

Künstler dieser Zeit: Klaus Mann's Novels of the 1930s

by

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Clare Choubey, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The 1930s represent the peak of Klaus Mann's novel-writing with respect to output and quality. While the predominant proportion of critical work on Mann's oeuvre has concentrated on those aspects which can be clearly associated with Mann's life (his homosexuality, his family background, and his self-destructiveness), I feel that Mann's writing was at least as influenced by the times in which he wrote. Therefore I concentrate on Mann's work as a reflection of the times in which he was living, with minimal reference to his biography; and I focus on four novels which are all from and about the 1930s.

What is particularly impressive about Mann's fiction is his ability to articulate the acute sense of the political and social crisis facing Western civilisation in that era. Together these four novels vividly depict the political and social instability that led to the rise of Fascism, show the effect of exile, and warn of the destructive nature of the Third Reich. These novels can be divided into two categories: the novel of individual choice (Individualroman): Flucht in den Norden, Mephisto, and the panoramic novel of social life (Roman des Nebeneinanders): Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, Der Vulkan. I have identified three key themes occurring in his fiction: Love and Desire, the Mind and the World, and Community, which I discuss in each novel individually, as well as evaluating Mann's narrative technique. Mann's writing is very character-driven, he strives to make his characters as vivid and affecting as possible, to create an emotional connection with his readers, and facilitate a dialogue between author and reader. Mann is not the greatest German author of the twentieth century, however his work has both

literary merit, and gives us an invaluable insight into the mindset of his generation.

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I Introduction

During his twenty-five year career,¹ Klaus Mann's literary output was both prolific and varied. In the first volume of the Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe, Fredric Kroll lists over one thousand separate pieces of work, ranging from essays and articles, to novels, short stories and plays. Mann was even involved in writing the screenplay to the 1946 film *Paisà*. Aside from his published work, Mann was a great letter-writer and diarist. Despite the setback of being denied access to German readers during the 1930s and 1940s, Mann continued to write, adopting the language of his new home in order to carry on his political and literary work.

Klaus Mann is a significant writer for two reasons: in terms of subject matter, he was ground-breaking, Der Fromme Tanz features an early portrayal of homosexual characters, while Flucht in den Norden was one of the first novels to engage with the theme of contemporary exile. Furthermore his work reveals much about the mindset of his generation; Mann's writing is shaped by the politics of the time in which he was living, hence he is a mirror of both German youth, and German intellectuals. Indeed he always regarded himself as representative of his generation. Mann was twenty-seven when Hitler came to power, and moreover he was a person who came from the social and intellectual elite of his country. Therefore Mann is especially significant as a first-hand observer of the ordinary German's and the intellectual German's response to the rise of Nazism.

Mann's work deals with contemporary themes in contemporary settings. The particular strengths he exhibits in his fiction are his dialogue, and his ability to

¹ Mann was first published in 1924

create vivid and convincing characters. While his style has been criticised for its lack of sophistication, his writing nevertheless has great impact. Arguably, Mann's novels have not received the attention they deserve: his technical "deficiencies" have meant he has suffered from being unfavourably compared to his father, Thomas. However, given the difference in style and subject matter of the two authors, this association is more the result of their familial connection than because their work readily invites comparison. As well as being in the shadow of his father, Mann has also suffered because he is perceived as a minority interest or single issue writer (gay, exile etc).

Perhaps surprisingly given this absence of interest in his literary output, Mann is a popular subject for biographical treatment. However this is largely because Mann is viewed as a flawed individual rather than because of regard for his work. Since his death, there have been at least ten publications which have been wholly or mostly devoted to a discussion of Mann's life.² This fascination with biography ranges from conventional biography to "psychological biography", and more recently to examinations of how aspects of Mann's life and character impacted on his work such as Alexa-Desiree Casaretto's Heimatsuche, Todessehnsucht und Narzißmus in Leben und Werk Klaus Manns (2002). For many writers, it is impossible to evaluate Mann's work without considering his life.³ Unsurprisingly this preoccupation with Mann's biography has spilled over into consideration of his literary work where many of the themes clearly reflect aspects of the author's

² Authors include Bernd A. Weil, Harald Neumann, Carol Petersen, Uwe Naumann, Armin Strohmeyr, Marlis Thiel, Nicole Schaenzler, and Peter Schröder. The first detailed biography of Mann's life written by French scholar Michel Grunewald appeared in 1984.

³ 'Da Leben und Werk Klaus Manns fast untrennbar miteinander verbunden sind[.]' Alexa-Desiree Casaretto, *Heimatsuche, Todessehnsucht und Narzissmus in Leben und Werk Klaus Manns* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p.9.

own life: the clash between father and son; desire for death; addiction; and thwarted homosexual desire. The unfortunate result of this is that Mann is best remembered for his homosexuality, his drug-addiction and his suicide, rather than as a writer and political activist. Arguably, Mann's work was also known for the wrong reasons: Mephisto's notoriety, for example, is due at least in part to the controversy surrounding it.

Earliest studies of Mann's work emphasised his political stance. Both Wilfried Dirschauer's Klaus Mann und das Exil (1973) and Elke Kerker's Weltbürgertum – Exil – Heimatlosigkeit (1977) concentrate on Mann's anti-Fascist politics and their impact on his writing. While Armin Kerker's 1974 Ernst Jünger – Klaus Mann. Gemeinsamkeit und Gegensatz in Literatur und Politik compares the work of Mann and Jünger, and discusses the Nazi period from both sides of the German border. This interest in Mann as a political writer coincided with Fredric Kroll's first publication in his Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe (in 1976), the seven volumes of which constitute the most comprehensive study of Mann's life and work which has been undertaken. With this series, Kroll discusses all of Mann's writing, with especial focus on the theme of non-possession.

The year 1986 saw the publication of two significant Klaus Mann studies: Stefan Zynda's Sexualität bei Klaus Mann and Susanne Wolfram's Die tödliche Wunde. Zynda discusses the relationship between Mann's own sexuality and the portrayal of homosexuality in his fiction, while Wolfram considers the correlation between homosexual desire and death in Mann's work. Once again Wolfram sees Mann's

work as an expression of his own personal issues.⁴ Two years later these studies were followed by Gerhard Härle's Männerweiblichkeit which considers the portrayal of homosexuality in the works of both Mann and father Thomas, by using current psychoanalytical theory. The same decade also saw the publication of two collections of essays: Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung edited by Rolf Wolff, and the Heinz Ludwig Arnold edited special edition of Text und Kritik dedicated to Mann. Both of these publications covered diverse themes within his novels as well as his non-fiction and short stories including generational conflict in Mann's short stories, Mann's pacifism, and the theme of the artist in his exile novels.

The last twenty years have seen both a broadening of the themes discussed with regard to Mann's work, and a closer reading of some of the texts. Notable publications include Nicole Schaenzler's Klaus Mann als Erzähler (1995) an exploration of Mann's development as an author by a study of his first and last novels: Der fromme Tanz and Der Vulkan, arguing that there is genuine literary merit in Mann's early as well as exile fiction; Arwed Schmidt's Exilwelten der 30er Jahre (2003) which examines Mann's portrayal of the individual exile experience in Flucht in den Norden and Der Vulkan, and Karina von Lindeiner's Sammlung zur heiligsten Aufgabe (2007) a discussion of how Mann's fiction reflects his political views, and how he expresses those views through the characters from Flucht in den Norden, Mephisto, and Der Vulkan. Also of interest is Daniela Trautmann's Mitläufer im Nationalsozialismus und ihre Darstellung in

⁴ 'Für Klaus Mann kam eine [...] Trennung von Arbeit und Privatheit offenbar nicht in Frage, denn er versuchte, die Probleme, die sein Eros mit sich brachte, durch das Schreiben zu bewältigen.' Susanne Wolfram, *Die tödliche Wunde: Über die Untrennbarkeit von Tod und Eros im Werk von Klaus Mann* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), p.11.

der Literatur (2005) which considers the portrayal of the Nazi Mitläufer in three novels, including the Mephisto protagonist Hendrik Höfgen.

Outside the German-speaking world, there is increasing scholarly interest, but few significant studies. The exceptions are Alison Lisa Ford's unpublished thesis⁵ which considers the culture of the Weimar republic and Mann's place within that cultural tradition, and James Keller's The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann (2001) which discusses the impact of the concept of identity on Mann's life and especially his work. The above-mentioned studies by Schaenzler, Ford, Schmidt, and von Lindeiner all demonstrate that close textual analysis of Mann's novel fiction is both legitimate and rewarding. What is also evidenced by their varying approaches to the novels, even the texts that they have researched, is that Mann's novels and his oeuvre as a whole can be approached from many critical angles.

I would argue that for too long there has been an unnecessary distinction made between those novels he wrote during exile (Flucht in den Norden, Symphonie Pathétique, Mephisto, Der Vulkan) and those written before exile (Der fromme Tanz, Alexander, Treffpunkt im Unendlichen). Closer examination reveals that this distinction is somewhat less clear-cut than might at first be thought.

Symphonie Pathétique, as the biographical novel of a real-life figure set during the previous century, seems a curious companion to Flucht in den Norden, Mephisto, or Der Vulkan, with their contemporary setting, and (largely) fictional characters. Mephisto does not engage with the exile experience that constitutes a

⁵ Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999),

significant aspect of Flucht in den Norden and Der Vulkan. Indeed two thirds of Mephisto takes place before Hitler becomes Chancellor. Flucht in den Norden deals with the more abstract, emotional issues of exile; the practical realities such as lack of income, or loss of social position only come to prominence in Der Vulkan. While Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is routinely excluded from the exile grouping, the novel is a clear forerunner of both Der Vulkan in terms of the panoramic depiction of society, and Mephisto in the portrayal of Hendrik Höfgen's forerunner Gregor Gregori.

For me, Mann's principle literary achievement lies in the four novels of contemporary life that he wrote in the 1930s – Treffpunkt im Unendlichen (1932), Flucht in den Norden (1934), Mephisto (1936), Der Vulkan (1939). Together, these novels constitute an powerful and perceptive socio-historical analysis of the 1930s, written as it was happening. Like Karina von Lindeiner, I feel that the maturing of Mann's political views in that decade imparts a greater urgency and focus to his creative work. In a sense the 1930s – the political turmoil, the experience of exile – gave Mann the all-important thematic concern that his literary work had lacked up to that point. But von Lindeiner is primarily concerned with Mann's political views hence she draws comparison between Mann's non-fiction political writing and his exile novels; whereas for me, it is the broader socio-historical concern expressed in these four novels that is at the heart of his literary achievement.

These four novels exemplify two different novel modes (and this generic issue has, I believe, so far gone unremarked): the novel of individual choice or

Individualroman (Flucht in den Norden, Mephisto), and the panoramic novel of social life, the Roman des Nebeneinanders⁶ (Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, Der Vulkan). Taking this body of novels as an attempt to evaluate the 1930s, it is evident that Klaus Mann is unsure of how to encapsulate this volatile period. It may be possible to relate these two forms of novel to a central dilemma in his oeuvre as a whole. The dilemma is that, in these novels, and the historical period they explore, he is committed to two kinds of understanding of man and his place in society: a corporate destiny experienced individually, or a sense of individual destinies as an expression of corporate experiences. One is a panoramic vision of the times that are “out of joint”; the other is an individuated and centrally thematized depiction of choice and responsibility. In the former, though moral judgement is still evident, the issue of personal responsibility is less to the fore than in the latter novel-type. The mad world is shown to be monstrous and uncontrollable, death to body and mind.

It is my principal contention that the centre of gravity in the four novels I discuss is to be found in the characters and the various constellations in which they appear, and this is seen in the critical approach I have chosen. At one level, Mann

⁶This is a term from Karl Gutzkow's foreword to his novel Die Ritter vom Geiste. The entire quotation reads: 'Der neue Roman ist der Roman des *Nebeneinanders*. Da liegt die ganze Welt! Da ist die Zeit wie ein ausgespanntes Tuch! Da begegnen sich Könige und Bettler! Die Menschen, die zu der erzählten Geschichte gehören, und die, die ihr nur *eine widerstrahlte Beleuchtung geben*. Der Stumme redet nun auch, der Abwesende spielt nun auch mit. Das, was der Dichter sagen, schildern will, ist oft nur das, was zwischen zweien seiner Schilderungen als ein Drittes, dem Hörer Fühlbares, *in Gott Ruhendes*, in der Mitte liegt. Nun fällt die Willkür der Erfindung fort. Kein Abschnitt des Lebens mehr, der ganze runde, volle Kreis liegt vor uns; der Dichter baut eine Welt und stellt seine Beleuchtung der der Wirklichkeit gegenüber. Er sieht aus der Perspective des in den Lüften schwelbenden Adlers herab. Da ist ein endloser Teppich ausgebreitet, eine *Weltanschauung*, neu, eigenthümlich, leider polemisch. Thron und Hütte, Markt und Wald sind zusammengerückt. Resultat: Durch diese Behandlung kann die Menschheit aus der Poesie wieder den Glauben und das Vertrauen schöpfen, daß auch die *moralisch umgestaltete Erde von einem und demselben Geiste doch noch göttlich regiert werden*.' Karl Gutzkow, Die Ritter vom Geiste, (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1998), Vorwort section, in Projekt Gutenberg (<http://www.projekt.gutenberg.de>) [accessed 20 July 2008]

is concerned to offer us vivid psychological portraits of the characters, but he is also concerned to understand their relationships within a philosophical framework – as instances of their characters' quest for purpose and meaning. Moreover the relationships frequently raise political implications; time and again the interpersonal sphere interlocks with notions of an actual or possible community. Hence in each of my chapters on the novels I have divided the discussion of character constellation into three subsections – characters and their relationships (the psychological theme), the mind and the world (the philosophical theme), and community (the political theme). Of course, these sub-divisions are a shade arbitrary in that the categories are by no means watertight. Yet I hope my three categories will help to illuminate the range and richness of Klaus Mann's character analysis. One final observation: Mann's exploration of his characters under the three thematic headings which I have outlined above has a particularly judgemental feel. He is at every turn concerned to evaluate his characters – and he does so in psychological-cum-moral terms, in philosophical terms, in political terms. As a result, his style is frequently forthright, on occasion even strident. Yet this is the measure of his being more than a social commentator or satirist. Rather, he seeks to animate his readers to respond to his characters in ethical, philosophical, political terms. Often he transforms the drama of individual lives into a kind of morality play, a reckoning with right and wrong, with good and evil. His characters utter their opinions, they ask the questions he wishes the reader to ask, and live out the angst and suffering he seeks to reveal. As a playwright, he has a feel for expressive dialogue, and in his novels he strives to make his characters, and the world they inhabit, vivid and convincing. His goal is to be an effective communicator, not to promote aestheticism for its own sake. He

therefore attempts to provoke an emotional and moral response, rather than an intellectual one from his reader. Hence the judgemental, sometimes lurid prose which has troubled many critics. Arguably the outrage and emotion in his work are not merely an expression of his own personality, but also an expression of the era in which he was living: a time where everything was supercharged, over-coloured, and exaggerated. In this respect he is very much a writer of his time.

II Treffpunkt im Unendlichen (1932)

Introduction

The last of Mann's novels written before he went into exile, Treffpunkt im Unendlichen distinguishes itself from his previous novels in terms of structure, dialogue⁷ and narrative technique.⁸ This narrative sophistication means that Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is a much richer work than any of his previous novels.

The novel also exhibits a thematic shift for Mann; he concentrates on contemporary themes (social unrest, poverty), as exemplified in terms of a much broader social canvas than he had hitherto attempted.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is a Roman des Nebeneinanders, a kind of chronicle novel, with a complex structure, dissolving the story into a set of multiple perspectives. There is little sustaining plot; rather we are acquainted with a broad spectrum of characters, all of whom are doomed in their quest for fulfilling relationships. Many of them seem to believe that they can only find emotional and moral fulfilment in some notional infinity where parallel lines intersect (hence the title of the novel). However what the characters perceive as a crisis of these various relationships (or the lack of them), and this is arguably the most important perception the novel has to offer, is in fact the historical nemesis that awaits a whole generation. The ever more poisoned atmosphere of early 1930s Germany means that there is little moral decency left anywhere. Mann suggests that his

⁷ 'Nachdem sich Klaus Mann im Geschwister-Drama in der Kunst des Dialogs geübt hat, weist Treffpunkt im Unendlichen mehr und bessere Dialoge auf als irgendeine seiner früherer Prosaerzählungen.' Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2006), p.166.

⁸ Der Fromme Tanz and Alexander both had 'simple, primarily linear plot centred upon a single story-line. In both instances this had excluded both subsidiary story-lines and secondary characters who had remained shadowy, ill-defined figures, of importance only in their reflection of the hero.' Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.286.

characters' relationships founder because the times, and their world in particular (Germany in the 1930s), are out of joint. He is consistently – almost obsessively – interested in the characters and the various forms of their relationships. But this psychological and moral focus is, in the last analysis, in the service of a political and social diagnosis. In Mann's later fiction, as we shall see, that diagnosis will become much more stringent and exacting.

1 The Characters and their Relationships

In a novel with so many characters, the interaction between them, and how they view their relationships is of central concern. The characters in the Treffpunkt im Unendlichen universe are seen to be linked together, interacting and influencing each other's lives whether they are aware of it or not. In general they feel a lack of connection with the world and those around them, consciously seeking to remedy this via their relationships. They view relationships with each other as a way of validating their existence, and making sense of the world, in particular searching for the intensity of being and cognition felt by becoming united with another person. This need to find a comforting compensatory relationship manifests itself in constellations where characters use and manipulate those closest to them, in order to gain power, self-gratification, even money. As a result human relationships in the novel are frequently dishonest, and destructive. Many characters begin their descent into self-destructive behaviour as the result of a relationship that has ended. There is a clear sense that relationships allow one character to have power over another. Frequently characters cling to relationships because they are unable to find the appropriate strength within themselves to cope with everyday life. Treffpunkt im Unendlichen surveys a whole range of doomed relationships although one in particular has dominant importance – that between Sonja and Sebastian.

Their meeting is the logical culmination of all events in their lives, however it is ultimately an ending rather than a beginning. The impact of this meeting is made greater because Mann keeps them apart for much of the novel, but he takes great care to present much evidence to the effect that these two people have a

subconscious affinity which transcends their lack of acquaintance. Initially they are connected only via Gregor Gregori: Sebastian is his former best friend and artistic collaborator, Sonja is his fiancée. Subsequently they are also linked by many of the other characters they impact on, and come into contact with. They are also seen to be connected by the way that their lives parallel each other: from the moment he leaves as she arrives in Berlin, they spend the novel echoing each other's actions. This parallelism is of thoughts as well as actions; they are unwilling to talk about each other, as though there is an unconscious bond between them. Sonja is keen to change the subject when Gregor mentions Sebastian to her, and Sebastian resents Larue asking him about Sonja:

Sebastian war es unangenehm, daß Larue soviel von dieser Sonja sprach, die er doch gar nicht kannte; vielleicht weil ihn ihr Name an Gregor Gregori denken ließ, der so oft und exaltiert von ihr gesprochen hatte; aber auch noch aus anderen, weniger klaren Gründen. Die ist kein Klatschobjekt für diesen, dachte er ungeduldig.⁹

One particularly conspicuous point of connection between the characters is the story of the three youthful murderers who are tried and executed in America. These weeping killers are another symbol of the waste of youthful potential in the modern world. Both Sonja and Sebastian are struck by the reports they read in the newspapers of these so-called “baby-bandits”, and their responses to these stories are very similar. Sonja thinks:

Wenn ich wenigstens irgendwen hätte, mit dem zusammen ich an diese drei weinenden jungen Mörder denken könnte. Ihr schien es, als sei dies nun der einzige Maßstab für den Wert irgendeiner menschlichen Beziehung, die noch für sie kommen könnte: ob den anderen auch der Gedanke an diese drei Knaben so tief erschütterte. Irgendwo muß doch einer sein. Irgendwo war einer. (155)

⁹ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.192. In order to lessen the number of footnotes when quoting the primary texts in the main body of the thesis, only the first reference to the primary text will have a footnote. The remaining quotations will reference the page numbers in parentheses.

Sebastian's experience echoes Sonja's:

Er sehnte sich plötzlich mit einer ungestümen Heftigkeit nach irgendeinem Menschen – irgendeinem –, mit dem er über diese drei weinenden jungen Mörder sprechen könnte. Die Intensität der Anteilnahme, die jemand an dem Jammer dieser kindlichen Angeklagten nahm, schien ihm der Maßstab dafür zu werden, wie nahe oder wie ferne ein Mensch ihm war. 'Irgendwo muß es doch einen geben[.]' (227)

The use of the expressions 'irgendwen', 'irgendeinem', '[i]rgendwo' underlines this idea of notional affinity. The desire to discuss these three murdereres comes to symbolise Sonja and Sebastian's feelings of isolation. Until they meet, they are both searching for something, Sonja had been searching for the man who can allow her to be herself, while Sebastian is searching for the woman who can facilitate his creative expression. During his first meeting with Greta, he explains his relationships as follows:

"Ich verliebe mich überhaupt selten. Bei mir ist es immer, als warte ich auf etwas." (102)

When Sebastian meets Sonja, the work on his novel starts in earnest. He believes that he can write if she is with him. Sonja and Sebastian meet during an unplanned visit to Fez, after having embarked on a journey south to escape various sorrows and pressures at home: Sebastian is trying to escape his guilt over Greta's death; Sonja has fled the demands of her relationships with Gregor and Bayer (and the horror she feels in Berlin). Their relationship is the fulfilment of the fairy tale Sylvester relates to Sebastian. However the manifestation of their relationship is almost disappointing; it stays in the realm of the fairy tale: unconsummated and unreal. They dare not touch each other, or talk about their affinity; the narrator addresses the characters directly, expressing sheer incredulity:

Wagt ihr, da ihr euch so unwahrscheinlich nah gekommen seid, nicht den letzten Versuch zu einer vollkommenen Annäherung, zu einem Miteinander-Einswerden? Wartet ihr, daß neue und unerhörte Formen der Annährung für euch erfunden werden? (262)

They are still in a state of waiting, even though they finally have what they have supposedly been yearning for. Eventually they seek consummation of their relationship via a shared experience of taking drugs, accepting the hashish procured by their guide. The consequence of their experiment with drugs is not to bring them closer together but to drive them apart, first by the fact that their experiences do not unite them, and ultimately because Sonja dies. It also spells the end of their dream sojourn, and future plans: their so-called son Salem disappears, and they lose their money. The things they lose are symbolically expressive of the loss of their independence, and the lack of fertility in their relationship. Their relationship will not nurture children, not even the one they plan to adopt. Salem also represents the essence of their relationship:

Salem, ihr Kind und ihre schönste Liebe; Salem, auf den sie alle Zärtlichkeit übertrugen, die sie voreinander nicht auszusprechen wagten, weil sie sich vor ihrem Übermaß fürchteten. (259)

In order to leave Fez, Sonja has to telegraph W.B. for money, once more Sebastian is dependent on his rival:

“Es scheint mein Schicksal, von Geheimrat Bayer ausgehalten zu werden”, sagte Sebastian und lächelte etwas matt. (283)

Fez had been their world, and their refuge from everything that had troubled them, but the magic and mystery are now gone, the town is just dirty and overheated. Overnight their dream has become a nightmare from which they struggle to escape. Having managed to leave Fez, they arrive in the town of Ouidjda: busy

and filled with unsympathetic people, reminding the reader of the Berlin that Sonja fled, the narrator is also explicit in his condemnation:

Auf den Straßen waren noch auffallend viel Menschen, Araber, Legionäre und Zivilisten. Sie schienen einander ähnlich zu sein, wenigstens einen verwandten Gesichtsausdruck hatten sie alle; etwas zugleich Geschärftes und Abgestumpftes in den braunen zerfurchten Mienen, und in den Blicken eine gewisse apathische Gier. Viele waren betrunken und sangen, aber es war eher Gegröl, das freundlos klang. (300)

It is an ugly, dirty, noisy place, where Sonja spends her last days dying an agonising death, effectively a negation of the idea of the fairy-tale meeting. The anticipation that Mann engenders by portents of their affinity and delaying their meeting for so long, is not borne out by the manifestation of their relationship. It seems to have its roots in fantasy and coincidence. Prior to their drug-taking, they had planned their future together, but these plans seemed impractical or fantastical. They plan to bring Salem back to Europe to live with them. However they treat him more like an exotic pet than a son. Any plans to alter the quality of his life (school, adoption) are to take place in some distant future, which does not need to impact on their fantasy world. Fredric Kroll questions even their affinity, arguing that there is little substantial foundation to their relationship:

Das Wesentliche an ihrem Verhältnis bildet die Tatsache, daß sie Gleches gleichzeitig tun[.]¹⁰

The heavy identification of their relationship with a fairy tale, as well as implying a magical affinity, also suggests that it cannot exist in the real world, perhaps even that it is chimerical. Their first few weeks in Fez, which Mann glosses over, are likened to time standing still:

¹⁰ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.159.

Sie waren seit vier Wochen in Fez, aber beiden kam es so vor, als seien sie nie woanders gewesen. Die Zeit hatte aufgehört. (258)

It is not a progression, simply the removal from the real world. Once the real world starts to show its presence, in the form of a definite date for their return to Berlin, they do something which jeopardises both their relationship and their lives. Their eager acceptance of hashish is the ultimate identification with the dissipation they left behind in Europe. Sebastian's euphoric letter to Do, stating that his life is now beginning, is followed by them eagerly ripping open the packet of hashish. They do not ask for the drug, but having been offered the opportunity, they show no hesitation. Sebastian calls their drug-adventure their honeymoon, which is an appropriate anticipation of how their relationship ends. It is not entirely clear whether the hashish was the sole cause of Sonja's death, or whether it fatally disturbed a mind which was already damaged by the environment in which she had lived.

The final days of Sonja's life are miserable and painful, and ultimately undermine any idea that her death is conventionally tragic. Mann even denies them union in death, Sonja dies, but Sebastian has to carry on living without the person who he believes gives his life meaning. The differences between them which had been established earlier show that Sebastian is less vulnerable than Sonja. Though Sebastian and Sonja are soul mates, he does not suffer from the absorption of other people's feelings as Sonja does. Sebastian is a dispassionate observer, he is capable of tenderness and remorse, but always retains the distance necessary to protect himself, whereas Sonja soaks up all the negativity around her, unable to detach herself from it.

Prior to her relationship with Sebastian, Sonja has affairs with three other men in the novel. When she arrives in Berlin at the beginning of the novel she is Gregor's fiancée, yet that same evening she contacts W.B. to arrange a meeting. Sonja is confused about her feelings for both these men, she is drawn to them despite seeing their flaws, and not being in love with them. They represent different circles to which Sonja belongs (the artistic community and the society of the wealthy classes), but also different ways of viewing Sonja herself. Both W.B. and Gregor are men who disregard other people in the quest for their own needs, and Sonja suffers under the stress of simultaneous relationships with them.

Sie bemitleidete und bewunderte beide [...] Deshalb tat sie ihr Bestes, den übermäßig gespannten Ansprüchen der beiden zu genügen, dabei kam sie sich freilich immer ein wenig wie eine Krankenschwester vor[.] (118)

The narrator in this commentary highlights the emotional and moral mismatch that blights both relationships. Sonja plays parts for her men, as though she were a nurse ministering to the sick, making herself ill in the process. To alleviate the strain of this continual suppression of her own identity, she begins a tentative relationship with her colleague, actor Kurt Petersen, which finishes when she discovers he lives with his lover and their child. The irony is that, while W.B. and Gregor impose their ideas of Sonja onto her, she does the same with Petersen. She projects her own vision on to him, based upon the character he plays on stage. Though Gregor and W.B. go some way to destroying Sonja, it is possible that her attraction to these two men is because of their dominating nature: like the other characters she craves escape from endless self-questioning by abdicating responsibility for the direction of her own life to a dominant partner.

To Gregor, Sonja is aloof, maternal, and unconnected to the real world. He needs her as an accessory for his public persona,¹¹ but also as a kind of agony aunt to offer him emotional support. He says that she is the only person to whom he shows his insecurity. The narrator agrees and expresses a firm value judgement:

Demütig war er nur, wenn er mit Sonja sprach. Sein Masochismus war die Kehrseite seiner ungesunden Überheblichkeit. (134)

However Gregor is not interested in her feelings, or her work. He does not ask how Sonja's rehearsals went, not merely because he is selfish, but rather more because he is shallow. He is not capable of feeling affection for another person, he can only relate to others so far as they can be useful to him. Once Sonja refuses to fit in with his plans for her, he will have nothing more to do with her, as he is unequipped to communicate with anyone who stands up to him, and he later ignores Sebastian's telegram telling him that she is dying.

Sonja is clearly as captivated by Gregor as other characters are: even when doubting his candour and sincerity, she finds him 'blendend' (198), and thinks that they have an affinity, although she is not sure whether this is love. However, her assessment of his behaviour towards Froschel as 'unerklärlich und abstoßend' (135) mirrors her subconscious feelings about him. She accepts his proposal because she believes that they have more in common than she and W.B., and the pity she feels at the sight of his bald head makes her think she does love him. Eventually though, Froschel's breakdown and Sonja's own inner turmoil make her realise that they will not have a happy future together, so she abruptly breaks off their engagement, and flees Berlin.

¹¹ Sonja comes to realise that he just wants to prove, to himself and the world, that he has a private life which he is putting aside for his career.

