

A Figure of Enormity:
Thomas Mann's Der Erwählte as
Political Allegory

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Abstract

Thomas Mann's novel Der Erwählte explores the concepts of sin, contrition, and eventual redemption through the life of the sinful pope Gregorius. The concept of enormity provides the link between the seemingly esoteric subject of his novel and the history of Germany under Nazi rule. He draws a direct, if subtle, parallel between German fascism and Gregorius' sins. The hero's sin, his penance, and his redemption are all overwhelming, thus providing the connection with German national character and history as understood by Mann. By examining the deep structure of the novel's imagery and plot in conjunction with Mann's political speeches, this thesis reveals these underlying similarities, and the essentially positive message which the novel finally conveys. The use of language and the Gregorius legend to express Mann's deep-rooted belief in the fundamental unity of European culture is also examined.

Abrégé

Le roman de Thomas Mann, Der Erwählte, explore les concepts du péché, de la pénitence, et de la rédemption éventuelle à travers la vie du Pape pécheur Gregorius. Le concept d'énormité établit un lien entre le sujet à caractère ésotérique du roman et l'histoire de l'Allemagne pendant le règne nazi. Il propose un parallèle direct, mais subtile, entre le fascisme nazi et les péchés de Gregorius. Le péché du héros, sa pénitence et sa rédemption sont profonds, traçant alors un parallèle avec le rôle national et l'histoire allemands tel que compris par Mann. En examinant la structure des images et de l'intrigue, en conjonction avec les discours politiques de Mann, ce mémoire dévoile ces ressemblances fondamentales, ainsi que le message indéniablement positif que le roman transmet. Le langage du roman et la légende de Gregorius, pour exprimer la foi profonde de Mann en l'unité essentielle de la culture européenne, sont également examinés.

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Introduction

Thomas Mann first read the history of the Pope Gregorius in a period during which he was engaged upon research for his perhaps greatest and most frightening work, Doktor Faustus. It may perhaps be precisely as result of the combination of the seriousness of the topic together with the harsh realities with which his homeland was faced at the time, that Mann found the story of Gregorius enchanting. He was delighted with it,¹ and immediately put it to use in his novel, but not without the resolve to bring it out again one day as the basis for a new and comic work. Precisely what initially attracted him so strongly to the story is not recorded, but it is not unlikely that it is the central premise of the legend - the concept of grace - which was so immediately and intensely appealing. Why else should this story, so immoral and shocking, yet underneath so innocent, be allotted to the depraved and damned Leverkühn to be the central element in one of his earliest compositions? Leverkühn himself is flirting with catastrophe, has committed enormous sins; perhaps precisely this juxta-

¹Mann later wrote; "Tatsächlich gefiel sie mir so gut ..., daß ich mir gleich damals vornahm, sie dem Helden meines Romans eines Tages wegzunehmen und selber etwas daraus zu machen." Thomas Mann, "Bemerkungen zu dem Roman Der Erwählte." Altes und Neues: kleine Prosa aus fünf Jahrzehnten (Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1953), p. 259.

position of the condemned Leverkühn with the gloriously saved Gregor is appealing to the author.

Der Erwählte is a novel written with laughter and the knowledge of the possibility of good in the world. The black mood of Faustus has passed, but the recognition of evil has not. The emphasis is on understanding of sin, on penance and eventual salvation in the novel is no accident, in fact it is central. In recreating this particular story, and in closely linking it with the previously written Faustus by means of the telling of the story of Gregor in Chapter XXXI of that work, Mann is sending out a definitive message concerning a subject very close to his heart - his beloved Germany. The message of hope, during a time of national despondency and self-condemnation, is clearly important to him. There are several major interesting parallels between his political writings (and historical events) and the novel itself, which would tend to support this theory. However, the central connection is inherent to the concept of enormity. Within the framework of the novel, a logical balance exists which enables the author to utilize this concept with maximal effect. The enormity of the sins committed by the protagonist is matched only by the corresponding enormity of his penance and subsequent earthly (and eventually spiritual) reward and elevation above the rest of humanity. The thematic structure of the novel is such that only an exaggeration of this or similar magnitude could be considered credible. The hero, Gregorius, has transgressed

against the fundamental laws of society by virtue of his actions (ie. his marriage with his mother), which occur as a result of his pride. His uniqueness, which led him to pride, his 'militarism' (that is to say, his infatuation with things military, ie. knighthood) and eventual incestuousness, combine to make of him an outsider, someone who cannot blend into society.

While on first perusal there appears to be no link between this novel and the German question which was of such central importance to writers of Mann's generation, the underlying message of hope and eventual salvation contained within Der Erwählte is clearly relevant to a wider context. Although one might not automatically assume a parallel between the storyline of Gregorius' life and Thomas Mann's views on Germany's fate, such a link is at least suggested by the author's discourse. This link can be traced through language and imagery, both in the text of Der Erwählte and in Mann's political and social parlance on the subject of Germany. In the deep structure of the literary text, the themes of transgression and incest are closely associated with the sense of the hero having taken the 'wrong path'. Confusion, misery, and repentance are the inevitable result, followed eventually by forgiveness and grace. Upon reading certain political texts written by the author during the tumultuous years of Germany's voluntary isolation, one becomes aware of a similarity between their subtext, revealed principally through language and

imagery, and the deep structure of the novel. The issues seem, on a purely theoretical level, to be remarkably similar in their essential nature. One can regard the Germany of the Third Reich as being in itself a transgression against fundamental human beliefs. It, like Gregor's unsuitable marriage, came about as the result of isolation, pride, militarism, and incestuousness (albeit racial). In the novel, harmony is restored through unity, and is implied throughout by means of language. The restoration of such harmony and peace to his defeated homeland is of great importance to Mann. This is indeed the underlying message of his 'heiteres Büchlein', a message of hope and grace for the individual as well as for his defeated country. "Germany's greatest problem has been to find a settled place in Europe,"² writes A.J.P. Taylor. Thomas Mann believed that the time for Germany to find such a place had arrived in the early post-war years; Der Erwählte, on one level, serves as a testimony to this belief.

²A.J.P. Taylor, The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of Germany since 1815 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1945), p. 8.

Chapter One

The Crime against the Blood

What is striking about Thomas Mann's discourse on Germany during and immediately following the Nazi period is the surfeit of extreme language he employs whenever the subject arises. In ostensibly political speeches and essays, the use of religious terms and metaphors is both widespread and startling. Mann transmits a political message through the medium of the terminology of sin and transgression. The question is, then, why he chose this particular imagery to express his ideas. Mann answers that question himself, at least partially, when he states; "Democracy, it seems to me, is nothing but the political name for the ideals which Christianity brought into the world as religion."¹ If, then, political and religious ideals are one and the same thing, Mann's imagery is not only justifiable, but, indeed, necessary. He, and those like him who believe in both democracy and Christianity, represent 'the good'; his enemies, conversly, are 'evil', and by extension representatives of the devil. The

¹Thomas Mann, An die gesittete Welt: politische Schriften und Reden im Exil (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1986) p. 252, hereafter referred to as Welt.

German "Erhebung der Kultur zum Religionsersatz"² worries Mann precisely because it is a substitute for the religion he holds as the foundation of both democracy and the ideals it is generally believed to protect and nurture. If the religion is rejected, then so too can the ideals and political system be cast aside or substituted. For Mann, such a substitution can only be 'teuflisch' in nature.

Helmut Koopmann writes "Thomas Mann dämonisierte den Nationalsozialismus, sah in ihm nicht nur den bösen Endpunkt einer langen problematischen Vorgeschichte, sondern schob die Schuld auf eine Außeninstanz, den Teufel, ab."³ Mann believed there had always been a close relationship between the German people and the daemonic, and ultimately the devil. In Doktor Faustus he has his devil tell Leverkühn "ich bin zwar deutsch, kerndeutsch meinentwegen...", and speaks of "meine kern-deutsche Popularität." (Faustus, pp. 305, 302) The connection is made repeatedly and pointedly by Mann, who, in 1945, described his homeland's relationship with the devil in the following words:

Wo der Hochmut des Intellektes sich mit seelischer
Altertümllichkeit und Gebundenheit gattet, da ist
der Teufel. Und der Teufel, Luthers Teufel, will
mir als eine sehr deutsche Figur erscheinen, das
Bündnis mit ihm, die Teufelsverschreibung,...-ist

²Thomas Mann, Doktor Faustus; das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1980) p. 433, hereafter referred to as Faustus.

³Helmut Koopmann, Der schwierige Deutsche. Studien zum Werk Thomas Manns (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988) p. 91.

es nicht ganz der rechten Augenblick, Deutschland
in diesem Bilde zu sehen, heute, wo Deutschland
buchstäblich der Teufel holt? (Welt, p. 705f)

The immediate connection is with Mann's novel Faustus, which was in progress when he wrote these lines. Faustus serves as Mann's indictment of the many schools of thought and great figures in German history he perceived as being responsible to some degree for the emergence of the Nazi movement. One of the most startling characters in the book is the devil himself, whose appearance is dramatic, if brief, but whose influence colours and controls the entire story.

In the speech quoted above, Mann had already described the German "Hochmut des Intellektes" and "Altertümlichkeit"; the connection with the devil was already clear in his mind, and had been for a long time. The echo of Christian imagery and phraseology is already evident in the diary entries of early 1933, when Mann, in the beginning of his long exile, writes "neue, bittere Lehren müssen kommen." (Welt, p.25) The tone is that of a stern Biblical patriarch pronouncing judgement. The word 'Sturz' carries with it the memory of the original fall from grace of Adam and Eve, and, perhaps more pertinantly, the fall of Lucifer. Mann refers here to the coming to power of the Nazi party in Germany; by now he is linking the Nazis with the daemonic in his mind.

During this period Mann calls Germany "ein heillos, verirrtes Land," and also a "verwildetes Land." (Welt, pp. 61, 86) Taking into account the fact of his exile, which must

inevitably cause some bitterness and resentment in even the most forgiving, his phraseology is undoubtedly both stern in judgement and unforgiving in intent. He condemns the 'Zuschandewerden' of his homeland; later, in his wartime broadcasts to Germany over the BBC radio network, he speaks of 'Schandtaten', and warns of a harsh retribution to come. Of Hitler himself, Mann later states that "sein Nachruhm wird Schande sein." (Welt, p. 284) Much later still, he speaks with sadness of the "Schändung des Menschlichen," (Welt, p. 520) which he felt was taking place in Germany during the war. The emphasis on desecration, shame, and dishonour is a measure of how deeply Mann felt betrayed by his country and his fellow citizens. He had always believed that his bourgeois ideals were fundamentally shared with most Germans of his time, however they chose to express them in their personal and political lives. Now it seemed to him that he had been entirely wrong in his estimation, and this new conviction devastated him. Since he saw the 'transgressions' of the German people as being as much ethical or religious as political in nature, it seems logical that he would turn to the intrinsically colourful and dynamic terminology of Christianity in discussing these transgressions. "Thomas Manns später Kampf gegen den Nazismus spielte sich, obwohl die politischen Auswirkungen gewaltig waren, nicht eigentlich auf politischer Ebene ab

sondern in psychologisch-religiösen Bereichen...das heilige Land vom Anti-Christ zu befreien."⁴

Whoever turned their back on Christian democracy seemed also to automatically also reject everything that was decent, moral, and civilized, according to Mann. Shortly after the Nazi party was asked to form a government in the Reichstag, Mann wrote with sorrow of "Deutschlands Absage an die Gemeinschaft der Gesittung." (Welt, p.12) This statement is especially interesting since the Nazis had only just legitimately come to power, and their more violent tendencies and beliefs were popularly believed, both within Germany and elsewhere, to be exaggerated at best⁵. Precisely what Mann means by the phrase "die Gemeinschaft der Gesittung" is somewhat clarified by a statement made in 1939, where he speaks of "eine die Grundlagen der abendländischen Gesittung bedrohende Barbarei." (Welt, p.292) The barbarism of which he speaks is the rule of the Nazis, but what is the basis of Western civilization? According to statements he himself made, it is, at least partially, Christianity, not as such, but as a moral and cultural framework.

⁴Rolf Kieser, Erzwungene Symbiose: Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Georg Kaiser und Bertolt Brecht im Schweizer Exil (Bern und Stuttgart: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1984), p. 29.

⁵At the same time, as Rolf Kieser clearly shows, the author began his exile as a "vorsichtiger Taktiker", who was only willing to publicly denounce the Nazi regime after much hesitation and persuasion from family members. Chapter I.5 of Erzwungene Symbiose, "Das Bekenntnis," explores Mann's gradual acceptance of the necessity of such a step.

Eventually, Mann begins to believe that the Germans have learned their lesson and are ready to repent and begin to work towards 'rejoining' what he calls the 'civilized' world. In his BBC radio broadcasts, he brings up the question of guilt, even remarking that "Schuld will Sühne." (Welt, p. 597) Finally, after years of exile and anguish, he can foresee "ein Deutschland das die Untaten erkennt und tief bereut." (Welt, p. 592) The recognition of wrongdoing, Mann believes, is the first step towards true contrition.

Mann himself writes "die bloße ledigen Tatsachen anzuerkennen, kommt schon moralischer Kasteiung nahe." (Welt, p. 254) On successive BBC broadcasts, he begins to discuss what must happen after the Nazis have been removed from power. He warns that "Ausschweifungen müssen bezahlt sein", and goes on to mention the dissipations he believes Germany to be guilty of. He speaks with passion of the recognition Germans must have of what he sees as their terrible crimes, emphasizing that this recognition is essential to the healing of their souls. Once this preliminary step had been taken, the Germans could proceed with the serious business of cleansing themselves of their collectively acquired sins. He says bluntly "ihr müßt euch reinigen...Die Sühne...muß euer eigenstes Werk sein." (Welt, p. 532) This statement is purely theological in vocabulary; it is only one of many such assertions which place Mann's political discourse on a theological level. The author's idiosyncratic language thus creates a bridge in his

mind between two otherwise vastly dissimilar concepts - the public events of recent German history, and the life of his fictional character Gregorius. The use of religious myth in describing and judging the former brings both author and reader one step closer to the world of the penitent sinner.

