'S „ŽIVOT A DILO SKLADATELE FOLTYNA“ AND THOMAS MANN'S „DOKTOR FAUSTUS“

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The author endeavours to establish parallels between Thomas Mann's „Doktor Faustus“ and Karel Čapek's last novel, „Life and Work of the Composer Foltýn“.

The two books are related in their subject. Both novels react and respond, if in different ways, to the spiritual and intellectual situation of their period. Both in „Foltýn“ and in Thomas Mann's work the musician is used to personify his age. Both authors write in full consciousness of the collapse of Europe, politically and morally, immediately before and during World War II.

Although Čapek and Mann were friends, their books are certainly not the result of direct inspiration or influence. Both are independent works, the products of the artist's independent imagination. This is testified most impressively by the difference in the formal structure of the two books. On the one hand, the short unequivocal narrative by Čapek; on the other, Thomas Mann's complicated and ambiguous „Doktor Faustus“.

The fundamental difference in the conception of each of the two books must be attributed to the difference between the Czech and German literary and spiritual tradition, in all its subtle undertones. The work of Franz Kafka illustrates this interweaving of influences in Czech and German literature rooted in the Bohemian countries.

The result of the confrontation can be summarized as follows: While the Faustus novel is an aesthetically conceived and artistically successful work, Čapek's work is a response to his age, sustained by an ethical impulse — and at the same time comes perilously close to being unacceptable from the artistic point of view.