

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

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Zürich, 1963-02-06

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Erika Mann
Kantonsspital, Zimmer A 75
Zürich

February 6, 1963

Dear Dr. Cassuto, -

I am sorry to have to tell you the following:

For the second time now a most promising film-version of "Death in Venice" has failed to be realised because Venice is to figure in "Tonio Kröger" and because this was felt to be unacceptable. The agent of that highly interesting director I mentioned to you writes from London: "He (the director) asked me to let you know that many important aspects of 'Death in Venice' are being used in the film adaptation of 'Tonio Kröger'. He feels that this would invalidate ~~the~~ film on 'Death in Venice'. I regret, therefore, that we must withdraw from any further negotiations."

This is, as stated above, the second such case (the first concerned the outstanding director and producer Ely Landau who is very highly qualified as a literary man). And even so - on account of our recent discussions - the city of Venice would not now play as important a part as originally planned, she still figures, and under no circumstances must I seemingly bar "Death in Venice" from being made into a film. Consequently, I have to withdraw my "yes" regarding Venice as the background for the beginning of "Tonio Kröger".

As it goes the use of that city was no happy idea at any rate; regarding this point Mauro Bolognini and myself saw absolutely eye to eye even during our last conversation. Never would Tonio have been disgusted with Venice, that exceptional dream-city, and what he says to Lisaweta may be meant for the whole of Italy, especially the south, but not for Venice. It is wholly illegitimate to offer to the public something which is indubitably beautiful whilst also demonstrating that one's "hero" is repulsed by it. And returning once more to the legal impermissibility of "Venice", it has to be pointed out that particularly the short scene which shows Tonio with his luggage on a gondola is a scene absolutely indispensable and very central for "Death in Venice".

Thomas Mann heartily disliked Naples, consequently Tonio dislikes Naples as well, and I have it from Bolognini that he, too, dislikes Naples most cordially. Why, then, not Naples? Operatic performances take place there, there is water there and the most typical Southern Italian types and ways of life are to be found there. Personally, I deem Naples excellent. Naturally, however, each and every Italian city - with the sole exception of Venice - would be acceptable.

My mother has asked me to write this letter which is hence an "official" one. With even mail I am writing to Herr Abich and sending an English translation of this letter to Bolognini. I trust that at second thought Messrs. Flaiano and Brusati will recognise the venetian background as being not only unimportant but also truly undesirable.

The damage done to us by the plan and ~~the~~ the exaggerated advance publicity given to it by some of those concerned is both provable and considerable. Additional damage must not be permitted to be done lest we be forced to react accordingly.

Once more: I am more than sorry to be obliged to tell you all this. But I couldn't do otherwise.

As ever with kindest regards

yours