W.B.'s view of Sonja is as distorted as Gregor's: he is said to think of Sonja as amazonlike: strong, independent, and flippant. Like his rival, W.B. sees Sonja as aloof, but in a hard, even mercenary way. Sonja occasionally finds this view of her irritating:

Aber es ärgerte sie, daß er sie so amazonenhaft stilisierte, so sehr auf "junges Mädchen von heute", stählern trainiert, geistreich, grausam, unendlich sachlich und vollkommen "amoralisch". (43)

W.B. therefore tailors his wooing to match his preconception of her, by pointing out that his money can make her very comfortable, and that she may not receive such tempting offers as she gets older. He also tries to stylise himself as the sentimental lover. Sonja is less taken in by his performance than by Gregor's, as the temptation of being taken care of by W.B.¹² is outweighed by the cruelty she sees in him. She suspects he treats his workers badly, and she knows he is cruel to his wife:

"Warum zwingen Sie die Ärmste dazu, mondäne Hausfrau zu spielen?" fragt Sonja, die betrübt hinter ihr dreinschaut. "Sie kann's doch nicht schaffen, es muß schauderhaft für sie sein." W.B. steht breitbeinig da, Zigarette im Mund, Augenbrauen buschig zusammengezogen, Fäuste geballt in den Hosentaschen: "Solange sie mit mir zusammenlebt und nicht eingesperrt ist, muß sie es schaffen." Sonja, die aufsteht, denkt: Das ist nur noch ein ordinärer Gewaltmensch, der geborene große Unternehmer, sonst nichts. (78)

Despite recognising his brutality, Sonja is drawn to him.¹³ The reader sees echoes of how he bullies his wife and mistress in his actions towards Sonja: he browbeats her into remaining after his party, and then compromises her in front of a gossip-

¹² At one point she thinks she would be 'aufgehoben bei ihm' (196). It seems more likely that he would eventually become bored with her, and she would suffer the same treatment as the other women in his life.

¹³ 'Was ihr Freund eben getan hatte, war ohne Frage abscheulich; anderseits konnte sie nicht leugnen, daß es ihr imponierte.' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.89.

columnist. As with Greta, he wants to separate her from anything which could give her independence, and as with Julia, he expects her to fit in with his life. When he tries to bully her into accepting his proposal, she has to threaten to leave in order to calm his anger. The power to absent herself is the only power she has in the relationship. The ‘gespannter und drohender Väterlichkeit’ (89) he exhibits towards Julia echoes his lecturing of Sonja in the restaurant, and shows what this will become. Though he tries to justify his selfishness, Sonja notices how he pursues his own desires quite single-mindedly:

Einsam war jeder. Aber nicht jeder kämpfte so zielbewußt um das, womit er seine Einsamkeit heilen zu können glaubte; und nicht jeder warf mit so robustem Gewissen das ab, was ihm lästig und beschwerlich wurde. (90)

The only time the reader witnesses a softer side of him (after he has removed Julia and Greta from his life) is when he weeps at Sonja’s *Don Carlos* premier. He is moved by what he sees on stage. This contrasts with his bafflement when faced with Sonja’s genuine distress after the performance. As with Gregor who can only feign emotion, W.B. can only respond to artificial emotion; they are both products of a world where people are touched by the superficial and artificial, and unable to respond to genuine feelings.

Kurt Petersen is young, undemanding, and spending time with him makes Sonja feel younger, and happier. Their relationship is an inverse of her relationships with Gregor and W.B.: he is eager to please her, playing the part she requires of him. Sonja also makes the mistake, as Gregor and W.B. do with her, of seeing Kurt in a particular role, and interpreting his actions accordingly. She views Kurt as the character he plays on stage, an innocent, who kills himself for love of her. She therefore assumes there can be no complications, and even believes herself to

be overwhelmingly in love. She sees him as fresh, and unspoiled; frequently picturing him as a cadet, implying a background of honour, discipline, and candour. However Kurt is simply a handy canvas for Sonja to project her fantasy of an ideal man: ‘Kurts Gesicht war vor allem jung. Das war sein wesentlichstes Merkmal[.]’ (126) She interprets his reticence as consideration and shyness, only later discovering it is to conceal the fact that he is living with his lover and their child. The brief respite offered by this relationship serves to emphasise how alone she is.

Sonja and Sebastian’s love affairs reveal a fundamental difference between them: while Sonja feels forced to play roles for her suitors, Sebastian is able to retain his identity, sense of self and boundaries. His relationships are also less complicated than Sonja’s because he is involved with only one woman at a time. Sebastian is very self-contained, as can be seen by the ease with which he settles into his room in Paris. After unpacking his small number of possessions, he thinks: ‘Man war wieder einmal zu Hause’ (48). He has need of few possessions to feel at ease, and the small income he gets from his relatives affords him financial independence. The narrator comments on his preparedness to accept gifts from friends, and on the moral casualness that is typical of the world in which he lives:

Sebastian war frei. Das war der einzige große Luxus, den er sich leistete – und es war der größte, den man sich leisten konnte in dieser Zeit [...] Er war anspruchlos und geschickt; bei aller Nachlässigkeit und Weichheit sehr elastisch. Andere Menschen helfen ihm gern, und er ließ sich gerne von ihnen helfen. (48)

He has no real ties in terms of family, work or friends; he appears not to stay in touch with his Berlin friends, and spends little time with Sylvester in Paris. He

seems to make and lose friendships easily, in part because he believes he needs to experience life to enable him to write well. The narrator at one point observes:

Mancherlei Erfahrungen waren ihm zugewachsen, denn er schloß leicht Freundschaften sowohl mit Frauen als mit jungen Männern [...] Er wartete auf Erfahrungen, die noch größer sein würden. Inzwischen lebte er, neugierig und geduldig. (49)

He has a similar casual approach to his relationships. Prior to Sonja, he viewed his relationships with women as transient, and therefore he can drift in and out of them. He is not an uncaring person, but his own needs are paramount, as is evidenced by his abrupt ending of the relationship with Do. When we first meet them, Do is still mothering Sebastian and still running errands to please him. He, in turn, is happy to be taken care of. Later Sebastian asks himself why he had to leave Do, concluding: '[e]s war eben einfach zu gemütlich bei ihr' (141).

Sebastian's abandonment of Do makes her vulnerable to the advances of Massis, who takes advantage of her grief to make her drug-dependent. Though Sebastian knows that Do will never overcome her addiction to morphine, and is fully dependent on the dangerous Massis, and despite feeling some residual affection for her, he does nothing to rescue her from the situation which his departure precipitated. He is even half amused at how Massis has gained control of her.

When Sebastian meets Greta in Paris, she is called the 'Königin von Montparnasse' (76), surrounded by admirers and would-be suitors. She is described as wild and dangerous, initiating contact with him by throwing plates at him in a bar. She is very different from Do: reckless, changeable, and intriguing.

[Sebastian] war nicht verliebt, aber dieses Gesicht erweckte eine merkwürdig tiefe Neugierde, ein sonderbar dringliches Interesse in ihm. (75)

Sebastian is both fascinated, and frightened by her: her fast, erratic driving frightens him, as does her intense need for him. The narrator highlights the mixture of coolness and desperation in her behaviour:

Sebastian hatte nicht vorgehabt, mit ihr zu schlafen, er war nicht aggressiver Natur, und außerdem hatte er geglaubt, sie täte es nur für viel Geld. Der merkwürdig sachliche und leidenschaftliche Ernst, mit dem sie zum Angriff überging, erschreckte ihn etwas; gleichzeitig rührte ihn das Hilfsbedürftige, gleichsam Verzweifelte ihrer Zärtlichkeit. Die vielbegehrte und beneidete Frau, die er auf der Terrasse des Montparnasse-Cafés hatte glänzen sehen, griff nach ihm, nicht anders wie ein Ertrinkender nach dem Bootsrand. (101)

Greta's recklessness masks a desperate fear of being alone. Similar to Gregor with Sonja, Greta shows Sebastian a side of herself which is hidden from everyone else. Despite the considerable differences between the two women, Sebastian's relationship with Greta follows the same pattern as with Do. He moves into her apartment, and she supports him financially. Given her economic support of Sebastian, it is perhaps not surprising that W.B.'s breaking with her precipitates the end of her relationship with Sebastian. She makes her will shortly before the crash, which implies that she had considered suicide, but the crash itself is ambiguous. Ironically enough, at the moment she thinks she could begin her life again, she loses control of the car. Sebastian's response is to blame himself for not having loved her enough:

“O Greta, Greta – ich habe zuwenig Liebe auf dein Gesicht verwendet. Hätte ich mehr Liebe darauf verwendet – ich hätte es vielleicht halten können.[...]" (238)

Their relationship is based upon Greta's need to have someone in her life, and Sebastian's financial dependency. Though he cares about her, he does not love Greta, and there is no real evidence to suggest that she loves him. When

describing their relationship, he suggests that they are bound by affectionate need rather than love:

“[...] Sie ist wundervoll zu mir, weißt du. Und dann bin ich dadurch an sie gebunden, daß sie mich im Augenblick so notwendig braucht.” (143)

Unintentionally Sebastian's impact on the lives of those around him is hardly more positive than that of Sonja's other suitors. Greta's decline happens immediately after Sebastian has been made aware of Do's situation, and still does not prompt him to act in a way which might alleviate her melancholy. He is too self-sufficient to sacrifice his own identity or freedom for another person.

Massis already has designs on Do at the beginning of the novel. Grete explains his dislike of Sebastian as an indication of his desire for Do, and once Sebastian has departed for Paris, Massis becomes the centre of the circle that Sebastian held together. Despite her initial distrust of him, Do visits Massis to express her grief for Sebastian. As with other characters, Do deceives herself as to Massis' intentions, regarding him as a kind of priest, unaware of his feelings for her. He in turn plays the chivalrous rescuer. On her first visit after Sebastian has left, Massis gives her a 'Beruhigungsmittel' (41), in reality an injection of morphine. This is the first sign of her self-destructive tendencies, as she goes against her instinctive horror of drugs to let him inject her. As her addiction to the morphine supplied by Massis develops, so their relationship begins, culminating in their marriage. She realises she is completely in his power, even that he may kill her, but cannot prevent herself from being drawn to destruction:

“Also, heirate deinen Massis”, sagte Sebastian, traurig und zärtlich. “Er wird dich umbringen.”

“Glaubst Du?” fragte sie, aber nicht angstvoll, mehr sachlich interessiert.
(146)

At the end of the novel, Do is no longer a healthy, attractive woman, she is a shadow of her former self: dependent and unhappy. Even Massis no longer desires her, adopting the new role of strict parent to maintain the distance between them.

Grete is also a member of Sebastian's circle, as well as being employed as Massis' receptionist. By chance she makes the acquaintance of Konsul Bruch, a wealthy and influential man, who previously had designs on Sonja. Grete goes along with Bruch's mistaken assessment of her age and background, as she knows he has a weakness for young actresses. Again she is a character who hides behind a fiction to achieve a certain result. However her relationship with Bruch is not entirely mercenary on her part, because she thinks she could develop affection for him: 'Ein Schwein, dachte Frau Grete. Aber ich könnte ihn gern haben' (172).

The revelation of the existence of her son Walter, means that the truth about Grete's past comes out. Bruch responds by dissolving their engagement, and paying her off. His regard for her is based entirely upon a fantasy, and therefore he can dismiss her without regret. Grete begins the novel as a vital woman, but she is finally broken by this disappointment. Like so many characters in the novel, she, too, is a failure.

Richard Darmstädter falls in love with Frau Grete's son Walter, whom he knows as Tom. Richard is an inherently depressive person, having attempted suicide twice before, once over an unrequited infatuation, once because of the oppression he felt at being forced to work in a bank. He is almost too sensitive to cope in the real world, and his inclinations towards the melodramatic and illusory lead him to

believe himself in love with a person whose real name he does not know, and who cannot return his affection.

“Er hat das Gesicht meines Schicksals”, erklärte Richard dem Doktor Massis. – “Dann dürfen Sie ihm nicht ausweichen”, sagte der Doktor leise, zart und exakt. (175)

Having persuaded Walter to come travelling with him, Richard still continues to imagine that he and Walter share that fundamental connection that he craves. He writes to Massis:

“Ich erlebe hier Wochen von einer Seligkeit, die Ihnen unvorstellbar sein muß. Täglich versenke ich mich tiefer und inniger in Toms Wesen, als es mir möglich wäre, wenn ich jede Nacht mit ihm schliefe. Seine unergründliche Einfachheit, seine Reinheit erschüttern mich jeden Morgen aufs neue. Er ist und bleibt für mich das Phänomen [...] des vollkommen naturnahen, des wahrhaft unverdorbenen Menschen.” (201)

What he sees as Walter’s purity is in fact roughness, and mediocrity. Moreover, Walter has no interest in Richard other than as a “meal-ticket”, preferring to spend his time pursuing women.

Richard war viel allein und hatte viel Zeit für seine Geistessorgen [...] Aber die paar Stunden, die Richard an Toms Bett sitzen durfte, oder ein Spaziergang zu zweit in der Nacht, oder ein Frühstück, wo sie zusammen Unsinn trieben und lachten und mit den Kissen warfen – entschädigten ihn für alles. (201)

Again the narrator is forthright in his analysis of the emptiness of particular relationships. Faced with his unrequited love for ‘Tom’, and his perilous financial situation,¹⁴ Richard decides to commit suicide,¹⁵ believing it will enable him to provide for Walter’s future, and spite his father. His death will be his gift to the

¹⁴ ‘Also: was würde ich eigentlich machen, wenn die vierundzwanzigtausend Mark verbraucht sind?’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.211.

¹⁵ It seems likely that Richard must have considered suicide before leaving with Walter, otherwise his revolver would not have been with him.

young man.¹⁶ It is intended to be a romantic gesture, but it is completely wasted.

Richard grossly misjudges Walter, who is not worthy of his love, and certainly not worthy of his suicide. This is the most extreme example of the self-deception exhibited by many of the characters: on the same day that Richard writes to Massis about how happy he is, he begins his work on the ‘Einsamkeitsproblem’ (202), yet his thoughts are occupied with the fact that Walter will not sleep with him.

Equally unfortunate is the relationship between W.B. and Greta. Greta sacrifices her career at its height, to become W.B.’s mistress, letting him isolate her from all that could keep her independent from him, and becomes a kept woman in Paris.

“Ich gab es dann auf, dem alten W.B. zuliebe. Er verlangte es einfach. Aber wirklich, er hat mich sehr entschädigt[.]” (100)

She tells Sebastian that W.B. was cruel to her, but she is still happy to let him control her life. Though theirs is not an exclusive relationship, Greta clearly dotes on him.

Greta, mit Stolz: “W.B. liebt mich! [...] [D]as was ich ihm gebe, genügt ihm. Ich habe ihn wahnsinnig gern.” (138)

To W.B., Greta is yet another person he can utilise at his own convenience, and once he has his sights set on another person, she is no longer useful to him. According to the *Kleine Journal*, he also ceases his financial support of her.

Unlike Sebastian, W.B. does not appear to blame himself for her death. Their relationship illustrates the cruelty and selfishness in W.B.’s character, and

¹⁶ ‘Ich schenke ihm meinen Tod.’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.210.

indicates what might happen to Sonja if she lets him determine the course of her life.

Similarly the function of W.B.'s wife Julia is mainly to illustrate her husband's cruelty, and to indicate what position Sonja might find herself in if she married him. Serial adulterer W.B. bullies and oppresses his wife, forcing her to play the role he requires of her, society hostess, by threatening her with institutionalisation if she disobeys him. Sonja believes that Julia's madness stems from W.B.'s treatment of her:

Sonja nickte. "Ohne Frage, geisteskrank ist sie. Sie können sie gewiß internieren lassen. Zu überlegen ist nur, was sie geisteskrank gemacht hat und ob sie nicht vielleicht zu heilen wäre, wenn Sie, W.B., sich etwas netter und anständiger gegen sie aufführten." (90)

He shows no compunction about wooing another woman in their home, even forcing Julia into her room so that he can proposition Sonja. As far as W.B. is concerned, Julia is of no use to him, so she can be dispensed with: "Die ist ein armes, erledigtes Wrack" (90).¹⁷ Ironically in the same breath he accuses Sonja of being unfeeling. When Julia finally has a severe breakdown, W.B. has her taken to an asylum. In what seems like a well-executed plan, he immediately informs Sonja that he is divorcing Julia, so that he can be free to re-marry.

Another patient of Massis' has an equally unhappy connection with another of Sonja's suitors. Despite initially disliking Gregor, at one point she calls him 'ekelhaft' (24), Froschel develops an unrequited affection for him which he encourages as it appeals to his vanity.

¹⁷ She is no use to him anymore, however instead of just divorcing her, he has her confined in an asylum.

Sie liebte ihn, daran war nichts Besonderes. "Sie ist mir wirklich ganz hörig," stellte Gregori fest. "Sie betet mich an." Es befriedigte ihn, obwohl es ihn langweilte. (112)

The final sentence from the narrator characteristically provides both psychological analysis and judgement. Gregor's need for adulation is paramount. Froschele is naïve and therefore taken in by Gregor's superficial charm, however when she refuses to give him her dog, Gregor cuts her out of his life. He even ignores Sonja's pleas for him to make up with her, saying:

"Sie interessiert mich einfach nicht mehr. Ein solches Wesen existiert nur für mich, wenn es mir bedingungslos gehorcht" (135)

This prefigures his response when Sonja defies him, which is to have nothing more to do with her. However Gregor's rejection simply increases Froschele's obsession with him, until the loss of his friendship takes over her life completely.

Froschele konnte kaum essen und schlafen, seitdem sie Gregori nicht mehr sehen durfte. Die Spritze wurde ihr einziger Trost. Einmal die Woche gestattete sie sich, bei Gregori anzurufen, um das alte Dienstmädchen zu fragen, wie es ihm ginge. (136)

She spends much time with Grete and Massis, and only Massis' injections of morphine provide her with any relief from her grief. Following an abortive attempt to free herself from drugs, her obsession with Gregor culminates in a public scene, where it is obvious that she has become capable of violence even against Sonja, and at the end of the novel we see her being forcibly hospitalised. She is a weak, naïve character, effectively destroyed by the treatment she has received from Gregor and Massis.

As we have seen, virtually all the love relationships in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen come to nothing. The same applies to the various friendships portrayed in the

novel. The breakdown of Sonja and Froschele's friendship echoes the dissolution of the friendship between Sebastian and Gregor, which is alluded to at the beginning of the novel. Froschele arrives from Munich with Sonja, having been Sonja's assistant, and her friend for many years. There is a hint that there may be some kind of attraction between them: when Sonja is described as finding Froschele's body 'bezaubernd' (24) and Froschele is said to be open-mouthed at Sonja's beauty. Froschele herself at one point describes her fixation with Gregor as an attempt to rid herself of the 'Sonjakomplex' (186). The loss of Gregor's friendship makes Froschele withdraw from Sonja partly because she believes Sonja cannot understand her pain, but also out of jealousy. Froschele in her turn cannot appreciate Sonja's state of mind, because she is too wrapped up in her own sorrows. Sonja's preoccupation with her various relationships makes her neglect her friend. This is best illustrated on Christmas Eve, when Sonja brings Christmas presents to Froschele in hospital, but leaves to spend Christmas with W.B., leaving her friend feeling bitter and abandoned:

Früher stand ich doch anders mit Sonja. Sie war doch, war doch meine Freundin. Daß sie jetzt noch so weihnachtlich vorbeigesummt kam, war ja ganz aufmerksam. Christnacht mit dem alten Bayer: ist ja ein Witz. Bayer ist isrealitisch. (186)

They are both sensitive, and vulnerable, and the environment in Berlin has damaged them both. The trauma they have suffered there has separated them; their preoccupations with their own problems have rendered them unable to communicate with and hence comfort one another, further compounding both trauma and separation.

The friendship between Gregor and Sebastian illustrates the conflict between two types of artist; however it is a friendship which is over by the start of the novel. Although it is evident that Sebastian is very shaped by his friendship with Gregor, continually revisiting his feelings towards Gregor, Sebastian seems to have had little lasting influence on Gregor. When Sebastian leaves Paris, he is thinking about Gregor rather than Do, angry that Gregor did not come to the station to say goodbye to him. It would even seem that his jealousy of Sonja is one of the factors that prompts him to go to Paris, as well as their opposing views of the artistic world. Gregor has come to consider art as entertainment which should pander to the taste of the masses, and changes his repertoire to increase his own popularity and influence. Whereas Sebastian still believes in the integrity of art, believing that Gregor has betrayed his talent. Once again, friendships are poisoned by the society in which they exist, Gregor happily lets Sebastian disappear from his life because he is not useful in Gregor's search for success.

There are also a number of professional relationships in the novel; one thinks primarily of those between Massis and his various patients (Richard, Froschele, Do, Grete, Julia Bayer). He exploits his professional position to conduct what he terms experiments on the people who come to him for help. At various times he is described as 'Menschenfänger' (34), 'Hexenmeister' (142), 'Satansbröcklein' (218), and 'Zauberkünstler[]' (166). Massis' depravity is shown most clearly by his manipulation of two of the most vulnerable characters in the novel, one of them he turns into an unstable criminal, the other he pushes towards suicide. Froschele is frequently described as looking childlike, which is equated with naivety, innocence and vulnerability. She is a country girl and unused to the

dangers of the metropolis. Once she has come under the influence of Massis he manipulates her behaviour to the extent that she becomes utterly ruined. Massis even expresses amusement at the extent to which he has corrupted her.¹⁸ After her unsuccessful attempt to cure her morphine addiction by staying in a sanatorium, Massis engineers the scene in the restaurant, where she has a public breakdown, both to observe her behaviour, and further his hold over her. He predicts she will end in prison, and encourages her to descend into criminal behaviour, even giving her the opportunity to steal from him, and falsify prescriptions.

Froschele is by no means Massis' only victim. Richard Darmstädter's chance meeting and subsequent infatuation with Walter provide a welcome opportunity for Massis to encourage Richard along a path towards self-destruction. After Richard has opened his heart to him, and explained the situation with Walter, Massis advises Richard to go away with him, confirming Richard's belief that there is no alternative.¹⁹ Having had Richard recount everything about his past, Massis knows that Richard's desire for the young man will be disappointed, and that this, combined with his innate suicidal tendencies, and feelings of self-loathing, may have severe consequences.

Eine Seele bot sich ihm an, die Geschichte eines Herzens öffnete sich ihm, das kostete der alte Menschenfänger wie der Feinschmecker ein besonderes Gericht. "Darmstädter, Richard", notierte er in seinem Haupt, "kein seltener Fall, aber ein höchst intensiver. Kurios durch das Pathos, mit dem er sein rassenmäßig und sozialistisch bedingtes Schicksal durchlebt. Typisch degenerierter Bourgeois, der weltanschaulich und sozial in der Luft hängt. Hinzu kommt die jüdische Problematik. Seine masochistische Hinneigung zu dem blonden Proletariertypus ist doppelt begründet: in der

¹⁸ 'Hingegen amüsiert es mich zu beobachten, wie weit ich Froschele bringe.' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.215.

¹⁹ ' "Er hat das Gesicht meines Schicksals", erklärte Richard dem Doktor Massis. – "Dann dürfen Sie ihm nicht ausweichen", sagte der Doktor leise, zart und exakt.' *Ibid*, p.175.

Instinktverlassenheit seiner *Rasse*, die sich zum Kontrasttyp hingezogen fühlt, und in der Untergangsbereitschaft seiner *Klasse*. Nicht originell, aber amüsant durch pathetische Heftigkeit.” (175)

The first sentence from the narrator highlights Massis’ delight in his ability to manipulate and destroy his patients. With machine-like efficiency he makes notes that are full of contempt. Most chilling however, is that Massis is making these particular notes while in Richard’s presence. Massis’ final “Andenken” (176) to Richard is to write an epigraph quotation on an academic paper he gives him:

“Das Paradies wäre eine Verbesserung. Aber das Nichts ist die Vollendung.
– George Clemenceau” (176)

Having persuaded Richard to pin all his hopes of happiness on to a relationship with Walter, Massis now reminds Richard of suicide as an alternative conclusion. As the consummate “Forscher”, Massis wields an almost godlike power, the power of life and death over his ‘Studienobjekte’ (215). With Froschele Massis subverts her natural tendencies, with Richard he promotes his natural tendencies. Though he is not the cause of their unhappiness, he makes full use of their vulnerability.

Massis and Grete share a somewhat sado-masochistic relationship, as they often physically abuse each other. Their relationship anticipates some elements from Hendrik and Juliette’s relationship in Mephisto. Massis enjoys being insulted by Grete because he controls nearly everyone else around him, and has ultimate power over Grete herself. The narrator comments on the perversity of their relationship:

[Grete] fuhr ihm derartig über den Mund und gab ihm Antworten von einer Keßheit, daß Massis erst sprachlos war, und dann aber in Wutanfällen durchs Zimmer tanzte. Es war deutlich, daß solch unwürdige und groteske

Szenen ihm eine gewisse masochistische Lust bereiteten. Manchmal prügelten sie sich sogar. (36–37)

As Massis' secretary, Grete knows how dangerous an association with him can be, and plans to get away from him before '[...] er mich kaputtmacht' (135). However, even her knowledge of what he is and what he will do to her cannot save her. Her escape plans come to nothing when Bruch finds out about Grete's past and breaks off their relationship. She attempts suicide, but is saved by Massis. However his intentions towards her are entirely sinister, and she ends the novel having lost her only chance to escape him. Many of the relationships portrayed in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen are symptomatic of a breakdown in society. Massis' extreme and conscious cruelty is almost an echo of the ways in which the remaining characters damage each other. Characters are inextricably linked to one another, and because of the poisonous climate in which they live, they are condemned to injure themselves and each other.

2 The Mind and the World

The world depicted in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is one where ugliness, amorality and despair are the dominant forces. People find no solace in their relationships with other people, in their chosen professions, or in the world around them, and only people who can place their own desires above all else can flourish. The characters in the novel are connected by their propensity for destruction, either by destroying themselves, or causing the destruction of others by selfish or manipulative behaviour. Even when they see their imminent ruin, the characters in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen cannot find the will to resist. There is a desperate helplessness, a fatalism and lack of meaning that can be sensed at every turn.

The propensity for self-destruction, exhibited by many of the characters, can be linked to the nature of modern society, and the prevalent cultural norms. Berlin is a modern, vibrant city, having access to and utilising all modern networks and modes of communication: telephone, telegraph, car, underground, advertising, newspapers. Paradoxically these networks and modes of swift communication seem to make human relationships more difficult. Life seems more frantic, more fraught, and even more dangerous. From the opening chapter with the traffic coming backwards and forwards, Mann establishes the idea of constant movement and noise, omnipresent and brutalising. The characters living in this world of continual flux, continual movement, and planning of movement, seem unable to stand still. Even newcomers to Berlin, such as Sonja, are caught up in this. As soon as she has arrived, she feels the compulsion to do something, even before having unpacked. She later notices that:

“In Berlin scheint sich alles wie in ständigem Krampf zu befinden”. (119)

This inability to reflect or stand still, and the almost manic search for pleasure is ultimately destructive, whether characters leave or stay in Berlin. As a newcomer to the city, Sonja is acutely aware of the destructiveness of this world. She sees it in the cruelty on the faces of the inhabitants:

Wenn sie von ihrer Zeitung aufschaute, kamen ihr die Gesichter derer, die ihr gegenübersaßen, von einer absurden Häßlichkeit vor, zerstört von Stumpfheit und Laster, Habgier und Dummheit. (122)

The sight of this palpable dissipation makes her feel that the whole of human kind is evil. She wonders:

Woher kommt das Böse in die menschliche Natur [...] Wieso mischt sich im Menschen Grausamkeit in jede Lust? Wieso vernichtet er lieber, als daß er zeugt. (123)

Even the fine society at the Bayers’ is repellent:

Sonja erkannte zunächst nur große Bäuche, über die weiße Westen sich spannten; Glatzen, Zwickerläser, Speckfalten im Nacken. (53)

“Das Gesicht der herrschenden Klasse”, dachte sie (Würgen, Würgen, Würgen im Hals). (58)

There is in this social portraiture the ferocity associated with artists Otto Dix and Georg Grosz. The Berlin elite merges into an indistinguishable mass of grotesque looking and grotesquely behaving people which disgusts Sonja. In this modern society lawyers mix with racketeers, diplomats with actors, bank directors and industrialists with prostitutes. The more Sonja sees of Berlin, the more unbearable the city becomes to her. It is as though all of her senses are assaulted and every sensation magnified until it is intolerable. She feels alone, vulnerable, and out of place.

Sonja tat gelegentlich, als ob sie diese große Stadt verachtete; in Wahrheit fürchtete sie sich vor ihr. Sie kam sich wie von tausend Seiten angegriffen, bedrängt vor, kaum daß sie morgens aus ihrem Hotel auf den Kurfürstendamm getreten war. Solche Vorstellungen hatte sie früher nie gekannt – „diese Stadt macht ja den Gesundesten hysterisch“, dachte sie wütend –: Aus dem Äther schienen unendlich viele aggressive Reize, feinste Schwingungen, die bissen und enervierten, auf sie zuzukommen.

Kraftfelder, gegen Kraftfelder tanzend. Strömungen, hin und wider. Wir, immer inmitten, Einflüssen ausgesetzt, von denen wir nichts ahnen. In unseren Leibern, unseren Hirnen verdichtet sich's zum intensivsten Gewebe. Unser Herz, ein bebendes Zentrum von geheimen Kräften. Wer weiß, welche Strahlen es seinerseits aussendet? Wer weiß, was wir wirken, indem wir leben? (120)

Her increasing desperation is underlined by the transition of the narrative into the present tense; this passage is a desperate, vulnerable interior monologue, one that expresses corporate despair, as in the insistent presence of the first person plural. Sonja feels the influences which surround her are invading her physical self, consuming her soul, and corroding the barriers which she needs to separate her from the rest of the world. Sebastian starts to resent the profligacy and superficiality of the society around him, once Greta has exchanged her bohemian Montparnasse set for the superficial, decadent Montmartre crowd. He craves the company of someone who appreciates what is happening in the wider world. Sebastian and Sonja both share a dislike of society, and the need to remove themselves from Berlin. They also have in common the fact they are disparaged by Massis: Sonja is of no interest to him, and Sebastian is lacklustre. They feel that they are out of step with the people around them, and show this by small acts of rebellion against what goes on around them: Sebastian refuses to emulate Gregor in his pursuit of fame, and Sonja does not follow her colleagues in thinking that making her name as an actor is the only important thing in life.²⁰

²⁰ There is one fundamental difference between them which is revealed during his arrival in Paris and her arrival in Berlin. As soon as she reaches her hotel, Sonja phones W.B., whereas when Sebastian arrives in Paris, he does not telephone anyone, he goes to sleep. He is less susceptible to the pressure of activity and role-playing than Sonja.

This feeling of being out of place is understandable given the psyche of most of the people around them. According to Massis the pathological is the representative state of society, and Sebastian and Sonja are exempt from this pathology:

Das Pathologische bleibt potenziertes Leben, und richtig verstanden, ist der abnorme Fall repräsentativer als der normale.