Finally, Mann states in the same series of BBC broadcasts, "Deutschland wird gereinigt werden." (Welt, p. 538) The use of the passive voice here indicates that a higher, super-human power will be involved; that even Germany itself may have little control over the event. Germany might be "ein Unsegen, ein Fluch," (Welt, p. 713) as Mann would later state, but her ultimate salvation is certain.

A few months before the outbreak of war in Europe, Thomas Mann gave a speech in New York, in English, on the subject of culture, democracy, and their relationship to Germany. The speech is very powerful; it is intended to be effective, to inspire an audience. It begins calmly, in a discussion of the intellectual weakness Mann believed had led the German people into the acceptance of the rule of the Nazis. "Intellectual Germany was not receptive to the political side of life and culture" he says; in fact "the German despised political freedom," and this he believes to be a mistake, since it precludes any support for a true democracy. He goes on to describe the "tragic, inexorable consequence: he (the German) is a slave of the state." (Welt, pp. 324, 325) For Mann, the cause of this appears to be quite simply that the German was

unaware that "democracy is nothing but the political aspect of occidental Christianity." (Welt, p. 326)

Mann ends the penultimate paragraph of his speech with the following sentence: "Evil has been revealed to us in such crassness and meanness that our eyes have been opened to the dignity and the simple beauty of good." (Welt, p. 326f) It seems to be the summation of all that he believes about the Nazis. But the sentence is interesting perhaps primarily from a rhetorical standpoint. Firstly, he makes a clear comparison between 'good' and 'evil'. While 'evil' appears to be attributable to the Nazi party and its members, 'good' is never specifically defined, although the listener is left with the firm impression that he or she is definitely included among its followers. The sentence is written in the passive voice, as if to imply that neither Mann nor his listeners could have exercised any control over the source or nature of the revelation. Who is then responsible? A greater, more powerful force than the merely human is at work, according to the implication. Were 'we' previously blind to "the dignity and the simple beauty of good"? If, as the use of the passive voice implies, the nature and timing of the revelation lie outside the realm of human responsibility, then, so, by extension, may the responsibility for 'evil' lie outside the ability of the Nazis to control.

In the last paragraph of his speech, Mann gives his penchant for religious phraseology free rein. He states:

Again we dare to take upon our lips such words as freedom, truth, and justice. We hold them out before the enemy of human kind as the medieval monk held out the crucifix before Satan in person. And all that the times call on us to bear of anguish is outweighed by the youthful joy of the spirit at finding itself once more in the chosen role, the role of David against Goliath, of Saint George against the old dragon of violence and lies. (Welt, p. 326f)

In these lines, Mann uses the rhetoric of war, while subtly lending moral authority to the subject matter by means of his religious terminology. His audience is stirred up and convinced of their own righteousness by the fiery images he presents to them, while at the same time being led to accept the underlying conclusion he draws; namely that the only solution to the problem posed by the German leaders is war.

The first sentence of this excerpt begins with the word 'again'. The reference could easily be to World War I, when Western countries, including the United States, united to fight Germany and her allies. More likely, however, is that Mann is speaking about the shame and horror many exiled Germans felt about the regime in power in their homeland. The word 'again' could then refer to the period since 1933, during which time Mann, and many like him, did not feel qualified to use the words "freedom, truth, and justice" when speaking of Germany. Now, having disassociated himself from the German people and finally accepted that they followed Hitler of their own volition, he is free to oppose them wholeheartedly.

In the next line, he proposes the dichotomy of "freedom, truth, and justice" on the one side, and "the enemy of human

kind" on the other. This enemy is then equated with Satan, in a powerful simile with an immediate and vivid appeal. The implication is clearly that the enemy is, in fact, Hitler. The fight against him is thereby raised to the level of the fight that humanity has always waged against the personification of evil. And it seems that those who fight in that battle are as the soldiers of God, fighting the emissary of His greatest enemy, and by consequence, also blessed by Him. By being compared with the crucifix, the concepts of "freedom, truth, and justice" are unequivocally equated with Christ and the ultimate good, rhetorically speaking. So are, by extension, those who believe in them.

The last sentence of the speech serves both to clarify the previous statement, and also as a final inspiration to the audience. Here Mann compares the "youthful joy of the spirit" to "the old dragon of violence and lies." Clearly, the winner of such a conflict must be a foregone conclusion. The inclusion of two of the most venerable saints of the Christian Church lends not only powerful imagery, but also the moral authority to convince even the most sceptical of the justness of Mann's arguments. Again, the use of Christian iconography and myth brings Mann to within a small jump of the life of Gregor. The codification of the actions of the enemies of the German spirit within the confines of biblical imagery lend moral weight to the argument; they also, whether consciously or

subconsciously, link the two very different subjects in the author's mind.

It is especially interesting that Mann decided to use the phrase "the chosen role" here. Who has chosen this role for him? He does not say, but the obvious implication is that God must be somehow involved. A few years later, Gregor will also be chosen by God. And there will also be a dragon for him to fight, except that this time the dragon will be inside himself, and the struggle will be within his own soul.⁶ The struggle which Mann is encouraging his audience to take up in this speech has been clearly defined; the line has been drawn between the good, the sacred, and the holy, on one side, and the "enemy of human kind," who by implication is then somehow outside of humanity, set apart and strongly identified with Satan, on the other.

Early in his career as a political writer, in the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, Thomas Mann claims that "der Begriff 'deutsch' ist ein Abgrund, bodenlos..."⁷ He makes this assertion, not with horror or disgust or even shame, but rather with pride. Germans, and their culture, are so completely set apart from the rest of Europe, so rich and

⁶In Welt p. 616, Mann states; "Und dennoch die Stunde ist groß,...die Stunde wo der Drache zur Strecke gebracht wird, das wüste und krankhafte Ungeheuer, Nationalsozialismus genannt."

⁷Thomas Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1983) p. 54.

exiting, that to define them is an almost impossible task, this statement implies.

More than twenty-five years later, and just days after the defeat of Germany in World War Two, Mann once again used the words 'Deutschland' and 'Abgrund' in connection with each other:

Wie bitter ist es, wenn der Jubel der Welt der Niederlage, der tiefsten Demütigung des eigenen Landes gilt! Wie zeigt sich darin noch einmal schrecklich der Abgrund, der sich zwischen Deutschland...und der gesitteten Welt aufgetan hatte! (Welt, p. 615f)

Here once again Germany is portrayed as being in conflict with the 'civilized' nations of the world. The implication is that Germany is uncivilized, barbaric, and evil, separated by and 'Abgrund' from all that is good, ie. the Allied countries. Mann is no longer the proud citizen enlarging on the praiseworthy idiosyncracies of his beloved homeland, but a disillusioned old man who knows that precisely those traits he praised in 1918 played a large part in the defeat of 1945.

Germany's 'Einmaligkeit', her insistence on being set apart from all other countries, had led her to turn, inevitably, inward upon herself, to engage in a "Kampf gegen den politischen Humanismus der westlichen Welt."⁸ What was to emerge from the rejection of Western European democracy, from what Lukacs was to call "das gesamte Erbe der reaktionären

⁸Helmut Plessner, Die verspätete Nation: Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1969), p. 32.

Entwicklung Deutschlands,"⁹ was the political party led by Adolf Hitler, the National Socialist Party, which ultimately came to influence every aspect of life in Germany.

A concept which is crucial to the ideology of National Socialism and important for this discussion is the concept of 'Rasse', by which is meant the belief in the biological superiority of the German, or 'Aryan', people. The belief in this superiority is evident in the German mass rejection of democracy in 1933 (Democracy is seen as a "verjudete Institution"¹⁰), and also in the realm of culture, which is assumed to be inherently German in nature.¹¹ By linking societal well-being with racial purity, the Nazis planted the seeds of violence into their political structure. Since such purity is non-existent and impossible to achieve¹², the arbiters of purity inevitably gain power over life and death when their

⁹Georg Lukacs, Die Zerstörung der Vernunft (Berlin-Spandau: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, 1962) p. 622.

¹⁰Lukacs, on p.648, states: "Demokratie ist eine verjudete Institution". Plessner, on the same subject: "Der sogenannte Antisemitismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts ist der in die moderne Wissenschaftssprache der Rassenbiologie geflüchtete Widerstand gegen die bürgerliche Emanzipation der Juden." (p. 170)

¹¹Mann himself expounds upon the presumed dichotomy of German culture and Western European civilization in his Betrachtungen. Hans Joachim Maitre discusses this phase of Mann's development in Aspekte der Kulturkritik Thomas Manns in seiner Essayistik. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1970)

¹²Gobineau, for example, admitted that the races were inextricably mixed, as did later racial theorists, but they decided that this problem could be solved by the process of 'Entmischung'; see Lukacs for a detailed and well-informed analysis.

function is legitimized by society, especially when linked with survival, and even more temptingly, racial superiority. The term 'Rasse' gains a mystical, mythical dimension, is elevated to the level of religion. Whatever means are necessary to ensure its survival are justified; thus the laws imposed by the Nazis governing the fate of the mentally and physically handicapped, placing restrictions on marriage, etc., were generally accepted, their importance for the greater good acknowledged.

Inherent to the theory of 'Rasse' is the importance of 'Blut'. Helmuth Plessner, in this context, speaks of the "Macht des Blutes." (Plessner, p. 163) The German 'Blut' is considered sacred, whereas the blood of other races is an impure pollutant which must not be allowed to further contaminate the blood of the master race.¹³ For this reason, 'mixed' marriages were forbidden during the National Socialist years, and Germans were required to prove the absence of Jewish blood in their family through a certain number of generations before the Government was satisfied with their 'Aryanness'. This rule did not, however, apply to those whose 'Aryanness' came primarily from within, since the final decision on racial origin was based on intuition. Rosenberg, the man whose theories lay behind the race laws, states,

¹³Lukacs, on p. 604, quotes Woltmann as propounding the 'Entmischung der Rassen'.

"Seele...bedeutet Rasse;"¹⁴ once again, only the intuition of those in power can be relied on to make such an important decision. The basis for such decisions was wilfull caprice. Lukacs describes the process as follows: "Bei einem Goebbels zählten das verdächtigste Aussehen und der zweifelhafteste Stammbaum nichts, während ein anderer, der in irgendeiner Frage ein Bedenken zu äußern wagt, sofort zum Mischling erklärt, als geistig und charakterlich 'verjudet' verdammt werden kann." (Lukacs, p. 640) Furthermore, certain 'biologically' based testing procedures could be employed in order to determine any given individual's degree of racial purity.

While Germans who had satisfactorily proven their Aryan heredity were considered to be members of the 'master race', non-Aryans were perceived quite differently. It was the duty of every German "...jeden Angehörigen eines fremden Volkes als Tiere zu betrachten...; je nachdem: als Zugvieh oder Schlachtvieh." (Lukacs, p. 643)

By imposing and strictly enforcing laws thus designed to isolate and 'decontaminate' the German people, the Nazi lawmakers attempted to elevate their concept of 'Rasse' into a religion, which could then replace Christianity as previously practiced. Unlike early racial theorists (eg. Gobineau), the Nazis saw no reason to attempt to reconcile their beliefs with those of any existing religious group. On the contrary, Hitler was reported to have said: "Man kann nur entweder ein Germane

¹⁴quoted in Lukacs, p. 634.

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oder ein Christ sein. Man kann nicht beides sein." (Lukacs, p. 646) To some extent at least, the cult of biology was to replace orthodox religion in the Third Reich. This inevitably resulted in far-reaching societal consequences, which only served to further enhance the power of the state. The result of regulating the existence of the individual in accordance with his or her biological heredity is that all individuals, regardless of societal stature, are relegated to the status of animals in a biological experiment. Thus stripped of their essential humanity, people are freed also of the restraints imposed upon them by the 'civilized' world. Such a society can reject in an instant any progress made throughout the long history of societal development. It is in a sense reborn by the process of destruction of previously binding restraints. It discards even the possibility of interactive communication with other groups, considering itself intrinsically superior. Lukacs speaks of the "Kampf des arisch-germanischen Lichtvolks mit den Mächten der Finsternis, mit Judentum und Rom." (Lukacs, p. 615) Similarly, Helmuth Plessner has the following to say about the new 'Religionsersatz':

Dieser neue Glaube an die Macht des Blutes als der eigentlichen Wurzel und Bestimmung des Menschen in den Grenzen eines rassistisch gehaltenen Volkes bildet die letzte Antwort auf die Verfallsgeschichte griechisch-christlicher Überlieferung im Blick auf Deutschlands politische und geistige Lage. (Plessner, p. 165)

In a very real sense, the racial segregation which formed an integral part of German society during the years of the

Third Reich developed into a kind of mass or group incest. The overwhelming abnormality implicit in any attempt to relegate by law the development of the human species was compounded by the fact that Germans were expected to marry and produce children only with their own kind, their own species. This 'racial incest' was considered necessary in order to purify the blood, etc. The Judeo-Christian concept of good and evil is a much later development than the basic laws which necessarily governed all early societies, necessary that is in terms of survival. The basic cultural law is much older, much more fundamental. The Western concept of evil must be secondary to this basic law, since it is neither as old, nor as universally accepted. As the practice of incest is one of the oldest taboos common to all humanity, the transgression of the written and unwritten laws preventing it must be seen as one of the 'original' sins known to human society. Incest is seen as the violation of one of the most fundamental cultural canons; therefore, those who practice it may be regarded as not only uncultured, but beneath the level of culture, in other words barbarian. Therefore, the racial restrictions imposed by the Nazi leaders can be seen as a transgression of these most fundamental cultural laws, thus opening the way to transgressions in the political sphere. Friedrich Meinecke saw the development of Nazism in a very similar light:

Denn hier war das letzte Band zerschnitten, das die bisherigen Säkularisierungen mit dem dogmatischen Christentum verknüpfte, nämlich die Anerkennung des menschlichen Gewissens als des Verkünders gött-

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lichen und ewigen Gebote, vor allem des sittlichen Gebotes des Nächstenliebe, und das hieß auch, der Anerkennung von Menschenwürde in jedem uns Begegnenden, und gehöre er auch einer ganz fremden Rasse an ...es blieb doch immer ein Stachel des Gewissens in den Völkern lebendig, und den Exzessen folgte in der Regel eine irgendwelche Wiederbesinnung auf die sittlichen Urgebote. Man wagte es nicht, sie grundsätzlich außer Kraft zu setzen.

