If Schiödl lived, if I may put it that way, as a roué of potentialities, Adrian now led—and this I could not doubt—the same life of a saint he had led before taking his trip to Graz, or better, to Pressburg. I now trembled, however, at the thought that since then—since that embrace, since his temporary illness and the loss of his doctors during its course—his chastity no longer arose from the ethos of purity, but rather from the tumult of impurity.

There had always been something of "noli me tangere" about his nature—I knew it well, was quite familiar with his distaste for any close physical proximity to people, for "breathing the same air" with them, for actually touching them. He was, in the true sense of the word, a man of "distaste," of evasion, of reserve, of aloofness. Physical displays of affection seemed inimical to his nature, even his handshakes were infrequent and performed with a certain haste. This peculiarity evidenced itself more clearly than ever during the weeks we had recently been together, and yet it seemed to me, I can scarcely say why, as if his "Don't touch me!", his "Back off three paces!", had changed its meaning in some sense, as if not only was some demand being rejected, but as if also he was shying from and avoiding some reverse demand on his own part—which, again, was apparently connected with his abstention from women.

Only a keenly observant friendship like mine could have felt or suspected such a shift in these things meant, and God forbid that those perceptions might have detracted from my joy in being near Adrian! What was happening inside him could shock me, but never drive me from him. There are people with whom it is not easy to live, but whom it is impossible to leave.

The document to which repeated reference has been made in these pages, Adrian's secret manuscript, in my possession since his demise and guarded like a precious, dreadful treasure—here it is, I shall confide it now. The biographical moment for its inclusion has come. Having now turned my back, as it were, on his refuge of choice, which he shared with his Silesian and where I visited him, I shall cease to speak, and the reader will hear Adrian's unmediated voice in this twenty-fifth chapter.

But is it only his? The document at hand is a dialogue, after all. Another, quite other, terrifyingly other voice, is indeed the principal speaker, and the scribe in his stony hall simply sets down what he has heard it say. A dialogue? Is it truly that? I would have to be mad to believe it. And neither can I believe that in the depths of his soul he considered what he saw and heard to be real, both while he heard and saw it and afterward as he put it on paper—despite the cynicisms with which his conversational partner attempted to convince him of his objective presence. But if he, the visitor, did not exist—and I am horrified to admit that such words allow, even if only conditionally and as a possibility, for his reality!—it is gruesome to think that the cynicism, the mockery, and the humbug likewise comes from his own stricken soul...

It goes without saying that I do not intend to surrender Adrian's manuscript to the printer. With my own quill I shall transcribe it to my text, word for word, from music paper covered with the dark black strokes of the same script I described once before—a small,
old-fashioned, ornate round-hand, a monkish hand one might say. He apparently used music paper because nothing else was available at the moment, or because the little shop down below on St. Agapitus square could supply him with no acceptable stationery. There are always two lines written in the upper five-line grid and two in the bass; but the white area in between is also filled with two lines of script throughout.

There is no determining precisely when it was written, for the document bears no date. If my own conviction is of any value, it definitely cannot have been composed after our visit to the little mountain town or during our stay there. Either it comes from an earlier period of the summer when we spent three weeks with the two friends, or it dates from the previous summer, when they first were guests of the Mannardis. That the experience on which the manuscript is based already lay behind him when we arrived, that Adrian had already had the following conversation by then—of that I am certain; just as I am sure he put it in writing immediately after the encounter, the very next day presumably.

And so I shall transcribe it—and I fear no distant explosions rattling my study will be needed to make my hand tremble and send the letters skittering out of control as I write.

—Mum, mum's the word. And mum will I be, if but out of shame alone and to spare mankind, why! out of social consideration. I am of firm and stern resolve and would not slack the seemingly reins of reason ere I close. Yet I did see Him, at last, at last; was with me here in the chamber, did search me out, all unexpected and yet long since expected, and spoke right copious words with Him and afterward have but one vexation, an uncertainty of what it was caused me to shake the whole time, whether 'twas the cold or He. Did I deceive myself mayhap, or He me, that it was cold, so that I might shake and by shaking gain certainty that it was He, in earnest, He in His own person? For as many a man knows, the fool does not shake at his phantasm, but feels at his ease instead and has intercourse with it sans disquiet and quivering. Would He perchance make a fool of me, and by the bitter cold deceive me to think I am no fool, and He no phantasm, in that I shook before Him in fear and infirmity? He is shrewd.