[...] Der durch und durch pathologische und exzentrische Richard bedeutete mir geradezu den Repräsentanten einer ganzen Schicht, die Hunderttausende umfaßt. In ihm ist nur eine Situation pointiert sichtbar geworden, die in unzähligen anderen Fällen nicht deutlich werden konnte, mangels Temperament und Begabung ihrer Träger.

Was ist im Grunde das Uninteressante an einem Mädchen wie dieser Sonja? *Daß sie nicht pathologisch ist.* Einem naiven Beobachter würde sie am ehesten von allen als Repräsentantin einer Generation gelten. Ich finde sie in der Tat kaum der Beachtung wert. (215)

For Massis only pathology is of interest because it embodies heightened intensified life. Furthermore that heightened exceptional condition is the truest expression of society in general. This insistence that only the exceptional is the typical is another sign of how out of joint the times are. Alison Lisa Ford writes that Massis finds Richard exceptional precisely because he commits suicide:

It is the act of committing suicide [...] that makes him exceptional and earns Massis' commendation. When he claims that the countless, anonymous others lack both his 'Temperament' und 'Begabung', he criticises them for their inability to express the negative sides of their personalities.²¹

Sonja in particular is the antithesis to Massis. He has little or no emotional feeling, so he can manipulate and abuse people without compunction, while Sonja is an emotional sponge for all the people around her, which proves detrimental to her wellbeing. Society is sick, hence only the atypical person may enshrine the possibility of health and decency. We see innocent or naïve characters corrupted.

²¹ Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.331.

The young, childlike Froschel is ruined, as is the girl Sebastian meets on the train to Paris, Annemarie. Froschel becomes a thief and is on the path to becoming a murderer, Annemarie has become a prostitute, modelling herself on the ill-fated Greta. Like Sebastian and Sonja, Froschel and Annemarie are seen departing from or arriving into Berlin simultaneously. Our last glimpse of both these characters paints a pessimistic picture of what the future holds for them.

In this kind of society it is paradoxically the satirical gossip columnist, Maurice Larue, who serves as the high-priest figure, arguably even the moral core holding everything together. He observes the activities around him, discovering and disclosing the misdemeanours of the wealthy and influential. Sonja believes that his function in society is not merely frivolous:

[I]n seinen boshaften und klugen Augen glaubte sie manchmal beinahe etwas wie Weisheit zu erkennen [...] Sonja empfand ihn als eine Art verbindendes Element zwischen den Menschen, das händereibend von einem zum anderen trippelt, nicht nur Bosheit säend, sondern auch Begütigung. (81)

Larue himself, in the opening lines of his book, acknowledges the transient nature of human civilisation in comparison with nature:

“[...] Wenn ich, alter und umgetriebener Kenner, Liebhaber und Genießer unserer Zivilisation, mich also daran mache, einige ihrer Kuriositäten zu beschreiben, tue ich das im vollen Bewußtsein der völligen Bedeutungslosigkeit alles menschlichen Treibens, das in der Tat nicht mehr ist als eine Laune, welche die große Natur sich leistet.” (286)

The gossip columns of the newspapers are the weapons of Larue and others like him. The *Kleine Journal* reports on the connections between Greta's death, Froschel's public breakdown, and Sonja's departure from Berlin, and hints at the

possible link to Richard's suicide. Through this disclosure, W.B., albeit in a limited way, is brought to account for his treatment of Greta.

Maurice Larue's denunciatory journalism is central to the savage social criticism which informs the novel at every turn. While the ruling classes enjoy their excesses, there are millions of other Germans threatened by unemployment, and poverty. Occasionally this "real world" intrudes on the merrymaking: Grete's hungry son Walter appears at the Red Domino club,²² the theatre critic at W.B.'s party mentions the four million unemployed in Germany,²³ W.B.'s kitchen boy's family is starving, a group of Nazis march past Massis' office, Herr Müller has to work hard to support his recently unemployed wife and brother, Sonja picks up a starving man in the road.²⁴ These glimpses of another world warn of the discontent in the wider populace which will eventually have devastating consequences for all the characters. W.B. gives Sonja an expensive piece of jewellery, while skimping on the Christmas money he gives his servants. The inequality is clear, and remarked upon by at least one of W.B.'s young servants. For young men like Willi Müller, who have lost their jobs and face an uncertain future, Hitler and Goebbels represent hope for a better future:

²² 'An seiner Mutter vorbei sagte [Walter] zu Richard Darmstädter: "Es schneit draußen. Geh' ich erst gar nicht ins Bett, sondern stell' mich gleich an, daß ich zum Schneeschaufeln drankomme. Ich bin nämlich arbeitslos." (Arbeitslos – Wort aus anderer Welt, Wort mit Zentnergewicht niederstürzend in das parfümierte, von Juchzern erfüllte Etablissement.)' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.72. The bracketed sentence is a characteristically forthright narrative judgement.

²³ ' [...] Man schämt sich halb tot wenn man von den vier Millionen Arbeitslosen liest oder daß eine halbe Million Chinesen glatt verhungert sind. Man schreibt trotzdem seinen Schmus. Inzwischen kann das demokratische Blatt, für das man arbeitet, jeden Tag von den Kommunisten oder den Nazis in die Luft gesprengt werden – –' *Ibid*, p.73.

²⁴ 'Er schien erstaunt daß ein Mensch sich um ihn bemühte. Es stellte sich heraus, daß er seit drei Tagen nichts gegessen hatte. Er biß gierig in das Stück Schokolade, das Sonja ihm gab. Aber kaum daß er es herunterhatte, mußte er sich erbrechen.' *Ibid*, p.244.

“Goebbels ist der einzige Mann in Deutschland, der uns davor bewahren wird, vollständig von den Juden und den Franzosen ausgezogen zu werden”, behauptete Willi[.] (163)

Unlike Gregor and Massis, the other two Nazi-sympathising characters, Willi believes Nazism can resolve Germany’s social and economic problems. He hero-worships Goebbels and Hitler, collecting their signed pictures, as though they were film stars. He exemplifies a generation which, caught up in a societal crisis, is easily led down an extreme path.

The modern world as exemplified by Berlin society is brutal and frightening, its destructiveness is a precursor to the topsy-turvy world portrayed in Mephisto and Der Vulkan. Moral values are upside down, priorities all wrong, (as can be seen by the reporting of the Lillyclare wedding, where even the liberal newspapers take a keen interest in the details of the event), but the glimpses of the real world are a portent of the destruction of this society as part of the worldwide devastation that is to come. The only hope for the characters is to escape from this world. Sonja and Sebastian are spiritually connected, but they do not meet until they are away from Berlin, in a place which has a completely different culture and landscape. Unfortunately, even there they cannot overcome the nemesis which awaits their generation.

The sense of darkness being unleashed in society is articulated in the clash between the two contrasting pairs of characters: Massis and Gregor represent the dark and demonic, Sebastian and Sonja the need to resist this. Massis and Gregor are identified with one another, because of their alliance at the close of the novel, and because they are the only two characters able to flourish in this world. Massis,

in part, cultivates a demonic aura, while Gregor tries to appear sincere, and charming. Both however have the same goal: the furthering of their own personal power. Massis' desire is to dominate other individuals, Gregor's to achieve fame and all that accompanies it. While Massis and Gregor have reinvented themselves, each wearing a carefully constructed mask, Sonja and Sebastian attempt to find their real selves, and search for something to give meaning to their lives. Massis can be taken to represent evil: apart from being described in satanic terms,²⁵ and identified with dark magic, his corruption of Froschel, Do, and Grete is manifestly Mephistophelean; the injection into their blood is a kind of pact with devil.²⁶ They absorb his corruption internally both physically and morally. He is masterly in his ability to render this monstrosity palatable: 'Massis selbst pflegte über seine Dämonie zu scherzen' (31).

He regards those other characters who come under his influence as 'Studienobjekte' (215), of which Froschel is his most successful experiment. It amuses him how easily she has taken to a life of dissipation, and he manipulates her into greater and greater excesses by placing temptation or provocation in front of her.²⁷ Gregor is also seen as frightening and poisonous. Leu, Froschel's little dog, shivers when he hears Gregor approaching, and again the narrator directs the reader as to the shortcomings of this character by stating categorically that Gregor's superficial charm is based on something unhealthy:

Die Energien, mit denen er die ständige Hochspannung seines Tages bestritt, waren keineswegs gespeist auf den soliden Quellen einer starken Vitalität,

²⁵ Do's dependency on Massis is a 'Zauber' (142) she has succumbed to, and Massis is a 'Zaubermeister['] (168).

²⁶ Drugs are identified with demonic influence, when Sonja takes the hashish, she feels as though she were possessed, and while drugged she resists sleep, fearing she will go to hell.

²⁷ It even seems likely that Massis somehow orchestrated the scene in the restaurant, which finally leaves Froschel completely incapacitated.

vielmehr erzwang er sie mittels einer hysterischen Verkrampfung [...] Sie gab seinem Wesen den phosphoreszierenden Charme, die Elastizität, die Unwiderstehlichkeit; sie verlieh seinen übertriebenen geistigen Ansprüchen, seinem intellektuellen Hochstaplertum den Schwung und die fieberhafte Intensität, dank denen sie fast überzeugten. (106)

Comparing Gregor's charm to phosphorus underlines his poison as well as his brilliance. By contrast there is little tangible good in the novel. Though the narrator has sympathy for Sonja and Sebastian in their quest for personal integrity, they are ineffectual in comparison to Massis and Gregor. Instead, their actions help to create more victims for Massis: Sonja brings Froschel, and Sebastian brings Do under Massis' spell. Arguably, the presence of Sonja in W.B.'s life also causes Julia to fall under the influence of Massis. More than anything, Massis profits from the harm that other characters do to one another. There is no real opposition to the evil of Massis and Gregor, Mann is unable to hold out any hope for society. Sebastian and Sonja recognise Gregor and Massis for what they are, but they do not oppose them. Massis dislikes both Sebastian and Sonja, as he cannot manipulate them, and they in turn have seen through the superficial Gregor. The partnership of Massis and Gregor, alluded to in the closing pages of the novel, is the combination of the single-minded careerist, and a man who can manipulate the weak into becoming little better than caricatures of themselves. We see a potential application of Massis' power on a wider scale when he talks about the Lillyclaire wedding:

Er wirkte, als befände er sich in einer Art Trancezustand – von angespanntestem Haß –, höchst eindrucksvolles und bizarres Schauspiel; alles horchte gebannt. (166)

His own powers of showmanship tap into the resentment and anger of his listeners to reach a crescendo of malice:

“Die Sache geht entzückend zu Ende, ganz Anekdot vor Ausbruch der Französischen Revolution [...] Kann dies denn sein? Vier Millionen Arbeitslose in Deutschland – und alle Welt hat in der Zeitung gelesen, daß die Blumen fünftausend Mark gekostet haben. Hat nicht sogar die Geduld Verhungernder ihre Grenzen? Wird keiner sich finden, der diese Lillyclaire aus ihrer Limousine reißt, um sie mit ihrer vier Meter langen Schleppe im Straßenkot zu erdrosseln?” (168)

This demonic little man has the capacity to stir up mischief on a huge scale. The future belongs to the partnership of Gregor and Massis and those like them, not that of characters like Sonja and Sebastian. They cannot find a place for themselves in this world, as we see when Sebastian and the dying Sonja cannot find a hotel room in Ouidjda.

This state of the world has rendered many of the characters wretched and they try various ways to escape from the world around them, or to make it more bearable. Drugs represent the most common means of finding solace, Do and Froschel take drugs to ease their pain and loneliness, Grete does the same to help her cope with her fear of the future. Froschel in particular cannot function without morphine:

[E]s gibt nur noch Schmerz auf der Welt. Nur noch Schmerz, und ich habe keine Waffe, gegen ihn zu kämpfen[.] (186)

Sebastian, Sonja and Richard seek solace in relationships. Other characters dream of removing themselves from the world. The rocket flights, which Massis' circle discuss, represent a futile hope of escape from the planet and from the terrors of the outside world. Their discussion of fleeing while the Nazis parade in the streets indicates that there is no capacity for real resistance in any of the characters, they would prefer to run away rather than fight, but, as Sonja and Sebastian discover, they cannot escape even by doing that. Other characters realise they cannot remove themselves from the situation, and must die to become free. When

Sylvester joins the army, he is not fighting; rather he is running away from life.

Sylvester tells the Duke of Aquitaine he is fighting for France, not for a tangible cause, but an abstract ideal of intellectual and racial purity.

Sebastian characterises the desire for escape as a search for something missing from his life,²⁸ Sonja as a respite from the world around her,²⁹ in fact both are looking for something which can give meaning to their lives. After seeing the word 'HINGABE' (124) graffitied all over Berlin, Sonja feels as though the world around her has been supernaturally transformed.

Das Gesicht der ganzen Stadt schien durch diese Aufschriften verändert; es war, als hätte über Nacht ein Atem religiöser Ekstase, ein Wiedertäuferatem die Stadt angeweht. (124)

She breaks down after seeing the graffiti, and the same helplessness overcomes her the night before she is due to leave Berlin. While travelling through Europe, she begins to feel afraid of her journey. The view of a surgical instrument shop causes her to have uncontrollable visions of blood and destruction. Sonja feels that she is about to die, and eventually begins to pray:

"Herr, ich bin bereit, mich aufzugeben! Zögere nicht länger, mich völlig in Anspruch zu nehmen, damit ich die Hochzeit feiere. Sind unsere Körper die Mauern, die uns voneinander trennen? Ach, wenn man nur einmal so zusammen wäre mit einem anderen, daß man *mit ihm* das Gefühl des eigenen Körpers verlöre – und körperlos eins mit ihm würde – und mit ihm singen, tanzen und fleißen könnte, ganz ohne Schwere, ganz ohne Ich, ganz identisch mit ihm und mit aller Schöpfung –" (252)

²⁸ Sebastian's decision to leave Berlin is based on a sudden 'Unruhe' (40) that had come over him.

²⁹ 'Das Leben sah wieder besser und sauberer aus, als Sonja erst im Ford saß[.]' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.243.

This search for meaning and desire to lose one's own physical self is echoed in both Sebastian,³⁰ and Richard.³¹ The tragic irony for Sonja and Sebastian is that their wishes do come true, they discover the person who shares their sensibilities and they sing, dance and lose the sensation of their own bodies; but unfortunately this moment is a prelude to Sonja's death, rather than the high-point of their union.

In the febrile society portrayed in the novel, theatrical artifice bleeds into normal life, and reality is obscured. Many of the characters are connected with the theatrical world in a professional capacity, but their role-playing extends both to everyday life, and the way in which they present themselves to other characters. People stylise themselves to hide their true nature. This may be to protect themselves, to further whatever strategy they are following or because society expects them to. In a number of cases this pretence is part of their own undoing, or used to destroy others (as in the case of the puppet-master Massis.) Appearance is paramount in this world, hence the significance and power of Larue the gossip columnist.

Both Massis and Gregor work hard to maintain an image which serves to help them attain power and influence. Gregor strives to appear charming, brilliant, and complex. Everything he does is calculated for effect; his gestures and words are carefully chosen and delivered, requiring an almost superhuman control:

³⁰ After pondering Massis' ideas about the 'Fluch der Individuation' (151), Sebastian, in the same words as Sonja, thinks: ‘‘[...] Ach, wenn man nur einmal so zusammen wäre mit einem anderen, daß man mit ihm das Gefühl des eigenen Körpers verlore – und körperlos eins mit ihm würde – und mit ihm singen, tanzen und fliegen könnte, ganz ohne Schwere, ganz ohne Ich, ganz identisch mit ihm und mit aller Schöpfung –’’ *Ibid*, pp.151–152.

³¹ ‘Oh, könnte ich mit diesen Rhythmen und Akkorden mein Blut verströmen, damit die Erde es tränke und ihre Blumen schöner blühen lasse.’’ *Ibid*, p.195.

Er spürte auf der ganzen Haut ein Prickeln [...] Er probierte seine Positionen vorm Spiegel: neuer Triumph, jeder Muskel straffte sich, wie er's wollte! – Der Wille schafft's, der Wille schafft's[.] (29)

The narrator's final sentence suggests that Gregor is in love with a kind of cut-rate Nietzscheanism. The "power" that Gregor wishes to achieve comes from success and fame. He sees conservative sensibilities and Fascist politics as the future dominant faction in society, and determines to use them to his own advantage:

So wollte er sich, so stilisierte er seine Person: er war nicht nur ein erfolgreicher Tänzer, sondern der Träger einer neuen Gesinnung, Repräsentant einer anti-individualistischen, zugleich volksverachtenden und volksbeglückenden Kunst für alle. (109)

Nevertheless Gregor still pretends to be courting fame for 'geistige Ziele' (106), and he is keen to cultivate the illusion that he has depth and substance. When Sonja visits him, he says she has caught him playing the theatre director, and asks: "Sah ich nicht colossal echt aus?" (221). This anticipates the theme in Mephisto of authenticity as a matter of performance. In pursuit of his ambition, Gregor continually plays the part which will give him the greatest chance of success:

[Gregor] brillierte und funkelte, zierte sich mit hochgezogenen Schultern, schielte verführerisch mit blaugrün schillernden Augen [...] Der Direktor [...] fühlte sich bezaubert[.] (29)

Gregor's performances are not merely reserved for those that can be useful to him, on occasion he is kind to Froschel for the gratification her devotion affords him:

Er war gütig aus naivster Wirkungssucht; aber darum war seine Güte nicht weniger unmittelbar, nicht minder charmant. (188)

In reality Gregor's actions, especially towards Froschel, reveal him to be cruel and selfish. Moreover, when he finds himself in a situation where his carefully constructed persona cannot be utilised, Gregor has nothing to say. When Sonja

ends their relationship, he is lost for words. Having no pre-prepared script, Gregor just sits and stares into the emptiness.

Massis' image is as cultivated as Gregor's. However, his main aims are to place himself beyond the comprehension of people so that they believe him to be wise, and to influence others by stylising himself as a mentor, father-figure, or spiritual guide. Unlike Gregor, he does not win people over with his charm and kindness, but rather by convincing them that he can solve their problems.

Sein Ehrgeiz war, vieldeutig zu erscheinen, was ihm bei seiner talmudistischen Verschlagenheit nicht übel gelang. Wozu er sich auch bekannte, immer ließ er noch geheime Hintergründe ahnen, niemals war im letzten festzustellen, wo sein Standort war. Was er preisgegeben hatte, nahm er durch ein ironisches Wort wieder zurück, und hatte er sich zu weit hervorgewagt, verhüllte er sich nachher um so gründlicher. [...] Dieses Spiel hatte denselben Reiz wie der Blick in den Spiegel, dem ein anderer Spiegel gegenübersteht: die Verführung der unendlichen Perspektive, die foppende Kulissenwirkung einer falschen Ewigkeit. (31–32)

The narrator's passionate moral disgust is quite evident in this paragraph. Massis changes stance to confuse and trap people, as well as to assert his mental prowess. His tactics are especially successful with the traditionally more impressionable groups of society.

Als geübter Menschenfänger und Geheimniskrämer betrieb er sein Verwirrung stiftendes Handwerk seit zehn Jahren mindestens. Schon auf ziemlich viele Menschen hatte er Einfluß gehabt, vor allem auf Frauen, aber auch zuweilen auf junge Leute. (34–35)

Massis dabbles in all kinds of subjects,³² and associates with many different social groups.³³ This is both in the pursuit of victims, as well as in cultivation of his

³² 'Pädagogik war sein erklärt Spezialfach. Ebensoehr war es die Philosophie, die Soziologie, die Medizin, die Literatur aller Zonen und Zeiten [...]; die Politik, Biologie, die Theologie, unter Berücksichtigung aller geheimen Kulte und Mysterien. Ein Gebiet, dem er seit neuestem ein auffallend starkes Interesse zuwandte, war das der Drogen und Gifte und ihres Einflusses auf die menschliche Psyche.' *Ibid*, p.35.

mystique. Even Massis' racial origin is difficult to determine.³⁴ As with the 'Kulissenwirkung' (32) of his persona, his study serves as a carefully constructed set, designed to make him seem attractively dangerous. Other characters call it the cabinet of Dr Caligari, full of odd artefacts, it is an amalgam of freak show and junk shop. He publishes on various areas of intellectual interest, including psychiatry, philosophy and history. However:

All diese Aufsätze zeichneten sich dadurch aus, daß sie dem Leser durch einen zugleich scharfen und verdunkelnden Stil imponierten. Der Inhalt der Sätze war nie ganz zu verstehen, deshalb vermutete man stets, daß sich noch die merkwürdigsten Erkenntnisse hinter ihnen verbargen. (36)

As with his intellectual mystique, Massis' prowess is essentially lacking in substance. His domination of other characters is both tawdry and unsophisticated. He manipulates the weak and impressionable, often by using drugs. However, even those who realise Massis is corrupt are taken in by his veneer of wisdom and overestimate his sophistication. Sebastian has some kind of admiration for his skill in manipulating Do, Sonja sees him as demonic rather than a charlatan. Other characters play roles in an attempt to fool the people they wish to court: W.B. attempts to portray himself as sensitive and caring to impress Sonja,³⁵ Grete passes herself off as a genteel and artistic type of person to hide her dubious past and win over Konsul Bruch.³⁶ Other characters have more complex reasons for

³³ He mixes in many different circles, but keeps them apart from each other.

³⁴ 'Es war das Anlitz eines feinen und sarkastischen Franzosen, pikant und überraschend gemacht durch einen slawischen, ja hunnischen Einschlag, der nicht nur durch den schwarzen, glänzenden Schnurrbart, sondern auch durch die zwar fein modellierten, aber entschieden zu hohen Wangenknochen enstand.' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), pp.15–16.

'Er hatte einen deutlich gallischen Akzent, obwohl seine Vorfahren seit verschiedenen Generationen Deutsche waren.' *Ibid*, p.16.

³⁵ W.B. seems shocked at Sonja's lack of taste by discussing money and social injustice while they eat, instead trying to paint himself and his generation as sentimental and selfless.

³⁶ Grete continually plays a part. Even her closest friends do not know the whole truth about her past. Like Gregor she hardly ever lets the pretence drop. Only once when on the U-Bahn to visit

their role-playing, Sonja feels forced to play the parts society seems to demand of her:

Ohne daß sie es wollte oder nur bemerkte, wurde Sonja nun doch ein wenig beeindruckt von all diesen gestärkten Hemdbrüsten, den schimmernden Dekolletés. Die Folge war, daß sie sich nicht mehr völlig natürlich gab. Sie überakzentuierte, sie stilisierte den Typ, als der sie eingeführt war, den man von iher erwartete. Diesen Typ konnte man als Mischung aus sachlichem Sportgirl mit Garçonneeinschlag und gotischer Madonna definieren; zugleich unnahbar und keß, melancholisch und aufgeräumt, körperlich tränert, doch empfindlich. (50–51)

Unconsciously Sonja loses her own truthfulness and then finds herself identifying with these types that recur in the advertising which so oppresses her as she travels around the city. She feels a similar compulsion to become what suitors W.B. and Gregor believe her to be:

Jeder hatte ihr gegenüber den gleichen pathetischen Ton, und jeder von beiden erwartete, daß sie ununterbrochen die Gestalt verkörpere, zu der er stilisiert hatte. Wenn sie mit Bayer zu Abend aß, mußte sie die grausam scherzhafte Amazone sein, die auf eine Liebeserklärung mit einem sportlichen Witz antwortete; und wenn sie sich nachher mit Gregori traf, sollte sie die mütterlich Herbe, die gütig Unnahbare, die sanft Verschleierte werden. (118)

Both men have in common that they profess her to be the inspiration for them to excel in their lives, though clearly their own need for power is what drives them. They are both ruthless men, yet see this vulnerable woman as someone to lean on. Ironically, she sees their cruelty and still feels obliged to nurse them, but her efforts to minister to them leave her feeling both alone and exhausted. Alison Lisa Ford writes that ‘Mann implies that through role the individual is empowered to

Walter, she feels herself to be unobserved and allows her mask to slip, which results in a change in her physical appearance.

³⁷ Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.315.

cope and confront society.³⁷ While true for some of the characters, arguably, in the case of Sonja, role-playing itself is destroying her. Despite how ‘frisch und unternhmungslustig’ (123) she seems to the casual observer, Sonja is being crushed by the life she is leading.³⁸ Like Sonja, Greta hides her fear and pain behind a façade of forced joviality. During her first night with Sebastian, she suddenly becomes frightened, and her face becomes like a mask:

Sie stellte den Motor ab, als bekäme sie plötzlich Angst weiterzufahren. Mit einem Gesicht, das von Angst und Trauer verstört schien, schmiegte sie sich an Sebastian. Ihn erschreckte, wie sie sich verändert hatte. Ihr Gesicht hatte jetzt etwas Maskenhaftes, das mußte ihm schon einmal im Dôme, eine Sekunde lang aufgefallen sein. (96)

Greta’s cheerfulness hides her deep fear. Once W.B. has ended their relationship, her frivolity becomes almost unbearable for Sebastian. Another recipient of W.B.’s cruelty, Julia, shows her acceptance of a role he casts her in, by commenting to herself ‘“Schließlich bin ich doch ein wenig geisteskrank”’ (76), when she feels too tired to play the party hostess. Even the minor characters play parts: Bob Mardorf pretends not to be German, and Herr Müller feigns ignorance of his wife and brother’s affair. Self-deception is also common, characters such as Sonja and Richard deceive themselves into thinking that their lovers are better people than they actually are. Many of the characters compound the misery of the world they live in by disparaging themselves in the name of impossible aspirations. A yearning for that which they cannot have, or which does not exist. Richard, as a Jew, feels that he belongs to a damned race whose distinction both exalts and destroys him.

³⁷ Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.315.

³⁸ There is a striking contrast between Sonja thinks and how she appears. She is falling apart, she but seems cheerful and healthy. Her state can be viewed as an analogy for Berlin and modern society: superficially vital, but fatally damaged.

Mit vierzehn Jahren notierte er in sein Tagebuch “Ich gehöre einer verdammten und auserwählten Rasse an.” Er war stolz auf allen Geistesglanz der jüdischen Geschichte, aber er litt furchtbar unter ihrer Schmachbedecktheit, unter ihrem Schmerzensreichtum. Alles, was “seinem Volk” in Jahrtausenden widerfahren war, glaubte er wie Narben am eigenen Leib zu erkennen. (173)

He has no interest in people of his own race, and desires only Aryan types he worships.

Mit jungen Leuten seiner Geistes- und Körperart verbanden ihn “höchstens geistige Interessen”; das genügte ihm nicht. (173)

Walter/Tom lives in the desperate pursuit of the projections of his own fantasy.

Richard wants what does not exist, and the only hope of achieving his dream is to deceive himself about who Walter is. Similarly, Sylvester, the absolute intellectual, worships the one thing he himself is lacking: a pure national origin, hence he exalts his adopted country, and desperately wants to become a Frenchman.

[Sylvester] mußte hochmütig sein, denn er war arm, und er kam aus einem Winkel Europas, aus dem zu stammen nicht ehrenvoll war. Wo Ungarn und Rumänien aneinanderstoßen, lag der Ort, wo er geboren war. Er war ungarisch gewesen, gehörte aber jetzt Rumänien. (60)

and

[Sylvester] mußte hochmütig sein, es war Schutzmaßnahme, denn er war von gemischter Rasse; serbisches Blut mischte sich in ihm mit mazedonischem; etwas keltisches kam hinzu, wie er behauptete. (61)

For this reason he adores his pedigree dog, Ariel, even sacrificing his own food so that he can keep him.³⁹ He chooses to live in an area of Paris preferred by the aristocracy, calling them his ‘Bekannten’ (237), although he only has a very casual acquaintance with one person there.

³⁹ ‘Er vergötterte das Tier Ariel, weil es vollkommene Rasse war, und er hätte um keinen Preis der Erde von ihm gelassen, obwohl es einen Luxus für ihn bedeutete, den er sich keineswegs leisten konnte.’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.61.

Another significant concept in the novel is that of the Partnertausch, a term coined by Fredric Kroll, a device which strengthens the concept of parallelism discussed later in this chapter. The frequency of the Partnertausch underlines the idea that the characters are condemned to repeat the same patterns of behaviour and feeling. Regardless of the person they are with, the characters always succumb to the same feelings, and perform the same actions. Although he has convinced himself that he loves her, W.B. tries to isolate Sonja from anything which will make her independent of him, as he did with Greta, and, like Julia, submerges her in a society which is abhorrent to her. The unfortunate Do, incomplete without a man at her side, begins to transfer her affections to Gregor once Massis has become bored with her, in the same way that she replaced Sebastian with Massis.

The idea of Partnertausch also underpins one theme which Fredric Kroll considers one of Mann's most significant, namely non-possession. According to Kroll:

[d]as Ethos des Nicht-Besitzens gründet sich auf das Erlebnis, daß jeder einzelne jedem anderen im wesentlichen unzugänglich bleibt.⁴⁰

Characters are powerless to make any positive impact on the lives of others, despite whatever they might feel for one another. Sebastian cannot prevent Greta from killing herself, neither can he prevent Do from continuing along her path of enslavement to Massis and morphine:

Trotzdem konnte Sebastian, dessen Grundfehler es war, die Angelegenheiten seiner Freunde – wie übrigens auch seine eigenen – zuerst ästhetisch, dann erst moralisch oder von einem noch schlichteren Standpunkt aus zu beurteilen, nicht umhin, diesen Menschen großartig zu finden. [...] Er hatte Do gerne, aber er glaubte sie nicht daran hindern zu dürfen, wenn sie denn zur Hölle fahren wollte. (141–2)

⁴⁰ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.155.