Hitler und die Seinen haben es gewagt...vor allem den verhaßten Juden gegenüber gab es sittliche Schranken und Anerkennung von Menschenrechten und Menschenwürde nicht mehr.¹⁵

Since the race laws are the cornerstone of National Socialist policy, Nazism itself may be considered beneath culture, that is to say barbaric. Thomas Mann not only saw the dangers inherent to such a system, he was also quick to point them out to anyone who would listen:

Unerschöpferische Gespräche über den verbrecherischen und ekelhaften Wahnsinn, die sadistischen Krankheitstypen der Machthaber, die mit Mitteln von verrückter Schamlosigkeit ihr Ziel absoluter, unkritisierbarer Herrschaft verfolgen und vorläufig erreichen...Durch keinen Ruin ist der Sturz dieses Abschaums der Gemeinheit zu hoch bezahlt. (Welt, p.10)

Mann wrote these words in his diary only months after leaving Germany in early 1933. He believed the Nazis to be barbarians, and their regime to have reduced the Germans to a sub-human state. He called the regime of Hitler "das Letzte an Niedrigkeit, entarteter Dummheit und blutiger Schmach." (Welt, p.61) From the earliest days when the National Socialists began to gain attention during the Weimar Republic, references equating

¹⁵Friedrich Meinecke, Die deutsche Katastrophe; Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen (Wiesbaden: E. Brockhaus, 1946) p. 124f.

them with barbarism in Mann's diaries and speeches are not difficult to find. In 1940, he wrote;

Einem Volk die Freiheit zu nehmen, ihm jeden Gedanken daran mit Knüppeln auszutreiben, den Schrecken unter ihm an die Stelle des Rechtes zu setzen, -diesem Volk aber, zur Kompensation, das Adelsgefühl rassistischer Distinktion gegen eine Minderheit zu gewähren, der man einen Extra-Schandfleck anheftet, mit der man besondere Tänze der Erniedrigung aufführt - ein sauberer Trick! (Welt, p. 353)

Georg Lukacs shows that the credo of Aryan racial superiority was carefully designed with the intention of giving the German people a belief in their own inherent superiority, their destiny as world rulers, while blinding them to the underlying agenda: "Das Brechen der Willensfreiheit und Denkfähigkeit der Menschen."¹⁶ The German people, according to this theory, are the possessors of culture, unlike other European, or 'white' peoples, who are merely civilized.¹⁷ Everything Germanic is glorified and mythologised, while at the same time anything which is 'other' is correspondingly denigrated. The final result was inevitable: "Ein Ruin nie gesehenen Ausmaßes, allumfassend, ein moralischer, geistiger, militärischer, ökonomischer Bankrott ohnegleichen." (Welt, p. 688)

In 1938, Thomas Mann wrote a Manifesto entitled "An die gesittete Welt". By addressing himself to the 'gesittete' world, instead of, for example, the free or the democratic

¹⁶Lukacs, p. 631, on Hitler's Mein Kampf; his "demagogisches Ziel".

¹⁷see Lukacs; Mann, in the Betrachtungen, goes into some depth on this topic.

world, Mann is sending out a clear and powerful signal. Germany, according to this title, is excluded, not from the free people of the world, not from the friendly, or peace-loving, or democratic peoples, but clearly and fundamentally from the civilized. It is, then, in straightforward and devastating fashion, completely cut off from the rest of the world. Mann, an extremely careful and precise writer, would never have used such a damning word to exclude his own people from the realms of the civilized without being entirely aware of what he was doing. This is not to say that this was the first time he had attacked the Nazi regime with such harsh judgements - he had (at least privately) consistently condemned it. But with the use of the term 'gesittet' within the given context, Mann condemns not only the Nazis, but the entire German nation in sharing complicity for the transgression of the fundamental laws of civilized society.

Chapter Two

Transgression and Verirrung

The political themes which occupied much of Thomas Mann's thoughts and time during the latter period of his life inevitably spilled over into his literary output. In the novel Doktor Faustus, the narrator periodically breaks the flow of his story with editorials on the progress of the war which forms the backdrop to his writings. Passages such as the following are not uncommon:

Alles drängt und stürzt dem Ende entgegen, in Endes Zeichen steht die Welt, -steht darin wenigstens für uns Deutsche, deren tausendjährige Geschichte, widerlegt, ad absurdum geführt, als unselig verfehlt, als Irrweg erwiesen durch dieses Ergebnis, ins Nichts, in die Verzweiflung, in einen Bankrott ohne Beispiel, in eine von donnernden Flammen umtanzte Höllenfahrt mündet. Wenn es wahr ist, was der deutsche Spruch wahrhaben will, daß ein jeder Weg zu rechtem Zwecke auch recht ist in jeder seiner Strecken, so will eingestanden sein, daß der Weg, der in dies Unheil ging - und ich gebrauche das Wort in seiner strengsten, religiösesten Bedeutung-, heillos war überall, an jedem seiner Punkte und Wendungen, so bitter es die Liebe ankommen mag, in diese Logik zu willigen. (Faustus, p.605)

The novel ends with a prayer; "Ein einsamer Mann faltet seine Hände und spricht: Gott sei euerer armen Seele gnädig mein Freund, mein Vaterland," thus linking the fate of Leverkühn inextricably with that of Germany. It was while researching this novel that Mann first encountered and used the Gregorius legend (Chapter XXXI tells Gregor's story in the context of an operatic Puppenspiel as composed by Leverkühn). The story

concentrates on a figure whose birth and subsequent life make of him an outcast from society, simply because society is not capable of intergrating a being of such extraordinary experience and background. Gregor is unique; like so many of Mann's heros, he is also an outcast.¹ The extreme nature of his experience leaves no possible room for banality; like the classical heros of antiquity, he cannot simply go on to 'learn from his experience' and lead a 'normal' life. While his transgression is the result of pride, it is his extreme humility and willingness to endure the harshest penance which result in his eventual elevation to the papal chair.

On a purely allegorical level it is possible to juxtapose the condition of Gregorius at various stages on his journey through life with the situation of Germany, reflected in Mann's changing attitudes towards his country. Like the 'schlimme Kinder' and Gregor himself, Germany, in the first half of this century, was seen as unique among the nations of Europe. Mann himself described the Germany of 1918 as "frei und ungleich, d.h. aristokratisch," in contrast to Western European democracies, where 'Zivilisation' was seen as a poor substitute for German 'Kultur'. The 'deutsche Sonderweg' is a source of deep pride, while concepts like internationalism and

¹Eberhard Hilscher ("Die Geschichte vom guten Sünder" in Vollendung und Größe Thomas Manns. Halle: Verlag Sprache und Literatur, p.231): "Von den 'Buddenbrooks' bis zum 'Doktor Faustus' hat Thomas Mann eigentlich immer dieselbe Geschichte erzählt, die Geschichte vom Erwählten, Hochbegabten, Ausgezeichneten. So gibt denn auch der Gregoriusroman das Seelenporträt eines Genies."

democracy are scorned as weakness. In 1918, Mann believed in the existence of "eine geschichtliche Sonderentwicklung deutscher Kultur." (Maitre, p. 36) At the time, he was only one of many who was suspicious of the newly formed Republic. He proclaimed himself proudly to be an unpolitical man, a bourgeois writer who could afford to leave the running of the state to others. Such an attitude was not uncommon in 1918; on the contrary, there were many who admired Mann precisely as a result of his anti-democratic sentiments.² However, he eventually came to believe that the voluntary spiritual isolation that Germany had practiced for so long, rather than serving to protect, had damaged the national psyche. The result was disturbing. "By virtue of an antidemocratic pride in pure culture the German spirit had become the enemy of humanity. Barbarism was the fruit of Germany's esthetic bourgeois culture."³ Mann himself "ist damals klar geworden ...daß eine sehr enge Nachbarschaft zwischen Ästhetismus und Barbarei

²The following quote may serve as an example of the kind of discourse Mann employed to make his political ideas known: "Ich bekenne mich tief überzeugt, daß das deutsche Volk die politische Demokratie niemals wird lieben können, aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil es die Politik selbst nicht lieben kann, und daß der vielverschriene 'Obrigkeitsstaat' die dem deutschen Volke angemessene, zukömmliche und von ihm im Grunde gewollte Staatsform ist und bleibt." (Betrachtungen, p. 30)

³Peter Heller, "Thomas Mann's Conception of the Creative Writer" Publications of the Modern Language Association of America LXIX (1954) p. 783.

besteht".⁴ He was later to let Serenus Zeitblom, the narrator of Faustus, state, with reference to the German people; "Ja, wir sind ein gänzlich verschiedenes Volk von mächtig tragischer Seele, und unsre Liebe gehört dem Schicksal, jedem Schicksal, wenn es nur eins ist, sei es auch der den Himmel mit Götterdämmerungsrote einzündende Untergang." (Faustus, p. 234) Germans had always been fiercely proud of their culture, their unworldly devotion to the spiritual at the expense of the political. Mann himself had at one time shared this pride, but later rejected it in favour of a broader humanistic and democratic approach. In describing the fatal naiveté of a purely non-political stance, and with direct reference to his own Betrachtungen, Mann did not hesitate to condemn precisely those attitudes which he had once cherished:

Wie sehr die Unglückseligkeit der deutschen Geschichte und ihr Weg in die Kulturkatastrophe des Nationalsozialismus mit der Politiklosigkeit des bürgerlichen Geistes in Deutschland zusammenhängt, seinem gegen-demokratischen Herabblicken auf die politische und soziale Sphäre von der Höhe des Spirituellen und der 'Bildung'. (Welt, p. 292)

At the same time, Mann continued to admire Nietzsche, a man he called "ein Heiliger des Immoralismus", and to speak of his philosophy with respect; "er (hat) das starke und schöne, das amoralisch triumphierende Leben ekstatisch verherrlicht

⁴Kurt Sontheimer, "Thomas Mann als politischer Schriftsteller," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 6.1(1958) p. 23.

und es gegen jede Verkümmernung durch den Geist verteidigt."⁵
Mann had always seen Nietzsche as a quintessentially German figure, a mirror of both negative and positive German traits, and this led him eventually to closely link Nietzsche's philosophical writings with Nazi ideology:

Aber wer, zuletzt, war deutscher als er, wer hat den Deutschen alles noch einmal exemplarisch vorgemacht, wodurch sie der Welt eine Not und ein Schrecken geworden sind und sich zugrunde gerichtet haben: die romantische Leidenschaft, den Drang zur ewigen Ich-Entfaltung ins Grenzenlose ohne festen Gegenstand, den Willen, der frei ist, weil er kein Ziel hat und ins Unendliche geht? Als die Laster der Deutschen hat er den Trunk und den Hang zum Selbstmord bezeichnet. ("Nietzsches Philosophie", p. 156)

Germany's pride was to lead inevitably to "den Größenwahn, die Überheblichkeit über andere Völker, den provinziellen und weltfremden Dünkel, dessen krassester, unleidlichster Ausdruck der Nationalsozialismus war." (Welt, p. 617) In 1945 Germany was seen as the transgressor, the perpetuator of hitherto unthought of crimes ("die moralische Barbarei, in der Deutschland länger als zwölf Jahre gelebt hat"). When the war ended, Mann spoke with sorrow of "die vergewaltigten Völker Europas." (Welt, p. 613) Thus, he saw Germany as having stepped outside the boundaries set by society and desperately in need of grace:

Gnade. Nicht umsonst spielt dieser Begriff in meine späteren dichterischen Versuche...immer stärker hinein. Gnade ist es, was wir alle brauchen, und

⁵Thomas Mann, "Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung", Neue Studien (Stockholm: Bermann Fischer, 1948) pp. 130, 131.

jenes 'Gnade sei mit euch', mit dem in der Lübecker Marienkirche allsontäglich die Predigt begann, -wie mein Blick über Sie hingeht, möchte ich es, das Herz bedrängt von dieser gefährlichen Zeit, jedem einzelnen von Ihnen persönlich, der deutschen Jugend insgesamt, Deutschland selbst und unserem alten Europa wünschend, zurufen: Daß Gnade mit ihm sei und ihm helfe, sich aus Wirrnis, Widerstreit und Ratlosigkeit ins Rechte zu finden. (Welt, p. 809f)

In the story of the incestuous twins and their sinful offspring, Mann found the ideal vehicle for the literary expression of the manifestation of divine grace.