Mum's the word. So mum will I mum. I shall mum it all down on this music paper here, while my fellow in eremo, with whom I laugh, drudges some distance off in our chamber, translating the alien he dotes upon into the homely he detests. Thinks I write music, and if he were to see 'tis words I write, would think that Beethoven surely did so as well.

Afflicted creature that I am, had lain in the dark all the day with tedious head ache, having often to retch and vomit, as comes with severe visitations, but toward evening came bettering, all unhoped and of a sudden. Could hold down the soup the mother brought me ("Poveretto!") afterward also cheerily drank a glass of the red ("Bevi bevi!") and was at once so sturdy that I even paid me with a cigarette. And could have gone out as well, as had been agreed the day before Dario M. wished to present us to his guild below, to make us acquainted with Praeneste's better citizens, show us its precincts, its billiard and reading rooms. Wishing to give the good man no offense, we gave our promise—which fell to Sch. to keep alone, I being excused by my visitation. After pranzo, with mouth pulled sour and at Dario's side, he trudged down to greet the grangers and suburbians, I being left to my device.

Sat alone here in these halls, near unto the windows, their shutters closed tight, the length of the room before me, and by my lamp read Kierkegaard on Mozart's Don Juan.

And of a sudden I am struck by piercing cold, as if one sat in a room warmed 'gainst winter and abruptly a window burst open upon the frost. But it came not from behind where the windows are, but rather falls upon me at my front. Starting up from my book, I gaze out into the chamber, see that Sch. is apparently come back already, for I am no more alone: Someone is there in the twilight, seated upon the horsehair couch that stands with table and chairs nearer the door, toward the room's middle, where we make our breakfast of a morning—sits in one corner of the couch, his legs crossed, but it is not Sch., it is another, smaller than he, not so comely by far, and no true gentleman whatsoever. But the cold continues to rush against me.

"Chi è costui?" is what I call from a throat in part constrained, propping my hands on the arms of the chair in such fashion that the book falls from my knees to the floor. The steady, slow voice of the other answers, a schooled voice as it were, with pleasant resonance in the nose:

"Speak only German! Avail yourself of naught but good old-fashioned German, no feignings, no presence. I understand it. Squarely said, my favourite language. At times I understand only German. But fetch your top-coat upon the by, and hat and rug as well. You'll feel the cold. Your teeth will clatter, dear boy, though you will not take an ague."

"Who speaks familiarly with me?" I ask, waxing angry.
"I do," he says. "I do, by your leave. Oh, you mean, do you, because you employ the familiar pronoun with no one—not even the waggish gentleman here—excepting your childhood playfellow, who faithfully calls you by your proper name, but not you him? It makes no matter. There is by now a relation twixt us for such familiarity. How now? Will you fetch yourself warmer attire?"

I stare into the twilight, fix him with an angry eye. Is a man of a more spindled figure, not near so tall as Sch., yet shorter than I—a sporting cap rugged at one ear, and on the other side reddish hair extending from the temple upward; reddish lashes round likewise reddened eyes, the face pale as a cheese, with the tip of the nose bent slightly askew; a stocking-knit shirt striped crosswise with sleeves too short and fat-fingered hands stuck out; trousers that sit untowardly tight, and yellow, overworn shoes ne'er to be clean again. A strizzi. A pimp-master. And with the voice, the enunciation of a player.

"How now?" he repeated.

"Foremost I wish to know," I said, trembling to find command of myself, "who it is presumes to intrude upon me and seat himself here."

"Foremost," he repeated. "Foremost is not at all bad. But you are oversensible to any visit you deem unexpected and undesired. I do not come to fetch you into company, to flatter you to join some musical confrayry. But rather, to speak of business with you. Will you fetch your things? There can be no discoursing with teeth clattering."