Once again, the narrative commentary combines psychological analysis and moral judgement; for the narrator there is only one way of interpreting Sebastian's behaviour; namely as a moral failing. Finally Sebastian is unable to save Sonja, even though he believes she gives meaning to his life, and impetus for his art. In this society, people cannot connect to one another, whether via affection, sex, drugs; each character is an individual and remains alone, no matter what affinity they may share with others. The characters themselves frequently ponder the question of how to overcome their loneliness and connect to other people. Many of the characters feel alone, whether they are in a room full of people, surrounded by suitors, or alone with the object of their desire.⁴¹ Sonja feels alone once her liaison with Kurt is over, even with the presence of two other suitors in her life.⁴² Richard writes to Massis about how happy he is to be with Tom, despite being preoccupied with the fact that their relationship is not physical. Greta feels alone with Sebastian, yet she, like Sonja and Richard, cannot bear to acknowledge that loneliness by separating herself from the person with whom she has, at least, an illusory connection. Do tells Sebastian:

“Massis weiß in allen diesen Dingen so unheimlich genauen Bescheid [...] Er sagt, der Fluch, den Gott damals über uns verhängt hat [...] bestände darin, daß die ursprüngliche Einheit des Lebens gespalten worden sei. Er nennt es den Fluch der Individuation oder so ähnlich. Einer findet den anderen nicht mehr. Massis behauptet, wir könnten uns überhaupt nicht vorstellen, daß der andere wirklich lebt, daß er seinerseits auch ein Ich ist. So gründlich sind wir voneinander getrennt. Ich finde, es wäre ja nicht so schlimm, wenn nicht gleichzeitig der eine so auf den anderen angewiesen wäre, zu dem er doch keinen Zugang hat, er kann ihn sich nicht einmal vorstellen, genaugenommen existiert er also gar nicht für ihn. Er braucht etwas, das gar nicht für ihn existiert.” (144)

⁴¹ Do feels alone again, now that Sebastian has gone. Massis tells her that is a ‘Täuschung[]’ (38). On the evening of his suicide, Richard suddenly notices there are many people around him. He is alone, despite being surrounded by people.

⁴² ‘Wieder allein. Sonja, wieder allein.’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.134.

The outcome of Sebastian and Sonja's relationship seems to confirm Massis' theory. Mann implies that this existential inability to find secure and fulfilling relationships may be a general human failing, but suggests that the historical situation, which has given rise to this poisonous world surrounding the characters, is also responsible for this endless waste of human happiness.

Not surprisingly, the psyche of this particular historical world is fearful, and in unguarded moments, fear can be seen in the faces of the characters. In the first chapter, as his friends watch Sebastian leave, he sees fear in their faces:⁴³

Auch was Frau Grete ihm noch mitteilen wollte, verstand er nicht mehr, er sah nur noch ihr aufgerissenes, nacktes und buntes Gesicht, in dem plötzlich etwas wie *Angst* stand – eine ganz wilde, unerklärliche Angst [...] Ehe der Zug in die Kurve bog, erkannte Sebastian noch einmal Dos Gesicht. Nun glaubte er auch in ihren Augen Angst zu finden. (11)

Prior to Sebastian noticing fear in his friends faces, the narrator tells the reader that:

Sebastians Gesicht [...] stand hochmütig über den Gesichtern seiner Freunde. Wie aus Mitleid beugte er sich noch einmal zu ihnen. (10)

Sebastian's feeling of sympathy for his friends is an anticipation of the fear he will see in their faces. At a subconscious level he too knows that his leaving means they have lost their protector.

[Frau Grete und Richard] überlegten einen Augenblick, was oder wieviel sie eigentlich von Sebastian gehabt hatten, genau berechnet. Es war nicht sehr viel, sie hielten ihn, bei all seiner Liebenswürdigkeit und Weichheit, eher für eine kühle Natur. Trotzdem hatte er, so passiv und nachlässig er war, die geheime Kraft, Menschen zusammenzuhalten. Sie fühlten alle, daß nun, da er fort war, Dinge geschehen könnten, die seine Gegenwart nicht geduldet hätte. (16)

⁴³ Kroll calls it a 'Crescendo der Angst' which starts with the expression of fear on the face of the dog Leu. Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.169.

Their unease is prophetic, a few months later, Richard is dead, Do is dependent on morphine and Grete is completely in Massis' power. Together, Sonja and Sebastian feel fear mixed with curiosity when they explore Fez; again this prefigures the uncontrollable fear they suffer during their drugs overdose and its subsequent after-effects.⁴⁴ The fear which the novel's characters feel is based in part on their individual precarious circumstances, but is also a symptom of the danger in the society within which they live. The characters know that everything is spiralling out of control, and that they are powerless to save themselves.

The characters are surrounded by signs of political instability. Society is breaking down, hence politics is becoming polarised and violent. Yet the characters' response to the political situation is for the most part emotional and unfocused rather than practical. There is no obvious political solution; hence the characters either talk in abstract terms, or discuss options which cannot possibly materialise. At this time, Mann himself had not developed a real interest in political debate, but Treffpunkt im Unendlichen at least reveals his profound distrust of Nazism. The character of the young discontented Willi, who becomes a Nazi supporter, prefigures Mephisto's Hans Miklas; we see both how youth can be taken in by extreme politics, and how extreme politics can be used by those seeking power.

Each character who becomes identified with Nazi politics represents a type of corruption which could also be ascribed to National Socialism: Gregor is cynical and self-serving, and Massis has a complete disregard for morality or human life.

⁴⁴ Sebastian sees terrible fear in Sonja's eyes when she has taken the hashish, and both re-live their drug-induced terrors every night.

However, Mann provides no tangible political alternative apart from Sylvester's blind Francophilia, which has its own disturbing aspects. Many of the characters are afraid and unhappy with the state of the world around them, but feel too helpless to take action. There is no sense of altruism or political alternative.

For some characters, art seems to promise a solution. Many of the discussions about the function of art in society pre-figure the handling of the same topic in Mephisto. Gregor is a clear forerunner of Hendrik Höfgen; however in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen art is seen as linked to an individual's quest for power, whereas in Mephisto, it is ultimately exploited for political effect. Sebastian and Gregor's friendship ends in part because of their differing opinions about art. While Sebastian believes in artistic innovation and independence, Gregor has come to see his artistic talent as a means to gain him wealth and power, by pandering to the desires of the masses:

“Ich verdiene mit dieser einen Inszenierung eine halbe Million –– [...] was sollen uns diese zarten, feinen Sachen, die nur die Snobs interessieren? Gebt dem Volke, was des Volkes ist! Strindberg war für die Inflation. Unsere Zeit des produktiven Wiederaufbaus braucht gesunde Kost. Die Kunst ist da, um zu erfrischen, nicht um zu zersetzen. Der Mime ist da, um zu tanzen, nicht um nachzudenken.” (217)

As a former collaborator and admirer, Sebastian judges Gregor's stance as a cynical betrayal of his talent. Massis, who regards himself as an authority on art, endorses Gregor's idea of appealing to masses to gain power:

Sie geben dem Volke, was des Volkes ist, ohne die verlogen idealistischen Kunstansprüche einer degenerierten Bourgeoisie zu berücksichtigen. [...] Ich sehe Ihre Sendung als eine eminent politische. Sowohl in einem faschistischen als in einem kommunistischen Staatswesen – die ich beide gleichermaßen begrüßen würde – wären Ihnen, Gregor Gregori, alle Angelegenheiten des Theaters wie des Films zu unterstellen. (288)

Sebastian and Gregor's difference of opinion with regard to the function of art in society is demonstrated in the differing success of Gregor, and Sylvester. Despite his intellect, talent and and prolific output, Sylvester cannot even scrape a living from his work:

In dieser verrotteten demokratischen Welt ist kein Platz mehr für einen wie mich. Die Ausstattungsrevue und der Unterhaltungsroman triumphieren.
(240)

The feeling of having no place in the world underpins all of Sylvester's paranoias: his feelings of racial inadequacy and his lack of national status. The only course of action open to him is to remove himself and his work from the world permanently.

“Ich wollte all meine Manuskripte, alles, was ich überhaupt je geschreiben habe – eigentlich heute Abend verbrennen. [...] Meine Arbeit ist zu schade für diese Zeit. Und zu etwas anderem lasse ich mich nicht herbei. Wer garantiert mir, daß künftige Generationen geistiger, menschenwürdiger, aristokratischer leben werden? [...] Seit ein paar Wochen bin ich naturalisierter Franzose”, erklärte Sylvester mit Stolz. “Un citoyen français. Ich trete in die französische Armee ein. Ich werde Soldat – und lasse das Schreiben. Meinen Ideen diene ich heute besser mit dem Schwerte und der Giftgasbombe als mit dem Wort, auf das niemand achtet.” (241)

At this stage in Mann's writing, Sylvester's decision to favour the sword over the word is regarded solely as fleeing from the harsh realities of the world. Later in Der Vulkan, where artists choose to go to war, this is seen as a viable if risky attempt to engage with the political problems of the time. The work of characters such as Maurice Larue is also representative of the prevailing fashion in art, as a gossip-columnist and author, his work both reflects society and panders to the appetite for celebrity trivia. Though he is not cynically trying to achieve advancement by appealing to the least discerning, as art rather than social commentary his work is tawdry and unsophisticated.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen shows a world where characters are beginning to realise how art, in particular the theatre, can be used for power and propaganda. The reader begins to comprehend how both art and people can be manipulated: Gregor wants to manipulate art to gain power, Massis manipulates people to gain power, encouraging them to give in to their most destructive impulses. If the fusion between art and politics is propaganda, then the collaboration of characters like Massis and Gregor illustrates the potential for using art to manipulate people and encourage them to indulge in their most destructive impulses.

3 Community

Although characters congregate in various groupings there is little sense of community in the novel. The characters exist in fragmented groups, fraught with tension and secrets. Despite the fact that there is much overlapping between the groups, and hence a likelihood that characters will be able to nurture relationships, the opposite is true, most characters feel like outsiders, unable to find a meaningful connection with other people and the world. Richard's sense of doom, because of his Jewish origins, feeds his innate tendency towards self-harm.

Sylvester Marschalk is Eastern European; the country in which he was born no longer exists. He speaks and writes in many languages, but has no real sense of identity. Countries, as well as their inhabitants, change boundaries and re-style themselves. The characters in the novel need to belong, to a geographical category, social grouping, or another person. Froschelle is separated from the place in which she has grown up, making her an easy prey to Gregor's facile charm and Massis' depravity.

In Berlin there are three main social circles: Sebastian's set of younger characters which is eventually appropriated by Massis; the society of wealthy industrialists to whom W.B. belongs, and the artistic community of which Gregor is a rising star. Sebastian's group of friends, which is initially quite innocuous, takes on a deadly aspect when it comes under the influence of Massis. The circle becomes characterised by the people he exerts his will over: Grete, Do, Julia Bayer and Richard, and the characters are linked by their drug-dependency, suicide attempts and general self-destructive behaviour. Wealthy society is represented by the Bayers' sham of a marriage, and Bob Mardorf, the gigolo who is welcomed

because he is from a good family, despite his dubious morality and uncouth manners. Berlin is characterised as a place where many people are miserable, and on the path to complete self-destruction. Sonja, who initially represents the strength and vitality of youth, almost has a total mental collapse in Berlin. Both she and Sebastian have to leave Berlin to find any peace of mind. The characters see no possibility of starting anew; they feel trapped in a world which is pretentious, hollow and vicious. Sonja's death perhaps justifies the sense of entrapment.

The artistic centre, Paris, is represented by, at one extreme, the community of artists (writers, performers), and at the other by hedonism and debauchery. Representing the former is Sylvester who deplores the ease with which the local women can be seduced, and on the other side is Annemarie, the young girl Sebastian meets on the train to Paris, who prostitutes herself. Greta spans both extremes, she is originally a dancer, but when she gives up her profession for W.B., she becomes a kept woman. When he meets her, Sebastian regards her as a woman who can be bought. Though Parisian society does not share the hopelessness of Berlin, its empty decadence offers little promise of profound human fulfilment.

A third community is that which Sebastian and Sonja attempt to create in their attempt to flee their world. Their rose-tinted view of Fez and their future plans are both founded in fantasy, and the description of Fez with its beautiful exotic appearance masking a putridity and lifelessness, echoes the similar idea of

superficial vitality masking decay and dissipation in the Berlin which Sonja has just fled:

Das Hotel bot den überraschenden Vorteil, daß es sich mitten in der alten, der eigentlichen, der arabischen Stadt befand, aber so raffiniert in sie hineinkomponiert, daß man sich auf einer anmutigen, dezent luxuriösen Insel von Terrassen, Blumen und Brunnen fand. [...] In den Gärten des Hotels mischte sich der Geruch von weißen, roten und orangegelben Blütengebüschern mit dem Menschen- und Warengeruch, der aus der Araberstadt stieg, und übrigens auch mit dem fauligen Geruch des Wassers. Denn das Wasser stank nach fauligen Oliven und allerlei Zersetzen und Totem; an den weißplätschernden Brünnlein des Parks ging man nur mit zugehaltener Nase vorbei. (261)

After they have survived their flirtation with drugs, Fez goes from being “their” city to a nightmare place which they struggle to flee:

“Wir kommen von Fez nicht mehr los”, sagte [Sonja]. Fez hielt sie. Die Gerüche von Fez waren wie eine Umklammerung. (294)

Their drug-induced adventure has deprived them of their money and their “son”,⁴⁵ and destroyed their future plans. Now Fez has become the place where every night Sonja relives her brush with death.⁴⁶

Fractured familial bonds offer little more consolation: Sonja and her brother Peti represent the only positive family relationship in the novel. Their letters are affectionate, and the boy regards Sonja as a second mother. By contrast Grete’s son Walter only turns up in his mother’s life when he wants money; he appears not to work, or want to work, and happily takes the opportunity to live off Richard. However, despite keeping the existence of her son a secret, Grete cares about him, fussing over him when he is ill, and bringing him food and money. The

⁴⁵ ‘Fez hatte seinen Salem wieder aufgeschluckt, das süßeste Geschenk, das es Sonja und Sebastian machen wollte, wieder an sich und in sich hineingenommen.’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.295.

⁴⁶ ‘Sie erlebte den Tod jede Nacht.’ *Ibid*, p.294.

liaison between Richard and Walter culminates in Richard's death, which in turn causes the truth of Walter's parentage to become common knowledge, wrecking his mother's relationship with Bruch, and with it any prospect she had of a secure future.

Richard's own family life is no better, his father dislikes him because his mother died giving birth to him. They also clash because they are different types of people: while Darmstädter senior is conservative, and robust, Richard is oversensitive and depressive, almost too sensitive to survive the world, hence his inclination towards suicide. Though he attributes his feeling of inner inadequacy to his race, it more likely stems from his over-sensitive nature, compounded by the absence of paternal affection. Even the Müller family has peculiar domestic arrangements (where the affable Hugo Müller knows his wife is sleeping with his younger brother, but affects ignorance both to avoid having to do anything, and because it suits him to share his marital responsibilities), and Sebastian and Sonja's attempt to found their own family by adopting Salem is unsuccessful. One of the most striking references to family is made when Froschel refers to her drugs as:

Urvater Opi, Urmutter Mo. Schwesternchen Euka, Brüderchen Panti – meine geliebte Familie. (185)

Froschel's reliance on drugs is the ultimate perversion of the family dynamic. She has lost the connection to her own family, and can only turn to drugs to replace them. This absence of familial structure is mirrored in generational clashes. Massis finds the younger generation 'verächtlich':

Nicht, daß sie ‘verkommen’ ist, stört mich – das sind bürgerliche Begriffe –, aber all das ist hohl, ich spüre dahinter kein Erlebnis, kein vertieftes Gefühl, kein Blut, keinen Kampf und kein Abenteuer. [...] eine ganze Generation physisch abgestumpft und daher auch im Geistigen unbrauchbar, unpathetisch und schlapp ihren phantasielosen Lüstern frönt. (37)

He deplores the lack of energy and hollowness of the younger generation.

However we sense that Massis is merely responding to the presence in others of his own deficiencies, as a justification of his treatment of them. Similarly W.B. characterises the younger generation, exemplified by Sonja, as ‘sachlich’ (92), and lacking in feeling:

“Reden wir ohne Sentimentalität! [...] Ich weiß es, ihr seid so. In diesem Punkte können wir von der sogenannten jungen Generation was lernen.” (91)

In fact he, rather than Sonja, is characterised by his lack of compassion and pity for other people. The main tension between the generations is not from youth trying to break away from the past and establish its identity, instead antipathy comes from the generation above. Those characters whom Mann often associates with father-figures are not attempting to guide the younger characters, but rather control or destroy them. Like Willi’s Nazi idols, they exploit the inadequacies and fears of the younger generation to gain a power which ultimately destroys those who follow them. In the other novels that figure in this thesis, the issue of community is urgently present. In Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, however, it is implicit rather than explicit. As the title implies, for most of the characters the point of meeting is not located in the finite, knowable world, but in some mysterious beyond, some compensatory infinity.

4 Language and Narrativity:

4.1 Structure

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is constructed to express a sense of fragmentation and confusion; the chapters are of uneven lengths, many characters are focussed on for a short time, and then disappear from sight. At the end of the novel, we do not know what will be the fate of many of the characters, but Mann leaves the reader with a sense of foreboding, and hopelessness. Mann is trying to convey a snapshot of society, which necessitates this uneven focus and abrupt ending. The structure reflects this intention; that which can be resolved in the length of the snapshot is brought to an end, the rest of the plots, and characters are abandoned before the reader has found out where they will lead. Thus the structural discontinuity echoes and expresses the experiential discontinuity.

4.2 Style

In Treffpunkt im Unendlichen Mann's style reflects the speed and pace of life in Berlin. He uses concise, even broken language and phrases to convey an urgency, and immediacy to events. The opening paragraph is a good example of how he communicates the sense of the pace:

Viele Taxis fahren vor; dazwischen, seltener, ein eleganter Privatwagen. Aus einem Auto steigt ein Mann, aus einem anderen eine Frau; aus diesem dritten ein Paar mit Kindern, aus dem vierten ein Paar, kinderlos. Auf dem Dach dieses fünften liegt ein großer Koffer. Er wird heruntergehoben. Es steigen aus: eine sehr große Dame mit einem blassen jungen Gesicht; ein kleiner Herr mit hängendem schwarzen Schnurrbart; ein junger brünette Mann, ohne Hut, mit offenem Trenchcoat. (7)

Mann's use of the present tense suggests immediacy, the repetition of the preposition 'aus' conveys movement, and pace. The repeated use of the indefinite

article tells the reader that these people are merely representative of the same habitual actions. He deliberately reduces these people from individuals to types by using simple physical details to define them ('groß', 'klein', 'blaß'). At this stage in the novel, this frenetic movement could be positive, indicative of industry and vitality, only later does the reader discover that Berlin is out of control, and that this activity is overheated and destructive.

As can be seen in this example, Mann varies his style to add emphasis and pace to his story. The cars stream backwards and forwards, all kinds of different groups of people appear and disappear. His repetition of phrases beginning 'aus' also underlines the pace of life. Throughout the novel he uses phrases and single words, rather than full sentences, as though he needs to achieve the sense of rapid impression. For example he changes scene with a few words: 'Haus Bayer' (73), 'Sonja, in ihrem Hotelzimmer, Zeitung lesend' (154). His summary of the characters' biographies is equally abrupt; he uses sentences which contain multiple abrupt phrases, often in the present tense, which echo newspaper headlines, and contemporary cinema newsreels:

Gregor Gregori ist erster Tänzer und Balletmeister an einem der Berliner Opernhäuser; Sonja, die in München engagiert gewesen ist, soll in Berlin in einem Gesellschaftsstück und in einer klassischen Rolle gastieren. Froschel lebt seit einigen Jahren bei Sonja, als ihre Freundin eher denn als ihre Angestellte. Sie ist in Landshut geboren und das erstmal in Berlin. (13)

Similarly Greta's past is conveyed almost in note form:

(Berlin der Inflationszeit, überschwemmt von Ausländern, zuckend in hysterischer Vergnügenssucht, expressionistische Dichtung und Kokainhandel, Untergang des Abendlandes plus Hochbetrieb auf der Tautzenstraße, schwule Bar an jeder Straßenecke, Grete mit ihrem Russen aus dem Wagen steigend, den er sich weiß Gott durch was für Schiebungen angelacht hat.) (100)

This paragraph, lacking a main verb, and sandwiched between parentheses forms a collage of detail: unrelated phrases co-existing in a breathless simultaneity of high culture and the brutal energies of common life. Along with the rapid changes of scene, this staccato language conveys the frenetic pace of life of his characters. A good example of this is when Mann describes the build up and occurrence of Greta's car crash. He switches between Greta's thoughts, her view of the speed dial (or what she can see), the movement of the car, her sight of the tree getting closer and closer, and then the various sounds and sights of the crash:

Scharfe Kurve der regenblanken Straße. Aber wozu jetzt bremsen, wo es gerade so schön war? Höchstens ein bißchen, klein wenig, un tout petit peu – von hundertzwanzig auf neunzig – –
Von hundertzwanzig – auf neunzig –
“*Merde – !!*” schrie Greta.
Der Wagen schleuderte.
Bremsen?!
Nicht bremsen!
Rasender Zickzack auf dem spiegelglatten Asphalt. Steuer gehorcht nicht – Wirbel, Wirbel, Wirbel. Und der Baum kommt näher. Baum wächst heran. Baum – riesen – groß. Und gleich wird es krachen; splittern, explodieren. Spitzer Aufschrei der Frankfurterin; Armfucheln der Männer. Greta, über das Steuer geworfen, das Steuer, das nicht mehr gehorcht hat. ‘Sebastian – alter W.B. – hat keine Ahnung – einsam – der ist eigentlich furchtbar nett – –’,
Donner der Katastrophe. Anprall, Bersten, Aufschrei, Flammenrot und Finsternis. (230–1)

Mann concludes the episode with a newspaper report which gives a detached and concise view of the event, it is the equivalent of a modern-day sound bite:

Auf der ersten Seite der Berliner Morgenzeitung. “Paris, 15. April. Durch Telefon. *Die Tänzerin Greta – im Bois de Boulogne tödlich verunglückt.*” (231)

Mann gives us the outward official world (newspaper reports) and also the inner world, as in the depiction of the accident, often as a frenetic sequence of thoughts and impressions. This juxtapositioning of styles is typical of Mann's writing in

this novel, where the reader is confronted with either the frenetic inner life or very detached documentation. There is no middle ground because of the schizophrenic way that society conducts itself, the characters are either completely detached or completely uncontrolled. This inner life is frequently articulated by Mann's use of a stream of consciousness technique, for example Froschel's inner monologue as she sits alone on Christmas Eve:

Feine Gedanken für ein Mädchen vom Lande am Weihnachtsabend. Was tun sie jetzt in Landshut? Sitzen am runden Tisch und essen Gansbraten. Roßmanns sind auch da. Bruder August, Diplomingenieur. "Nehmen Sie noch ein bißchen Gurkensalat, Herr Roßmann!" O Gregor, du hast keine Seele. Urmütterchen hat eine Seele, eine tiefe Seele, Mohnseele, wiegende Mohnseele, wie das Meer. Gregor, leider total seelenlos. "Leider total seelenlos" war vollkommen Sonja. Ich denke wie Sonja. Feiner Weihnachtsabend, das kann man wohl flüstern (seit wann berlinere ich denn?). Und wer ist schuld? Sonja. (185–6)

Mann varies his language depending on which character's viewpoint he is describing. Time and again he emphasises their confusion, and their inability to communicate with those around them. As in the main narrative, short phrases abound. Mann also uses varied narrative forms to tell his story, from newspaper articles to letters and diaries; he even introduces Sonja's brother Peti via an exchange of letters. The language of Peti's letter is vividly expressive of what a teenager would write, and Sonja's letter reveals another dimension to her character, her affectionate playful style contrasts to her obviously disturbed state of mind. Mann uses Peti's journal writing to show how much Sonja's death will affect him, and the extent to which Massis manipulates his 'Studienobjekte' (215) is revealed by what he writes in his notebook. Newspaper extracts reveal the rise of Gregor Gregori and the death of Greta, as well as the connections between the various circles. Again this style has a succinctness, sense of urgency, and frenetic simultaneity.

The novel takes place in various locations, and is told from the viewpoints of multiple characters, although the narrative does, in Sonja and Sebastian, achieve two points of coherence. Alison Lisa Ford writes that Sonja and Sebastian are lost in the plurality of the novel.⁴⁷ However while they are not the most significant or even the most memorable figures in the novel, they are set apart from the other characters, the reader spends the most time with them, and has the greatest insight into their psyches. They also represent a moral centre, and the only conscious attempt made to escape the cycle of self-destruction.

The idea of parallelism, which I have already discussed in exploring the theme of Partnertausch, is linked to the title of the novel, the characters are on parallel tracks, destined to meet only in infinity. Mann's use of parallelism is his most striking narrative device in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen; his characters continually echo each other's words, actions, and feelings. The implication is two-fold: in spite of the separation between them, they all belong to one governing culture, and they are like puppets in the grip of that culture.

The clearest parallelism centres upon Sonja and Sebastian: Sebastian's departure from Berlin is echoed by Sonja's simultaneous arrival in that city. Even early on they unconsciously mimic each other's gestures: Sebastian moves away from the window as he begins his journey, moving away from his friends, while Sonja, as she arrives, leans towards the window moving towards Gregor, Sebastian's old

⁴⁷ [...] Sonja and Sebastian appear merely as nominal protagonists, for their relationship is easily lost amidst the numerous secondary story-lines as Mann introduces the individual and collective fates of a further ten characters.' Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.286.

friend. They have similar feelings, in particular a sense of alienation from the frivolous society in which they live, and share similar experiences and acquaintances. Fredric Kroll notes the similarities between Sebastian's departure for Paris (a figurative 'Abreise') and Sonja's death (an actual 'Abreise'):

Vor dem Beginn der Handlung betrachtet Sebastian eine Austellung von Särgen im Schaufenster eines Geschäfts [...]. Auf ihrer Reise nach Fez, schon gefährlich überanstrengt, schaudert Sonja beim Anblick eines Magazins für chirurgische Geräte in Sevilla [...]. Als Sonja klagt, "ich habe ekelhaft Durst", und eine Orange pressée bestellt [...], erinnert man sich an Sebastians trockenen Mund und seinen zurückgestellten Entschluß, eine Apfelsine zu essen[.]⁴⁸

Aside from Sonja and Sebastian echoing each other's thoughts and behaviour, Mann also uses a technique of cutting together scenes which are occurring simultaneously to create a sense of the connection between the two characters. In Chapter Three Sonja is at the Bayers' party, while Sebastian is having dinner with Sylvester, and Sebastian's friends in Berlin are at the Red Domino. Mann switches between each of these scenes, to convey the idea that these individual narratives are linked by their coexistence in time and space. In this instance the scenes culminate with Sonja fending off Bayer, while Sebastian discusses Bayer with Greta. Once Sebastian and Sonja finish their discussions, they have the same desire to be alone and act upon that desire in similar ways.⁴⁹

Parallelism between the other sets of characters is also evident: lovers especially repeat the same patterns of behaviour. On separate occasions Do and Greta ask Sebastian: "Hast du mich gern?" (102 and 148). W.B. and Gregor both give Sonja

⁴⁸ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.170.

⁴⁹ Fredric Kroll also notes the strong structural parallels between chapters three and ten of the novel, placed as they are in reverse positions in the set of twelve chapters. They are the longest chapters in the novel, and many storylines which are mentioned in chapter three are resolved in chapter ten. For example Greta first appears in chapter three, and dies in chapter ten.

an ultimatum on Christmas Eve. Each tries to woo her by professing vulnerability, and a need for consolation in their difficult lives.⁵⁰ They are similarly ruthless when dealing with people who stand in the way of achieving what they want. W.B. and Gregor are cruel to Julia and Froschele, the former being replaced by Sonja in W.B.'s affections, the latter believing she is being replaced by Sonja in Gregor's affections. This rejection causes both to come under the influence of Massis, who along with Gregor, represents the antithesis to Sonja.

The parallels between other pairs of characters show the different paths available to each person, and reveal what the destiny of one character can be if he or she follows the path of another. The clearest example of this is the connection between Sonja and Greta, they are both described as being tanned, both are drivers, and refer to their vehicles as 'Tier'. Sonja thinks about Greta's car accident while she is driving, both are lovers of W.B. and Sebastian, both are given money by W.B., both support Sebastian financially, both are stage performers, both are connected to Munich, both enjoy their greatest career success in Berlin, and both die while in relationships with Sebastian. Sonja's final period of sickness echoes all the unfortunate women associated with Sebastian and W.B: 'Sonja, wahnsinnig; Sonja vergiftet; am Sterben Sonja' (269–270). Sonja is mad like Julia, poisoned like Do and dying like Greta. It is as though she is sharing the fate of all the doomed characters.

There are striking parallels between Richard and Sylvester, two other characters who never meet, but share the acquaintance of Sebastian and are the main

⁵⁰ Surprisingly Sebastian repeats Gregor's clichés, also objectifying Sonja. Gregor's cry of ' [...] Meine Arbeit braucht dich! Heirate mich!' (198), anticipates Sebastian telling Do that having Sonja in his life will enable him to write.

outsiders in the novel. Both are intellectual with interests in diverse creative areas. Both suffer from an inferiority complex stemming from their ethnic origins, and consequently worship what they believe to be lacking in themselves; for Sylvester this is racial purity, for Richard Aryanism. Richard is openly homosexual, while Alison Lisa Ford believes that the disgust Sylvester expresses at his easy conquest of Parisian women indicates a latent homosexual inclination.⁵¹ For both men the hopelessness of their social isolation means that they take drastic action to escape it, Richard by committing suicide, and Sylvester by abandoning his art and joining up, presumably to die.

Sonja, Sebastian and W.B. travel between Paris and Berlin simultaneously; characters drink coffee at the same time, receive telegrams at the same time,⁵² and continually mimic and echo each other's reactions and actions. One notable scene is when Grete and Herr Müller visit Froschel and Sonja. While Sonja and Herr Müller are out of breath from exercising, Froschel and Grete are panting in anticipation of the drug they are about to inject. The entire to-ings and fro-ings of the affluent classes in Berlin are mirrored in the shenanigans of Bayer's servants: Georg feels obliged to make love to Sophie even though it tires and disgusts him, and the kitchen boy considers it his duty to sleep with the housekeeper, because she gives him food for his family. Below stairs this is generally comical, above its results are seen to be tragic. The parallelism is very evident, but it never feels contrived, largely because the characters are so convincing. We understand the

⁵¹ '[Sylvester] hints at his latent homosexuality, with the euphemism "Abenteuern", when he confides to Sebastian "ich sehne mich nach anderen Abenteuern".' Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.293.