It is clear from the first introduction of the twins Willigis and Sibylla that they are not ordinary children. The first mention of them refers to "die Wickelkinder, des Todes allerliebsten Sprossen," (DE, p. 18) a theme which the children themselves will later take up when Willigis in a particularly gruesome moment reminds Sibylla that "aus dem Tode sind wir geboren und sind seine Kinder." (DE, p. 35) This first intimation of 'otherness' is followed by many more, as we follow the twins' growth from childhood to adolescence. Mann stresses primarily the great beauty of the children: "Reizendere Wickelkinder sah wahrlich die Welt noch nicht," (DE, p. 18) and we are shown how beloved they are, how charming, how intelligent.⁶

Thomas Mann proceeds to chronicle the growth of the twins, their pride, their unsurpassed belief in themselves and

⁶"Die Wonne der ganzen Burg...Schoydelakurt... genannt" (DE, p. 18). The physical descriptions, especially of Sibylla, are lovingly done and quite detailed.

each other. It is precisely this pride, coupled with the reinforcement of the court, which leads them to the belief that no-one is equal to them in beauty or birth. As Willigis says; "unser beider ist niemand wert,...sondern wert ist eins nur des anderen." (DE, p. 27) Their pride leads them to grow inward, toward each other and the dark, instead of outward to the light and the world around them. Their glorification of each other is really a celebration of self, since they each see the reflection of the self in the other, and only the knowledge of the other's presence and approval leads to true happiness. Karl Stackmann, in his article entitled "Der Erwählte: Thomas Manns Mittelalter-Parodie", propounds the theory that the act of incest "geht...aus einem übermächtigen Narzismus hervor."⁷ The dialogue of the children, as well as their subsequent acts, seems to validate that statement. As Willigis puts it, once again affirming his devotion to his too-close sister; "die anderen sind fremde Stücke, mir nicht ebenbürtig wie du, die mit mir geboren..."(DE, p. 26) The proliferation of such assertions, so lovingly made, certainly indicates that Mann intended the reader to draw such a conclusion.

Out of the twins' self-absorption comes inevitably the belief that they are truly set apart from all others, including their father. They are therefore above all others, and,

⁷Karl Stackmann, "Der Erwählte: Thomas Manns Mittelalter-Parodie", Wege der Forschung Band CCCXXXV (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975) p. 243.

logically, above the laws which others, including God, set. That which is forbidden to most of humanity may not be refused them. "Die blutschänderischen Paare wissen, daß das Gefühl ihrer Ebenbürtigkeit Grundlage ihrer Zuneigung ist. Stolz der Absonderung ist Wesen dieser Vereinigung. Die Außenwelt besteht für die Liebenden nur insofern, als sie abgewehrt wird."⁸

Helmuth Plessner describes the introspective Germany of Hitler in much the same terms, when he speaks of "das Volk als realer Träger des Staates, eine bluthaft-erdgebundene Einheit." (Plessner, p. 132) The sinful twins of Hartmann's legend simply exclude the rest of humanity, but in Nazi Germany obsessive introspection went one step further, in actively perceiving other peoples as inferior, and acting upon that perception. "Eine hundertprozentige Verherrlichung des Germanentums" was combined with a corresponding "hundertprozentiges Verwerfen von allem, was nicht germanisch ist." (Lukacs, p. 616)

In his extensive analysis of Mann's famous montage technique, which was used to such excellent effect in the novel under discussion, Hans Wysling also touches upon the subject of incest. He believes that for Mann "Erwähltheit und Inzest" belong together, that indeed the one arises out of the other. Incest is the result of "Erwähltheit" because it is a form of

⁸Anna Hellersberg-Wendriner, Mystik der Gottesferne: Eine Interpretation Thomas Manns (Bern: Franke, 1960), p.183.

narcissism or self-love "gepaart mit der Unfähigkeit, das andere zu lieben. Diese Liebesunfähigkeit, im christlichen Sinn gesprochen, ist Sünde."⁹ His theory poses the interesting theological question of precisely what the sin for which the twins are to be punished is; their incest or the underlying cause of it, their overweening pride and self-love? Within the context of the novel they are certainly punished for the former crime, but in a wider context, that of the writer, his underlying message, and his audience, it is self-love, selfishness, introversion which must be seen as criminal and punished accordingly.¹⁰

The actual seduction of Sibylla by Willigis takes place in somewhat spectacular fashion, as Mann "turns the spotlight on a riot of elemental passion, both exciting and repulsive."¹¹ In telling of this night, which the narrator Clemens describes as "ein Gewöll von Liebe, Mord und Fleischesnot, daß Gott erbarm," (DE, p. 35) he spares us few details. The murder of the faithful dog Hanegiff symbolizes the step the twins are

⁹Hans Wysling, "Die Technik der Montage: Zu Thomas Manns 'Erwähltem,'" Euphorion, LVII (1963) (p. 296.) Here again one sees the underlying link with the voluntary isolation of Germany. // 18?

¹⁰In this context, Erich Kahler states the following: "Alle Sünde kommt aus jener christlichen Ursünde der Hoffart, der urmenschlichen Selbstüberhebung, und hier ganz besonders aus dem primär antichristlichen Adels- und Rassehochmut der ganz reinen Linie." Erich Kahler, "Die Erwählten," Neue Rundschau LXVII 3(1955) p. 300.

¹¹Hermann J. Weigand, "Thomas Mann's Gregorius", Germanic Review XXVII 2(1952) p. 24.

about to take outside the boundaries set by societal and religious laws. It is also the death of their innocence. The dog, their hitherto constant and beloved companion, had protested against the overturning of natural law, but Willigis refuses to listen to the warning Hanegiff represents. After killing the dog, he comes to Sibylla's bed with its blood still on him. It is the beginning of barbarism.

Similarly, Mann wrote in his diaries of 1934, "verhunzt wird alles, namentlich das 'Blut'. Es wird verhunzt in der idiotischen Rassentheorie und ebenso in dem Wahn, wo Blut fließe, da sei große Geschichte." (Welt, p. 59) Thus both the cult of race and the worship of militarism are seen as aberrations, even by the Mann of the early period of exile, whose books were still being published in Germany, and who still thought that perhaps a peaceful way might still be found to return to his homeland without abandoning his principles.

Like Sibylla and Willigis, Gregorius is the victim of pride and self-love. Throughout his childhood he leads the privileged life of a precocious intellect surrounded by lesser minds. His situation is parallel to that of his parents in that he too stands out from those around him, the difference being that he is outstanding by virtue of his talents and brains instead of as a result of birth. Mentally he is far ahead of his playmates and adoptive siblings, and is in fact an equal only of the monks who teach him. He masters everything they know with an almost annoying ease-nothing is too

difficult. Physically he is also depicted as being different from the other children. He is fine-boned and fine-featured, where all his companions are average peasants of the Middle Ages; coarse-featured and heavy-set (although he is equal in strength to any of them). They are shown as being brutish in intellect, comportment, and even speech. Gregor, by contrast, speaks like the monks, in refined tones, and is actually shown to be uncomfortable in the language and manners of his foster family.

In unconscious imitation of his parents, Gregor also has a 'twin', who is, however, almost a parody of the refinement and exaggerated daintiness of the older pair. His foster brother Flann is, instead of 'ebenbürtig', Gregor's exact opposite. He is physically "ein kurzhalziger Bursch, sehr stämmig, von breiter Brust, mit Kräften am ganzen Körper reichlich beladen." (DE, p. 91) He works with his hands instead of his mind, and he speaks in the dialect of the peasants. Flann has none of Gregor's learning, and evidently resents his foster-brother for precisely those abilities and characteristics which set Gregor apart from the other island dwellers. In fact, not only does Flann resent Gregor, he despises him: "Es war der Haß auf Grigoriß, seinen Bruder, der ihn beseelte und ihn jenem beim Spiele ebenbürtig machte." (DE, p. 93) It is the only time the word 'ebenbürtig' is used to describe the two boys. Flann's one obsessive desire is to beat his brother in physical combat; it is this which leads in-

directly to Gregor's discovery of his true identity, and his departure from the island.

The pattern set by the older pair, Sibylla and Willigis, is thus reversed in the early life of their son. Gregor grows up one of many children in a fisherman's hut, he is paired, and compared, with an adoptive brother who is his exact opposite in every way, and he, unlike his parents, puts his considerable intellect to good use, so that by the time he leaves his island home he is a highly educated young man. Pride, for him, comes from his sense of appartness. His self-love arises from looking into the eyes of his 'brother' and seeing his opposite instead of his equal. He feels isolated from all those around him: "Ihm war, als sei er nicht nur von den Seinen verschieden nach Stoff und Art, sondern passe auch zu den Mönchen und Mitscholaren im Grunde nicht...und sei ein heimlich Fremder so hier wie dort" (DE, p. 87). The willfullness which will lead him to militarism (the taking up of the profession of knighthood and the rejection of the peaceful monastic life) and incest is thus aquired early and unwittingly. The child Gregor is already an accomplished scholar, and appears ready and destined to lead a peaceful, studious life within the confines of the abbey, ie. the structure of the church. His future within the spiritual and religious sphere seems assured, and it is clear to everyone who knows him, up to and including the abbot himself, that this is the right course for him. He has a clear vocation for the priest-

hood, and yet he chooses to deny his own nature by rejecting the spiritual in favour of the secular; knighthood, chivalry, the militaristic, are to be the cornerstones of his new life. Despite all the most compelling and reasoned arguments of the old abbot, Gregorius departs the island to become a knight, thus denying his own nature and taking the first step towards his most unusual destiny. He desires to thus achieve the salvation of both himself and his unknown parents - by throwing himself into "Fahr und Nöte" (DE, p. 117), he believes he can achieve this goal, while at the same time satisfying his own worldly aspirations, since he is confident of his own abilities in knightly pursuits. "Wer immer in der Welt am besten zu Pferde sitzen, die Volte schwenken, leisieren und jambelieren mochte, -innerlich war ihm, als könnte er's gerade so gut, wenn nicht gar besser." (DE, p. 90)

The dichotomy of Gregor's priestly vocation and his knightly ambitions, which inevitably result in tragedy, seems an apt metaphor for the struggles of the German people in the early twentieth century. The development of militaristic nationalism in the country whose inhabitants were known as 'Ein Volk der Dichter und Denker' was supported by Mann during World War One, then later rejected. Like many Germans, he was proud of a "politisches Vakuum des Geistes in Deutschland" which inevitably led to a "Geringschätzung der Freiheit" which ended in slavery. (Welt, p. 295) Even Nietzsche had warned against what he called, "Die Niederlage, ja Exstirpation des

deutschen Geistes zu Gunsten des 'deutschen Reiches' "¹²; however, during the Weimar years many Germans firmly believed that only rearmament and a strong army would restore the country's prestige in the eyes of the world.¹³ The ultimate fulfillment of the dreams of German nationalists did indeed become reality during the Third Reich. This fulfillment was illusory, however, since it was based on conquest and human misery. Gregorius' contentment with his mother is likewise based on sand, since she is, in fact, his mother and therefore an inappropriate life-partner for him. Their happiness, which is founded on illusion, can only be false, and thus the reader is not surprised to learn that Gregor spends a portion of each day weeping secretly for his shameful birthright, nor that his first child is born with her head on the wrong way. The word 'Ausschweifungen', used by Mann in connection with the crimes of the Nazis,¹⁴ is literally appropriate to Gregorius' married life.

The combination of the militaristic and the poetic is always an uneasy one, with the potential for tragedy; in Der Erwählte, Mann attempts to demonstrate that this potential must not necessarily always be filled. His hero is not doomed, he is, conversely, destined to triumphantly overcome his sinful

¹²Friedrich Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen (Leipzig: 1899), p. 180.

¹³see, among others, Craig's Germany 1866-1945, and Taylor's The Course of German History.

¹⁴see p. 10.

past, with the help of a forgiving and benevolent deity. Thus, throughout all of his adventures, Gregor is able to retain a certain innocence and goodwill without which his ultimate fate might have been very different. When he eventually recognizes the truth of his relationship with Sibylla, Gregorius does not lose hope, because he believes that "Gottes Hand ist ausgestreckt...Ich lernte, daß er wahre Reue als Buße annimmt für alle Sünden. Sei Eure Seele noch so krank: wenn Euer Auge nur eine Stunde naß wird von Herzensreue...so seid Ihr gerettet." (DE, p. 179) Although Gregor has indeed committed a serious transgression of societal law, his sincere contrition and willingness to throw himself uninhibitedly into a severe penance ("was er wünschte, war, daß Gott ihn in eine Wüsterei sende, wo er büßen könnte bis in den Tod." [DE, p. 181]) are equally important. He tells Sibylla, "ich aber gehe und stelle mich Ihm zur Buße, und zwar zu einer außerordentlichen. Denn einen Menschen, dermaßen in Sünde getaucht wie mich gab es auf Erden nie oder ganz selten, -ich sage es ohne Überheblichkeit." (DE, p. 180) His guilt is extraordinary, unique in human experience. Mann described the defeat of Germany in 1945 in a remarkably similar fashion: "Ein Ruin nie gesehenen Ausmaßes, allumfassend, ein moralischer, geistiger, militärischer, ökonomischer Bankrott ohnegleichen." (Welt, p. 688) In both cases the misdeeds are inconceivable, the need for grace urgent. Der Erwählte describes the necessary celestial absolution with dignity and joy. "Das Buch vom 'Erwählten' gibt

die Botschaft von der Erlösung nicht mehr verhüllt" says Eberhard Hilscher, "sondern am Anfang und Ende herrscht Jubel." He also draws the connection with the Germany of the immediate post-war period:

Der Dichter trägt durch den Roman gleichnishaft seinem Lande den Frieden an. Obwohl ihm Haß und Unrecht zugefügt wurden, vergilt er mit einer Mitleidsempfindung, bringt die Kraft zur Versöhnung auf nach wenigen Jahren der Erniedrigung und Wiedergutmachung. Die neugestaltete Gregoriuslegende erwies sich also als ein durchaus aktuelles Buch, in dem freilich die Erhöhung nicht gar zu wörtlich genommen werden darf. Der Büßer vom Stein wird das geistliche Haupt der Welt, und eine geachtete Stellung im Reiche des Geistes soll sich unser Volk wieder erringen, so ist es gemeint. (Hilscher, p. 230)

This is not to imply that Germany's eventual fate will be the same, metaphorically speaking, as that of Gregor. Mann does not intend to elevate Germany, but rather to enable the country to finally become equal to other nations. On an abstract level, Gregor and Germany have equally endured a devastating catastrophe, for which each is, knowingly or unknowingly, responsible. The end result may not be the same, but the lesson learned should, according to Mann. However, Germany's fate is still open, there is no inescapable destiny. Similarly, Gregor is free, upon discovering the reality of his situation with Sibylla, to make his own decisions regarding his future, to, in fact, choose the very nature and severity of his own penance.