Sat several seconds more without taking my eye from him. And the chill from off him rushes against, so piercingly that in my light suit of apparel I am defenceless and naked before it. So I depart. Do indeed stand up and enter through the next door to my left, where my bedchamber lies (the other being farther on the same side), take from the press my winter coat that I wear in Rome on days of trammontane and brought along perforce, for I knew not where to leave it elsewise; do on my hat as well, snatch up my plaid rug, and return thus furnished to my place. As before he still sits in his.

"You are yet here," I say, turning up the collar of my coat and winding the rug about my knees, "though I did depart and return again? That mazzes me. For 'tis my strong conjecture you are not here."

"Not here?" he asked with resonance of the nose, as schooled. "Wherefore not?"

I: "Because it is most improbable that a man would seat himself here by evening, speaking German and giving forth cold, professedly to discuss with me matters of business whereof I know and wish to know naught. It is the more probable that I am taking some malady and in my dazed state transfer unto your person the chill of fever again which I have wrapped myself, and behold you merely but to see it source in you."

He (calm and with a player's persuasive laugh): "What nonsense. What intelligent nonsense do you say! It is, as they say in good old fashioned German, unfeigned folly. And so artificial! A clever artifice as if pilfered from your opera. But let us make no music here, for the nonce. It is moreover pure hypochondry. Play no infirmities with me please! Be but a little proud and do not pack off your five senses. You are not taking any malady, but are in the best of youthful health after that slight visitation. Beg pardon, I would not be rude, for indeed what is good health? But, dear boy, this is not the manner of your malady's eruption. You have not a trace of fever, and there is no need that you ever should have."

I: "Further, because your every other word lays bare your nothingness. You say only such things as are in me and come out of me, but not out of you. You counterfeit Rumpf in his turns of phrase and yet do not look ever to have been at a university or academe, or ever to have sat beside me upon the dunce's bench. You speak of the indigent gentleman and of him with whom I use the familiar pronoun, even of such as have used it with me and got no recompense. And speak of my opera, too, no less. Whence could you know all that?"

He (laughs again his practised laugh, shaking his head as at some precious childishness): "Whence could I know? But you see that I do know. And from that you would, to your own discredit, conclude that you do not see rightly? That would truly mean to stand all logic on its head, as one learns in academies. Rather than construe from my informed state that I am not present in the flesh, you would do better to conclude that I am not merely in the flesh, but am also he for whom you have taken me all this time."

I: "And for whom do I take you?"

He (with courteous reproach): "Pooh, you know well! Nor should you make false pretence, feigning you had not long since expected me. Know as well as I that our relation presses sometime for discussion. If I be—and I think you admit of that now—I can be but One. Do you mean by your whom am I: How am I called? But sure you still have memory of all those scurrilous little nicknames from your academies, from your first course of study, when you had not yet shoved Holy Writ out the door or under the bench. You can tell them all by heart and take your pick thereof—I have 'most only such, 'most only nicknames, with which the people give my chin a chuck, so to speak—the
which comes from my foremost German popularity. Indeed one willingly brooks it, this popularity, even when one has not sought it out and is persuaded in the main that ’tis grounded in a misconceiving. It is ever flattering, ever beneficial. Choose then for yourself, if you need name me, though you mostly do not call others by their names, not knowing them for lack of interest—choose one as you will from ’mongst those rustic blandishments! Only one I would not and will not hear, for it is a most certain spiteful slander and befits me not in the least. He who calls me Master Dicis-et-non-facis is on the slippery slope. ’Tis also meant as a chuck under the chin, but calumny it is. I do what I say, keep my promises to a title, indeed that is my very principle of business, much as Jews are the most reliable of merchants, and if fraud there was, well, it is proverbial that it was I, ever a believer in fidelity and probity, who was defrauded....

I: "Dicis et non es. You warrant truly to sit there on the couch before me and to speak to me from without in good Kumpfian scraps of old-fashioned German? Warrant to have searched me out here in alien Italy of all places, where you are quite out of your realm and enjoy not the least popularity? What an absurd want of fashion! In Kaisersaschern I would have suffered you. In Wittenberg or on the Wartburg, even in Leipzig I would have thought you credible. But surely not here, under a heathen Catholic sky!"