⁵² Sebastian and Greta receive telegrams from W.B. and Do at the same time. Both telegrams are to arrange meetings which are connected to their future marriage plans.

true significance of this parallelism, when Mann sets the activities of his small cast of characters against world events:

Auf der ersten Seite des Berliner Morgenblattes:

“Sensationelle Premiere der Schauburg [...] Italien feiert den sechzehnten Jahrestag seines Eintrittes in den Weltkrieg [...] In England soll ein neuer Verein für den Weltfrieden gegründet werden [...] Schießerei zwischen Kommunisten und Nazis in Berlin-Neukölln. [...] Die Nazis haben einen Toten zu beklagen. Sein Name ist Willi Müller, Bruder des in der Berliner Gesellschaft wohlbekannten Sportlehrers Hugo Müller.” (286–7)

The tension on the streets of Berlin, resulting in the death of a familiar character, is mirrored in the rise of Fascism in Italy and the inclination towards appeasement in England. In the middle of this political instability Gregor is a triumph. His ascent parallels that of Mussolini, confirming the identification with Fascism made earlier when Gregor is described as a ‘Herrenmensch’ (30 and 109). He has seized his opportunity and is set for success.

Mann’s Treffpunkt im Unendlichen works with conflicting structural strategies: on the one hand an omnipresent restlessness which conveys the pluralism of utterly separate, disparate lives; on the other, constant intimations of overlap, similarity, and parallelism which gives the sense that, despite their fragmentation, all the lives chronicled belong together in a corporate destiny. The characters are bound together in a society which is destroying itself, with the implication that they may be helpless to determine the direction of their own fates.

4.3 Language

I have already had occasion to note that the narrator so often passes judgement on his characters. Moreover the characters have desperate need to pass judgement on themselves and the world around them. Yet this judgemental rhetoric co-exists

with lengthy passages where the narrator assumes the stance of dispassionate reporter. One notable exception to this occurs in the following paragraph, where the narrator openly judges Gregor:

Man pflegt sich nicht zu stellen, die Frage nach dem: "Für was?", wenn Bühnenmenschen sich um ihren Ruhm bemühen. Gregors Wesen aber war von der Art, daß er selber sie stellte – ohne sie freilich beantworten zu können. Nichts – als – eitler Komödiant zu sein, wies er mit Hochmut von sich. Er prätendierte geistige Ziele, über deren Beschaffenheit er Genaues allerdings nicht auszusagen wußte. Sein Wesen war so anspruchsvoll wie unklar. (106)

The characters' own need continually to question themselves, their morality and their place in the world is reflected in the imagery employed in the novel. Mann's most striking imagery is that associated with physical vulnerability, continually reminding the reader of the fragility of life, and how overwhelming existence can be. We also see an early employment of some of the imagery which becomes important in his later novels, most notably the image of the 'Abgrund' (278). In this modern society the characters feel that they are continually under attack:

Sonja is skinless,⁵³ Richard feels his heart is naked,⁵⁴ Froschele's only weapon is oblivion in drugs. Though their sensitivity is an emotional weakness, Richard and Sonja both perceive it as a physical vulnerability. There are continual reminders of the vulnerability of the characters (whether real or perceived) via the images and language of disappearing, being drowned or losing their physical selves. Sonja and Richard are linked by the concept of disappearing: when suffering from the drugs overdose, Sonja calls out that she is disappearing. On the evening of his suicide Richard, at the restaurant where he is eating his final meal, notices how a

⁵³ 'Sonja, die wie hautlos durch diese Gesellschaft ging[.]' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.58.

'Sonja [...] verurteilt, hautlos durch dieses Treiben zu gehen[.]' *Ibid*, p.122.

⁵⁴ 'Das Gefühl – enthüllt. Das Herz – nackt.' *Ibid*, p.194.

waiter is keenly trying to remove the picture of a woman which has been stuck to one of the windows.

Ein Kellner war damit beschäftigt, an der großen Fensterscheibe, die zur Straße ging, etwas abzukratzen. Richard sah genau hin: es war ein aufgeklebte Dame im Badetrikot, die sich, Kopf voraus und in anmutig gestreckter Haltung, in ein imaginäres Wasser, beziehungsweise: ins Leere schleuderte. [...] Er kratzte eifrig an der Papierdame herum, und immer, wenn er wieder einen Teil von ihr abgekratzt hatte – die Füße oder die Hüften –, wusch er mit einem Schwamm säuberlich nach. Den Schwamm nahm er aus einem Kübel voll Wasser, der neben ihm stand. Bald würde die Scheibe blank sein, als sei nie eine Dame auf ihr gewesen. (209–210)

Richard's protest cannot prevent the image of the woman from being washed away. Similarly, once he is dead, and Walter has spent his money, Richard simply vanishes: it is as though he never existed. Richard has the creative ability to leave a lasting reminder of his life, but instead wastes his life in a useless romantic gesture. The picture of the woman in the Badetrikot is associated with Sonja via W.B.'s fantasy of her in a bathing costume. This association is further reinforced, when Sonja, while travelling through a bad storm to Cadiz, fears she will be washed away:

‘[...]Dieses Meer regt sich ja auch übertrieben auf, wegen des bißchen Sturms. Toller Regen. Er wäscht mich weg.’ (249–250)

Like Richard's paper lady and Richard himself, Sonja will be washed away and life will carry on as though she had never existed. Sonja's fear of being washed away is echoed in Greta's sudden fear and the narrator's comparison of her to a drowning person:

Die vielbegehrte und beneidete Frau [...] griff nach ihm, nicht anders wie ein Ertrinkender nach dem Bootsrand. (101)

Perhaps not surprisingly given these characters' feelings of physical fragility, Sonja and Sebastian crave to be bodiless. According to Fredric Kroll '[k]örperlos

sein, wörtlich genommen, bedeutet tot sein.⁵⁵ The images of defencelessness and disease connect to the idea that the physical self is fragile, the body is attacked on all fronts and is a burden to the soul. Sonja and Sebastian's desire for bodilessness can be interpreted as much as a desire for freedom as for death. They finally achieve their dream of transcending their physical selves when they take the hashish, and become bodiless:

Sein Körper war weg. Das Ich gehörte nicht mehr zu ihm. Das Ich, keineswegs besinnungslos, vielmehr in einem Zustand schmerzlich trockener Klarheit, gaukelte irgendwo in den Winden. [...] Die Bindungen, auf denen unser Dasein basiert, waren aufgehoben. Der Zusammenhang zwischen Ich und Körper dahin. Das Individuum – eine Täuschung. Ursprallung, Zerspringen ins Chaos. (275)

Moreover when they achieve their desire to be bodiless, Sonja and Sebastian yearn for a return to the comfort of their own bodies. Their own physical selves are not the source of their spiritual troubles, and fleeing their own bodies does not allow them to escape from the world around them.

Herr Müller makes a passing remark that the wisdom of the new generation is '[o]hne Gesundheit kein vollwertiges Leben' (158). Unwittingly he highlights the main predicament of the characters in this society; that they are not healthy and therefore cannot lead a 'vollwertig[]' life. Many of the characters have outward indications of their predisposition towards the pathological or unhealthy. While Sonja, Greta, and Sebastian have brown skin, indicating their resilience and vigour, characters who come under Massis' spell are often pale, or have an unhealthy pallor: such as Do⁵⁶ and Gregor.⁵⁷ Even Massis himself has skin which

⁵⁵ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 3 Vor der Sintflut* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.158.

⁵⁶ 'Die Farbe ihres Gesichtes war nicht gut, auch die Beschaffenheit des Fleisches besorgniserregend. Ihr Fleisch schien grau und zu locker von Masse; nicht schwammig gerade,

is synonymous with ill-health: ‘mattgelb, angegriffen und rauh’ (16). After taking hashish, Sonja’s uncharacteristic paleness identifies her with the other victims of Massis’ drugs. Character’s hands are another indication of their state of health: Sonja’s strong, brown hands contrast with Julia’s pale and thin hands, and Gregor’s fat, heavy, pale hands.

Mann also draws parallels between Massis and his victim, Froschele. Massis is first introduced with the neutral ‘ein kleiner Herr’ (7), by the end of the novel he is ‘gnomenhaft zusammengekauert’, and ‘verwachsen’ (292). Similarly Froschele is initially described as ‘winzig klein und verhutzelt’ (12), wizened, though not unattractive. She has the body of a fourteen year old implying that her smallness stems from her lack of maturity, so she still has the potential to grow. In her final scene of the novel she has become unattractive and deformed:

Wie sie herantrippelte, das Mienchen verzerrt, schien sie eine ganz böse Zwergin. (219)

The image of the dwarf implies extreme age, as well as lack of stature and ugliness. Froschele is no longer recognisable as the innocent, young girl who arrived in Berlin. Gregor is seen to be of the type most at home in this society, and the fact that his abilities are based on a foundation of hysteria, further emphasizes the idea that unhealthiness and the pathological is the modern mode. This underlining character of sickness in Berlin society causes Sonja to feel nauseous. When faced with Berlin high society, many of whom represent the dissipation and selfishness of modern society, Sonja feels as though she will be physically sick. In her last conversation with W.B. she says:

aber zu leicht, zu porös.’ Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.17.

⁵⁷ ‘In seinem fahlen Gesicht[...]’ *Ibid*, p.12.

“Ich kann nicht mehr – ich bin fertig – es war *zu, zu, zu* scheußlich – zum Kotzen, W.B. – entschuldige bitte – höchste Zeit, daß ich fortkomme –” (235)

These two episodes anticipate her attempt to rid herself of the hashish by vomiting, and echo Sebastian’s complaint to Greta that their current social circle “gut glatt zum Kotzen sei.” (225)

Eyes frequently function as the outward representation of the character of each person: Gregor has empty, dead eyes, indicating his lack of substance;⁵⁸ Massis has eyes which are hidden behind his glasses and only occasionally flash dangerously.⁵⁹ He is poisonous, but keeps it hidden. Annemarie’s eyes are empty because she is ingenuous.⁶⁰ Maurice Larue’s eyes reveal a combination of the sage and the cunning.⁶¹ Sonja, Sebastian and Greta at different times have eyes which are described as being wide open: they are thus open, honest people. Sonja and Sebastian in particular are able to see beyond the obvious:⁶²

[Sonja und Sebastian] standen sich direkt gegenüber und starrten sich an, mit wild geweiteten Augen, die nicht mehr das Naheliegende, nur schauerliche Fernen zu erkennen schienen. (277)

Sonja and Sebastian’s wide-open eyes reflect their ability to see what most characters overlook; namely their proximity to death. The most striking examples of this trait are when each sets off on their most significant journey. On the train to Paris, Sebastian ponders why he saw fear in his friends faces. This causes him

⁵⁸ ‘Vielmehr starrte er mit Augen, die nicht mehr schimmerten und verlockten, sondern sich glasig trübten, fischig und tot wurden, hinüber zu der kahlen, bildlosen Wand.’ *Ibid*, p.224.

⁵⁹ Massis eyes are hidden behind his glasses, so others cannot see where he is looking. ‘Nur zuweilen gab es ein überraschend dunkles und gefährliches Aufblitzen hinter den Gläsern.’ *Ibid*, p.16.

⁶⁰ ‘Über der Stupsnase hatte [Annemarie] runde und helle Augen, die Sebastian fast ununterbrochen leer und zärtlich musterten.’ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁶¹ ‘Augen, die sowohl weise als bösartig und sehr eindringlich blickten.’ *Ibid*, p. 52.

⁶² [P]lötzlich, die Augen weit, dunkel und todernst aufschlagend, küßte sie ihn.’ *Ibid*, p.101.

to recall the coffin maker's in the centre of Berlin, which he had only recently noticed:

In einem Schaufenster, wo normalerweise Zigaretten, Strümpfe, Bücher oder Kuchen liegen:— Särge. Metallene Särge. Särge aus Eichenholz, Fichtenholz, schwarzem Stein. “Alle Beerdigungsangelegenheiten für In- und Ausland erledigt promptest — —” Mitten in der Geschäftsstraße der Tod. Komisch. Der Tod — als Teil der Geschäftsstraße. Der Tod als Geschäft. Komisch, komisch. (14)

He is starting a new chapter in his life, yet he is thinking about death. Similarly when Sonja is escaping from Berlin, the sight of surgical instruments in a shop later causes her to have macabre visions:⁶³

“Madame wünschen Wein?”
Spaltung. Weggespült. Meer bricht in Zimmer. Gummihandschuhe.
“Eine halbe Flasche.”
“Rot oder weiß?”
“Rosé.”
Der Kellner ab.
Das Zimmer schwimmt in Blut. Porzellanschüsseln, Eimer, Messer jeder Form, Prothesen, Strafgericht Gottes. Verwüstung, Verwüstung.
Strafgericht, triefend von Blut. In einem Meere von Blut — Meer greift nach ihr — schwimmt der geblümte Biedermeiersessel. (251–252)

This reference to the flowery Biedermeier chair swimming in a sea of blood echoes the relationship between respectable façade, and hidden putridity which sickened Sonja at the Bayers' party. Sonja's response to the surgical instruments also establishes a further connection between her and Greta, as she thinks:

[...] Ich bin überanstrengt. Was ist neulich dieser armen Person in Paris passiert, der Freundin von Bayer? Das Auto an einen Baum. Rote Nacht. Blutgeschmack. Hand nicht mehr rühren können. Tot. [...]’ (248)

As well as thinking about Greta, her thoughts echo the images used in the description of the car crash, even down to the description of the hand of the

⁶³ Also ‘[o]hne Frage, sie hatte *Angst* vor der Fahrt. Den Blutgeschmack auf der Zunge, den sie aus dem makabren Geschäft in Sevilla mitgenommen hatte, konnte sie nicht mehr loswerden.’ *Ibid*, p.249

Frankfurterin poking out from under the wreckage. While Sebastian's contemplation of his own mortality is revealed to be a common occurrence, unlike Sonja he does not let it overwhelm him, counteracting the feeling by absorbing everything around him that he associates with life:

Sebastian kannte diese Lebenshabgier. Sie kam zuweilen, ebensooft wie das andere, das ihr vorangehen mußte. Jeden Blick, jeden Schritt, jeden Atemzug, den man auf diese Weise dem Besitz des Gelebten zuführte, um den Tod noch darum zu betrügen, sammelte man recht eigentlich für ihn – für den Tod –, der eines Tages seine dunkle Hand auf diesen hastig zusammengerafften Besitz der winzigen Erinnerungen legen würde. (15)

This preoccupation with death is echoed in the sense of leave-taking which is omnipresent in the novel. The 'Abreise' (10) is first mentioned as Sebastian bids his friends goodbye at the station.

Er, über ihnen, schon ganz isoliert, schon ganz fern, losgelöst und entschwindend. Welcher Schriftsteller – dachte Sebastian – hat gesagt, bei jeder Abreise verwandelt sich der, welcher am Coupéfenster steht, in einen Pfeil, der gefiedert ins Ferne zielt; der aber, der am Bahnsteig zurückbleibt, in ein Ei, aus dem die Bewegung noch nicht geboren ist. Stolz des Scheidens, des Bald-nicht-mehr-Daseins; Stolz des Sterbens. (10)

With this paragraph Mann establishes an association between the journey and death, via the word 'Abreise', which features strongly in the novel. Greta dies while driving, and Richard and Sonja die while on holiday. Alison Lisa Ford identifies Greta's drive through the Bois as connected with death, hence her insistence to drive on the night of her accident is shown to be a wish for death.⁶⁴ Massis uses the word 'Abreise' (176) in the dedication which he writes in a gift he gives to Richard before he embarks on a journey Massis expects will end badly.

⁶⁴ 'Mann unmistakeably associates the drive with death, first by introducing such motifs for death as water, and the image of eternity represented by the never-ending vista of the night sky[.]' Alison Lisa Ford, *Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic. Literary Tradition and Experimentation in his Prose 1924–1933* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p.317.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen also contains brief references to the idea of the ‘Abgrund’ which was to become the central image of Der Vulkan, and symbolic of the disaster which Mann believed was to be the future of European society.

Here the ‘Abgrund’ is associated with the nightmarish results of Sonja and Sebastian’s drug taking:

Was für entsetzliche Augen sie hatte. Abgründe von Angst, kohlschwarz, blicklos aufgerissen. – Sonja wird wahnsinnig. Sonja vergiftet. Die Welt geht unter. Die Welt – geht – unter. (270)

[Sie] stürzten, beide gleichzeitig, in den gemeinsamen Schlaf, als in den Abgrund. (278)

The sense of falling relates to the idea of the rocket which represents the desire for escape that many of the characters share. Massis’ guests discuss the planned rocket flights while the Nazis march past. According to Massis, the future that these rocket flights herald mean that all of today’s concerns will be rendered insignificant. All the characters are keen to go, including Do and Grete. Another guest remarks:

“Wie das köstlich sein muß! Wenn man die Erde, die so vollgepackt von unseren Schmerzen ist, das erstmal als Scheibe *über sich* hat, so ganz distanziert – –” (165)

Even Walter mentions the rocket flights to Richard. The image of the rocket is also associated with Gregor’s rise to prominence:

Gregor Gregoris Ruhm stieg plötzlich und blendend über Berlin auf wie eine Rakete. (106)

Finally the rocket is symbolic of society’s future: it is a weapon of mass destruction, anticipating the world war which the characters will become engulfed in. The rocket exudes both exultation and menace.

That co-existence of joy and terror expresses itself in the significance of laughter and smiling in the novel. There is a tendency for the weaker characters in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen to use laughter and smiling to hide their fear, disgust or despair. Julia tries to smile at her potential replacement, Sonja, when she arrives at their party: 'Das Lächeln blieb gespenstisch dünn auf ihren dünnen Lippen' (51).

Greta laughs continually to hide her unhappiness,⁶⁵ and when W.B. has broken with Greta her laughter becomes 'beunruhigend' (225). Sonja's attempts to hide her feelings under laughter are less successful than Greta's and her laughter is often likened to a grimace. At the Bayers' party, despite being an actress, Sonja cannot make herself overcome the disgust she feels for these people:

Sie wandte sich schon, obwohl der Allgewaltige eines Theaterkonzerns ihr aus den Rauchwolken zugewinkt hatte. Es wäre sehr nützlich gewesen, zu bleiben und ein wenig mit ihm zu schäkern. Aber sie empfand Widerstände. Sie schämte sich ihrer – denn wozu ging man in eine Gesellschaft wie diese, wenn man dann leichten Ekel beim Anblick der Mächtigen empfand? Sie zwang sich dazu, dem Theaterkönig zuzulächeln, aber aus dem Lächeln wurde nur etwas wie eine schiefe Grimasse. (53)

By the time Sonja has reached Spain, she has become so weary that smiling hurts her face as she flirts with the mechanic. When Sonja and Sebastian take drugs they laugh 'merkwürdig laut' (267). After her drugs overdose, her smiling becomes distorted and ugly. It is a sign of how ill she is:

Als Sebastian zu erzählen anfing, riß sie die Augen erschrocken auf und lächelte dann. (Ein Lächeln, dachte Sebastian, als wenn ihr etwas fürchterlich weh täte; verwundetes Lächeln.) (298)

⁶⁵ 'Sie hatte ein schönes, breites, wildes Gesicht und lachte fast immer.' Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.74.

As she succumbs, this becomes worse, and her laughter becomes an expression of her suffering.⁶⁶ When first introduced in the book, Sonja's laughter is 'tief, herzlich und laut' (12), we see Sonja's steady deterioration until her laughter becomes only a symbol of her pain. Do is also introduced as someone who hides their upset and fear by false joviality, by the end of the novel, she does the same when appearing at the races with Massis and Gregor. Early on Richard's laughter betrays a tendency towards self-destruction:

Wenn Darmstädter lachte, bildete sein Mund eine beinahe viereckige Form – schwarzes Loch, schmerzlich aufgerissen. Seine Augen wurden dann wie aus schwarzem Glas, funkeln und hart – während sie, wenn er ernst blieb, feucht und gefühlvoll blickten. (17–18)

Unknown to himself, his laughter betrays his inner turmoil, turning his smile into a silent scream. Through the collective pain inadvertently expressed by these characters, Mann demonstrates that all human experience is the combination of a multitude of individual experiences, and that all individuals are interconnected. However, in such a destructive world, this interconnection can only mean disaster for its characters.

⁶⁶ 'Sie grimassierte vor Qualen und mußte lachen, weil sie grimassierte.' *Ibid*, p.304.

5 Conclusion

Mann's style and imagery express both parallelism and confusion. The staccato and broken language underlines the sense of turmoil in a novel which thematically shows the breakdown of society, and the resulting collapse of individual identity. The number of themes, motifs and statements linked to being uncomfortable in one's own skin shows that the fabric of society is so broken down that people are not even "at home" in their own physical selves. The separation between body and soul that Sonja fears happens in death is actually occurring in life. The thematic culmination of all this confusion, friction and pain is expressed in the scene of the Nazis marching through Berlin, while other characters contemplate how they can escape from the world.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is a Roman des Nebeneinanders depicting a group of people who are trapped in their circumstances. The characters have largely unfocused lives: there is little vital incident; and the lack of plot suggests aimlessness, as well as a sense of being lost. While there is some conversation, and exchange of ideas, there is a strong sense that this is simply talk to fill the void, the only other means of filling the void are alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen portrays a sick society which will destroy itself, but provides no answers as to how this might change or what could be done to improve it. There is no obvious enemy to fight, so the characters are playing a waiting game, but there is a pervading sense that no adequate resistance against the inevitable crisis is possible. Sonja and Sebastian long for freedom, but do not know how to find it in the society in which they live. The novel is unsubtle, unsophisticated in some of its effects, and feverishly close to the manic,

threatened world it portrays. Yet it is impressive for its omnipresent intimation of doom, of a culture spiralling out of control.

III Flucht in den Norden (1934)

Introduction

Published in 1934, Flucht in den Norden is the first novel to appear after Mann went into exile. This work is based on his own experiences of travelling to Finland and falling in love with a young Finnish man. Fredric Kroll believes that the ease with which Mann wrote the novel derived in part from the fact that the events depicted are so close to his own life:

In der Tat hat Klaus Mann wohl in keinem anderen Roman ganz bestimmte Vorgänge aus einem begrenzten Abschnitt seines Lebens so unverändert abgeschrieben wie hier.⁶⁷

Reflecting the time during which it was written, Flucht in den Norden represents an attempt to reconcile Mann's favoured themes (love, sexuality and community) with current exile issues. Elke Kerker regards the novel as essentially a love story:

Das zentrale Ereignis des Romans ist tatsächlich die Liebe zwischen Johanna und Ragnar und der tragsiche Konflikt, der ihnen daraus erwächst. "Die brave Antifaschistin Johanna, die in einen miffigen Pariser Hotelzimmer mit den Genossen hungert und konspiriert" ist für Klaus Mann "nicht mehr interessant".⁶⁸

Fredric Kroll concurs:

Flucht in den Norden ist der Roman eines Schriftstellers, der eine Liebesgeschichte schreiben möchte, doch sich durch das Zeitgeschehen zum politischen Engagement gezwungen fühlt.⁶⁹

Despite this, Flucht in den Norden is significant as one of the first novels to deal with the theme of contemporary exile, discussing both the iniquity of the Nazi regime, and looking ahead to what sacrifices may be needed before Germany can

⁶⁷ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.1 Repräsentant des Exils: 1933–1934* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.258.

⁶⁸ Elke Kerker, *Weltbürgertum – Exil – Heimatlosigkeit. Die Entwicklung der Politischen Dimension im Werk Klaus Manns von 1924–1936* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1977), p.247.

⁶⁹ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.1 Repräsentant des Exils: 1933–1934* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.269.

be free again. As well as the development of themes he had explored in his earlier writing, Mann makes use of a number of other motifs or verbal devices adapted from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen: there are echoes of Sonja and Sebastian's flight South in Johanna and Ragnar's flight North, and parallels in the way that both relationships exist outside the socio-historical world. Fredric Kroll notes the similarities between the structure of both novels, the similar descriptions of the car crashes, and the echoing of Sonja's stormy drive south:

Die Formel aus Sonjas stürmischer Fahrt, "Hand – nicht – mehr – röhren – können" [...] wird fast wörtlich übernommen: "Nur die Hand nicht mehr röhren müssen" [...] ⁷⁰

Unlike the other three novels in my discussion, Flucht in den Norden centres on a figure who cannot be described as an artist, indeed Johanna is essentially a very ordinary person. However in contrast to Mephisto, the other Individualroman, in which the protagonist Hendrik hardly develops at all, Johanna makes a developmental journey, and the novel follows her through a significant chapter in her life, leaving her at a defining moment. The main difference between the endings of the two novels is that although Johanna is in a painful situation, and poised to face danger, there is a feeling that the decision she has made is the right one; whereas Hendrik's story ends in the gesture of facile self-exculpation.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.262.

1 The Characters and their Relationships

Johanna is the central character of the novel, and most of the relationships depicted are centred upon her. Throughout much of the novel, she is very pliable, often easily led by other characters. The reader is given the impression that she is not fully developed: she lacks confidence, arguably even conviction. In her relationships with others she gravitates towards stronger people who bring out certain aspects of her character, and suppress others. Even the strength of her political beliefs sometimes seems doubtful. In this novel (and as we see later in *Mephisto*) Mann uses the secondary characters to illustrate certain facets of the protagonist's character. Each of the relationships involving Johanna shows her making a choice, and reveals something about her and about her quest for individual autonomy.

Johanna's relationship with Ragnar occupies the greatest part of the narrative, and is the most intensely observed relationship in the four novels I discuss. In some ways they are the perfect couple, and if this novel were a straightforward romance, Johanna and Ragnar would remain together; but despite Mann's evident sympathy for their burgeoning relationship, he continually calls it into question, showing that Johanna and Ragnar cannot be happy together because of the intersection between their own experience, and the political world in which they find themselves. Like the other characters in the novel, they cannot find fulfilment in love alone. Their relationship encapsulates one of the fundamental conflicts in the novel which is that between the pull of the dream world of their emotional longing and the necessity of facing the real world that exists outside their relationship.

Ragnar is the final member of Karin's immediate family that Johanna meets. At their first meeting he is out of step with the women by not dressing for dinner, and arriving after they have started to eat. This sense of Ragnar being an outsider in his family continues throughout the novel: Karin and Jens have strong relationships with one of their parents, while Ragnar has been at odds with all the other members of his family at one time or another. In the course of the novel, Johanna notices that Ragnar is changeable, at times he almost seems like a different person. Immediately after dinner the nervous and gauche Ragnar disappears: he plays with his dogs, and Johanna sees him transformed into a young 'Gutsherr[]' (49):

Sein Gesicht, das von einer so finsternen Reizbarkeit gewesen war, sah mit einemmal zugleich jünger und reifer, freundlicher und stärker aus.⁷¹

The changeability of his character also surfaces in his conversational habits: he comments that it must be 'ekelhaft' (51) in Germany, and then switches to asking Johanna if she wants to hear a gramophone record. His flitting from topic to topic tells the reader that he is immature, and that he cannot really understand Johanna's state of mind, and serves to illustrate how he differs from Karin, who is almost the personification of empathy. Johanna sees a worrying similarity between Ragnar and the unstable Yvonne, the latter's superficial sympathy for "terrible" Germany echoing Ragnar's earlier passing condemnation. Johanna thinks that Ragnar's hypochondria has heightened his senses, but arguably it has made him self-obsessed rather than sensitive, as can be seen when Ragnar and Yvonne share reminiscences, causing the others to feel left out. Only Yvonne notices their

⁷¹ Klaus Mann, *Flucht in den Norden* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), p.49.

discomfort, while Ragnar remains oblivious.

Many other aspects of Ragnar's character seem designed to diminish sympathy in the reader. He shows selfishness and lack of regard for Karin, by usurping her in Johanna's affections and then ignoring her pain. He shows a similar disregard for Johanna's feelings when he asks Yvonne if Nancy is serious about wanting to marry him.

“[...] Glaubst du eigentlich, daß Nancy mich *wirklich* heiraten will?” wandte er sich mit einer überraschend hemmungslosen Direktheit an Madame Yvonne. [...] Johanna erschrak, [...] diesmal nicht so sehr über den Inhalt des Gesagten als über die Schonungslosigkeit, mit der Ragnar das Thema vor ihr behandelte. (189–190)

As in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen Mann's prose steers the reader towards a moral judgement; for him, human relationships and human interaction always raise ethical questions. For Mann's narrator, Ragnar's disregard of Johanna's feelings, expressed by words such as ‘überraschend hemmungslos[]’, and ‘Schonungslosigkeit’ is brutal and unnecessary, and is therefore indicative of his moral failing. The journey North is Ragnar's idea, and only after giving orders for their trip does Ragnar ask Johanna if she would like to go. Once on the trip, his wishes dictate what they do, and Johanna has to adapt to them.

Johanna is drawn to Ragnar's attractiveness, intellectual sophistication, and his sympathy for her political viewpoint, but he is shallow: he sees Johanna's flight from Nazi Germany as an opportunity to catch up on her reading. Significantly, during the evening when they first meet, Ragnar monopolises Johanna, treating her as though she were on holiday, and as if she were his guest rather than Karin's. This can be judged as a response to her subconscious lack of political

conviction, but it is also in keeping with his attitude towards life.⁷² He says of himself that he is an ‘unnützer Mensch’ (80), and that he wants to learn from her, and her political conviction, yet he merely distracts her from her “mission”. While he, like Johanna, is trapped by circumstances, his own contribution towards the chaos in his life is self-evident, and has an equally disruptive effect on Johanna’s peace of mind.

Despite their happiness, there are portents of the outcome of their relationship: Johanna experiences sudden feelings of loss and fear when around Ragnar, his mother’s presence casts a shadow, especially by reminding Johanna of Ragnar’s need to marry a rich woman to solve the family’s financial difficulties. However the unpromising mood has as much to do with their personalities as their circumstances. Subconsciously Johanna is aware that Ragnar cannot care about her as she does about him, because he is too shallow and changeable. When Johanna has had news of Bruno’s arrest, she stays alone in the hotel room for some time while Ragnar remains downstairs. When he finally arrives, he can only offer her comfort by leading her to bed. Their intimacy is only physical, and when she wants to discuss leaving him, he can only suffocate her concerns with kisses.

