Some Aspects of the Semantic-Structural Analysis of Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*

Nino KVIRIKADZE*

Key-words: *Thomas Mann, Tonio Kröger, the statistical-semantic analysis, artist-burgher*

Reflections on the essence of art, the relation of art to reality and life, and the interpenetration of these concepts – these are the themes Thomas Mann (like every great artist) is obsessed with from his early career. In the early years of the 20th century Thomas Mann begins a series of works (mostly short stories) commonly referred to as the works about artists. They are talking about the role of art and the destiny of the artist.

Starting with early stories and novels (*Buddenbrooks* and *Royal Majesty*) and the sole play *Fiorenza* (1904) and ending with the late novel *Doktor Faustus* (1947), the writer's interest in the relationship between art and life never fades away. Particularly detailed and consistent analysis of this problem is given in *Tonio Kröger* (1903).

The topic of *Tonio Kröger* is a feeling of isolation, a sense of the contradictions between the artist and burgher. The text which contains autobiographical features was later described by Thomas Mann in his essay *Theodor Storm* (1930) as

> eine lyrische Novelle, deren Gegenstand der in einer Brust lebendige Widerstreit zwischen bürgerlich-nordischer Gefühlsheimat und der strengen, abenteuerlichen und kalt-ekstatischen Welt der Kunst und des Geistes war (Mann 1955: 452).
>
> ("a lyrical novel, the subject of which is the conflict in the burning soul of the hero – conflict between the burgher-Nordic feelings and harsh, bizarre and cold ecstatic world of art and spirit.")

Literary critics indicate a special treatment of the problem "Art and burghers" already in the antithesis between the first and last names of the protagonist: *Tonio* ↔ *Kröger*. As they point out, the contradictions and duality of his nature is embodied in the contrast between the Nordic (northern) origin of his father and his mother's southern ancestry, *i.e.* between the motives of father-burgher and mother-stranger, brought from distant lands, located at the very bottom of the map (Адмони, Сильман 1965: 99).

* University of Kutaisi, Georgia.

„Philologica Jassyensia", An X, Nr. 1 (19), 2014, Supliment, p. 257–262.

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)

> So sagt bereits der Name "Tonio Kröger" viel über seinen Träger aus. Er besteht aus zwei Teilen, einem südlich klingenden Vornamen und einem norddeutschen Familiennamen. In dieser heterogenen Zusammensetzung spiegelt sich die Herkunft seiner Eltern: auf der einen Seite die der kunstsinnigen Mutter, einer südländischen Schönheit, von der Tonio das "ganz südlich scharf geschnittene Gesicht" geerbt hat; auf der anderen Seite die des Vaters, der als Abkömmling deutschen Großbürgertums an eine ernsthafte Lebensführung gewöhnt ist, in gleichem Maße Würde und Ordnung verkörpert (Neubauer 2001: 12).
>
> ("Thus, even the name 'Tonio Kröger' says a lot about its bearer. It consists of two parts: the southern-sounding name and the Northern German surname. This combination reflects the heterogeneous origin of his parents: on the one hand, a deep understanding of the art by his mother with characteristic beauty of the southern countries, from which Tonio inherited a 'completely southern finely featured face'; on the other hand, the origin of his father as typical burgher personifies/embodies the dignity and order.")

Helmut Jendreiek also believes that

> der Familienname Kröger auf seine Bürgerlichkeit verweist und in unmittelbarem Zusammenhang mit der motivischen Assoziationskette steht, die an das Motiv des Vaters geknüpft ist. Der Name Tonio ist an die Motivdimension seiner Mutter gebunden und verweist auf Unbürgerlichkeit und Differenz zu den Gewöhnlichen und Normalen. In dem Verhältnis zwischen Vor- und Familiennamen spiegelt sich die für die Novelle strukturbildende Nord-Süd-Spannung als Antagonismus zwischen dem bürgerlichen Leistungsethos des Nordens und der schönheitstrunkenen Unproduktivität des Südens (Jendreiek 1977: 177).
>
> ("The surname Kröger indicates to the class of burghers and is in close connection with the reasoned chain of associations linked with the motif of the father. The name Tonio is associated with the motive of his mother and points to something non-burgher and different from the usual and normal. In this relationship between the name and the surname is reflected structure-forming opposition 'north-south' expressing antagonism between the burgher ethics of achievements and unproductive south, characterized by a craving for beauty.")

The problem of Tonio Kröger's image in this paper is formulated as follows: Who is he in reality – burgher (separately), artist (individually), or does he combine both concepts and is a burgher-artist or artist-burgher?