He (shaking his head and clicking his tongue in distress): "Tut tut, ever the skeptic, ever the same lack of self-regard. Had you but courage to say to yourself: 'Where I am, there is Kaisersaschern,' why then, of a sudden the matter would be in accord, and Master Aestheticus would no more need sigh the want of fashion. Cod's eyes! You would be right to speak thus, but lack courage or pretend its lack. You value yourself too low, my friend—and value me too low as well in limiting me so, wishing to make naught but a German provincial of me. German I am, German to the core, if you will, but then surely in an older, better sense, to wit: cosmopolitan at heart. You would disallow me here and make no account of the old German yearning and romantic itch to travel to Italy's fair shore! German I shall be, yet you, good sir, begrudge me that I should, in good Dürer fashion, freeze to pursue the sun—and do so even when, quite without regard to the sun, I have urgent business here with a fine creature well-created...."

Here an unutterable loathing came over me, so that I shuddered violently. Yet there was no true distinction between the causes of my shudder; at one and the same time it might have been from the cold, for the chill off him had turned abruptly sharper, piercing my coat's cloth and me to the marrow. Angrily I ask:

"Can you not abate this nuisance, this icy breeze?"

He in reply: "Alas, no. I regret I cannot accommodate you there. Plainly, I am so cold. How else should I endure it and dwell at my ease where I dwell?"

I (instinctively): "You mean in hell's horrid hole?"

He (laughs as if tickled): "Excellent! A crude and German and rugged phrase! And has many a pretty name, besides, so eruditely solemn, all known to Master Ex-Theologus, as carcer, extium, confitatio, pernicios, condemnatio, and so forth. But, there's no help for it, the homely and humorous German names always remain my favourites. But let us leave aside for now the place and its particularities. I read from your face that you are about to ask me concerning them. But that lies far afield and is no burning matter—forgive me the jest, that it is not burning!—there will be time, abundant, immeasurable time. Time is what is real, the best we give, and our gift is the hour-glass—indeed 'tis subtly narrow, that bottle neck through which the red sand runs, so hairlike its trickle that the eye beholds no diminishment in the upper chamber, and only at the very end does it appear to go fast and fast be gone. But that is yet so distant, what with the narrowness, that it deserves no mention nor thought. Simply that the hour-glass has been turned, that the sand has begun to run—about that would I come to an understanding with you, dear boy."

I (duly mocking): "You love what is most extraordinarily Dürer-like, first your 'how I should freeze to pursue the sun' and now the hour-glass of Melancolia. Can the reckoning square of numbers be far behind? I am prepared for all and grow accustomed to all. Custom myself to your impudence that you use the familiar pronoun and call me 'dear boy,' to which I take special offence. For, to be sure, I do address myself familiarly—which most likely explains that you do so as well. You would maintain that I am conversing with Black Kesperlin—Kesperlin being Caspar, and thus Caspar and Samiel are one and the same."

He: "There you are at it again."

I: "Samiel. It could make a man laugh! Where is your C-minor fortissimo of string tremolos, woodwinds, and sackbuts, that ingenious bugbear for the Romantic audience, rising from the abyss of F minor as you from your crags? I am mazed not to hear it!"

He: "Let it be. We have many a laudable instrument, and hear them you shall. We shall indeed strike them up for you, but only when you are ripe for the hearing. It is all a matter of ripeness and sweet time. And for that reason would I speak with you. But Samiel—the term is foolish. I am considerate of what is popular, but Samiel is foolish, and..."
was corrected by Johann Balhorn of Lübeck. The name is Sammael. And what does Sammael mean?"

I (keep mutinous silence).

He: "Mum, mum's the word. I am kindly disposed to the discretion you show in leaving the German rendering to me. It means 'Angel of Poison.'"

I (between teeth that would not rightly stay shut): "Yes, of a certainty, you look the part! Why, very like an angel, exactly so! Do you know how you look? Common is scarcely the word for it. Like churlish dross, a bawd, an utter pimp-master, is how you look, is the guise you thought to put on to visit me—but no angel!"