Chapter Three

Penance and Redemption

When Gregorius' true parentage is finally revealed and he is forced to admit that which the reader has long been aware of, namely that he is married to his own mother, he sums up his own unenviable situation in the following succinct lines: "Ich bin ein Mann...dessen Fleisch und Bein gänzlich aus Sünde besteht und dazu auch wieder in solche Sünde getaucht wurde, daß es das Ende des Denkens ist und der Welt Ende." (DE, p. 185) His only recourse is to perform a hard and bitter penance for the rest of his life in the hope that God's grace will extend even to him, the most miserable of sinners. His analysis of his situation makes that very clear. He continues: "Was ich zu erwandern suche, das ist ein härtester Aufenthalt, wo ich bis an meinem Tod mit der Not meines Leibes büßen kann um der Huld Gottes willen." (DE, p. 185) In the chapter entitled "Der Stein", we learn of the search for that place, and how he eventually finds it. Gregorius believes his sin to be greater than that of his mother because he is the man, and his penance must therefore be correspondingly harder. In marked contrast to the weakness and indecision displayed by his father Willigis when confronted with the possibility of discovery of his knowingly committed sins, Gregorius (at

approximately the same age) is immediately prepared to shoulder his burden. He does not need to seek out older and wiser counsel in order to extricate himself from an impossible situation. Instead, in a clever foreshadowing of his future as a wise and caring pope, he pronounces both judgement and penance on himself and Sibylla. He is unflinching and unsparing, especially of himself.

Gregorius displays his eagerness for just punishment in many ways. His abjectness, his desire to be humiliated, debased, and trodden upon are patently sincere. He accepts every sneer and word of abuse of the fisherman. His one overriding desire is to be taken to the rock the fisherman describes to him, and to spend the rest of his life there, alone and in humility and penance. When the fisherman's wife tries to show him kindness, he rejects it with horrified dignity. When she asks, "Wer weiß, ob du nicht etwa ein Heiliger bist?" (DE, p.187), Gregorius shudders. He truly believes that the rest of his miserable life will be spent in anguished penance on the rock. He believes this because he has come to the conclusion that "ich gehöre gar nicht der Menschheit zu!" (DE, p. 113) He cannot conceive of the possibility that the world is large enough to accomodate even the greatest of sinners, if they truly and honestly repent of their sins. He can only hope that God will forgive him in the next world, and he will eventually find a place in heaven. Until that time he must hide himself away in a lonely place, isolated from the rest of humanity,

since he can only serve as a corrupter of innocent purity if he remains among his fellow humans.

The sorrow with which Gregorius sets out on his lonely search for expiation of his sins may be seen as a reflection of Mann's view of the sorrows and suffering endured by his own country during the immediate post-war period. He had already watched the "beispiellose Isolierung des Landes"¹ during the Nazi years and was entirely in favour of the idea that Germany must pay for the atrocities for which it was responsible. During and immediately following the war Mann seemed to see little hope for his country. In Faustus grace seems impossible; Leverkühn sadly admits that "meine Sünde ist größer, denn daß sie mir könnte verziehen werden." (Faustus, p. 672) His unshriven descent into madness seems an apt metaphor for the spiraling insanity of the last months of Hitler's reign. For Leverkühn too appears no longer to belong to humanity, and he too has done terrible things. But Gregorius has sinned for love, he has defied the laws of nature unwittingly. His crimes are certainly of a high magnitude, but they have not twisted his soul in the dark and frightening way that Leverkühn been corrupted. Gregorius sets out of his own free will to seek grace while Leverkühn calmly accepts damnation. In Der Erwählte, grace becomes possible, but only through true repentance and hard penance. That this concept, that humanity

¹ Excerpt from Mann's diary, 12.07.34, from Welt, p. 64. He continues, "aber dies ist eine Vereinsamung ohne jede Ehre, irreführend, weil sie edles Leiden vorgespiegelt."

and more specifically Germany can find grace, is important to Mann is clear. Much of Der Erwählte consists of ironic assides, playful games, and lightheartedness, which the author himself freely admitted to, but on one point he was in dead earnest. "Ich mache viele Scherze, aber mit der Idee der Gnade ist es mir recht christlich ernst - sie beherrscht seit langem mein ganzes Denken urd Leben,"² wrote Mann in discussing the book, and he repeated this sentiment many times in discussing the "Büchlein". In Die Entstehung des Dr Faustus he states that "Extreme Sündhaftigkeit, extreme Büße, nur diese Abfolge schafft Heiligkeit;"³ it is clear that the idea had gained more credence with the passing of time. Mann firmly believed that Germany must also do penance, for the enormity of her crimes precluded any other possible solution to the problem.

Mann refers to Germans as "ein Volk, das sich nicht sehen lassen kann." (Welt, p. 690) This is a highly damning statement which clearly demonstrates the author's feelings of despair and revulsion. He turns away from Germany when he realizes that Germany has turned towards National Socialism and embraced it.⁴ From the beginning of World War Two onward,

²Thomas Mann to Albrecht Goes, 21.4.51. (All letters, unless specifically stated otherwise, are quoted from Hans Wysling ed., Thomas Mann, Teil III: 1944-1955. Reihe: Dichter über ihre Dichtungen. München, E. Heimeran, 1975)

³Thomas Mann, Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus: Roman eines Romans (Amsterdam: S. Fischer Verlag, 1966) p. 106.

⁴In "'German Culture is where I am': Thomas Mann in Exile," (Studies in Twentieth Century Literature 7.1 [1982]) Helmut Koopmann states, "(in) Bruder Hitler...Thomas Mann saw

the references to Germany become increasingly vitriolic in nature, so that Mann eventually reaches the point where he can refer to it as "ein Land, das mit Fleiß der Hölle zurennt." (Welt, p. 688) It is only when the country's collapse becomes inevitable that he begins to seriously look at the 'Sühne' which must come.

In his series of wartime broadcasts to the German people, Mann often speaks of the path Germany must follow to salvation. He is adamant that "ihr müßt euch reinigen" and that "die Sühne ...muß euer eigenstes Werk sein." (Welt, p. 518) Again and again he speaks of the "Schuld" and the "Untaten" of the German people. This is Mann at his most condemning. He demands a "volle und rückhaltlose Kenntnissnahme entsetzlicher Verbrechen...Es muß...in euer Gewissen eindringen." (Welt, p.598) The acknowledgement is all-important since, as Gregorius admits, "wir sollen ausdrücklich sprechen und die Dinge bei Namen nennen zu unsrer Kasteiung. Denn die Wahrheit sagen, das ist Kasteiung" (DE, p. 177). Mann longs for the day when the German people will also feel mortified by their acts, and thus take the first step on the long road to salvation.

Gregorius meanwhile has already traveled some distance down that road. He has now assumed the status of a pariah, an outcast, separated by the invisible boundaries of his trans-

clearly that the Germans had identified themselves with Hitler and that Hitler had identified himself with Germany...Mann turned away from Germany and the Germans at this time." (p. 13)

gressions from his fellow humans. Like the "Volk, das sich nicht sehen lassen kann," he must regain his humanity and atone for his sins before being readmitted to society. The desolate rock is to be his home for 17 years. In the chapter entitled "Die Buße," the years of his penance are described, although we never learn what, if anything, is going on in his head during that time. Mann spends some time justifying the survival of his hero, since the possibility that God may have chosen him for a higher destiny does not preclude his dying of starvation. So he is fortified by the "Milch der Erde", which in true fairy-tale fashion still springs out of this isolated corner of the earth as a remnant of earlier times when such miracles might have been commonplace. As expected in such a fantastic situation, this nourishment does not prevent his gradual metamorphosis into a more primitive creature, closer both literally and figuratively to the earth, although still capable of human speech and suffering. This milk also represents Gregorius' first glimmer of hope since the discovery of the true nature of his marriage:

Zum ersten Mal (kam Gregorius) die hoffende, ja beseligende Ahnung an, daß Gott seine Buße nicht nur annähme, sondern ihn auch nicht an ihr zugrunde gehen lassen wollte, vielmehr es mit ihm, wenn er seine Eltern und sich selbst durch härteste Reue entschönt haben würde, noch irgendwie gnadenvoll vorhabe" (DE, p. 192).

This inkling that he might, after due suffering, come into the light of God's favour is doubtless as indispensable to his

psychological survival as the "Milch der Erde" is to his physical well-being.

The punishment that Gregorius endures on the rock is entirely unbelievable in normal human terms. Like the earth's milk which serves as nourishment, the seventeen long years spent chained to a tiny rock exposed to the raging seas and bitter winds, and the physical transformation from handsome young man into "mosiges Wesen" are hardly meant to be taken literally. Mann is describing a metaphor for the unthinkable enormity of Gregorius' suffering. Just as we cannot imagine the terribleness of his sins, since they are far greater than those committed by any normal human being, so is his penance also beyond our understanding. Sibylla expresses this awe when she exclaims, "Wie schonungslos mußt du gebüßt haben, daß Gott dich so über uns Sünder alle erhöhte!" (DE, p. 257) The need for the enormity of the grace accorded Gregorius is created by the enormity of his sins and subsequent penance. He is unique, set apart from others, from the moment of his conception, even before his birth. The possibility never exists for him to blend into society, to be unexceptional, ordinary. Hugo Kuhn says of him; "die Sühne selbst trägt ja bei ihm schon das Zeichen der Ausnahme, und Ausnahme ist schon Erwählung. Ihre Sünde macht die drei, Bruder und Schwester und Kind, in der Welt 'unmöglich'...ihr Abgrund bedeutet geradezu die Erwäh-

lung."⁵ The same argument could also be used to describe Germany, since Mann felt that Germany's belief in her own uniqueness had led to dangerous levels of isolationism:

Der deutsche Freiheitsbegriff war immer nur nach außen gerichtet; er meinte das Recht, deutsch zu sein, nur deutsch und nichts anderes, nichts darüber hinaus; er war ein protestierender Begriff selbstzentrierter Abwehr gegen alles, was den völkischen Egoismus bedingen und einschränken, ihn zähmen und zum Dienst an der Gemeinschaft, zum Menschheitsdienst einhalten wollte. (Welt, p. 611f)

Only by balancing the severity of the penance with the enormity of the sin is the end result of Gregorius' elevation to the highest seat of authority in all Christendom justified. Even so it is far from being the inevitable conclusion to the story, and is a clear indication of God's supreme grace. Fürstenheim wrote; "Gregor has challenged God by demonstrating that he is not afraid of death. God does not accept the challenge."⁶ Fürstenheim contends that the true message behind the book is that, as Clemens points out at the very end, forgiveness cannot be taken for granted - it is truly an act of grace. (Fürstenheim. p. 60) Gregorius, according to him, must learn to love others above himself before he can leave the rock. "Gregor's chain falls off his body, that is to say his self, shrinks away; he becomes free as soon as his whole being is filled with the love of others." (Fürstenheim, p. 63)

⁵Hartmann von Aue, Gregorius der gute Sünder (Stuttgart: Reklam, 1965. Afterword by Hugo Kuhn) p. 241.

⁶E.G. Fürstenheim, "The Place of Der Erwählte in the Work of Thomas Mann" Modern Languages Review LI 1, (1956) p. 62.

Eventually Gregorius' time of sorrow must come to an end, and when it does, it is, inevitably, heralded spectacularly by the Lamb of God, who appears to two prominent citizens of Rome in two separate visions, and assures them that God has chosen his new Pope. The Lamb declares in his soft, beguiling voice that "alle Erwählung ist schwer zu fassen und der Vernunft nicht zugänglich." (DE, p. 229) For Gregorius this is certainly true, since he had no inkling of eventual grace when he first came to the rock. Fürstenheim describes his transformation as follows: "No longer self-centered he can appreciate other human beings; gradually realizing his own guilt he learns to forgive the failings of others; longing for human companionship in his exile he comes to love men in a way which would have been impossible for him had he remained in the world." (Fürstenheim, p. 62) Gregorius is now ready to take on his exalted task, and wastes little time in protestations of unworthiness once the call has come. Upon accepting his newly appointed role he explains his lack of hesitancy thus: "Kein Platz war für mich unter den Menschen. Weist mir Gottes unergründliche Gnade den Platz an über ihnen allen, so will ich ihn einnehmen voller Dank, daß ich binden und lösen kann." (DE, p. 229) Here, once again, he affirms his acceptance of his role in life; he knows that he could never expect to simply become an ordinary citizen when his years of penance come to an end. The dictates of his exceptional nature must once again be observed; his fate remains unique. He takes on

his new burden with little humility, but rather with the old confidence of the "festhaltende Hand" combined with the experience and wisdom gained from the long hard years of penance.

As soon as he becomes Pope he exonerates the old fisherman and his wife from any guilt they may have been nourishing all the years of his exile. The Roman dignitaries already sense that he will be a merciful Pope, and comfort the miserable and repentant fisherman by explaining, "er wird dich lösen und dir verzeihen, daß du ihn nicht erkanntest, und, wie es einst geschah, zwar nach seinem Willen tatest, aber mit Haß. Es ist nicht zu spät zur Abbitte." (DE, p. 220) Indeed the principle message of this novel seems to be just that; it is never too late to honestly and sincerely repent for any evil one may have committed.