While Johanna discusses her work in Germany and her plans for her future with Karin, Ragnar only seems interested in trivia or his own life. She cannot talk to him about the values which are important to her, for which she left Germany and risked her life. The first time he discusses with Johanna anything serious is when

⁷² The young Austrian man that Johanna meets while travelling North echoes Ragnar when he declares that: ‘“Politik interessiert mich nicht [...]Ich bin mehr auf andere Dinge eingestellt, Musik, Gedichte, all so was liebe ich”’. Klaus Mann, *Flucht in den Norden* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), p.220.

he is trying to impress her by showing interest in her political work and indicating that he knows he should be doing more with his life. He says he wants to learn from her, but this is all only a means of eliciting her sympathy, after they begin their relationship she becomes his pupil and he tries to imprint his values upon her. The sole time she can articulate anything important is while he is asleep, and cannot hear her. The remaining time she has to suppress her thoughts and wishes. This disparity between what she says, and what she thinks is illustrated graphically in the following paragraph:

Ich möchte sterben, mein Ragnar. Aber die entscheidende Instanz will meinen Tod nicht. Sie will, daß ich den Verlust in tausend Tagen auskoste, ihn gründlich durchlebe, ihn aufs ausführlichste kennenlernen – während sie uns das Glück doch immer nur recht flüchtig kennenlernen läßt. Genau das will die entscheidende Instanz, und nichts anderes. Ach, Ragnar, wir sind ausgeliefert, verloren, verloren; einen Strom von Tränen sehe ich, Ragnar, lauter Schmerz, gib mir deine Hand, lieber Ragnar, was soll da der Glücksanspruch, aus Schmerzen ist unser Fleisch und Blut gemacht, so meint es die entscheidende Instanz, was hilft da Aufbegehren, gib mir die Hand.

“So fahren wir also nach Island”, sagte Johanna. (232–3)

This passage betrays a sense of crisis which extends beyond simply Johanna’s fear of having to forfeit her happiness with Ragnar, it is an articulation of Johanna’s confusion about her values, purposes in life, and responsibilities. It is almost a public utterance, or a declaration of will and purpose. Johanna expresses the sense of a destiny that decrees that she must experience the pain of the world, and that pain necessarily supplants the need for human warmth and affection. Johanna expresses this self-analysis in existential terms: ‘ausgeliefert’, ‘verloren’, ‘verloren’, ‘Tränen’, ‘Schmerz’, ‘Fleisch und Blut’, but it is clear that behind the existential crisis is the political crisis. This passage is made more powerful by a return to the narrative techniques employed in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, namely the rhetoric, the repetition, for example the triple reference to ‘die

entscheidende Instanz', the parallelism of structure: 'ihn auskoste, [...] ihn durchlebe, [...] ihn kennenerne', or the repetition of 'gib mir die Hand'. The narrator contrasts the inward movement with the outward one (her banal remark about going to Iceland) while the inward movement is non-associative and free-floating.

When Yvonne leaves them, Johanna feels fear, not happiness that they have been left alone, because now 'niemand schützt uns mehr voreinander' (198). It represents the final break with the outside world. Aside from his time in Paris, Ragnar has always been an outsider, Johanna has also become an outsider, arguably they have to share this status if they are to be together. Separated from her life in Germany and the now familiar world of the estate, all Johanna has left is her relationship with Ragnar. But for her it is almost as though this loss was necessary to allow her to be in love with him:

Ich bin mit dieser Liebe geschlagen worden. Ich mußte alles verlieren, damit Platz in mir werde für diese Liebe. (199)

Again we are reminded of the sense of destiny with the notion that her selfhood has room only for existential despair or for love. Here she envisages her love taking the place of everything else that she knows. Yet we feel, and the title of the novel tells us this, that the flight into headlong passion, away from Germany, away from the resistance circles in Paris, is ultimately an evasion, an escape. Johanna's choice is not only between political responsibility and love, but whether she wishes to battle destiny, the 'entscheidende Instanz', which is conspiring to curtail her flight. Johanna, for whom the historical situation, the political monstrosity of her native land, has become part of her existential being, tries to

escape and be happy in love, but her destiny will not let her. This flight or evasion cannot last forever. Ragnar's flight North into a fairy-tale land of seals and icebergs shows his desire to retreat into a childhood state of no responsibility and no restrictions. It also reflects what Schmidt calls Ragnar's rootlessness:

Hier ist die Wurzellosigkeit Ragnars zu suchen, die ihn auch jetzt noch daran hindert, sich für die politische Situation Europas zu interessieren.⁷³

Their relationship is seen as a means for them to escape their duty, as much as an attempt to find love. They are running away from that which is problematic in their lives, rather than going towards happiness. Johanna is often isolated and unhappy around Ragnar; Arwed Schmidt speaks of '[e]ine zärtliche Nähe freilich, die einsam lässt, ist von Verzweiflung kaum zu unterscheiden.'⁷⁴ Johanna senses the transient nature of Ragnar's affections, and the ultimately the futility of seeking happiness based on human love.

The precursor of Johanna's attraction to Ragnar is the night she spent with Karin. This brief affair illustrates the desperation we sense in the other characters, a frantic lunging at relationships in order to fill the existential void. Though Karin's feelings for Johanna seem genuine, Johanna's conduct seems to stem from her need to connect to another person, having been separated from her friends, family and former life. This is the same need that causes her eagerness to start a relationship with Ragnar, despite ostensibly planning to spend only a short time in Finland. Karin is quickly eclipsed by Ragnar during the first evening Johanna spends at the estate. Mann describes how Johanna returns to her room after rebuffing Karin, still clutching the volume of Rimbaud that Ragnar has loaned

⁷³ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.53.
⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.89.

her. Karin has already been replaced in Johanna's affections by Ragnar, even though Johanna herself is not yet aware of that.

Fredric Kroll comments that 'Karin verwirklicht das Ethos des Nichtbesitzens, indem sie angesichts des Verlustes ihrer Geliebten an ihren Bruder geschwind resigniert.'⁷⁵ Karin is in love with Johanna, yet she introduces Johanna to both of her brothers: Jens who behaves badly around women, and attention-seeking Ragnar. It is almost inevitable that one or both of the brothers would turn out to be a rival for Johanna. It is as though she feels it is futile to try to preserve their relationship. Karin makes a fleeting attempt to show possession, when she introduces Johanna to Jens:

"Das ist meine Freundin Johanna", sagte Karin und strich der Freundin dabei mit den Fingerspitzen über das Haar. (15)

The only time she attempts to thwart Ragnar is on Johanna's first night at the estate, when she plays Bach on the piano while Ragnar searches for a gramophone record. This time only she manages to tempt Johanna away from her brother. After that she accepts that she has lost her friend, neither trying to win back their former intimacy, nor attempting to hinder Johanna's relationship with Ragnar. She carries on offering her affection, regardless of whether it is appreciated, or even deserved.

Johanna's political "awakening" occurs during and perhaps because of Karin's absence, after the two girls become friends. This change is not just because of a

⁷⁵ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.1 Repräsentant des Exils: 1933–1934* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.265.

shared interest in politics, but also because of her relationship with Bruno, one of her brother Georg's friends. In fact she becomes part of Georg's political circle solely because of Bruno. It is Bruno's death while working for the resistance that brings Johanna back to her path of political activism, ultimately resulting in the end of her relationship with Ragnar. Johanna admits to Karin that her interest in politics resulted from her friendship with Bruno. She calls him wonderful, and admires his courage, and enthusiasm. As Johanna's political interest is connected to Bruno, rather than her brother, it seems we are to accept Johanna's political awakening as somewhat accidental. Karin herself regards Bruno as a rival for Johanna's affections:

[D]ieser Bruno hatte ihr nicht Angst gemacht. Mit ihm hätte sie Johanna vielleicht sogar teilen können; denn der wollte eine andere als die Kindliche, die sie liebte und meinte. (91)

Bruno's most important function in the novel is to bring about the end of Johanna's stay in Finland and consequently her relationship with Ragnar. Despite not appearing in the novel, Bruno's presence is strong enough to change the course of the narrative.

In Flucht in den Norden Mann offers glimpses of a number of other relationships that fail: Karin and her terminally ill fiancé, Gunnar, Johanna's parents. This small constellation of lives serves to illustrate that human relationships seem destined to disappoint in various ways. From such details as we are given, the cause of the failure is on frequent occasions personal inadequacy. Yet somehow we feel that Mann is interested less in the intimate details of psychology than in a panorama of a world out of joint. Johanna's existential crisis is almost the logical progression from the fear exhibited by the characters in Treffpunkt im

Unendlichen. In the earlier novel, the characters flee the crisis brought on by the question of what is their place in the wider world by pursuing ideal love. Here Johanna finds love, but realises it does not answer that fundamental question. The search for solace, intensity, or fulfilment in human relationships seems doomed to failure; only the struggle for the greater cause is worthwhile, even if it only brings cold comfort.

2 The Mind and the World

Thematically Flucht in den Norden moves from a study of society and a large cast of characters to a focus on one central figure, and themes viewed from an individual perspective. The novel develops some of the themes from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, and begins to tackle the bloody truth of Nazi rule seen from one individual's perspective. Mann also moves away from the bohemian and artistic worlds depicted in earlier work, to look at a person with whom he has less in common than most of his other protagonists. Johanna is a simplified character, and her choices are much less complex than those of his other main characters. She faces difficulties of trying to establish her individuality, and to find her place in the wider world, while coping with the situation her nationality places her in, and her problematic relationship with her homeland.

The themes in Flucht in den Norden are centred upon three distinct areas. The first covers the political situation in Germany, specifically the nature of the new Nazi regime, and the consequent flight and exile seen from the main character's point of view. Only this area has a tangible discussion of contemporary politics. The second thematic area in Flucht in den Norden is the discussion of the changing of the modern world and the consequent shift in societal or class structures. This area has its roots in the depiction of society from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. The third area covers the individual's journey through life, and the existential choices each person has to make in response to external pressures. This is the closest to the type of subject matter Mann had hitherto favoured. Each of these thematic areas is linked by the idea of flight : Johanna flees the Nazis, and then flees the everyday social world, but eventually chooses the path of political engagement and

embraces her fate. These thematic areas help to express what Mann suggests is an appropriate response to Hitler's ascent to power. Together they depict the crisis in Germany, show that modern society is in a state of flux, and exhort the individual to action. If any message can be taken from the novel, then it is that there can be no flight from the problems caused by the rise of Nazism; instead they must be confronted.

Although the narrative takes place outside Germany, the protagonist's current geographical situation and state of mind result from the political regime in Germany. Johanna is a product of her time – an exile and political refugee. Mann explores two related aspects of the exile experience in the novel: loss of one's home and a feeling of not belonging. Johanna and the reader are reminded continually that she is a displaced person. This is established by the opening passages describing Johanna's arrival in Finland. While the other travellers are returning to their loved ones in their 'nordischer Heimat' (7), Johanna has left her home, and is only induced to leave the safety of the ship by the sight of Karin, who represents a connection to her past and her homeland.

Das junge Mädchen, das Johanna heißt, zögerte noch, das Schiff zu verlassen. Sie stand auf dem oberen Deck und suchte mit den Augen in der Menge drunter nach ihrer Freundin, ohne sie zu finden. Wahrscheinlich ist Karin überhaupt nicht gekommen, dachte sie, und es enttäuschte sie so sehr, daß sie keine Lust mehr hatte, sich von der Stelle zu rühren. (7)

Her arrival in Finland symbolises the loss of home, rather than an escape from danger: the emotions she later experiences when she hears Bach being played, or sees German books are not feelings of relief at being safe, but the grief at the loss of those things which represent her cultural identity.

Ihr kam plötzlich, mit einer Mischung von Wohlbehagen und Schrecken, zu Bewußtsein, daß sie in der Fremde war und daß es einen Weg zurück für sie zunächst nicht mehr gab. (33)

As a refugee rather than a tourist, she is unable to take even superficial pleasure in the world around her:

Johanna betrachtete sich diese Stadt, die fremde Hauptstadt eines fremden Landes, ohne ein eben leidenschaftliches Interesse. (18)

The differences between her homeland and Finland are often bewildering, and unsettling. The water in the lake turns Johanna's body golden, and though this looks attractive, she is afraid when she sees it. Everything is unfamiliar and strange, and Johanna feels no tangible connection with her new environment, so her reactions are more extreme than usual.

[S]ie kannte die Gegend nicht, sie war fremd in diesem Lande, man konnte sie anführen und foppen und sie aus Scherz an den häßlichsten Punkt des Landes führen statt an den schönsten [...] Sie hatte nichts hinter sich, Johanna, keine Heimat hatte sie und war ausgeliefert auf Gnade und Ungnade den Launen, Witzen und Grausamkeiten der Fremde. Sie hing in der Luft, man konnte ihr einen Stoß geben, wie's beliebte: sie baumelte in die gewünschte Richtung. (184)

and

Sie war aber nicht zu Hause in diesem Land. Sie war in der Fremde, ein Flüchtling, ausgeliefert der Schönheit und Einsamkeit eines fremden Landes. Sie durfte um sich schauen, aber mehr durfte sie nicht. (186)

In both of these extracts Mann uses the word 'ausgeliefert', Johanna feels both powerless and passive. The accompanying sense of estrangement occurs partly because everything is so different and unfamiliar that she cannot connect with it, and partly because she does not want to connect with it, feeling that it would be inappropriate, even a betrayal of her political mission. Johanna is not the only character to experience exile in the novel. The flamboyant Yvonne is also in exile from her family. Having disgraced herself by her wild behaviour, she is even excluded from her only child. Similarly, before the death of his father, Ragnar was

in self-imposed exile because of the friction between them. For Yvonne and Ragnar, exile represents an opportunity to experience freedom from their families while waiting to return home, though their chances of being truly reconciled with their families are remote.

Like Yvonne and Ragnar, Johanna finds that exile brings the freedom to step back from her planned path. Her political interest begins to waver, as a result of being so cut off from her roots, and from the real world, and of finding herself in the company of pleasure-seekers. Johanna is initially passive, and relies on other people to form her opinions. Gradually however, in a place where her past has been forgotten, and her future is a blank slate, she realises that she has the freedom to decide what happens with the rest of her life. Ultimately she has to wake up from the dream represented by her existence in Finland. Her choice to leave Ragnar is an affirmation that in these times love is incompatible with a political vocation.

The theme of escape prevalent in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen develops, in Flucht in den Norden, into the idea of flight. The importance of this concept is echoed in the title; the flight can mean Johanna's journey to Finland, or her later journey North with Ragnar. Both are an escape from, rather than a journey towards something, echoing the flight South made by Sonja and Sebastian in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. Elke Kerker also notes the parallel between Johanna's flight North and Bruno's mission to Germany, the catastrophe of which brings to an end

Johanna and Ragnar's attempt at escape.⁷⁶ Ragnar wants to go where they are completely alone, in an attempt to take Johanna away from any reminders of her previous life, and to flee his own responsibility for the future of his family.⁷⁷ Johanna realises she is fleeing from the rest of the world, and therefore her duty, hence her wish not to stay too long in one place in case she comes to her senses:

Irgendwo zu bleiben, war gefährlich; denn die Möglichkeit bestand, daß man dann zur Besinnung käme – Besinnung aber war grade das, was man sich jetzt nicht leisten konnte und wollte. Mit der Besinnung mußte die Frage nach dem Sinn, ja, nach der Entschuldbarkeit dieser Reise auftauchen. (214–215)

This generalisation of Johanna's guilt is conveyed by the use of the word 'man'. Her individual anxiety has become a reflection of that faced by the rest of humankind, an anxiety that is both existential, having to do with the 'Frage nach dem Sinn' and moral in terms of the 'Entschuldbarkeit dieser Reise'. They travel as far as they can, but even in this remote place Johanna cannot flee the horrors of what is happening in Nazi Germany, and Ragnar cannot escape his responsibility towards his family. The news of Bruno's death still reaches her, and forces her to resume her political work. While Johanna is able physically to distance herself from Germany, she is unable to break the ties that bind her to her homeland.

Given Mann's concentration on the love story between Johanna and Ragnar, it is not surprising that he has been criticised for sidelining the discussion of the political situation. For Arwed Schmidt '[d]er tödliche Ernst der Lage in

⁷⁶ Elke Kerker, *Weltbürgertum – Exil – Heimatlosigkeit. Die Entwicklung der Politischen Dimension im Werk Klaus Manns von 1924–1936* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1977), p.246.

⁷⁷ ‘“Was sollen wir tun?” fragte Johanna. “Ganz wegreisen [...] Wo es nichts mehr gibt, nur noch uns...”’ Klaus Mann, *Flucht in den Norden* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), p.200.

Deutschland wird beiseite geschoben, bagatellisiert [...].⁷⁸ Mann's placing of political ideas in the mouths of his characters is sometimes unsubtle and occasionally even contrived. Mann often uses his characters to voice opinions with little explanatory causality. Jens, his mother, and Suse are used to praise the Nazi regime or justify its actions. This is seen to be a product of naivety or ignorance. Both Jens and his mother assume that because the regime is in Germany, it must be benign; she refers to Germany as a 'nobles', 'ordentliches Land' (41), and is only concerned with whether Communism could take hold as in Russia. Jens, believing that his two-day visit to Germany renders him well-informed about the situation there, agrees that there must be a good reason for the political events in Germany:

“[A]lles, was in Deutschland geschieht, muß doch einen gewissen *Sinn* haben. In Deutschland geschieht doch nichts ohne Sinn und Verstand.” (17)

Again, Jens' motivation is the fear of Soviet Communism, while Suse represents a majority of Germans who are well-meaning, though politically naïve. She finds Johanna's opposition to the regime anti-patriotic, and anti-German. Johanna counters her arguments with:

“Ich habe doch nichts gegen Deutschland gesagt, wenn auch allerdings ziemlich viel gegen die, die es jetzt regieren.”

“Aber die *sind* doch nun einmal Deutschland!” behauptete hartnäckig das Fräulein Suse. “Wenn unser deutsches Volk diese Regierung nicht wollte, dann wäre sie doch nicht da – das muß jedem einleuchten[.]” (157)

The characters that Johanna encounters in Finland are too far removed from the realities of her world to understand them. Even those sympathetic to Johanna's politics often trivialise the situation. Yvonne seems to regard Germany's

⁷⁸ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.53.

‘Unmenschlichkeit’ (139) as amusing, and Ragnar recognises that it must be ‘ekelhaft’ (51) in Germany, but then passes on to a more interesting topic. Suse believes that politics is a divisive force, and has no impact on their every day lives. Mann shows this in a short exchange with Johanna.:

“[...] [I]ch sage immer: die Politik verdirbt den Menschen. Sie haben mich, zum Beispiel, überhaupt noch nicht gefragt, ob ich Nachricht von meinem Jungen habe.” (158)

Suse feels that discussion of her boyfriend is more important than German politics. However this statement subtly parallels Johanna’s situation. She has begun to think like her Finnish hosts, and she would rather spend time with Ragnar than plan the journey to Paris to begin her work with the resistance. Jens and Ragnar have profound political differences, but ultimately their clash over German politics is symptomatic of the personal friction that exists between them, and their disagreement over how to manage the family estate. Jens’ provocative stance is as much the product of pique as political ignorance. He declares his support for the Nazi regime at the dinner table mainly to upset Johanna, and annoy his brother because he is jealous of their relationship. While Ragnar’s anti-Fascism renders him more sympathetic to the reader, his politics are almost as simplistic as his brother’s. Even Johanna regards Ragnar’s views as built on emotion rather than substance. Ragnar’s dislike of Germany is hinted at early on in the novel when he says he does not care for German literature, then during the argument with Jens where he disparages German fashion. It is not, however, until towards the end of the novel, that an intoxicated and irritated Ragnar shows the true extent of his dislike for Johanna’s country.

“Dieses verfluchte Land mit allen seinen abscheulichen Eigenschaften. Es ist ja doch wahrhaftig das anspruchsvollste und das niedeträchtigste aller

Länder [...] Ach, die wissen ja überhaupt nicht zu leben, die haben ja überhaupt nicht teil an der Zivilisation; deshalb sind sie so unsicher, daß sie immer mit dem Säbel rasseln und schnarren und befehlen und einschüchtern mit ihren scheußlichen Stimmen und ewig den Revanchekrieg vorbereiten.[...]" (236–237)

For Ragnar, Germany's present situation is the product of its inherent barbarism, rather than the actions of a despotic few. The German threat to civilisation has always existed, and will always continue to exist unless Germany is conquered and entirely subjugated. His tirade serves to paint the blackest picture possible of Germany, showing why Johanna should abandon her homeland. She feels unable to dispute what he says. This argument is followed by the revelation of Bruno's death, which finally forces Johanna to choose between Ragnar and her duty. The order of these events shows the association between the question of Germany's place in the world, and Johanna's search for her own goals and aims. She realises that her place is to fight for her country. Johanna begins the story thinking she has escaped; but she is not free, and never will be until Germany is also free.

The truth of Germany's suffering is revealed subtly. The omnipresent, but abstract fear felt by many of the characters in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, is, in Flucht in den Norden, replaced by the actual malevolent presence of Nazi rule. Early on Johanna recollects the first wave of persecutions following Hitler's rise to power:

Ihr Bruder und einige seiner Freunde, darunter Bruno, konnten ins Ausland fliehen; andere wurden verhaftet, andere getötet. Sie selbst mußte sich versteckt halten, wurde gefunden, wieder freigelassen, wollte nicht abreisen, ihren Platz keinesfalls räumen, aber die nächste Verhaftung stand schon bevor; sie wurde gewarnt, mußte sich entschließen, falsche Papiere zu benutzen, die ihr zur Verfügung standen; sie verließ Deutschland. (14)

Although a brief synopsis, the events listed are concrete, people are murdered or imprisoned because of their political stance. However the fear does not end when

Johanna arrives in Finland, it pervades her reactions to what she sees there. Fear is so much a part of the German psyche that Johanna frequently feels fear at times when she might be expected to feel a different emotion. In turn the reader is reminded of the terror still reigning in Germany by the news of Bruno's death, and the passages where Johanna reads and later replies to a letter from her mother. She notices the contrast between her mother's decorative writing and the confusion and fear manifested in the words themselves. When replying, she herself worries about compromising her family by her choice of words, wondering who may read the letter before it reaches her mother. Her fears for the safety of her family are seen as justified by Bruno's murder while in Germany.

The second thematic area in Flucht in den Norden is the discussion of the inevitable changes in society which are partly the result of the scars left by the First World War. Family structures are changing, the class structure is changing, there is both social upheaval and social mobility. Johanna believes that the family unit is dying out. Though this theme is connected to the discussion of modern society in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, here in Flucht in den Norden, it is less bleak; there is a sense that society needs to be purged, and something positive can result from the crisis in Germany. Georg seems to regard the coming destruction as inevitable, and necessary to bring about a better society.

“Mein Bruder hat den ganzen Schrecken vorausgesehen, als die notwendige Konsequenz einer langen Entwicklung [...] Ja, es konnte nicht anders kommen, diese Republik mußte genau so und nicht anders enden.[...]" (32)

The redefinition of class structures has had a very tangible impact on Karin's family. Though the evidence of the family's wealth is unmistakable, they are struggling to maintain their former lifestyle. Arwed Schmidt observes:

Schon zu Beginn des Romans, mit der Schilderung der Stockholmer Stadtwohnung der Familie, deutet er ebenso auf das märchenhaft Prunkvolle wie auf das gespenstisch Öde dieser, dem Ruin bereits merklich preisgegebenen Großbürgerfamilie[.]⁷⁹

Karin's mother reminisces about the “good old days” in St Petersburg when she mixed with Russian royalty. She now dines with their only domestic servant who also socialises with her children. Swedish aristocratic society of the present is dying out, the upper classes can no longer be idle landowners living off their land, they must work to manage their assets. Circumstances have also changed for Johanna's parents, they represent a liberal culture which is no longer favoured in their homeland; her father can no longer sell his paintings, and both parents are potentially in danger because of their pan-European, and pacifist views. Johanna believes that society will change radically, so that Socialism can triumph, but fears that even those who defeat Nazism will not restore the kind of society that her parents would welcome. The world changes around the characters, but if they cannot change with it, they are exiled within their own countries.⁸⁰ In Flucht in den Norden, we see societal structures begin to break down and alter, society becoming less tolerant, and political instability leading to oppression.

The third thematic area covers the individual's journey through life, how he or she interacts with the world, and the existential choices that the typical person faces. As stated earlier, Johanna is significant precisely because she is in many ways unremarkable, and therefore her struggle has general resonance. She is young, and not conspicuous for her intellect, beauty, or even morality. Her metaphorical

⁷⁹ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.51.

⁸⁰ ‘Die Vergegenwärtigung der Familiensituation Johannas ist eine Variation jenes Verfallsmotivs; sie zeigt den kleinbürgerlichen Abstieg, der nicht in Dekadenz, sondern in Deklassierung terminiert.’ *Ibid*, p.51.

journey throughout the novel is one of self-discovery, the establishment of her own identity, and the recognition of the choices she must make in life. She finds resources within her that prepare her for the difficult path she will take through life. At the beginning of the novel, Johanna is seen to be immature, both Karin and Ragnar tend to treat her as someone who is still growing and developing. The narrator too emphasises her childlike qualities as in the opening chapter: '[s]ie rannte wie ein Junge, der endlich, endlich aus der Schule darf' (8). Johanna's initial relief at being safe and free is associated with immaturity, while Karin has to mother her, and organise the transportation of her luggage. Early in the novel she discusses her development with Karin, commenting that she must have changed since their days in Berlin, as before she had no 'Gesinnung' (35), Karin's reply is the kind of comment which would be expected from an adult to a child or a young person:

"Aber man konnte damals schon merken, daß du bald eine haben würdest [...] Du warst in einem abwartenden Zustand." (35)

Moreover, even Johanna's political awakening is the result of her emulating a person whom she idolizes in a childlike way. Elke Kerker believes that Johanna's political views are both simplified and unconvincing:

Sie hat letztlich kein politisches, sondern ein moralisches Bewußtsein. Nicht zufällig spricht sie von "Gesinnung" und definiert als ihr Ziel: "[d]aß es anders wird[.]"⁸¹

Johanna continues with:

"Daß es richting wird. Daß man sich nicht mehr schämen muß für die Menschen. Daß diese Erde endlich ein vernünftiges Gesicht bekommt. Daß das Leben etwas wird, was sich lohnt – sich für *alle* lohnt, weißt du. Die Sache, das heißt einfach: die Zukunft, und die kann nur der Sozialismus

⁸¹ Elke Kerker, *Weltbürgertum – Exil – Heimatlosigkeit. Die Entwicklung der Politischen Dimension im Werk Klaus Manns von 1924–1936* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1977), p.250.

sein.” (36)

Aside from the one reference to Socialism, the terminology is general and existential (‘die Menschen’, ‘diese Erde’, ‘das Leben’) rather than specifically political. She is fighting for a better world, not simply a non-Fascist country, but a fair society. Later Johanna feels like a child caught in a lie, when discussing with Karin whether she will be returning with Ragnar to the estate. Similarly she also adopts a ‘schülerhafte[] Haltung’ (51) towards Karin’s mother. Ragnar assumes the mantle of teacher the first time he meets Johanna. He shows her his library, itself a symbol of his erudition and life-experience, and chooses books for her to read. When she tells him that she has read little because there has always been so much to do, he tells her that she now has the time to do so, simultaneously dismissing the things that have prevented her reading, and instructing her on how she should now occupy herself. At the point where we sense a tangible attraction between the two, they have been talking while Johanna sits on a swing, an obvious symbol of childhood. Before the arrival of Jens and Yvonne she spends her days as Ragnar’s pupil, reading literature that he has given her, consulting him in his study if there is anything she does not understand. Later he tells her what she should do and how she should think. Even his habit of touching the back of her head is the gesture of an adult to a child. Similarly the way she sits with her head on his knee is childlike. Ragnar and Karin are attracted to Johanna’s immaturity: Ragnar can dominate and instruct her, while Karin wants someone to nurture. Johanna has to grow up, in order to learn to do what is right, and take a path that she has chosen for herself, not one she has taken to emulate or please others.

Johanna's separation from her country and her family represents the fracturing of her identity, which further compounds her innate immaturity. All of the things which form the cornerstone of a person's identity are, in Johanna, confused, conflicted or imposed upon her by other characters. She is a character out of context and therefore struggling to find herself. The two most important ways of defining herself have been taken away from her, her citizenship and her political mission, the former by her fleeing her country, the latter by her ending up in a sort of Nordic "Neverland".

Educated and socially engaged, Johanna differentiates between the government of her country, and the people. Her countrywoman Suse⁸² represents the politically ignorant masses who blindly accept the actions of their country's leaders. When Johanna first meets her, Suse declares herself to be excited about what is going on in 'unsrem Deutschland' (38), and in answer to Ragnar's criticism of Germany at dinner later in the novel, she asserts ' "[W]as mein Volk und seine Führer tun, ist wohlgetan – was es auch immer sein mag!" ' (133) She views Johanna's criticism of the new regime as unpatriotic. In the same way, Jens identifies himself as being pro-German because he is pro-Nazi.

When Ragnar says that Johanna is not German, as she is not in accord with the prevailing mood of her country, he is doing the same as Jens, identifying nationality with political ideology. For Mann nationality is more than politics, it is culture, language, history, family, and so much a part of an individual's psychological make-up that it cannot be repudiated by separation from the mother

⁸² Arwed Schmidt calls Suse 'eine Karikatur des faschistischen Frauenideals'. Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.83.

country. Johanna is no less of a German than Suse, despite being against the German government. Mann also undermines the idea that shared race is the most unifying factor amongst people. Early in Johanna's visit, Suse comes to her room saying she is suffering from her customary evening homesickness. She feels glad to have someone there who understands it, summing this up with the phrase 'Fremde Sprache, fremdes Herz' (44). Mann subsequently illustrates the difference between these two young German women, by having Johanna misunderstand what Suse means when she says she yearns for her "boy"; Johanna assumes this is her son, whereas in fact she means her fiancé. Later in the novel she asks Johanna for advice because, as a fellow German, she is the only person qualified to help her. In fact they have less in common than they do with the other characters around them. The lack of camaraderie between the two, despite Suse's best efforts to awaken Johanna's sense of shared identity, underlines the fallacy of the idea that nationality is the most defining factor in a person's character. Mann's treatment of the question of nationality in the novel also shows that being German and being Nazi are two separate issues. Johanna is bound to do what she feels is the best thing to do because of her nationality, she therefore has the dilemma of how to express her patriotism.