He (gazing down over himself with arms spread wide): "How then, how then? How do I look? No, it really is a good thing that you ask me if I know how I look, for in truth I do not know. Or I did not know, for you first call it to my attention. Be assured I have not the least regard to my appearance, leaving it to itself, so to speak. It is pure chance how I look, or rather, comes about thus, it establishes itself as circumstance demands, without that I give it any heed. Conformation, mimicry, you know it well, the munciance and conjuring of Mother Nature, who always keeps her tongue in her cheek. But surely, dear boy, you will not apply this conformation, of which I know as much and as little as the leaf butterfly, to yourself and take it ill of me. You must admit that on its other side it has it suitableness—on that side from which you came by it, and indeed forewarned, on the side of your pretty song with its alphabetical symbol—oh, truly wittily done and very near by inspiration:

And so it was by giving
Me cooling drink by night
You poisoned life and living . . .

Excellent.

And on the wound the serpent
Now tightly clings and sucks . . .

'Tis truly a gift. And that is what we recognized betimes and why we have had an eye upon you from early on—we saw that your case was entirely worth our attention, that it was a case of favourable disposition, out of which, presupposing but a little enkindling, incitement, and inebriation, something lustrous might be made. Did not Bismarck observe that the German needs half a bottle of champagne to attain his natural elevation? Meseems he said much the like. And rightly so.

Gifted, but lame is the German—gifted enough to be vexed by his lameness and overcome it by illumination, and devil take the hindmost. You, dear boy, knew well enough what you lacked, and held true to your German nature when you made your journey and, salva venis caught the French measles.”

"Hold your tongue!"

"Hold my tongue? Look there, I call that advancement on your part. You grow warm. At last you cast courtesies aside and turn familiar, a is only proper between people who strike a compact and find agreement for time and eternity."

"I said, keep silence!"

"Silence? But we have kept silence soon these five years and must sometime converse with one another and deliberate the whole matter and the interesting circumstances in which you find yourself. And here silence is but natural, yet not twixt us nor over time—not when the hour-glass has been turned, not when the red sand has begun to run through that subtly subtle bottle neck. Oh, only just begun! What lies below is still as nothing in comparison with the quantity above—we give time, abundant, immeasureable time, the end of which one need not contemplate, not for a long while, nor even yet have cause to be fretted with that point in time when one might begin to think on the end, when 'Respite finem' might pertain, insmuch as it is an unsteady point in time, subject to vagaries and temper, and no man knows where it ought be set and at how far a distance from the end. It is a fine jest and splendid contrivance: how the very uncertainty and haphazard of the moment when it will be time to think on the end waggishly befogs the momentary view of one's appointed end."

"Triflings and trumpery!"

"Go to, there is no pleasing you. You treat even my psychology rudely—when you yourself upon your local Zion did once call psychology a nice, neutral middle point and psychologists lovers of the truth. I trifle not in the least, nor even at all, when I speak of time given and of an appointed end, but am speaking narrowly to our argument. Everywhere the hour-glass has been turned and time has been given, incomprehensible, but bounded time and an appointed end, there are we upon the field, there grows our sweet clover. Time is what we sell—twenty-four years, shall we say—can one forethink it? Is it a requisite sum? A man might live like a pig in the old Kaiser's sty and set the world in astonishment as a great nigromancer with much devilry; he might forget all lameness the more, the longer the years and transcend himself by high illumination, yet never become a stranger to himself,
but be and remain himself, except lifted to his natural elevation by his half-bottle of champagne, and might in drunken indulgence taste every bliss of almost intolerable infusion, till he be convinced more or less rightly that there has not been such an infusion for thousands of years and till in certain wanton moments he may plainly and honestly deem himself a god. How would such a man ever come to be fretted by the point in time when it is time to think on the end! Except, the end is ours, in the end he is ours, that demands agreement, and not merely of the silent sort, however silent things may else proceed, but from man to man and expressly."

I: "So you would sell me time?"