The most important thing, for Gregorius as for Mann, is grace. Only through grace is salvation possible, and it must always be hard earned. On the subject of Gregorius, Mann later wrote: "Sein Wille zur radikalen Buße schien mir das Entscheidende, und die Gnade erkennt diesen Willen an, indem sie den tief Erniedrigten wieder zum Menschen, ja über alle Menschen erhebt."⁷ Ultimately, it is not the sins one has committed which are important. If one shows true remorse, then, like Gregorius, one may be elevated eventually into a state of grace. The greater the sins, the more extreme the penance -

⁷"Bemerkungen," p. 301. In his letters Mann repeats this statement several times.

and the more extreme the penance, the greater the eventual elevation.

It was not only in his fiction, however, that Mann propounded the view that grace could only be achieved after due penance for sins committed. There is a definite parallel between his fictional themes and the views he expressed both publicly and privately on the future of Germany and the demise of Hitler. His judgements were harsh, and the criticism leveled at him by members of the exiled German intelligentsia with differing opinions was correspondingly acrimonious.

In the last years of World War Two, as it became increasingly obvious that Germany could not hope to win, Thomas Mann, like many other exiled German intellectuals, agonized both privately and publicly over the eventual fate of his country. As one of the few well-known and widely respected public figures among the exiles in America, he was under especial pressure from all sides. It is clear from the well-publicized conflict between him and Bertolt Brecht that Mann was no longer concerned with separating Germany into two camps; the 'good' and the 'evil' Germany had finally ceased to exist for him. Already, in his 1940 essay "Zu Wagners Verteidigung", Mann had admitted the indivisibility of Hitler and the German people:

Der Nationalsozialismus muß geschlagen werden, das heißt praktisch heute leider: Deutschland muß geschlagen werden...auch geistig. Denn es gibt nur ein Deutschland, nicht zwei, nicht ein böses und ein gutes, und Hitler...ist kein Zufall: nie wäre er möglich geworden ohne psychologische Vorbe-

dingungen, die tiefer zu suchen sind, als in Inflation, Arbeitslosigkeit, kapitalistischer Spekulation und politischer Intrige.⁸

This period (1939-40) marks a radical change in Mann's views on the subject, since he had previously steadfastly upheld the belief that one could in fact differentiate between the two Germanys. He was now fully occupied with the problem of what should become of the soon-to-be-defeated country, at the same time as his literary work was also focused on the question of Germany and the enormous task of chronicling her decline. Mann now believes Germany to be "ein heillos verirrtes Land." (Welt, p. 61) This is a particularly dark time in terms of Mann's identification with German culture. He has finally come face to face with "...die Schattenseiten der glänzenden deutschen Tradition," (Koopmann, p. 88) and is subsequently demoralized. How to reconcile himself with the unrelenting blackness with which he is now faced? The answer for him seems to lie with the concept of "Sühne"; the German people has collectively committed horrendous crimes, and therefore must be seen to expiate those sins collectively. It is precisely here that Mann's views clashed with those of Bertolt Brecht, the committed Marxist. When a group of exiles wrote a Manifesto, in which a clear line was drawn dividing Hitler from "das deutsche Volk", Mann first signed, then subsequently distanced himself firmly from both the Manifesto

⁸Thomas Mann, "Zu Wagners Verteidigung". Leiden und Größe der Meister (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1982) p. 822.

and the ideas expressed in it.⁹ According to Bertold Brecht, in removing his name from the Manifesto Mann declared that "nur eine echte und aufrichtige Umkehr Deutschland von den Mächten des Übels säubern kann..." (Lehnert, p. 252) This is hardly a surprising comment, since Mann repeatedly expressed his feelings towards Germany using extremely strong language during the period up to 1945. He variously described Germany's "Amokläufertum", her "Quertreiberei", and the "Bluttaten" of an "unglückliches, vereinsames, irres Volk." (Welt, pp. 35, 24, 63, 46) He now believes National Socialism to be "die virulente Entartungsform von Ideen...die schon dem alten, guten Deutschland der Kultur und Bildung keineswegs fremd waren..." (Koopmann, p. 88) As a result, Mann is no longer willing to compromise in his belief that guilt must be admitted, and after sincere repentance penance must be done. Failing repentance, he is not above inflicting a severe but just punishment on the country of his birth. For by this point in time Mann has no illusions left about the cultured and civilized world, the world of the Nineteenth Century German bourgeoisie he had grown up in. 'Die deutsche Schuld' is an accepted phrase in his mind.

Just four days after the German surrender to the Allies in May, 1945, Thomas Mann addressed the German people through

⁹Herbert Lehnert, "Bert Brecht und Thomas Mann im Streit über Deutschland," Stationen der Thomas Mann Forschung. Aufsätze seit 1970 (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985) p. 254.

the auspices of the BBC once again. In his speech he expresses the mixture of joy and sorrow which must inevitably be felt by any German exile at the news. While rejoicing in the defeat of Hitler and the Nazis, he is nevertheless horrified by the suffering and degradation to which Germany will inevitably be subjected: "Das Herz krampft sich in (dem Deutschen) zusammen bei dem Gedanken ...durch welche dunkle Tage, welche Jahre der Unmacht zur Selbstbesinnung und abbüßender Erniedrigung es nach allem, was es schon gelitten hat, wird gehen müssen." (Welt, p. 616) However, he had always acknowledged the inevitability of such a defeat, and is now eager to look ahead to a future in which Germany will take her place among the nations of the world without shame. He declares, "Es ist trotz allem eine große Stunde, die Rückkehr Deutschlands zur Menschlichkeit," (Welt, p.617) and ends with the hope that his country will once again become a place where freedom of the spirit is cherished. As Henry Hatfield has pointed out, "Mann's dialectics allow the possibility of a 'hope beyond hopelessness, the transcendence of despair.'" ¹⁰ He believes the defeat of the Third Reich to be an unqualified necessity, but does not condone the absolution of those who participated, whether actively or passively, in its rise to power.

In a speech given a few short weeks after the abovementioned radio broadcast (29/05/1945), Mann elaborates once

¹⁰Henry Hatfield, "Death in the late works of Thomas Mann", Germanic Review, December 1959, XXXIV, p. 285.

again on his views of Germany. But this time he is addressing the victorious Americans in Washington, and it is his task to attempt to explain something of the German national character to an audience for whom his words must sound both strange and somewhat incomprehensible. The speech is called "Deutschland und die Deutschen." In it Mann attempts to come to terms with what he calls "das deutsche Rätsel": How is it possible that a people who have produced so much that is good and beautiful could also be responsible for Auschwitz? The subject is a disturbing one, and extremely complex, but Mann feels it to be essential that it be discussed. (Welt, p. 702) In many ways this essay can be seen as a kind of 'progress report' on his work on the novel Faustus, which was his main preoccupation at the time. All the main themes are there; music, Martin Luther and his fundamentally undemocratic vision of freedom, the daemonic, and their lasting impact on the German psyche.

Another theme which relates both to Faustus and, in real practical terms to the Germany of 1945, is the question of grace, and how it may be achieved. Mann raises the topic in the very first paragraph when he states "Gnade aber ist immer erstaunlich und unerwartet. Wer sie erfährt, glaubt zu träumen." (Welt, p. 701) He is, however, unready to proclaim a state of grace for the German people; instead he is looking for the roots of their problems, and the path to redemption in the eyes of the world.

In this article Mann does not attempt to find excuses for the Germans; he is interested in creating an atmosphere of understanding. Nazism did not grow in a vacuum, its roots are long and deep. The very nature of the German soul, according to Mann, is such that, while on the one hand it is capable of producing music of great and enduring beauty, it can also be twisted into strange and evil shapes. Sontheimer claims that the essay "ist eine Frucht jahrzehntenlangen Nachdenkens über das Wesen des Deutschtums, und damit auch über sich selbst," which clearly shows the extent to which Mann has indeed distanced himself from Germany. (Sontheimer, p. 34) This does not mean that Mann has disassociated himself from the Germans; he has not. Rather, he has taken the necessary step backwards to enable him to observe a series of events with a critical eye.¹¹ He strongly repudiates the idea, which he himself once held dear, of a Germany divided into 'good' and 'bad', instead he now believes that "das böse Deutschland, das ist...das fehlgegangene gute, das gute im Unglück, in Schuld und Untergang". He includes himself in this confession: "Ich habe es auch in mir, ich habe es alles am eigenen Leibe erfahren." (Welt, p. 721) He ends the speech by subtly reminding his audience of the common humanity shared by Germans and

¹¹Koopmann points out "an alienation from what Mann had previously termed 'German culture' or his Heimat", beginning much earlier, and growing more pronounced with the progression of events in Central Europe.

Americans alike: "Der Gnade, deren Deutschland so dringend bedarf, bedürfen wir alle." (Welt, p. 723)

The question of 'Gnade' was much more than a theoretical problem to be dealt with in the writing of Faustus. It was a real issue in 1945, one which German exiles were especially concerned with. In an open letter from Mann to Walter von Molo written in September, 1945, the subject is broached once again. Drawing a clear parallel between Faust and Germany, Mann states:

...fern sei uns die Vorstellung, als habe Deutschland nun endgültig der Teufel geholt. Die Gnade ist höher als jeder Blutsbrief. Ich glaube an sie, und ich glaube an Deutschlands Zukunft...(Welt, p. 735)

It is clear from this that Mann is firm in his conviction that Germany will ultimately find her place among the nations of the world. Nazism and Germany are not synonymous, the fate of Germany will not be synonymous with that of Leverkühn.

The main character of Faustus believes himself to be beyond God's mercy. As his pride does not allow him to even make the attempt, he cannot be helped. However, that fact has already been made painfully clear to him in his conversation with the devil. In a burst of unparalleled cynicism, Leverkühn explains that he is not beyond salvation if he, like Cain before him, is convinced that his sins are too great to be forgiven, since it is only those who have committed the greatest sins who are of real interest to God. "Eine Sündhaftigkeit, so heillos, daß sie ihren Mann von Grund aus am Heile verzweifeln läßt, ist der wahrhaft theologische Weg zum Heil."

But the devil is ahead of him - his answer leaves little doubt but that salvation is quite impossible: "Es ist dir nicht klar, daß die bewußte Spekulation auf den Reiz, den große Schuld auf die Güte ausübt, dieser den Gnadenakt nun schon aufs äußerste unmöglich macht?" (Faustus, p. 333) The life of Leverkühn serves as a great, intricately woven, and sometimes breathtaking lecture on the susceptibility of humanity to the lure of power. Leverkühn is proud beyond measure, he is also a truly cold man who is incapable of loving humanity. His life serves as a terrible warning - without humanity, without humility, we too could end up insane, or damned.

Gregorius, by contrast, is to be saved; it is his destiny to bathe in the pure light of God's grace. He is the one who, unlike Leverkühn, believes "er habe es zu grob gemacht, und selbst die unendliche Güte reiche nicht aus, seine Sünde zu verzeihen." (Faustus, p. 333) He shows the true remorse which is the first step towards salvation, but he is, more importantly, entirely without guile or pretense. Even Mann's Gregorius, far more sophisticated than his medieval prototype, is entirely incapable of the kind of theoretical theological gymnastics that are second nature to the young Leverkühn. As soon as Gregor repents his salvation is ensured, although it is the long years of penance which will result finally in his elevation to the papal chair.

In 1945, Thomas Mann wrote his famous open letter to Walther von Molo entitled "Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland

zurückkehre." At the time he was still living in America, working on Faustus, and involved in various political groups of German speaking exiles. In the letter he attempts to explain his reasons for not returning to Germany, despite the frequent and sometimes aggressively challenging attempts to induce him to change his mind. Fundamentally, Mann's opinion of books printed in the Nazi period, his belief that "ein Geruch von Blut und Schande" clings to such books, applies also to his opinion of the people who stayed, who made no protest, the "Mitmacher" who ended up forming the backbone of the regime by virtue of their silence. His longstanding disagreement with Brecht concerning the eventual fate of the German nation testifies to his ambivalence and tendency to dehumanize a group of people, while unable to condemn an individual when he has knowledge of his suffering.¹²

In the letter to von Molo, Mann does not attempt to gloss over his years of exile; instead he speaks frankly of his sorrow, his bewilderment, his loneliness. At the same time he realizes that for him, as for so many others, the world he left behind is no longer his own. "Deutschland ist mir in all diesen Jahren doch recht fremd geworden. Es ist...ein beängstigendes Land." (Welt, p. 731) While he recognizes that not all Germans supported Hitler, that the equation Germany=Hitler is

¹²Fürstenheim says: "Es erscheint ihm (Mann) notwendig und gerecht, daß Deutschland nach der Kapitulation durch lange Jahre des Leidens und der Not hindurchgeht." Statements by Mann himself tend to substantiate such a claim.

entirely invalid (he reiterated his belief in the fallaciousness of that argument many times), an uneasiness remains in his relations with the country. He feels it is too soon to return, that a healing process must first take place, a process arising from within the country, not imposed by the self-righteousness of returning exiles. He ends his letter with the hope that "... Deutschland treibe Dünkel und Haß aus seinem Blut, es entdecke seine Liebe wieder, und es wird geliebt werden." (Welt, p. 736)

Mann's concern for Germany's future well-being is inextricably linked to his belief in the imperative need for co-operation among all the nations of Europe. This, he felt, was the only hope of a lasting peace. His vision of unity among Europeans found a voice not just in his political writings, but also in the sphere of literature. On one level, that of language, the novel Der Erwählte is nothing less than an extended metaphor for the unity Mann believed in so strongly as the only viable future for a beleaguered Germany. The novel is, in fact, an incarnation of his vision within the sphere of literature, incorporating as it does, elements of medieval European literature, and elements of several European languages.