Johanna's chosen "mission" also helps define her identity. By the beginning of the novel, Johanna has chosen the path of active political involvement, and of resistance to the Nazi regime in Germany. However as stated earlier, her initial involvement in politics has come about as a consequence of her friendship with Bruno, which itself was a reaction to the void created in her life by Karin's return to Finland. Like her best friend, Johanna subconsciously defines herself through

her relationships with others, but while Karin needs a person to nurture to have purpose in life, Johanna looks for someone to shape her thinking. Although Johanna initially has a goal and a direction, the reader questions her commitment, and whether she has chosen this direction for herself. Early on in the novel when Jens and Karin discuss a political topic which interests Johanna, she is half-tempted to contribute, but then decides it would achieve nothing.

Merkwürdigerweise empfand sie wieder keine Lust, sich auf eine Diskussion einzulassen, obwohl das Thema ungeheuer interessant für sie war und obwohl sie über die politische Bewegung, um die es ging, besser Bescheid wußte, als die Geschwister voraussetzten. Sie spürte aber, daß ein solches Gespräch weit führen würde und keine Resultate haben könnte. (22)

Moreover, when Jens extols the virtues of Hitler's Germany at dinner, Johanna leaves Ragnar to challenge him. Johanna's unwillingness to do more than utter abstract clichés when asked her opinion implies that she is merely emulating others. This would seem to be borne out by the fact that once in Finland, when she is not around Bruno or like-minded people, her resolution to continue with her political fight gradually weakens, and is almost forgotten once she falls in love with Ragnar.

Having lost access to her history, family and country has robbed Johanna of her sense of self. The earliest manifestation of her confusion is during her first evening in Finland. When Jens asks her to dance, she replies that she hardly does, but stands up to dance despite her unwillingness. This is followed by a feeling of disorientation resulting from the unfamiliarity of her physical location. That same night she feels dizzy, and does not know where she is or why she is there. On waking up on her first morning at Karin's family's estate, she feels fear at not

recognising her surroundings: ‘[s]ie hatte ein Gefühl, als stürze sie, ungewiß wohin.’ (55)

This sense of confusion and loss of perspective continue when she meets Ragnar. Her disorientation turns into helplessness caused by her inability to control her feelings for him. She is reduced to being in a state where she cannot order her thoughts, and can only focus on Ragnar. When under Ragnar’s spell everything around them fades into the background for her. Even Karin is reduced to a ‘weiße Gestalt’ (111), and Johanna remembers very little from that time. Though she has come to a place where she is supposed to be able to regain her equilibrium, the opposite happens. She loses sight of everything that was once important to her, and eventually comes to believe that she has no future without Ragnar, even wishing for death to avoid having to leave him. However, the loss of perspective caused by her infatuation is not entirely unwelcome. When her feelings about Ragnar become clear to her, she is sitting at her desk at night trying to write, thinking that she could put her thoughts in order if she stopped the light.

Sie überlegte sich, ob sie den Vorhang vor das Fenster ziehen sollte. Wenn dieses Licht aufhören würde, wie ein zu lange ausgehaltener Ton in ihr Zimmer zu klingen, könnte vielleicht doch noch ein wenig Ordnung in ihre Gedanken kommen. Sie ließ den Vorhang aber geöffnet. (82)

By leaving the curtains open, she is choosing to remain in this state of confusion. Johanna is a person who relies on others to define her. Once they are gone, she loses everything. If she were more politically committed, this loss of context, and thus identity, would not be so devastating. By pursuing a direction which has been prompted by another person, she has to lose her way, and her sense of self before she can discover who she is or wants to be.

The loss of Johanna's identity and everything she has relied upon has given her the freedom to make the right choice. She believes she has had to lose everything to have Ragnar's love, in fact she needed to lose everything to find herself. The estate is already far away from the rest of the world, from there Ragnar and Johanna go even further away, gradually severing contact with everything that binds them to the world. Yet Johanna cannot separate herself entirely from her country and people, she chooses to read German newspapers, and has Georg's telegrams forwarded to her. Johanna has known from the time her relationship with Ragnar began that she will have to choose between remaining with him and her duty. Ironically it is the death of Bruno, which allows her to exercise that choice. Bruno is what binds her to the resistance; he is the reason she became politically active. His death frees her from the obligation she has towards the resistance, and she could therefore ignore Georg's call to join them. Instead she makes her decision on her own terms, regardless of Ragnar's protestations.

Her decision to leave Ragnar is not solely because she has decided to do the "right" thing, it is also an acknowledgement that she and Ragnar cannot make each other happy. It could also be argued that Johanna, given the disaster that has overtaken her mother country, has not enough room left inside her for a love relationship; her identity is defined by grief and pain. Furthermore the choice Johanna has to make between remaining with Ragnar or continuing her political work, is by implication a choice between engagement with life or death.⁸³ Mann

⁸³ '[D]er Kampf der Emigrantin Johanna gegen den Faschismus ist grundsätzlich lebendbejahend und an der Zukunft orientiert.' Elke Kerker, *Weltbürgertum – Exil – Heimatlosigkeit. Die Entwicklung der Politischen Dimension im Werk Klaus Manns von 1924–1936* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1977), p.243.

continually associates their relationship with death. Ragnar believes death might be easier than life, Johanna thinks of death as a means of escaping a life she is finding very difficult. By dying she could avoid leaving Ragnar. Her remark “[n]ur die Hand nicht mehr rühren müssen” (227), is reminiscent of Sonja in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, and emphasises the idea of finding happiness in love being a prelude to death. The only action they can take to stave off these feelings is to lose themselves in the act of love. For Mann though, this is an act of desperation, and, rather than an affirmation of life, represents an escape from the realities of life:

[...] und so stürzen sie sich in die Liebesnacht wie in den Tod. (228)

Once again, Mann reminds the reader of the potential futility of relationships; what keeps people alive is not love of other individuals, but love of ideals. Elke Kerker regards Johanna's choice as being between Nihilism and participation in society:

Johannas Verzicht auf Ragnar, also auf ihr individuelles Glück, zugunsten umfassender politischer Erfordernisse ist die Absage an den Nihilismus und das Bekenntnis zum gesellschaftlichen Aktivismus.⁸⁴

In the end Johanna's choice might seem to be initially between Karin and Ragnar, and then love and duty, in fact it is between life and death. Staying with Ragnar would be easy, but she would be choosing death. Johanna's choice is also a confirmation that she has grown up, and that she has begun to see herself as an individual with her own choices. The world outside Johanna and Ragnar's relationship is unstable and frightening: whether it is the world that Johanna has left behind in Germany, and or the world that she and Ragnar seek to leave in

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.247.

Finland. The truth is that she cannot escape. The dream world she seeks is unstable and dangerous. She cannot flee her problems by running away from them, she can leave Germany, but she still has to engage with the situation she has left behind there.

3 Community

While Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is notable for its absence of family structure, community in Flucht in den Norden is mainly centred upon the family, with a lesser focus on the exiled community in Paris. Human society is fragmented, and while the communities represented are not destructive as in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, they are nevertheless fractious and turbulent. Significantly there is not one entirely happy family grouping amongst the major characters. Karin's family is the main family unit portrayed in the novel: and while Ragnar and Jens' relationship is the greatest source of friction in the household, there is also tension between Ragnar and his female relatives. In the wider family, both Jens and his mother are hostile towards Yvonne, reflecting the breach with her immediate family. Within all these disagreements, Karin has to play the part of a diplomat. It seems probable that without Karin, Jens and Ragnar would have gone their separate ways long before Johanna's visit, since she is the only person who consistently attempts to keep the peace between her relatives. However it is the arrival of an outsider that acts as a catalyst for the breakdown of the relationship between Jens and Ragnar. This inability of these warring factions of the same family to find common ground seems to echo Johanna's remark about there being no families in the future.

There is a clear parallel between the sibling groupings of Karin and Johanna's families where the older brother and sister are anti-Nazi, while the younger siblings are pro-Nazi. This difference in outlook is not entirely because of politics. Fritz is a Nazi as a matter of convenience, in order to further his career, Jens' Fascism echoes the despotism of the Tsarist class in Russia, and stems partly from

his hatred of his brother and therefore anything favoured by him. Ragnar and Jens clash over the family spoils, and their political opinions are a symptom of their personal enmity rather than a sign of any real engagement with politics. The relationships between Johanna, Georg and Fritz mirror those between Karin, Ragnar and Jens: they are divided by politics in the same way. Georg and Ragnar also battle for Johanna's loyalty. To some extent, Ragnar and Georg are seen as characters who use other people, but while Georg's ruthlessness is in pursuit of his political ideals, Ragnar simply pursues his own pleasure. For Karin, Ragnar's life appears to be one 'in dem so viel Zärtlichkeit großartig-ungeschickt vergeudet worden war' (91).

The parents depicted in Flucht in den Norden emerge as weak, fallible, and dominated by their children. The reader sees more of Karin's family than Johanna's, and despite wealth, and advantages, the Swedish family is a fractured unit. The cause of this goes far back into the past with Ragnar's relationship to his father. They clashed, according to him because of the way his father treated their mother. Karin tells Johanna that everyone else thought her father was wonderful, and attributes the bad feeling between her father and eldest brother to Ragnar's inappropriate fear of his father. Arwed Schmidt sees an oedipal dimension to the relationship between Ragnar and his father,⁸⁵ which is reinforced by Ragnar's confession to Johanna that he wished for his father's death. The friction between male members of the family continues with battles between Jens and Ragnar. Moreover Ragnar also clashes with his mother. Neither of them seems able to overlook what they see as faults in the other, and despite their professed affection,

⁸⁵ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.69.

they are unable to break the habit of hurting each other. Yvonne's arrival allows Ragnar the opportunity to assert his authority over his mother and his dead father, by giving her his father's old room. On the same night as accepting a guest against his mother's wishes, Ragnar also throws his brother out of the house. Ragnar is becoming the father he hated: taking his father's study as his own and playing the a despot at home. His trip North is partly to spite his mother, and he looks forward to the shock he expects her to experience when she hears they have gone to Iceland. This sense of parents being at the mercy of their children is especially compounded by the shocking discovery of the senile grandmother hidden away upstairs.

Johanna's mother and father have had a difficult marriage, marred by infidelity and poverty. Their pacifism, artistic interests, and liberal politics are at odds with both their sons, and the exile of their daughter results in the loss of the only child with whom they have anything in common. Their eldest child Georg, though intellectually gifted, rejects everything that is important to his parents, rendering their relationship cool:

Aber in dem fast religiös gefärbten, asketischen Radikalismus ihres Sohnes Georg spürten sie eine allzu eisige Nichtachtung ihrer höchsten Ideen und geliebtesten Gefühle; vor seiner Strenge wurde Papas Liebe zu Monet ebenso unwichtig, ja, wesenlos, wie Mamas Kammermusik[.] (88)

The final parent/child relationship in the novel is that of Yvonne and her son Paul. The unstable, but well-meaning Yvonne cannot remember her child's name. Though she is an engaging personality, Yvonne is clearly unable to take care of her son. However the manner in which she is kept away from him, by a family which ostracises her, is both sinister and callous.

As the exile community exists at the periphery of the novel, the reader gains little insight into its dynamic. We learn that Georg does not spare his friends in his fight against the Nazi regime, sending Bruno to Germany in what Johanna believes is certain suicide. In the fight against Fascism, individuals are not important. Georg is also happy to work alongside people that are less gifted than himself, if they share the same goals:

Denn die große Sache ist einfach. [...] Er war sich auch nicht zu gut für die Kameradschaft mit mittelmäßigen Menschen, wenn sie nur mit derselben Leidenschaft dienten wie er. Seine Überzeugung war felsenfest, daß das erste Ziel, die totale Änderung der Wirtschaftsform, zu erreichen sei, mit allen Mitteln, ehe über Nuancen debattiert werden dürfte. (117)

Georg exemplifies how modern society is changing, becoming more cynical and ruthless. Even though he is on the “right” side, Georg has turned his back on the emotional ties of family and friends, exalting the political victory above individual concerns and individual happiness.

In this world, as elsewhere, Klaus Mann delights in writing about and assessing human relationships and human interaction. All the emotional relationships that he explores in this novel are doomed. While in some instances this doom is seen to be the result of individual failing, more frequently it stems from experiences that are not directly depicted: namely the horrors of Nazism. In Mann’s lurid, yet strangely impressive vision, the evil of those developments in Germany poisons everything around it; it becomes a planetary disaster. Even in a country well away from Germany, decent human relationships seem impossible; the blight is everywhere. In the one trajectory of personal development that the novel traces,

Johanna comes to know this truth. In this sense, she is the moral and existential centre of the novel.

4 Language and Narrativity

4.1 Structure

Flucht in den Norden is the shortest of the four novels in this discussion, and has the simplest structure, as well as the least amount of action, and the slowest pace. The first four chapters each cover one day, including Johanna's arrival in Finland and the beginning of her relationship with Ragnar. These chapters build towards Johanna's definitive entry into the dream world represented by her relationship with Ragnar. Chapter Five covers several days, most of which pass as a uniform blur for Johanna as she loses herself in that relationship. Only the last day mentioned in this chapter is covered in more detail, as it is the occasion of a crisis in the dream world Johanna and Ragnar have constructed for themselves. From Chapter Six, the novel begins to lay the foundations for the end of their relationship. Chapter Seven covers the start of the next and final phase of the novel, where Johanna and Ragnar try to preserve their relationship by leaving the estate. Chapter Ten covers their last few days, culminating in the tragedy which ends their flight. Everything becomes gradually stranger in the final four chapters: from the late night visit to Yvonne's family culminating in the bizarre exchange between Yvonne and her father, to the peculiar landscape, the oddly lascivious, or hostile demeanour of the locals, the kamikaze behaviour of the animals on the road, and the monk whose appreciation of material treasure is offensive. The oddness which before had been fairy-tale-like has now become nightmarish, and the news of Bruno's death deals the final blow.

The intensity of this referential structure interlocks with an intensity of narrative performance: everything is concentrated, from the short temporal periods to the

small number of characters. The reader is aligned with Johanna's perspective and sees the world through her eyes. It allows Mann to intensify the novel's emotional impact, and as Johanna's senses are heightened our appreciation of what we see becomes the more striking.

4.2 Style

The style is also the least complex of the four novels. Mann employs a third person narrative from one character's point of view with the occasional variation such as the narrator addressing the protagonist, or the protagonist visualising other characters. The latter device enables Mann to incorporate characters who are in Germany, by having Johanna picture them as though she could see them, and imagining vividly and in detail the future that awaits them.

Sie sah, während sie aufhörte zu sprechen, ihre Mutter vor sich, deutlich als säße sie hier im Zimmer[.] (34)
and

Sie sah ihren Vater im halbdunklen Eßzimmer allein in einem unbequemen Stuhl am Fenster sitzen. (217)

Other techniques Mann employs are the occasional use of stream of consciousness or a visual montage of images. After reading a letter from Bruno, Johanna's thoughts fuse with the words she has read:

Georg entwickelt eine wunderbare Aktivität –: da war ihres Bruders kluges und strenges Gesicht, mit dem schmalen, eifervoll beredten Mund, der großen, grade vorspringenden Nase, der eckigen, eigensinnigen Stirn. Eine wunderbare Aktivität – man hatte es niemals anders von ihm erwartet. Aber *sie* saß hier auf dieser Terrasse. 'Den Freunden geht es relativ gut. So gemeinsam bringt man sich durch.' So gemeinsam...Aber sie saß hier. 'Auch Willi und Oskar bewähren sich': auch Willi und Oskar. Zwei junge Proletarier waren das, der eine schrieb revolutionäre Gedichte, sie hatten in derselben Zelle wie Bruno gearbeitet, auch Johanna kannte sie, seit sie das erste Mal mit der Partei zu tun gehabt hatte, sie bewähren sich; und sie Johanna, auf dieser Terrasse. Ja, ich will über Stockholm und Kopenhagen zurückfahren. Ich habe Aufträge zu erledigen. So gemeinsam bringt man sich durch. (59)

This technique brings Johanna's consciousness alive, and facilitates an intimacy with the reader similar to that provided by a first person narration. On two occasions Johanna's thoughts run past a visual montage of recent images, firstly after the conversation she had with Ragnar while sat on the swing:

Übermächtig waren die Bilder der letzten Tage. Das ziemlich nichtswürdige und confuse Vorspiel mit Jens; die tröstliche Umarmung Karins, der schwesterlichen, mehr-als-schwesterlichen; und Ragnar. Ragnar, zwischen den Hunden, der junge Gutsherr; Ragnar im bunten Talar, der kriegerische Priester; Ragnar als Ruderknecht, mit hilflos gebäumtem Leib; Ragnar, der junge Meergott, wasserumschäumt. Ragnar, nahe bei ihr, und sie auf dem zaubrischen Sitz, der Schaukel, Wiege der Erinnerungen. (82)

And again just after Yvonne has left Johanna and Ragnar alone on their trip:

Karin, die betrübte Lichtgestalt, die ernste und sanfte, die zärtlich tatkräftige, die schamhafte, die geheimnisvolle; schwarzer See, der die Glieder vergoldet; Terrasse, Speisezimmer, unkomfortables kleines Gästehaus; Knut und Wolf, töriches Fräulein Suse, schnell beleidigt, dann wieder munter, vaterlandsliebend und schlecht behandelt von ihrem Jungen,stellungslosem Ingenieur; die Mutter, gemütliche und schreckliche Figur, die, die Hände reibend, demütig und verstört, ihre heimliche Tyrannis über das Haus übt[.] (199)

This technique effectively gives a vivid insight into Johanna's psyche. The lack of main verbs makes the details vividly, hurtfully present. The reader is living those moments with her. It reveals her confusion and how she is being bombarded by images, thoughts and feelings, unable to focus on and process them. It also emphasises the dream-like quality of this world in which Johanna has found herself, reality itself is dissolving into a series of images.

Told from one person's point of view, the novel also takes place in one (politically neutral) country. Germany and Nazism are mostly "off-camera". The focus is on Johanna and her life, and the text stays within the narrow field of her consciousness. The only parts of everyday Germany we see are those which

Johanna brings with her: her memories of Germany under the Nazis, the fleeting remarks she makes to her host family about the situation there, and the news she receives from Germany. Again, the real world seems far away and inaccessible.

4.3 Language

The narrative presence in Flucht in den Norden is less prominent than in Mann's later novels, but more active than in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, acting as conscience, commentator, and oracle. Occasionally the narrator addresses Johanna, asking her if she can afford to lose Karin's love, or echoes the words of characters.⁸⁶ The stream of consciousness technique shows an overlapping of narrator and subject, allowing both narrator and reader to share in Johanna's confusion and emotions. However the narrative voice is also prepared to stand outside the characters, even to address them or to pass judgement or reveal what their future has in store:

Wirst du einen Sieg erleben, und wird er aussehen, wie man sich Siege erträumt – wenn er dann endlich kommt? Kleine Hotelzimmer in Paris, Prag und Zürich werden der Schauplatz deines Schicksals sein. Du wirst in Versammlungen sprechen und in Zeitungen schreiben; du wirst Kurierdienste tun und vielleicht in Deutschland illegales Material verteilen, und vielleicht bald schon erschossen werden, erst aber gequält und verhöhnt; oder den großen Weltkrieg noch miterleben, ja, ihn vielleicht gar überleben, aber das ist nicht wahrscheinlich [...] Ragnar wird Nancy heiraten, die es sich in den Kopf gesetzt hat; so wird er seine etwas gefährdete und brüchige Situation noch einmal retten. Reisen wird er und neue Abenteuer haben, aber auch er ist betrogen um den Glücksanspruch[.] (241)⁸⁷

This anticipates the idea of the grand design expressed by the narrator at the end of Der Vulkan. The narrator also communicates with the reader, for example

⁸⁶ Ragnar calls himself an 'unnützer Mensch' (80), this is echoed by Jens and the narrator.

⁸⁷ The reference to 'in Versammlungen sprechen' is perhaps a sign that she will find her own voice, and 'in Deutschland illegales Material verteilen' echoes Bruno's mission.

asking whether Johanna is so governed by her feelings that she fails to notice Karin's suffering:

War Johanna denn schon so benommen, so berauscht vom Gefühl, daß sie gar nichts mehr merkte? Wußte sie denn nicht, in welcher Trauer Karin gestern nacht zurückgeblieben war, als Johanna mit Ragnar in den Garten verschwand? (90–91)

Flucht in den Norden both understands and evaluates the impulsive and emotional condition of its characters; similarly the reader is drawn to share in the experiences and feelings of the characters, but also invited to judge and learn from their actions.

As a whole the imagery indicates that this world is strange, a dreamscape fraught with danger and uncertainty. Johanna finds herself in a land of extremes: darkness and light, vast emptiness and dense forest. Initially, Finland is a country of light, Johanna arrives on a sunny summer day surrounded by joyful people:

Zu dem allgemeinen, beinah rauschhaften Vergnügen, das die Ankunft eines Dampfers immer hervorruft, kam die Freude an einem strahlenden Sommertag. Himmel und Wasser waren gleich blau, zum Entzücken schön der Flug der Möwen, auf deren bewegtem Gefieder das Licht schimmernd blendete. (7)

The light is so intense that even the sea-birds shine. In this strange topsy-turvy land the water in the lake is black, and the nights remain light. But the continual light becomes unbearable, Johanna feels ever more confused, and disorientated; the elements which she has taken for granted are different and disturbing. Johanna begins to long for the darkness, and for the normality it represents.

Wie hypnotisiert schaute sie durchs offene Fenster in den glasig-blaugrünen Himmel, der, gnadenlos und verschwenderisch, in seiner Helligkeit blieb – hell, hell, zum Verzweifeln und Entzücken hell, während der ganzen Nacht. (81)

However, darkness is also linked to the sense of despair which Johanna and Ragnar share:

“Es gibt Stunden – da möchte ich so *gern* sterben”, sagte unten Johanna, das Gesicht ruhig an seine Knie gelehnt. “[...] Oft ist es mir so zumute, daß ich lieber sterben möchte als alles, alles andre. Nur die Hand nicht mehr rühren müssen [...] Solche Gedanken sollte man natürlich abwehren mit ganzer Kraft. Aber kann ich denn dafür, wenn sie manchmal kommen, wie die große dunkle Welle, und alles wird von ihr dunkel? (227)

While Johanna’s is an abstract despair, Ragnar’s is more tangible, being a response to the extreme darkness in winter.

[...] Wenn das hier alles zugefroren ist, ganz abgestorben, und es wird überhaupt nicht mehr hell – so wenig wie es jetzt jemals dunkel wird. Was sind das dann für Tage! Eine riesenhafte Finsternis...Es ist oft schwer für uns auszuhalten. Vor allem für Ragnar ist es oft sehr schwer...” (43)

Ragnar’s mother too is associated with the darkness, she is described as a big black fly, and a dark shadow. Arwed Schmidt calls her the personification of loneliness and death.⁸⁸ Like the babbling, dribbling white shadow of the locked up grandmother, she has become a relic of the past, serving to intimate the approach of imminent disaster; she has sacrificed her life for others to the point where she has nothing left.

Mann alludes to the silence of Finland, but silence does not simply denote peace, it is frightening because the silence is merely muffling the conflict and unhappiness present. Even the use of the word ‘schweigsam’,⁸⁹ to describe the family home almost seems sinister. It is the surrounding countryside, however, that most impresses Johanna with its vast, nightmarish absence of noise.

⁸⁸ ‘Die Mutter personifiziert in ihrer leblosen Erstarrung und Resignation nichts als Einsamkeit und Tod.’ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.97.

⁸⁹ ‘[D]ie Fenster des schweigsamen Hauses[.]’ Klaus Mann, *Flucht in den Norden* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), p.37.

Der Friede über dieser Landschaft war so ungeheuer, daß er fast erschreckend wurde für Johannas Herz. In solcher Stille atmete sie zugleich erlöst und beänstigt. Sie hatte nicht gewußt, daß es so viel Ruhe irgendwo noch gab. Mit einer andächtig gedämpften Stimme versuchte sie etwas darüber zu sagen.

“Das is ja betäubend still hier”, brachte sie hervor. (43)

Finland is so quiet and safe that it is unsettling, because although Johanna no longer witnesses what is happening in Germany, atrocities are still taking place, and clamour to be heard. The silence is often broken by Ragnar, he is a noisy person, enjoying loud music, contrasting with Karin who is described as ‘sanft[]’ (7), or ‘ruhig’ (7). At the lake with Johanna and Karin he disturbs the silence with his gramophone, repeatedly playing a record that Karin dislikes. He later disturbs his mother, Karin, and Johanna when they are looking at old photographs. Ragnar’s need for noise betrays an innate restlessness, and underlines the truth that Johanna cannot be at peace while she is with him.

Characters are unable to communicate with one another. While the family home hides its secrets, the characters keep their feelings close to themselves. This is most evident with Johanna, who shows her inability to communicate by either not saying what she thinks, or not looking at the person to whom she is speaking. The disparity between what Johanna thinks and what she says, especially regarding her relationship with Ragnar, is very evident in the following passage:

Sie dachte: Ich muß weg von dir, ich müßte weg von dir, Ragnar – aber sie sagte es nicht, sondern, statt dessen: “Möchtest du hierbleiben, Ragnar?” (200)

Her mind is full of the things she needs to say to him, yet she cannot bring herself to utter them. On the first night Johanna and Ragnar spend together they do not

look at each other, while they are talking; their communication is guarded.

Similarly during their final moment of confidence Karin talks past Johanna:

Sie sprach an Johanna vorbei, in einer Art von kühler und vernunftvoller Ekstase, zur hellen Nacht. (152)

Despite physical intimacy or proximity, each person is ultimately alone in his or her own world, deliberately keeping something of themselves from everyone else. Characters speak to each other, but they do not really communicate, and the rites of love are merely a routine. Closeness and communication are transitory at best, if not illusory. As well as exhibiting their mismatched communication, Johanna's inability to express herself is also seen as a result of her feelings for Ragnar; on numerous occasions she is so consumed by her feelings that she is unable to speak:

Johanna konnte fast nicht mehr sprechen; der Wunsch, ihn zu sehen, schnürte ihr die Kehle zu. (100)

Johanna's inability to speak also extends to her political self. Despite her anger and distress at Jens' belittling of her situation and celebration of the people who have hounded her out of Germany, she still cannot speak for herself. Her relationship with Ragnar has rendered her unable to speak freely. Finding her own voice is equated with being able to formulate and follow her own plans. She has to find her voice, so that she can leave this unreal world.

The unreality of this world in which Johanna finds herself is reinforced by Mann's use of elements which are familiar from fairy tales, gothic novels and romances. It is an exaggeration of Sonja and Sebastian's dream world from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. Beginning with the little Japanese girl who speaks Berlin German,

Johanna is introduced to a host of strange, fairy-tale characters such as the monstrous cousin and aunt, the dribbling grandmother locked up in the attic, the multiple identical girl cousins, and the grotesque giant fly mother. Johanna and Yvonne are magically transformed, when the enchanted lake makes their limbs look golden, so that they cannot even recognise their own bodies. Ragnar continually changes: one minute he is a ‘Ruderknecht’ (65), the next a ‘Meergott’ (69), or a ‘Gutsherr[]’ (49). When they visit Uncle Peter, Ragnar has to temper his behaviour and play a suitable part. This ‘Mienenspiel’ (104) so exhausts him that he cannot drive back home. He is the enchanted prince trapped in the castle, forced to play a part for his extended family. In this scenario Jens is the villain, trying to steal the kingdom (and the princess) from the prince. Johanna also falls under the spell of the house, when she falls in love with Ragnar. Like Sleeping Beauty she is bewitched, nothing and no-one else exists for her, she has forgotten her past and her duty and the days blend into one:

Es gab nur noch Ragnars Gegenwart. [...] Die Schatten, die über *seine* Stirne gingen, sein trotziges kurzes Auflachen, sein Lächeln und das Schimmern in seinen Augen sind die Gesetze, die den Tag bestimmen, es gibt keine andren mehr. Es gibt keine mehr außer seiner Kraft und Launischkeit, seiner Zärtlichkeit, seiner Zerstreutheit, Unruhe, Lustigkeit, seinem Leichtsinn, seiner Melancholie. Der Klang seiner Stimme hatte die Macht, Johanna vergessen zu lassen, was hinter ihr lag, was an Leiden und Pflichten sie erwartete. Sie war ganz verzaubert. In diesen Tagen hatte sie nicht einmal schlechtes Gewissen. Alle Skrupel und Bedenken in ihr waren stumm gemacht, zugedeckt, fort, samt den Erinnerungen und mit den Verpflichtungen der Zukunft. (111–112)

Letters from Georg and Bruno, her only link to the outside world, are left unopened. The spell is only broken by the arrival of the outside world in the form of Jens and Yvonne. Out in the countryside, on the quest to preserve their love, Johanna and Ragnar meet more strange people, either with repellent physical

deformities, or who are unfriendly and hostile. The night journey to Yvonne's family is particularly surreal. They drive through a forest, itself a traditional fairy-tale location, in the dead of night, followed by two white birds. The door is opened by a woman described as a witch. An "invisible line" stops Yvonne from reaching her son. She throws her pet tortoise to her son almost in an attempt to break the spell separating them. Johanna and Ragnar then journey to Lapland, another fairy-tale setting, where they discover a marvellous chapel at a remote monastery in the wilderness.

Mann also blends in standard elements from gothic romance: the lone friendless girl comes to a remote house, meets the anti-hero with a shady past in a house full of family secrets. Things lurk about in the shadows, in the attic, under the surface. Families hide secrets: the babbling ghostly grandmother, the stolen grandchild, and the dysfunctional family life behind the respectable exterior. Finally Mann adds conventional love story elements: a boy and a girl who find each other, despite the opposition to their relationship. Early in the novel, Mann raises the expectation that Ragnar can be redeemed, that he has potential which can be put to good use if he meets someone whose love can bring out the best in him. These expectations are disappointed. Johanna's love does not make Ragnar a better person, it only diminishes her.