Among researchers there are discrepancies with respect to this issue. Some of them believe that Tonio Kröger is a burgher more than an artist; others suggest that in the first place he is an artist. Others see in Tonio Kröger an unreal, too insecure, weak burgher obediently admitting that "he wandered into art by chance" but at the same time he is seen as an artist bewildered by the ghosts of "simple human happiness".

The Russian artist Lizaveta says to Tonio Kröger, that he is "ganz einfach ein Bürger" ("ordinary burgher"). Then she refines this formula and slightly softens her sentence: "Sie sind ein Bürger auf Irrwegen, Tonio Kröger – ein verirrter Bürger" (Mann 1955: 238) ("You are a burgher on the wrong track, Tonio Kröger – an erring burgher"). Tonio Kröger himself feels his duplicity and thinks that this condition is associated with his origin, his parents.

Tonio agrees with Lizaveta and explains that he is a result of mixing the different blood of his parents. He does not specify to which of these worlds he is

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)

closer (to the common burgher world or the art world); he does not specify the extent to which he is a burgher, and to which an artist. Neither the author comments on this. This aspect of the problem has not been properly explored in literary scholarship. We believe that this issue deserves proper attention and since the answer is not given in the plain text, we consider it necessary to use the structural method for the analysis of the work.

So, in this article the problem "art – reality", "spirit – life", "burgher – artist" is not only treated in the context of classical literary analysis, but from a different angle – in the context of a detailed analysis through the structural-semantic method. For further analysis of the text we use the following denotations: for the details associated with the verbal series/row of the name – the Tonio-series/row and for the details of the verbal series/row of the surname – the Kröger-series/row; for the details associated with both of them – the Tonio-Kröger-series/row.

Based on what has been said above, we proceed from the premise that the protagonist's name and surname acquire the following semantic plans:

> The name "Tonio" – "art", "spirit"; that is, under this name is meant "artist". This forms the first row of details: the Tonio-row;
>
> The surname "Kröger" – "life", "reality", "burghers"; this is, under this name is meant "burgher". This forms the second row of details: the Kröger-row;
>
> The name "Tonio" + the surname "Kröger" ("Tonio Kröger") – "art" and "burghers" together, showing the protagonist's dichotomy: "burgher with an additional increment of the artist" and "artist with an additional increment of the burgher". This forms the third row of details: the Tonio-Kröger-row.

The purpose of this paper is to handle the problem raised in semantic-statistical terms: to trace the movement of the above-mentioned three types/categories of details throughout the text; to count their number and determine in what kind of relationship with respect to each other they are. These goals can be further subdivided as follows:

> I. Which semantic plane (1. "Art", 2. "Burghers" or 3. "Burghers + Art") predominates in the main character and how it relates to the basic idea of the works?
>
> II. In the case of the predominance of the third semantic plane, which of the two aspects dominates in the image of the protagonist?

The movement of the above-mentioned details can be viewed in chronological order throughout the text of the story. It should be noted that the phrase-detail "Tonio Kröger" goes beyond text and is observed as a paratextual element at a fixed location (the title). Due to its strong position this detail, unlike the name-detail "Tonio" and the surname-detail "Kröger", it immediately attracts the attention of the reader. Therefore, one should start analyzing the verbal series from the title of the story.

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)

The Title
Tonio Kröger

The number of details in the title: Tonio-row – 0, *Kröger-row* – 0, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 1.

The number of details according to the individual chapters:

Chapter 1

Tonio Kröger, Tonio, Tonio, *Kröger*, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonios, Tonio, Tonios, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, ***Tonio Kröger***, *Dem Sohne Konsul Krögers*, Die Mutter Tonios, Konsul *Krögers*, Die Familie der *Kröger*, Tonios Liebe zu Hans Hansen, ***Tonio Kröger***, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonios, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, *Kröger*, *Kröger*, Tonio, *Kröger*, Tonio, *Kröger*, Tonios Mund, Antonio, Tonio, Tonio, ein Sohn Konsul *Krögers*, aus der Familie der *Kröger*, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio, Tonios, ***Tonio Kröger***, Tonio, Tonio, Tonio

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 37, *Kröger-row* – 10, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 4.