Chapter Four

Sprache

When Gregorius finally triumphs over all his troubles and becomes Pope, the bells of Rome peal out with joy, perhaps with too much enthusiasm for the city's inhabitants, who are relieved when the new Pope is crowned and the pealing of the bells finally stops. Gregorius himself is also filled with joy, since his "Erwählung" means that his sins are fully expiated; he is for the first time in his life a man cleansed of all evil, a man who has endured a great deal in order to be free of a burden he was only partly responsible for creating. Initially he can hardly believe his time of penance is over; he warns his rescuers "stört nicht die Buße von Gottes größtem Sünder!" (DE, p. 226) The sincerity of this exclamation may be seen to be somewhat dubious, since it is certainly true that he need only have remained silent in order to have spent the rest of his life on earth in penance on the rock. But Gregorius himself says later, "alles hat seine Grenzen. Die Welt ist endlich;" (DE, p. 259) even penance has a time limit, if the sinner is truly repentant - and we have seen that Gregorius is. However, the hardly credible appearance of the "Milch der Erde" has already given the starving sinner an inkling that he is not destined to die on the rock. Is it

possible to actually feel God's forgiveness, perhaps as a palpable lightening of guilt, or by whatever other means? Mann gives us very little idea of what goes on in Gregorius' head during his seventeen years spent on the rock. It is entirely possible that Gregorius saw the return of the fisherman, this time in the company of the two Romans, as a sign from God that his time of penance is over, that he has finally achieved a state of grace.

Once his descent from the rock is accomplished, Gregorius' new position - in the context of the medieval period - is that of the ruler of all Christendom, and therefore of most of the known world. He represents unity, humanity, peace, and wisdom. Mann goes to great lengths to show that the new Pope is fully qualified for such heavy responsibility by dedicating a full chapter, "Der sehr große Papst", to describing the great and wise deeds performed by the new pontiff. Here Mann has borrowed heavily from the Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter of Ferdinand Gregorivus,¹ which gives many details of the actions and judgements of the popes of the period: "Our Pope has to his credit a variety of achievements distributed among successors to Saint Peter over a great many centuries." (Weigand, p. 28) Almost all the good works and wise judgements for which Gregorius is acclaimed

¹It was Hermann J. Weigand who first brought this reference to general attention in his extremely useful work, "Thomas Mann's Gregorius", in Germanic Review, February and April 1952, vol. XXVII.

during his tenure of office are drawn from this source; they are neither Mann's invention, nor the work of an actual individual, but rather a conglomeration of the works of many. The meticulous task of piecing together the relevant events of so many lives, into a harmoniously balanced and readable text, is one which Thomas Mann evidently carried out with much care. There is a definite emphasis on proving the fitness of Gregorius for his post; Mann is concerned that his readers should indeed believe that "Gregorius vom Steine erwies sich binnen kurzem als ein sehr großer Papst." (DE, p. 238) In condensing so much wealth of wisdom, and also so much adulation on the part of cheering crowds (during the papal procession) into the life of one pope, Mann clearly wishes to emphasize the holiness and 'chosen position' of his hero. After describing the terribleness of Gregorius' sin, his horrendous penance which no ordinary mortal could endure, it is necessary that both his elevation to grace and his qualifications for the position he now holds be without reproach. He has been raised from a state in which he is little better than an animal to become the spiritual leader of the Christian world. The absoluteness of this reversal must of necessity be matched with an equal ability to fulfill the requirements of his new position. Mann attributes to him the good deeds of a long succession of popes, and thereby proves that he is worthy, he is even glorious, his justice and wisdom are legendary, and his triumph is absolute. Thus, Gregorius is redeemed in his

own eyes, and in the eyes of the world. This redemption forms an important part of the reason for Mann's having chosen the Gregorius legend for his subject matter, since not only remorse and salvation, but also worldly equality are intrinsic to his hopes for Germany in the future. Germany must once again be counted among the civilized nations of the world. Gregor's success is a useful, if slightly exaggerated metaphor for this recognition.

Gregorius is something more than a great pope, though; he is also, and more importantly, a symbol of unity. As pope he represents the unity of man and God, of the profane and the sacred. He also symbolizes the (perhaps theoretical) unity of the Christian world. Christians of whatever nationality, speaking a wide variety of languages, and often at war with each other, were unified during the medieval period only in their periodic attacks on all non-Christians - that is to say, of course, while engaged upon the Crusades. This unity is symbolized by Gregorius' transformation from "ein Ding, ein Wesen, eine lebendige Creatur..." (DE, p. 224), which horrifies and disgusts at least one of his rescuers, into the Fisher of Christ. The 'sea change' comes about through the partaking of human, 'adult' food and drink, (Weigand, p. 26) in this instance bread and wine. Mann himself admits that, "mit 'Brot und Wein' ist natürlich auf das Sakrament angespielt."² By symbolically performing the ritual of the

²27.02.1951. to H.T. Lowe-Porter.

sacrament, and thus figuratively partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ, Gregorius regains his human form within a short period of time, and is ready to put on the mantle of Christ's earthly representative. He also represents the longing of the sinner to reconcile with the purity of the church. Gregorius has successfully overcome his own sinful past and has become a living symbol of the potential of each and every human being to achieve grace.

If we accept the premise that Gregorius' story is, for Thomas Mann, somehow connected to the history of Germany in the first half of this century, then this sudden elevation to the throne of Saint Peter must also be significant for him. Whatever that significance is, it must be seen within the context of a different thread of unity, one which is introduced in the opening chapter and runs throughout the entire novel. That is, of course, the theme of language, or "Sprache", which is first mentioned by Clemens in partial explanation of his literary style:

Aber es ist ganz ungewiß, in welcher Sprache ich schreibe, ob lateinisch, französisch, deutsch oder angelsächsisch, und es ist auch das gleiche, denn schreibe ich etwa auf thiudisc, wie die Helvetien bewohnenden Alamannen reden, so steht morgen Britisch auf dem Papier, und es ist britunsches Buch, das ich geschrieben habe. Keineswegs behaupte ich, daß ich die Sprachen alle beherrsche aber sie rinnen mir ineinander in meinem Schreiben und werden eins, nämlich Sprache. Denn so verhält es sich, daß der Geist der Erzählung ein bis zur Abstraktheit ungebundener Geist ist, dessen Mittel die Sprache selbst ist, welche sich als absolut setzt und nicht viel nach Idiomen und sprachlichen Landesgöttern fragt...Gott ist Geist, und über den

Sprachen ist die Sprache (DE, p. 12f; my underlining).

Clemens goes on to prove himself right many times in his narration. There are numerous examples in the text of one language slipping effortlessly into another, as in the following line: "Es war ein Fürst, nommé Grimald," and we can hardly imagine why they should be written otherwise. As in Doktor Faustus some conversations are deliberately structured with the purpose of awakening an echo of Martin Luther's voice and time, so here Mann plays with Middle High German and Old French words and phraseology in order to add a layer of medievalism and internationalism to the text. Not only that, he also uses elements of modern German dialect, English, Latin, and modern French in order to further complicate the matter. It is his stated intention to create a "recht unhistorischen üernationalen, mittelhochdeutsch-altfranzösischen Zeit- und Sprachraum"³ and this he does with great success. The fishermen's dialect, which is first used when they are introduced after having made their discovery of the casket containing the child Gregor, is an excellent example of this clever mixture:

Fische? Nee, dat's nu'n littel bit tau veel verlangt. Wi könn von Lucke seggen, dat uns de Fisch nicht hebben, denn dat was Euch 'ne Freise, Herr, gar keen Einbildung von. Da muß immer een Mann die Seen drauwen aus dem Boot... (DE, p. 73).

³03.09.1950, to L. Lewisohn.

This "dreist erfundener Dialekt aus Englisch, Französisch und Plattdeutsch"⁴ shows how the three can be mixed together in a seemingly effortless fashion without the meaning getting lost in the process. We can only laugh when the Abbot, faced with this dialogue, thinks, "Wie sie reden... höchst ordinär." (DE, p.73)

The critic Hermann J. Weigand finds precisely the usage of anglicisms the least successful element in the tale, taking offence at such terms as "smoothlich", "boasten und swaggern", and "slacklich." (Weigand, p. 97) This leads him to complain that "Thomas Mann's 'Sprachgefühl' is slipping." (Weigand, p. 92) It is certainly true that words like 'twelf', 'Fiddel-Faddel', 'derrière', etc., occur occasionally in the text, but their usage is deliberate on the part of the author. We have already seen that the intention was clear from the very beginning to do exactly that about which Weigand is complaining; to blur the distinctions between language boundaries, to, in fact, rise above linguistic differences in order to emphasize the similarities between people rather than their differences. Using his native Plattdeutsch as a foundation, Mann builds a new pan-linguistic communicative form which incorporates other languages, as well as multiple levels within his own language, from the educated and eloquent musings of the Abbott down to the fishermen's dialect. In so doing he insinuates the advantages of a broadening of one's

⁴10.09.1949, to Erich von Kahler.

linguistic horizons to incorporate elements of other, 'foreign' languages. By extension, he thus also condones the concurrent widening of cultural confines. The idea of inclusion, of moving from the local and specific to the all-encompassing general or universal is in fact true cosmopolitanism. Mann's ultimate goal seems to be the creation of 'unity through diversity'. By choosing the medieval period as a setting for this tale, he may perhaps have, at least subconsciously, remembered the National Socialist myth of the 'golden age' of German nationalism in the Middle Ages, the source of much of their cultural propaganda. His work clearly demonstrates that the Middle Ages were, in fact, a cosmopolitan era, when ideas were freely exchanged, and nationalism had not yet become a definitive force in Western society. As Karl Stackmann points out, the ultimate effect of this wonderful melange of so many different languages and dialects is precisely that wished by Mann; the individual languages lose their importance, are overwhelmed simply by the very idea of language itself, of the human potential to communicate, our single most important ability. (Stackmann, p. 238)

Hans Wysling also points out the importance of 'Sprache', and Mann's overt political use of it in the novel: "...so wird im 'Erwähltem' eine Übersprache montiert, welche in ihrem raschen Wechsel zwischen den Idiomen eine Möglichkeit der Völkerverständigung anzeigen soll." He also states "diese

Sprache sollte ein menschliches Zusammenleben begründen."⁵
Taken to its logical conclusion, Mann's theory would, as Wysling points out, lead to a complete and utopic overhaul of society, an end to nationalistic prejudice and international conflict, "eine Neubegründung des Menschen aus der Sprache."
(Wysling, p. 309)

The story of Gregorius has multi-cultural, pan-European roots, so it is only logical that the language in which it is written should reflect the same dexterous flexibility. And Thomas Mann, at this point in his life, is interested precisely in that which the 'Sprache' of Der Erwählte attempts to emphasize; in internationalism. Mann's fascination with the 'international' roots of his 'fromme Legende' combine in Der Erwählte with this newly developed internationalism of speech. In 1948 he wrote, "das Schweben der Sprache im Uebernationalen hat für mich einen besonderen Reiz..."⁶ He is concerned here that the unusual and sometimes startling language juxtapositions be both evocative and comical. Nothing in this is to be taken too seriously, at least not on the surface.

Before beginning work on Der Erwählte, at the beginning of 1948 in fact, Mann was already mentioning his desire to

⁵Hans Wysling, "Die Technik der Montage; zu Thomas Manns 'Erwähltem'", Euphorium, 1963, vol. LVII, pp. 307, 308.

⁶27.05.1948, to Agnes E. Meyer. Also 30.05.1948, to Ida Herz: "(Ich) habe meinen Spaß daran, die Sprache in über-nationaler Schweben zu halten...Mir scheint, über den Sprachen steht die Sprache."

create "ein internationales...Mittelalter."⁷ Hartmann's seemingly straightforward tale proved to be the perfect vehicle. When first researching the legend of Gregorius, it took Mann very little time to discover its pan-European roots. "Die Legende ist sehr oft erzählt worden, auch in alt-französischer und alt-englischer Sprache."⁸ He became fascinated with this multi-cultural element, having discovered that even a Coptic version of the legend existed.⁹ "Schritt für Schritt ließen mich meine Nachforschungen ihrer historischen Hintergründe und ihre weitverzweigten, über ganz Europa bis nach Rußland hinreichenden Beziehungen, Verwandtschaften und Abwandlungen gewahr werden." ("Bemerkungen", p. 298) Time after time, in letters to friends and colleagues, Mann reiterates his fascination with these same elements; language, internationalism, multiculturalism. The time is the postwar period, he is concerned with the fate of his homeland, Germany, and indeed with the fate of all Europe. Having just completed Doktor Faustus, a novel verging on the apocalyptic in its portrayal of Germany's descent into barbarism and madness, he is looking for some relief, something positive, both in terms

⁷13.02.1948, to Samuel Singer.

⁸13.09.1948, to P. Sack.

⁹30.05.1948, to Ida Herz. In his "Bemerkungen zu dem Roman Der Erwählte", Mann also mentions the possibility of a Serbian and a Bulgarian version; also that the legend traces its roots back to the story of Judas Ischariot (p. 299).

of his work and in the world around him.¹⁰ Mann is convinced that Germany can and must find a place among the nations of the world. When Gregorius cries out in his anguish, "Ich bin ein Auswurf... Ich bin der Sünde greuliche Frucht!" (DE, p. 113), he speaks not just for himself, but also for the man who has always felt his ties to the country, the language, and above all the culture of his native Germany to be the most important influences in his life; a man who has seen that country commit itself to a barbaric course of action, and find defeat and degradation the eventual inevitable consequences of that action. His only recourse now is to attempt to formulate a vision of a newly purified Germany within a strong and unified Europe. Thus far in European history, Germany had tended to either dominate her neighbours, or conversely to be so disunited as to present little threat to those around her. In 1934 Mann had reported, without comment, that the 'Times' had called Germany "kein europäisches Land mehr." (Welt, p. 60) After his involuntary exile Mann was concerned with the problem of how one could bring Germany back to Europe.¹¹ His impassioned pleas to the German people, in his BBC radio broadcasts, demonstrate his unswerving hatred of everything that Nazi Germany represents, at the same time as he is

¹⁰Mann speaks repeatedly of this need; for example in a letter to Agnes E. Meyer: "Recht ernst kann ich nach dem Faustus nichts mehr nehmen" (09.09.1949).