Hell: "Time? Mere time? No, my good man, that is no Devil's ware. For that we would not earn the price of an end that belongs to us. What sort of time—there is the pith of the matter. Great time, mad time, most devilish time, in which to soar higher and higher still—and then again a bit miserable, to be sure, indeed deeply miserable, I not only admit of it, but also say it with proud emphasis, for that is but meet and fair, such being surely the way and nature of the artist. Which, as all men know, ever tends to extravagancy in both directions, is regularly a bit excessive. The pendule always swings widely to and fro twixt good cheer and melancholy, that is customary, and is, so to speak, still of the more civilly moderate, more Nurembergish sort, in comparison with what we purvey. For in this respect we purvey in extremes: We furnish uplightings and illuminations, experiences of release and unshackling, of liberty, security, facility, such states of power and triumph that our man trusts not his senses—incorporating, moreover, a colossal admiration of his own achievement, for which he could easily forgo that of any stranger and alien—the self-glorious shudder, yea the precious horror of himself, in which he seems to himself a mouthpiece well graced, a divine monster. And commensurably deep, venerably deep, is likewise his descent at intervals—not only into emptiness and waste and rich sorrow, but also into pain and nauseas—companions, by the by, who were always there, who are part of the propensity, yet now most worthily enhanced by illumination and sensible pot-valiance. They are pains that one gladly and proudly takes in the bargain with pleasures so enormous, pains such as one knows from a fairy tale, pains like slashing knives, like those the little mermaid felt in the beautiful human legs she had acquired for a tall. You know Andersen's little mermaid, do you not? What a darling that would be for you! Say but the word, and I shall lead her to your bed."

I: "If you could but keep silence, you jackanapes."

Hell: "Now, now, be not always so quick with insult. You would have naught but silence still. I am not of the family Schweizergill. And, by the way, Mother Else prattled with charitable discretion a great deal about her occasional guests. I am in no way come to you on this here shore for silence and stillness, but for express ratification between us two and firm covenant as to service and payment. I tell you, we have kept silence now for more than four years—and yet all is taking it finest, most exquisite, most promising course, and the bell is now hal cyon. Shall I tell you how it stands with you and what's afoot?"

I: "It seems I must indeed hear."

Hell: "Would moreover like to hear and are well-content that you can. I even believe you are more than a little in the mood of hearing and would whine and grumble privately were I to keep it from you. And rightly. It is so snug and dear, this world wherein we are together you and I—we both are very at home in it, pure Kaisersaschen, good old German air from anno fifteen hundred or so, shortly before the arrival of Dr. Martinus, who stood upon such stout and cordial terms with me and threw a hard roll, no, an inkpot, at me, long before the thirty-year festivities. Do but recall the lusty temper of the folk among you in Germany's midst, along the Rhine and everywhere, in the excitement of high spirits and yet constrained enough, full of foreboding and ill at ease—the hot yearning for pilgrimage to the Sacred Blood in Niklashausen in the valley of the Tauber, children's crusades, and bleeding hosts, famine, insurrection, war, and pest in Cologne, meteors, comets, and great signs, stigmatical nuns, crosses that appear upon men's garments, and now they hope to advance against the Turks 'neath the banner of a maiden's shield marked by a wondrous cross. Good times, devilish German times! Does your mind not take warm comfort in the thought? The proper planets met together in the house of the Scorpion, just as a most well-instructed Master Dürer drew it for his medicinal broadsheet, and there arrived in German lands the small delicate folk, living corkscrews, our dear guests from the Indies, the flagellants—you prick up your ears, do you not? As if I spoke of the vagabonding bond of penitents, scouring their backs for their own and all mankind's sins. But I mean the flagellants, the tiny imperceptible sort, which have flails, like our pale Venus—the sprochaeta pallida, that is the true sort. But right you are, it sounds so snuggly like the high Middle Age and its flagellum haereticorum fascinatorum. Ah, yes, they may well prove to be fascinarii, our revellers—in better cases, such as yours. And are, by the way, long since properly mannered and domestical, and in old lands, where they are at home so many centuries
of years now, their buffooneries are not so crude as before, with open boils and pestilences and noses rotted off. Neither does the painter Baptist Spengler look as if he ought to swing the warning rattle as he walks about and stands, his carcass mummied in haircloth."

I: "Is such the state of Spengler, then?"