Chapter 2

Tonio Kröger, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, *Kröger*, Fräulein *Kröger*, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 0, *Kröger-row* – 2, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 13

Chapter 3

Kröger, ***Tonio Krögers***, Das große *Kröger'sche* Haus, Tonios Mutter, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 1, *Kröger-row* – 2, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 3

Chapter 4

Tonio Kröger, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, *Kröger*, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, Tonio, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, Tonio, *dass Sie... ganz einfach ein Bürger sind, Sie sind ein Bürger auf Irrwegen* (you are an ordinary burgher, a burgher on the wrong track), ***Tonio Kröger***, *ein verirrter Bürger* (erring burgher)

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 2, *Kröger-row* – 1, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 9

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)

Chapter 5

Tonio Kröger, Tonio, ***Tonio Kröger***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 1, *Kröger-row* – 0, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 2

Chapter 6

Tonio Kröger, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, Tonio, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***der Sohn Konsul*** *Krögers*, aus der Familie der *Kröger*, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Krögers***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 1, *Kröger-row* – 2, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 27

Chapter 7

Tonio Krögers, ***Tonio Krögers***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 0, *Kröger-row* – 0, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 10

Chapter 8

Tonio Kröger, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***, ***Tonio Kröger***

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 0, *Kröger-row* – 0, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 19

Chapter 9

Tonio Kröger, *Ich stehe zwischen zwei Welten* (I stand between two worlds)

Number of details of each row: Tonio-row – 0, *Kröger-row* – 0, ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** – 1

The analysis revealed the following number of details: in total – 148 details; among them: ***Tonio-Kröger*** – 89 details (88 + 1 in the title of the work); Tonio – 41 details; *Kröger* –18 details. In quantitative terms, it is very much dominated by a number of details associated with ***Tonio-Kröger-row***; the details of the Tonio-row, in their turn, outnumber those of the Kröger-row. We found that the number of Tonio-Kröger-row details prevails quantitatively not only throughout the entire text but they also dominate at the end of the text of the story: in the last three chapters only ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** details can be traced, and the last 35 details in the text are also ***Tonio-Kröger-row***

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)

details. As noted above, one detail of the ***Tonio-Kröger-row*** is beyond the text as a title starting the whole verbal row, which is very important; it also ends the verbal row of chapter 9, thus forming a frame structure for the ***Tonio-Kröger-row***.

Thus, as the statistical-semantic analysis shows, the protagonist of Thomas Mann's story *Tonio Kröger* is neither burgher nor artist separately, but combines both sides/features in himself. He is a "burgher + artist", but, however, the semantic plane "artist" (41 details) outnumbers more than twice the semantic plane "burgher" (18 details), which results in "artist with an additional increment of the burgher". Therefore, we can rightfully assume that Tonio Kröger is an artist-burgher.

Bibliography

Адмони, Сильман 1965: В.Г. Адмони, Т.И. Сильман, *Томас Манн. Очерк творчества*, Ленинград, Советский писатель.

Fourrier 1960: G. Fourrier, *Thomas Mann: Le messages d'un artiste-bourgeois (1896-1924)*, Paris, http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/litheroes/565.

Hirschbach 1955: F.D. Hirschbach, *The Arrow and the Lyre: A Study of Love in the Works of T. Mann*, Hage.

Jendreiek 1977: Helmut Jendreiek, *Thomas Mann. Der demokratische Roman*, Düsseldorf, August Bagel Verlag.

Mann 1955: Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in 12 Bänden. Zehnter Band*, Berlin, Aufbau-Verlag.

Нартов 1976: К.М. Нартов, *Зарубежная литература в школе*, Москва, Просвещение, http://nova.rambler.ru/search?btnG.

Neubauer 2001: Martin Neubauer, *Thomas Mann. Tonio Kröger*, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun.

Павлова, Юрьева 1983-1994: Н.С. Павлова, Л.М. Юрьева, *Томас Манн. История всемирной литературы: В 8 томах, Т. 8, АН СССР, Ин-т мировой лит-ры им. А.М. Горького*, Москва, Наука.

Peacock 1934: Ronald Peacock, *Das Leitmotiv bei Thomas Mann*, in *Sprache und Dichtung. Forschungen zur Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft. Heft 55*, Bern, Paul Haupt Akademische Buchhandlung vorm. Max Drechsel: 1-69.

Some Aspects of the Semantic-Structural Analysis of Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*

In this article the problem "art – reality", "spirit – life", "burgher – artist" (in Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*) is not only treated in the context of classical literary analysis, but also from a different angle – in the context of details analysis through the structural-semantic method. Literary critics indicate there is a special treatment of the problem "Art and burghers" already at work in the antithesis of the first and last name of the protagonist: Tonio ↔ Kröger. The purpose of this paper is to handle the problem raised in semantic-statistical terms. Thus, as the statistical-semantic analysis shows, the protagonist of Thomas Mann's story *Tonio Kröger* is neither burgher nor artist separately, but combines in himself both sides/features. He is "burgher + artist", but, however, the semantic plane "artist" (41 details) outnumbers more than twice the semantic plane "burgher" (18 details), which results in "artist with an additional increment of the burgher". Therefore, we can rightfully assume that Tonio Kröger is an artist-burgher.

BDD-A8065 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:23 UTC)