¹¹Welt, p. 62, also p. 521, where Mann expresses his hope that the Germans will "Platz einnehmen...in der Gemeinschaft der Völker."

encouraging them not to despair. He assured his listeners that "das deutsche Volk muß und wird sein 'Platz an der Sonne' einnehmen in der Welt, die kommen soll." (Welt, p. 481) But what, for Mann, did that future world look like? If he saw the immediate post-war future as a Utopia of peace and goodwill, he was surely disappointed and disillusioned by the reality he experienced. He did firmly believe that,

Deutschland wird gereinigt werden von allem, was mit dem Unflat des Hitlerismus auch nur zu tun gehabt und was ihn möglich gemacht hat. Und eine Freiheit wird erreicht werden in Deutschland und in der Welt, die an sich glaubt, die sich selber achtet, die sich zu wehren weiß und nicht die Tat erst, sondern schon den Gedanken in die Zucht die Idee nimmt, welche den Menschen mit Gott verbinden. (Welt, p. 538)

The sentiments expressed in this broadcast were oft-repeated, albeit in many different guises. Mann frequently speaks of Germany's 'Reinigung' and her subsequent salvation. But he does this not only in speeches and letters, but also in concealed form in his literary work. In Faustus, Mann's bleakest and least accessible work, the attempt at salvation is doomed to failure, but Mann himself is far from giving up.

In an essay on Joseph und seine Brüder, Mann speaks with enthusiasm of "die Demokratie der Zukunft, das Zusammenwirken freier und unterschiedener Nationen unter der Gleichheitszepter des Rechts."¹² Here, as elsewhere, he reiterates his belief in a future union of European states in peace and

¹²Thomas Mann, "Joseph und seine Brüder", in Neue Studien, (Stockholm: Bermann Fischer Verlag, 1948) p.182.

cultural exchange. The theme of Europe, and the concept of 'bringing Germany back to Europe,' are of primary importance to Mann from the beginning of his exile.

The long and fervent "Dieser Krieg" serves as a good example of the thoughts of an exiled and unhappy writer. In it Mann lauds the British model of democracy, while lamenting the folly of the German people in allowing themselves to be duped by Hitler. His praises of the British transition from Empire to Commonwealth are obviously coloured to some extent by wishful thinking; however the basic dichotomy between the two peoples, between the democratic and the oligarchic traditions comes across very clearly.

Mann speaks of two "Zukunftskonzeptionen" in this essay; two different "Formen der europäischen Neuordnung". The first of these is already being experimented with as he writes; it is the reign of terror, of the "selbst versklavten Edelfrasse" of his native land. The second is the as yet untried vision of "politische und ökonomische Zusammenarbeit der Nationen...die europäische Konföderation." Both of these "Konzeptionen" presuppose the relinquishing of national sovereignty of the nations of Europe. But the Nazis, as they had already well proved by the year 1940 when this essay was written, proposed nothing more than the taking over of as many countries as possible in order to make their citizens into slaves of the Germans. Mann's vision of a united Europe is the complete antithesis to Nazism. His dream is of "eine optimistisch-

menschenfreundliche Perspektive, die Wohlfahrt, Freiheit, Ansehen des Rechtes, individuelles Glück, Kulturblüte verspricht." (Welt, p. 379) Mann is setting human nature, with its inherent pessimism and desire for conflict, against the also very human desire for peace and harmony. He himself is unsure of the viability of his vision. Finally he is only sure of one thing - Hitler must go.

Mann does not give up on his belief in internationalism. Throughout the long war years and into the subsequent uneasy peace, he continues to speak and write on the subject. In the same year as he wrote "Dieser Krieg", he broached the same subject again, this time in an interview entitled "I am an American": "There would be no hope for Europe, if as a result of this war, there should not be established a Democracy of free peoples who are responsible each one to the other - a European Federation in fact. This may sound impossible of achievement today..." (Welt, p. 388)

Kurt Sontheimer, in his article on Mann's political stance, also brings up the question of Europe. He describes the author's dedication to the ideal of European unity within the context of the author's political beliefs over the decades, including his early conservative stance as well as the various stages of his social and political evolution. Sontheimer's judgement is positive; he ends by stating "seine politischen Anschauungen waren im Tiefsten bestimmt von der humanen Überzeugung, daß der Mensch frei und ohne Not in

Frieden leben sollte." As Sontheimer points out, Mann chose to live out the last years of his life in Switzerland, a country he considered "ein europäisches Land par excellence." (Sontheimer, p. 43) Thus, in choosing Switzerland over his own homeland, claims Sontheimer, Mann effectively expresses his political convictions in a practical manner. The theory is a sound one, especially since Mann did not lack opportunities to return to both Germanys after 1945. So great was the pressure in fact that he felt obliged to write the letter entitled "Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückkehre" in order to justify his non-return. Since he did nonetheless return eventually to the Continent, although not to Germany, Sontheimer may well be right in his assertion.

Sontheimer quotes Mann as saying, "Europa war Herz und Hirn der Welt, und mein stiller Glaube ist, das es auch in der neuen, vor unseren Augen sich hervorbildenden Emanzipationswelt nie aufhören wird, das zu sein." (Sontheimer, p. 42) Mann fought many intellectual battles during the years in America to ensure that Europe would have that chance.

In an impassioned speech delivered over the radio waves of the BBC in early 1943, Mann addresses himself for the first time not just to Germans, but to all Europeans. The speech, entitled "European Listeners!" and broadcast in English, compares Hitler's desire to "make Europe into a hollow, intellectually degraded appendage of monopolistic Germany," (Welt, p. 623) with Mann's own ideal of a free continent held

together by a strong belief in peace and shared moral values. By communicating this belief with the enslaved peoples of Europe, Mann attempts to lift their morale and give them strength to survive. But this is the aim of all propaganda broadcasts. Mann's is different simply in that he himself is one of the oppressors, if only by birth. And he is assuring the peoples of Europe that there are many Germans like him, who want to help make amends once the war finally does finish, so that all Europeans can work together to build a lasting peace and a safe future. In the speech he once again affirms his support for,

a federation of free states with equal rights able to cultivate their spiritual independence, their traditional cultures, subject at the same time to a common law of reason and morality, a European federation in the larger frame of economic co-operation of the civilized nations of the world. (Welt, p. 623)

In 1943, when Mann wrote those words, the idea of European unity would have been laughable, except that, at the time, it had been "perverted and defiled in a horrible way" by the invasion of neighbouring countries by German troops. (Welt, p. 622) Those who were able to look to a future embracing the kind of peaceable union envisaged by Mann were few indeed. Mann himself never changed his vision; the theme of European unity is one of the many constants in his political writings after 1922. Knowing as he did that it would necessarily entail a long hard struggle for Germany to regain the trust and respect of her neighbours, as well as to recover from the economic and

human wreckage that was Hitler's inevitable legacy, Mann continued to expound his belief in both the justness of Germany's sufferings, and the inevitability of her return to the European fold. Nevertheless, Mann was and remained a realist. In 1948 he wrote,

World government bleibt rationale Utopie. Notwendig zuerst ist die Wandlung des geistigen Klimas, ein neues Gefühl für die Schwierigkeit und den Adel des Menschseins, eine alles durchwaltende Grundgesinnung, der niemand sich entzieht, die jeder im Innersten als Richter anerkennt. Für ihre Entstehung und Befestigung kann der Dichter und Künstler, unmerklich von oben ins Untere, Breite wirkend, einiges tun. Aber sie wird nicht gelehrt und gemacht, sie wird erlebt und erlitten. ("Nietzsche", p. 159)

He had originally believed that with the end of the war, the attitudes of the peoples of Europe and the world would change radically. Like many others, he could not conceive of the idea that the governments of the world would not have learned a lasting lesson from the events of the first half of the century. As the Cold War became more and more of a reality, Mann was not the only one to be forced into revising his ideas on how a post-war Europe would look. However, the firmly ingrained belief, stated in, among others, the essay "Dieser Krieg"; namely that Germany can only find lasting happiness within a free and united Europe (Welt, p. 383), never left him. "Es könnte ja sein, daß die Liquidierung des Nazismus den Weg freigemacht hat zu einer sozialen Weltreform, die gerade Deutschlands innersten Anlagen und Bedürfnissen die größten Glücksmöglichkeiten bietet," (Welt, p. 722) he wrote in 1945.

Of the Germans he said "in ihrer Weltscheu war immer so viel Weltverlangen." (Welt, p. 736) Now, in the post-war period, he finally sees the chance that Germans might join their European brothers and sisters in a lasting union.

Unlike many of his compatriots, both in America and in the newly formed West Germany, Mann was not, nor ever had been, a virulent anti-Communist. On the contrary, he was very sympathetic to its ideals, although horrified by many aspects of its practical application in the Soviet Union; nevertheless "der Kommunismus galt ihm immerhin als Träger einer Idee, der Idee der sozialen Gerechtigkeit." (Sontheimer, p. 28) He was careful in his post-war lecture tours to visit both West and East Germany. Sontheimer mentions that "als Schriftsteller deutscher Zunge fühlte er sich allen Deutschen in Ost und West verbunden," (Sontheimer, p. 40) a fact which was appreciated neither by West Germans nor by Sontheimer himself. Mann's ideal of unity found no place for a divided Germany, or even a divided Europe.

Mann ends the story of Gregorius with a warning and a positive message for the future. He cautions against the assumption of forgiveness, while at the same time encouraging the sinner not to abandon hope, since,

...klug ist es freilich, im Sünder den Erwählten zu ahnen, und klug ist das auch für den Sünder selbst. Denn würdigen mag ihn die Ahnung seiner Erwähltheit und ihm die Sündhaftigkeit fruchtbar machen, so daß sie ihn zu hohen Flügen trägt. (DE, p. 260)

This highly positive statement comes at the very end of the novel, thus stressing its relevancy, primarily to the story itself, but also on a wider scale. The story he has told is important not just intrinsically, but as a parable of the possibility of redemption in the world.

Conclusion

Der Erwählte has been generally perceived in the academic community as a lighthearted novel, full of comic interludes, indeed, as a kind of counterpoint to the more serious novel just completed. The author himself stated many times that it was hardly to be taken seriously, that he felt unable to tackle a serious or important topic, since his creative talents had been exhausted by the effort required to finish Faustus. But Mann was a perfectionist, a writer who could not produce anything halfheartedly. His letters show without a doubt that he put a great deal of effort into "das Büchlein". His research was extensive, his attention to detail exceptional. Perhaps he did begin by treating the little book as something of a joke, in the way his creation, Leverkühn, was tickled by its perversity into putting it into his operatic "Puppenspiel". But the story eventually began to take hold of his imagination - its international flavour, both in terms of history and in the language he himself introduced into it, was precisely in tune with his own ideas at the time. No less important, perhaps indeed far more compelling to him, was the idea of grace, of divine forgiveness. If ever a group of people were in dire need of grace, it seemed to him to be the Germans of the immediate post-war years. Mann had already, in various political and creative writings, attempted to

explain and come to terms with the impulse which led the German people to throw themselves eagerly on the mercy of a proven megalomaniac. Now he is looking for some evidence that even such terrible sins may be forgiven. In Der Erwählte, Mann has taken the idea of collective guilt and individualized it in the comforting personage of Gregorius, the man who sinned inadvertantly but spectacularly, repented sincerely, and after long penance is raised up in magnificent fashion to rule all Christendom. That the author did indeed take this story seriously is evidenced by his own admission: "In der späten modernen Nachformung der viel erzählten Gregorius-Legende ist das Thema von Sünde, Buße und Erwählung wieder ganz in verschämten Scherz gehüllt. Nur Dümmlinge und Frömmlinge wird das täuschen."¹³ It is true that the story is told in a heavily ironic fashion, but, "die Geschichte ist aber komisch, und Komik erscheint mir mehr und mehr als das Beste auf der Welt, erlabend, entlastend, ein wahrer Segen."¹⁴

E. G. Fürstenheim, in discussing Der Erwählte in the context of Mann's work as a whole, observes "Der Erwählte merely asserts that even the greatest sinner may be forgiven. Nothing would prevent the reader from applying this thought to the political sphere: even the German catastrophe may contain the seeds of salvation if the Germans learn to accept it in the right spirit." (Fürstenheim, p. 60) Mann himself appears

¹³29.10.1950 to Karl Boll.

¹⁴07.10.1950 to Kuno Fiedler.

to have done precisely that, and the result, Der Erwählte, is a novel which conveys a message of hope and of universal forgiveness, both in the story it tells, and in the subtext, which is specifically concerned with the fate of the German people.

Finally, says Stackmann "Erwähltheit ist...Erwähltheit zum Adel des Geistes," (Stackmann, p. 245) the concept of which was always so important to Mann. Gregorius is for him not just an ironic figure from the distant literary past, whom he chose to revive out of boredom or curiosity, but a living and relevant symbol of Mann's hopes for the future of all humanity. "Bleibt nicht die Hoffnung bestehen, daß zwangsläufig und notgedrungen die ersten versuchenden Schritte geschehen werden in der Richtung auf einen Weltzustand, in dem der nationale Individualismus des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts sich lösen, ja schließlich vergehen wird?" (Welt, p. 736)

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