He: "And why not? Should it be your state solely? I know you would have what is yours to yourself alone and are vexed by all comparison. Dear boy, one always has a host of fellows. But assuredly Spengler is an Esmeraldus. Not in vain does he wink so audaciously and craftily with his eyes, and not in vain does Inez Rodde call him an underhand sneak. So goes it—though Leo Zink, the faunsus ficarius, has still escaped it yet, but the spruce and prudent Spengler was snatched right early. Yet be calm and spare yourself any envy. 'Tis a dull and humdrum case, without least consequence. That is no Python with which we shall do astounding feats. By its reception he may have grown a bit canny, more given to the intellect and would mayhap not read so gladly the diary of Goncourt or his Abbé Galliani had he not the connexion to higher things, had he not his secret memorandum. Psychology, dear boy. Disease, and most specially opprobrious, suppressed, secret disease, creates a certain critical opposition to the world, to mediocrite life, disposes a man to be obstinate and ironical toward civil order, so that he seeks refuge in free thought, in books, in study. But it goes no further than that with Spengler. The time still given him to read, to quote, to drink red wine and idle about—we did not sell him that, it is naught but time made congenial. A man of the world, lightly singed and stale, of demi-interest, nothing more. He will cripple along with liver, kidneys, stomach, heart, and gut, and one day be all hoarse of voice or deaf and after a few years will perish inglorious, a skeptical jest upon his lips—but what else? There was nothing to it, there was never an illumination, enhancement, and excitation, for it was not of the brain, was not cerebrose, you see—our small folk had no concern for his noble, uppermost part, which parenthood had no allurement for them, it never came to a metastasis into the metaphysical, metavenerial, metainfectious..."

I (with rancour): "How long have I to sit and freeze and listen to your intolerable gibberish?"

He: "Gibberish? Have to listen? Now that is the most facetious of ballads for you to strike up. To my mind you listen most attentively and are merely impatient to know more and all. You made particular inquiry concerning your friend Spengler of Munich, and had I not cut you off, would have zealously interrogated me this whole time about hell's horrid hole. I beg you do not play the importuned! I, too, have my self-regard and know that I am no unbidden guest. In short any plain, metaspirocheatois, that is the menengial process. And I do assure you that it is indeed as if some certain of these small folk may have a passion for the uppermost, a special estimation for the region of the head, the meninges, the dura mater, the tentorium, and the pia, which defend the tender parenchyma within, and would swarm ardent thither from the moment of that first general infection."

I: "It suits you, this mode of speech. The panders appears to have studied medicine."

He: "No more than you theology, which is to say by bits and starts and speciality. Would you deny that you have studied the finest arts and sciences only as a speciality and pastime? Your chief regard was me. I am much obliged. And why should I, Esmeralda's friend and keeper, as which you see me here before you, not have a special regard for the material, personal, most immediate field of medicine and be specially at home in it? And indeed I follow with constant and greatest attentiveness the most recent consequences of investigation. Item, several doctores would claim and swear by all swearing's worth that among the small folk there must be brain specialists, whose pastime is the cerebral sphere, in short, a virus nervosus. But they are upon the old familiar slope. It is rather contrariwise. It is the brain that lusts after a visit and waits expectant for theirs, as you have for mine, that invites them to it, draws them to it, as if it could not bear the expectation. Do you still recall? The Philosopher, De anima: 'Actions by an actor are performed on one previously disposed to suffer them.' There you have it, the disposition, the readiness, the invitation is all. That some men are better endowed than others for the performance of witchery, and that we know well to distinguish them—the worthy authors of the Maleus were already familiar to that."

I: "Slanderer, I have no dealing with you. I did not invite you."

He: "Ah, ah, sweet innocence! The far-traveled client of my small folk was not warned, was he? And you likewise sought out your physicians on sure instinct."

I: I came upon them in the street directory. Whom should I have asked? And who could have told that they would leave me in the lurch? What did you do with my two physicians?"

He: "Dispatched, dispatched. Oh, in your interest to be sure, we dispatched those bunglers. And at the right moment, neither too early nor too late, once they had set matters on the right path with their quick- and quacksalvery, and had we left them, could only have botched
so lovely a case. We permitted them their provocatio—and then basta, away with them! As soon as they had duly limited the first, specially cutaneous general infiltration and so had given a powerful upward stimulus to the metastasis, their business was done, they were to be disposed of. Those ninnies do not know, you see, and if they know cannot alter the case, that the uppermost metavenebral process is accelerated by such general treatment. It is, to be sure, likewise expedited often enough by not treating the fresh stages—in short, do what one will, 'tis false. In no case could we permit the provocatio by quick- and quicksilver to continue. The reversal of the general pervasion could be left to itself, in order that the upward progression might continue at its pretty slow pace, that there might be reserved for you years, decades of lovely, nigromantic time, a whole hour-glass of devilish time, of genius time. Today, four years after you came by it, that uppermost place is narrow and small and finely circumscribed—but extrant it is—the hearth, the workshop of the small folk, who have come there by the licorous path, on a waterway so to speak, to the place of incipient illumination.

I: “Do I catch you, blockhead? You betray yourself and have told me the spot in my brain, the feverish hearth, that conjures you up, and without which you were not! You have betrayed to me that I see and hear you out of perturbation, but that you are a mere semblance before my eyes!”

He: “Ah sweet logic! Little fool, inside out 'twill make a shoe. I am not the production of your pial hearth up there, understood? But that hearth enables you to perceive me and without it, surely, you would see me not. Is my existence therefore governed by your incipient tipiness? Do I therefore belong to your subjective mind? Many thanks! Have but patience. What may ensue and progress there will render you capable of quite other things, will pull down quite other obstacles and soar with you high above your lameness and hindrance. Wait until Good Friday, and 'twill be Easter soon! Wait one, ten, twelve years, until the illumination, that bright radiant annulment of all lame scruples and doubts, reaches its pitch, and you will know for what you pay and why you bequeath us body and soul. And osmotic growths will sprout sine pudore from apothecary seeds...

I (flying into a rage): “Now hold your filthy tongue! I forbid you to speak of my father!”

He: “Oh, your father is not at all misplaced upon my tongue. He is sly, always wanting to speculate the elements. From him you also have that megrim in your head, the starting place for those knitting pains the little mermaid knows... I spoke quite rightly, by the way, since the whole wizardry is osmosis, a diffusion of liquor, a proliferous process. You have there the spinal sac, a pulsing column of liquor within, reaching to cerebral regions, to the meninx, in whose tissue the furtive ventricine meningitis goes about its soft, silent work. But however much our small folk be drawn to the inmost part, to the parenchyma, and however great the yearning to draw them thither, they could never enter—without the diffusion of liquor, the osmosis with the pia’s cellular fluid waterering it, dissolving tissue, and clearing a path to the inmost part for our flagellants. It is all a matter of osmosis, my friend, in who, sporting products you early took such delight.

I: “Their misery made me laugh. I would that Schildknapp might return that I could laugh with him. I would tell him tales of a father, even I. Would tell him of the tears in my father’s eye when he would say ‘Even though they are dead!’”

He: “Zounds! You were right to laugh at his compassionate tears—irrespecting that he who by nature has dealing with the Tempter always stands on contrary terms with others’ feelings and is always tempted to laugh when they weep, and to weep when they laugh. What can 'dead' mean when such coloured and multiform flora flourish and grows rank—and what if it be heliotropic, too? What can ‘dead’ mean when the drop manifests so healthy an appetite. One ought not my boy, leave to the suburbanite the final word as to what is sick and what is healthy. Whether he understand rightly about life remains a question. Many a time has life joyously taken up what has arisen by paths of death and sickness, that it might let itself be led thereby farther and higher still. Have you forgotten what you learned at your academy, that God can bring good out of evil, and that the occasion thereto ought not be curbed? Item, one has always had to grow sick and mad that others need no longer do. And where madness begins to be a malady no man can easily tell. If in a rapture a man write in his margin: ‘Am in bliss. Am beside myself! I call this new and grand! Conception’s seething delight! My cheeks glow as molten iron! In a frenzy am I, and you will all grow frenzical when this comes to you! May God help your poor souls then!’—is that still madding health, common madness, or are the meninges infected? The townsman is the last to discern it; in any case he remarks nothing for a long while, for artists, says he, be always lunatic. And should he cry the next day in recoil: ‘Oh foolish desolation! Oh dog’s life, that one can accomplish nothing! Were there but a war without, that something might be afoot. Could I but perish in decent fashion! May hell have mercy, for I am a son of hell!’—