By configuring these various elements, Mann is almost inviting his heroine to decide what kind of story she is participating in. Ultimately, she is forced to recognise the truth that none of these worlds are for her: she does not free the handsome prince, or restore the family fortune, or live happily ever after with the

hero. The love story in which she has found herself is not hers, it is merely the prologue to her real story, a story of exile and political struggle. The fairy-tale elements underline the unreality of the world in which Johanna has found herself, but also show that the dream world is no paradise and contains its own menace. Johanna and Ragnar's attempt to remain together by fleeing the real world leads them into more, not fewer, dangers.

Acting as a background to the bizarre characters, the strangeness of landscape emphasises the strangeness of everything else, reinforcing the idea that this world is not real. As they travel away from the estate, the countryside becomes increasingly odd, changing abruptly, going from dense forest to a barren landscape. Roads end in lakes, and they have to continue on a ferry. Eventually they reach nothingness:

Es gab wirklich so gut wie gar nichts mehr. Über ein ödes Hochplateau ohne Vegetation blies ein Wind, der Angst machte. Die einzige Unterbrechung dieser finsternen Weite waren zackige Erhebungen, im Abstand von ein paar hundert Metern sich wiederholend, die sich zu wüsten, schwarzen Kratern öffneten, als hätten hier Meteorsteine oder enorme Bomben eingeschlagen und im gräßlichem Übermut die platte Landschaft zerfetzt und dadurch belebt, freilich auf eine wüste und wilde Weise. (221–2)

This landscape seems to be the result of an apocalyptic disaster caused either by an onslaught from outer space ('Meteorsteine') or by some act of warfare ('enorme Bomben'), the latter reference echoing the atrocities happening in the real world. After journeying through the forest Johanna remarks that the wildness of this landscape makes the vast and stormy sea appear civilised. The forest has the "Unendlichkeit" (202) of the sea or a desert. She notices the sounds it makes are like music:

Der einschläfernde und pathetische Orgelton des großen Rauschens – Musik ohne Rhythmus, Urmusik, noch nicht vom Rhythmus gegliedert; Brandungsmonotonie – begleitete ihre Fahrt. (202)

The sound has overtones of the primeval, the dangerous and the savage. There is the sense that this “natural music” is an echo of the human barbarity we see bubbling over into the aggression between Ragnar and Jens, the hostility of the local people, and the violence taking place in Germany.

Frequently Johanna feels as though she is in a dream, Mann describes her as walking like a sleepwalker, her visits to Uncle Peter’s house and Yvonne’s family are remembered as though they were dreams and she is not sure how much was real. She begins to accept the fact that fantasy and reality are merging into each other.

Johanna war jetzt fest davon überzeugt, daß die ganze Geschichte von dem geraubten Söhnchen eine Erfindung, ein Hirngespinst sei. [...] ‘Sie hat niemals einen Sohn gehabt’, dachte Johanna. ‘Aber warum soll sie nicht ein bißchen lügen, wenn es ihr Freude macht? Wir befinden uns ja ohnedies in einer ziemlich merkwürdigen Gegend, und so ganz zuverlässig real sehen die Dinge ohnedies hier nicht aus.’ (186–187)

This dream world motif is strongly associated with Johanna and Ragnar’s relationship. Johanna watches Ragnar while he is asleep, feeling cut off from the world he is now occupying; but feels closer to him when he relates his dreams about his childhood. However Johanna is seen to seek out the dream world even before she falls in love with Ragnar. On her first morning at the estate, she becomes convinced that she needs to recall her dreams:

Ihre zweite Sorge und Beängstigung war, daß sie sich, trotz angestrengtestem Nachdenken, keines einzigen Traumes erinnern konnte, den sie in der Nacht gehabt hatte. Dabei spürte und wußte sie ganz genau, daß ihr Schlaf voll von großen und sehr bemerkenswerten Träumen gewesen war. (55)

Her flight north with Ragnar and Yvonne (the two characters who are most associated with the dream world), represents a flight from the real world and a retreat into an imaginary world. Ultimately Ragnar denies the reality of the world from which Johanna comes, by dismissing her political ideals as founded in “unreality”:

“[...] Aber das ist doch eigentlich etwas ganz Abstraktes, etwas Unwirkliches, so weit weg [...]” (183)

In fact his use of the term ‘unwirklich’ echoes the description of their lovemaking:

Wie in einem überwirklichen, nicht irrealen, sondern gesteigert realen Raum geschahen mit einer feierlichen Ausführlichkeit [...] die Gesten ihrer Vereinigung. (107)

“Überwirklichkeit” and “Unwirklichkeit” are the foundations of their world, a dream world where they do not communicate fully, and which cannot last beyond the Summer. Towards the end of their journey, the truth of their world begins to emerge. Their trip north is not romantic and exciting, the reality is that the “Grand Hotel of Paris and London” is dilapidated, people are starving and hostile, war is coming to Europe. The world is full of misfortune and evil, and they cannot escape by running away, or living in a fantasy world. As with Sonja and Sebastian, the end of Johanna and Ragnar’s relationship is played out in a shabby hotel in an impoverished town, surrounded by starving people, denied the fine and tragic union in death that Johanna had thought appropriate. Their stories and their lives are not destined to end with their relationship, instead this is a transitory episode, which will one day fade into insignificance.

5 Conclusion

Johanna is caught in a human drama centring on the experience of flight. Her flight takes her to a new landscape: one of beauty, of unfamiliarity, and of threat. Those three elements conspire to create a fairy tale world. That fairy tale world is itself circumscribed by the political catastrophe, Nazism, which is unfolding off-stage. In the final analysis, the fairy tale world gives way to the nightmare. Johanna's sacrifice of her relationship with Ragnar is an acknowledgement of this fact.

Taken as a whole Flucht in den Norden may be an uneven novel, unsure whether it is realistic fiction, or a tale that explores an escape from social reality, or a love story or an existential-cum-political allegory. However, that unevenness is a measure of the confusion and anguish felt by Mann himself, both as author and exile; and it gives the novel a compelling emotional rawness which, in some measure at least, compensates for its flaws.

IV Mephisto (1936)

Introduction

Published in 1936, Mephisto. Roman Einer Karriere is the third of the novels Mann wrote while in exile. Although it focuses on one individual's story, as is the case with Flucht in den Norden, Mann also draws on elements from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. The main character Hendrik Höfgen is a fully-realised version of the Gregor Gregori figure, with echoes of the masochism from the character of Doctor Massis. The thematic concept of a society spiralling out of control has also been expanded, this time with a clear connection to the rise of Fascism. The background to the publication of Mephisto and the subsequent controversy it gave rise to is probably one of the most discussed aspects of Mann's life and career. Clearly the debate surrounding the portrayal of the Gustaf Gründgens-based figure has overshadowed and coloured the evaluation of the novel. Given that all the 'real-life originals' are long dead, it seems redundant to spend more time dissecting this debate, Fredric Kroll perhaps puts it best with:

Der Erfolg des *Mephisto*-Films auf der ganzen Welt – wobei Gustaf Gründgens außerhalb Deutschlands kaum bekannt ist – beweist endgültig, daß der Roman seinen Gehalt *nicht* aus der Denunziation der Person Gustaf Gründgens gewinnt.⁹⁰

The novel has greater resonance and scope than the mere disparaging of a former friend and relation.⁹¹ Despite its troubled history, Mephisto is vivid and challenging, and still a significant novel of the 1930s. It engages with the Nazi

⁹⁰ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.2 Repräsentant des Exils: 1934–1937. Im Zeichen der Volksfront* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.696.

⁹¹ In response to Hendrik's assertion that every regime needs him Kroll writes: 'Damit beweist er, daß er sein Talent "für die propagandistischen Zwecke eines infernalischen 'totalen Staates'" [...] *wissenschaftlich* zur Verfügung stellt. Daß er ein Minimum an Kunst im Nazi-Reich und damit den Schein der Zivilisation in Deutschland dem Ausland gegenüber bewahrt, daß er dadurch mit dazu beiträgt, die anderen Länder sowie das deutsche Bildungsbürgertum über die wahre Natur des Hitler-Staates hinwegzutäuschen, ist sein eigentliches Vergehen. Dieses grundlegende Thema des Romans wird aktuell bleiben, solange es Staaten gibt, die nur den Interessen einer relativ kleinen Schicht dienen.' *Ibid.*, p.696.

government's use of theatre, questions the relationship between art and politics, and is an uncannily prophetic vision of a future Nazi Germany.

1 The Characters and their Relationships

As in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen human relationships are based upon people playing roles for one another both knowingly and unknowingly. Here though, the relationships revolve around one main character who plays roles for himself as well as demanding a similar level of role-play from others. While Hendrik's primary goal is the furtherance of his career, he also needs and wishes to form meaningful attachments to other people. Though largely determined by self-interest, he, in his dealings with other people, is capable of affection, albeit limited, for them.

The young Heinz Höfgen decides he must escape from the mediocre milieu he has been born into, and reinvents himself as Hendrik, effectively ridding himself of his old self. However this new self is a fragmented being full of contradictory elements and tensions. He is not so much a character as an assemblage of personae, which he utilises in an attempt to hide his deep feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Uwe Naumann describes Hendrik's assimilation to circumstances and the people around him as 'chamäleonartig', ⁹² an instinctive and complete transformation. He needs an appreciative audience around him constantly, without one he is lost and incomplete. This need for approval means he cannot cope with being married to a woman who sees his inadequacy, and this helps to destroy his first marriage. His inner feeling of personal failure is compounded by the fact that, as he confesses to Hedda von Herzfeld, he believes himself to be a second rate

⁹² Uwe Naumann, *Klaus Mann* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.80.

actor.⁹³ At the height of his career, his Hamlet is a failure (artistically if not critically). His role-playing can convince an audience, but he cannot convince himself.

As the novel unfolds, we register the plurality of roles which Hendrik plays. The first role the reader experiences is the confident Staatsintendant who appears in the prologue of the novel. This is Hendrik's starring role, the role towards which all of his efforts have been directed. He is powerful, rich and famous; envied and admired equally. While Mephistopheles is Hendrik's greatest role on stage, this is his greatest off stage; the most powerful and popular artist in the Nazi Reich.

Common to both roles, of course, is the sense that Hendrik is consorting with evil. Yet, for all his grand public persona, he cultivates a suitable artistic eccentricity. The reader meets this side of Hendrik in the first chapter of the novel. Brilliant, yet erratic (even neurotic at times), Hendrik is equally charming and offensive. He indulges in hysterical tantrums at regular intervals, but only in situations where they will not impede his career. Most of his peers regard him as enviably talented, whereas theatre directors Kroge,⁹⁴ and the Professor think of him as a Komödiant, rather than a true actor, but recognise his appeal to the public. Hedda Von Herzfeld regards Hendrik's talent as a reason to excuse his selfishness and arrogance. Sebastian considers that Hendrik's character is emblematic of the acting persona.

⁹³ ‘“Ich werde mich nicht beweisen. [...] Ich habe nichts zu beweisen. Niemals werde ich erstklassig sein. Ich bin provinziell.”’ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.57.

⁹⁴ ‘“Alles an ihm ist falsch, von seinem literarischen Geschmack bis zu seinem sogenannten Kommunismus. Er ist kein Künstler, sondern ein Komödiant.”’ *Ibid*, p.32.

“Er lügt immer, und er lügt nie. Seine Falschheit ist seine Echtheit – es klingt kompliziert, aber es ist völlig einfach. Er glaubt alles und er glaubt nichts. Er ist ein Schauspieler.”⁹⁵

Politics also gives Hendrik an appealing role. Until the Nazis come to power, Hendrik professes his Communist ideals, and his intention to devote his talent to those ideals by way of the “Revolutionary theatre”. Although these plans come to nothing, his performance is entirely convincing: Herzfeld, Ulrichs and Kroge, all of whom later resist Nazism, are taken in. His enthusiasm has them ‘gebannt’ (54). Once Communist beliefs are no longer expedient or safe, Hendrik dismisses them as ‘Künstlerlaune’ and ‘Künstlertorheit’ (278), though privately telling friend Otto Ulrichs that his outward capitulation to Nazism is his way of fighting it from within. Paradoxically Hendrik’s lack of morality generates another role. Hendrik casts himself in the role of one who has strayed from the path of goodness, but is contrite and ready to be saved. He initially views Barbara as the good angel who can save him.

“Ich brauche dich....Ohne dich muß ich ganz zugrunde gehen. Es ist so viel schlechtes in mir. Allein bringe ich die Kraft nicht auf, es zu besiegen, du aber wirst das bessere in mir stark machen.” (109)

He also confesses to her the episode from his childhood where, as a choir boy he “shamed” himself by singing an octave above the rest of the boys, and tells her that he has often felt shame.⁹⁶ When the Nazis come to power, Hendrik looks for protection from Lotte Lindenthal, called the Fliegergeneral’s good angel. After his pact with the “devil” he makes confession to the Fliegergeneral of his sinful Communist politics.

⁹⁵ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.187.

⁹⁶ ‘“Ich muß mich häufig so entsetzlich stark schämen – mich so in die Hölle hinunter schämen...”’ *Ibid*, p.142.

Precisely because he has so few deeply held beliefs, Hendrik is an enchanting speaker on almost any and every subject. His storytelling skills are so entertaining that even his sworn enemy Hans Miklas listens to him. Hendrik is the centre of attention at his wedding to Barbara, playing the guest star, who drops in to entertain and enthrall. He is a talented dancer, and a brilliant speaker. He is referred to as a 'Märchenprinz' (131 and 321) on a number of occasions. He successfully disguises his weight problem, and his lack of beauty, by carrying himself in the conviction of his own splendour. The success of this masquerade is shown by his popularity with women, both on and off stage. Even other men agree that he is handsome. The dark side of the fairy-tale prince are the King of the Underworld, and Dionysus, gods of darkness and debauchery. Both he and second wife Nicoletta are likened to deities of the underworld, the poet Benjamin Pelz calls them Oberon and Titania leading the dance of death and damnation; behind all the notions of black magic one senses the essential form of the thousand year Reich.

“Ihr führt den Tanz [...] Ihr verzaubert uns mit eurem Lächeln, und mit eurem wundersamen Blicken. [...] Ihr geleitet uns unter die Erde, in die tiefste Schicht, in die magische Höhle, wo das Blut von den Wänden rauscht, wo die Kämpfenden sich begatten, die Liebenden sich töten, wo Liebe, Tod und Blut in orgiastischer Kommunion sich vermischen...” (344)

During his lengthy relationship with Juliette, Hendrik sometimes believes that their liaison is more than sexual, that he perhaps loves her; though he is uncertain as to whether he is capable of loving another person. He even believes himself to be in love with Barbara, though he is prompted to propose by Nicoletta's assertion that marriage to her will be good for his career. Hendrik's performance for

Barbara is convincing enough for her to accept him, however he is unable to play the devoted husband for very long, as he cannot summon up any passion for his wife. He disguises the failure of this performance by reverting to another type, the devious adulterer, a role he plays more easily. At various times during their marriage Hendrik convinces himself that his relationship with Barbara is not over, despite resuming his affair with Juliette. The narrative moves into the present tense to convey the urgency of Hendrik's processes of self-deception:

Die Bindung an Juliette, das grausame Naturkind – sie ist mehr als nur sexuelle Angelegenheit, sondern kompliziert und geheimnisvoll –: Hendrik legt Wert auf diesen interessanten Umstand. Manchmal glaubt er auch, daß seine Beziehung zu Barbara – Barbara, die er seinen guten Engel genannt hat – durchaus nicht abgeschlossen und zu Ende sei, sondern noch Wunder, Rätsel und Überraschungen bringen könne. (215)

Until the Nazis come to power he always mentions Barbara when asked about what has helped him to his success. The other factor is the revolutionary 'Gesinnung' (216), hence he nurtures his relationship with Ulrichs.

Hendrik needs to see himself as heroic, and enjoys playing the martyr. Throughout his career, he believes he works very hard for the others around him. He sees himself as leading a selfless existence while Barbara has an easy and selfish life. He also thinks of himself as an exiled political martyr when the Nazis come to power. Back in Nazi Germany he tells Nicoletta that they are at the front, and the emigrants are the deserters.

After Hendrik has established his power base in Nazi Germany, his fame and riches allow him to indulge his role-playing even more obviously. At his flat in town he plays the bohemian, at his country villa he is the English lord. His profit

from the Reich is more than just career-based. His mansion, ‘Hendrik Hall’, is bought cheaply from a fleeing Jewish banker. He has servants, cars, and appears in society magazines; but his popularity means his blatant wealth does not cause resentment. His servants wear black livery, and he has horses, even though he neither likes riding nor looks good on horseback. These and the other animals, including the dogs he fears, are merely useful props for photo-opportunities.

Once Hendrik is established as the Intendant of the Staatstheater, he allows himself not only in public but also in private to play the devil. He no longer bothers to make excuses for his actions, asking his friends, ‘*Bin ich nicht ein Schurke?*’⁹⁷ This is however a pose reserved only for close, discreet friends, as Hendrik appreciates that his Nazi protectors like to think of themselves as embodying the splendour of German culture. When Hendrik is asked to do something to help those in concentration camps, he refuses, admitting no guilt for profiting from this unstoppable tide:

“Was wollen Sie, junger Freund?” machte er ungeduldig. “Was verlangen Sie denn von mir? Soll ich den Niagarafall mit einem Regenschirm aufhalten?” (346)

Hendrik is called one of the ‘vornehmsten und aktivsten “Trägern des deutschen Kulturwillens”’ (361). Despite claiming to hate Nazi art, and to dislike what he knows of Nazi politics, he submits to being exploited for propagandistic purposes because of what he stands to gain, and becomes the public face of Nazi Germany. Hendrik needs a partner in this particular role. He chooses the manipulative Nicoletta, a woman with whom he has always felt a certain empathy, given their

⁹⁷ ‘Mit einem zynischen Übermut verzichtete er plötzlich auf alle Beschönungen und Entschuldigungen.’ *Ibid.* p. 346.

similar natures.⁹⁸ Ultimately Hendrik and Nicoletta's willing role-playing is a poisonous mask. At their wedding reception, they carry themselves as though they were going to their own funerals. The language is full of images of artifice and decay: the glass flowers which Nicoletta wears are brittle. Glass is fragile, and transparent.

Nicolettas Anlitz leuchtete von harten, künstlichen Farben; Hendriks Gesicht schien zu phosphoreszieren in seiner grünlichen Blässe. (363)

Hendrik's face is pale and sickly. It is torture for them to smile; their demeanour is 'maskenhaft' (363), their eyes are glassy, unable to respond to those around them.⁹⁹ The description of their 'erfror[enes] Lächeln' and 'leidvolle[] Grimasse' (364), is reminiscent of the expression of a corpse. The narrator asks whether their expressions reflect the remembrance of what and whom they betrayed: Barbara, Theophil Marder, even their own youth. They have betrayed themselves, and are now bound together forever. The narrative tone is, as so often in the novel, fiercely judgemental, appalled at the actions of these glittering, terrible people.

Nun gehörten sie für immer zueinander, diese beiden Glitzernden, Schimmernden, Lächelnden – so wie zwei Verräter, so wie zwei Verbrecher für immer zueinander gehören. Das Band, das den einen Schuldigen an den anderen bindet, wird nicht Liebe sein, sondern Haß. (364)

The consequence of Hendrik's continual role-playing and pretence is the destruction of his capacity to feel and act spontaneously or honestly. He is no longer able to be sensitive to the world around him; his mask is only shattered when he hears of Ulrichs' death, and he is unable to hide his grief. Hendrik's

⁹⁸ On his wedding day, Hendrik notices his affinity with Nicoletta: '[Hendrik] empfand [...] eine brüderliche Sympathie für Nicoletta. Er begriff: Sie war seinesgleichen.' *Ibid*, p.135.

⁹⁹ 'Es war deutlich, daß ihnen beiden das Lächeln große Mühe und sogar Qual bereitete. Ihre Mienen wirkten maskenhaft. Der starre Blick schien durch die Personen, die sie auf Ihrer stolzen Wanderung begrüßten, hindurchzugehen [...] Was schauten denn ihre Augen, daß sie so glasig wurden unter halb gesenkten Lidern?' *Ibid*, p.363.

reaction is the first completely spontaneous, genuine expression of his feelings in front of the Fliegergeneral, and the Fliegergeneral is disappointed at this weakness. Yet Hendrik's heartfelt emotion now sounds insincere, as he comprehends when discussing Ulrichs with Nicoletta: '[e]r fühlte, daß die ernsten Worte aus seinem Munde klangen wie Hohn' (374). He is ashamed, and though he eases his conscience by sending money for Ulrichs' funeral, he cannot dispel the doubts he has about himself which are expressed in his performance as Hamlet. He struggles to play the Prince of Denmark, which contrasts with the ease with which he portrayed Mephistopheles.

The secondary characters are related to Hendrik by representing choices that he makes: Barbara or Nicoletta/Juliette, Komödiant or Künstler, Communist or Fascist, Hamlet or Mephistopheles. The starker example of this occurs when he is in Paris. After receiving the news that he is safe to return to Germany, and buying his return ticket, he comes across Barbara and her friends. While his instinct is to go to her, he is afraid, both of her reaction, and of the symbolic choice he would be making. He instead chooses the easy path, and returns to Germany. However she haunts his memory, he thinks of her on the day of his wedding to Nicoletta, and is reminded of her when he meets the Generalin in the Tiergarten. Even during his great success, he wonders if she thinks of him. By nature Hendrik is a man who would rather not choose between two paths, preferring if he can to have "the best of both worlds", he would like to stay married to Barbara, and sleep with Juliette, he would prefer to be a revolutionary in reputation and art, but a Fascist in politics and career-choices. When forced to decide between two courses of action, Hendrik always chooses the easiest option. The secondary characters

serve to remind us of the various personal, political and artistic options open to him.

Hendrik's relationships with women are often characterised by their commercial nature: Juliette is his private prostitute; Barbara is a useful prop for his career; Nicoletta is a suitable leading lady for his role as the Staatsintendant. He feels desire for Juliette and Nicoletta, and is fascinated by Barbara's dissimilarity to himself. Out of his superficial attraction, he convinces himself that he feels affection for each of these women. Ultimately his real love affair is with his career, and the women only serve to fulfil those aspects of life which cannot be met by his work, which is why he sacrifices Juliette and Barbara for his career, and why he marries Nicoletta.

Juliette is introduced as the daughter of a German engineer and an African woman, allegedly of royal descent. Despite the narrator's frequent likening of her face to a mask, she is the most straightforward character in the novel. She is very open, and does not try to disguise her brutal nature or lack of sophistication. Despite being a gifted dancer, her violent nature and drinking force her to supplement her income by prostitution. Hendrik employs her ostensibly for dancing lessons, but this is merely an adjunct to the sadomasochistic sexual games they play. Hendrik is drawn to her savagery, which he regards as purity. But his attraction to her is not solely sexual. He can debase himself in front of her, indulge his self-hatred and give expression to his feelings of inadequacy. When he tires of this outpouring of self-disgust, he can cease, as he has the economic power, and hence controls the relationship.

Notwithstanding her lack of education or refinement, Juliette has the clearest understanding of Hendrik's true nature: she upbraids him for his superficiality, and his pretence. However she stays with him, partly out of financial consideration, but also because she feels genuine affection for him. She is hurt by his betrayal, and hence she threatens him, once she realises he is intent on being rid of her. Hendrik's subsequent treatment of Juliette, which destroys her spirit, but not her love for him, serves to indicate his ruthless desire to protect his position in Nazi Germany. When Hendrik asks the Fliegergeneral for help, he wishes to avoid having to kill her, but does not discount that as a possibility:

Hendrik, der doch nicht geradezu wollte, daß Prinzessin Tebab umgebracht würde, bat leise: "Aber daß ihr nichts zuleid geschieht!" (285)

The final poignant image we have of Juliette is of her little room graced only by a photograph of Hendrik:

Ihr trauriges Zimmer [...] war finster und hatte den Blick auf einen engen, schmutzigen Hof. Der einzige Schmuck an den kahlen, fleckigen Wänden war eine Photographie des Schauspielers Hendrik Höfgen: Juliette hatte sie einst, während eines Zornes- und Schmerzensanfalls, zerissen, aber dann hatte sie die Fetzen sorgfältig wieder aneinander geklebt – Hendriks Mund saß nun ein wenig schief und gab seinem Gesicht einen hämischen Ausdruck; quer über seine Stirn lief ein Streifen von Leim wie eine Narbe; aber sonst war seine Schönheit ziemlich tadellos wiederhergestellt. (316)

The photograph is symbolic of their relationship, despite her occasional brutality, she loves him, and this is seen in her painstaking reconstruction of the photograph she destroyed.

Although Barbara fulfils various functions in the novel, she is used most significantly as the antithesis of Hendrik. She develops as a person during the

novel, parallel to Hendrik developing as a careerist. Arguably the advent of Nazism is the making of both of them. Hendrik is fascinated by her sincerity and openness, neither of which are traits he possesses. Unlike her best friend Nicoletta, Barbara does not disguise herself with make-up, affected gestures, and dresses in what suits her rather than what is fashionable. Hendrik wishes her to play the role of his good angel, he thinks that by marrying her he can save himself from women who appeal to his baser instincts,¹⁰⁰ and that she can bring out his latent goodness. He is also attracted to her enviable place in society and the thought of how she could help his career:

Geheimrat Brückner war ein großer Mann, auch nicht arm; die Verbindung mit seiner Tochter würde Vorteile bringen, neben allem Glück. (108)

When his sudden proposal is met with surprise, he has to play on something other than her affection for him:

“Ich brauche dich”, schluchzte er, die Stirne auf ihrem Schoß. “Ohne dich muß ich ganz zugrunde gehen. Es ist so viel Schlechtes in mir. Allein bringe ich die Kraft nicht auf, es zu besiegen, du aber wirst das Bessere in mir stark machen!” (109)

Hendrik begs for her compassion, and it is that compassion that makes her agree to marry him. Aside from the role of good angel, Hendrik also wishes to have Barbara as his “sisterly friend and confidant”, a role previously occupied by Herzfeld. Unlike Herzfeld, Barbara is not prepared to fulfil this function without some recompense:

Die Geheimratstochter war zu anspruchsvoll [...] Sie beanspruchte Glück. Hierüber mußte Frau von Herzfeld höhnisch lachen. Begriff die arrogante Barbara nicht? Das einzige Glück, das Männer wie Hendrik Höfgen

¹⁰⁰ Hendrik views Nicoletta as a potential replacement for Juliette, whereas Barbara is the ‘Gegenspielerin’. *Ibid*, p.97.

gewähren konnten, war das ihrer erregenden Gegenwart, ihrer bezaubernden Nähe... (162)

During their marriage Barbara attempts to establish a career doing theatre design, not knowing that Hendrik is preventing her from working at the Hamburger Künstlertheater. Their marriage works best when Hendrik starts over in Berlin, without money, friends and reputation. The dedicated, struggling actor appeals more to her than the feted star of the Hamburger Künstlertheater. It fascinates her to listen to him describing the development of his career, she knows in these moments he is 'echt' (194), as close to being genuine as he can be.

Barbara utilises her social contacts to help further his career. However Hendrik also likes to play the pedagogue, which requires Barbara to be inferior to him, therefore her social status, which is higher than his, irks him. The illustrious background for which he married her is what causes him to resent her throughout their marriage. The other irony of their relationship is that Hendrik is attracted to her because she cannot play roles, hoping that her straightforwardness will influence him, but ultimately their marriage fails. He cannot muster sexual desire for the woman he views as 'Madonna[]' (97) and 'Jüngling[]' (97). She is drawn to his neediness and insecurity, but these are only hiding selfishness and inadequacy. The final break in their relationship happens when Hendrik turns his back on her in Paris. The ascent of Hitler to power compounds the breakdown in their marriage which had been inevitable from their wedding day.

Barbara contrasts with Hendrik because of her social conscience, her natural empathy, and her developing self-awareness. Though she realises her marriage was a mistake, she attempts to learn from it. Barbara's interest in politics stems

from her compassion and her liberal education. Despite being from a privileged background, she realises that Miklas is starving, and that part of his hatred for the other members of the Hamburger Künstlertheater stems from their poor treatment of him. She is one of the few people to see through Hendrik. Even before his conversion to Nazism, she suspects his Communist politics of being insincere. After marrying him she comes to know the true Hendrik and cannot be part of his adoring audience.

Nicoletta and Hendrik gravitate towards each other because of their constant need to hide themselves behind a mask. Like Hendrik, she carries herself as though she were beautiful, and she dazzles the opposite sex. She speaks in an affected manner, and celebrates her bohemian origins, which in fact hide a displaced and presumably unhappy childhood. She speaks of her ruthless ambition to Hendrik, assuming the mantle of a calculating femme fatale; however, she readily sacrifices her burgeoning career to marry Theophil Marder. In Marder she finds a replacement father, and he gives her access to the current artistic elite. Once this marriage goes sour, Nicoletta disguises her desire for escape by calling it a wish to be useful in the new Reich.

Though they are already having an affair, Nicoletta and Hendrik marry for convenience, once they are rid of their “dubious” spouses. For Nicoletta, marrying Hendrik is the means to re-start her career, and establish herself in Nazi society. Hendrik in turn marries Nicoletta to quash rumours about his “racially-inferior” mistress. Hendrik’s attraction to Nicoletta can also be seen as an expression of his narcissism, as she reminds him of himself. Hendrik’s relationship with Nicoletta

is the only one that seems have the chance of lasting, perhaps because in some respects she represents the fusion of Barbara and Juliette, she is good for his career and can satisfy him sexually. But in marrying her Hendrik has sacrificed other things that he needs including love and understanding, as we see when Ulrichs dies. Nicoletta offers him little support, asking Hendrik how he feels, with an almost mocking curiosity.

“Geht es dir nahe, Hendrik?” erkundigte sich Nicoletta mit einer merkwürdig kalten und, wie es schien, beinahe höhnischen Neugierde bei ihrem Gatten. “Beschäftigt es dich?” (373)

Her personal reaction to Ulrichs’ death seems to be one of detached envy for political convictions which she does not share. She considers him fortunate to have died for his ideals.

“Er ist für die Sache gestorben, die ihm die richtige schien. Er ist vielleicht zu beneiden” (373)

She then debates as to whether Ulrichs would be a suitable literary subject for her ex-husband. Her response to Hendrik’s grief at Ulrichs’ death shows how little they connect mentally, despite their similar personalities. Hendrik has saved his career, but has sacrificed any chance of affection or intimacy. At the end of the novel, they are both trapped in the empty illusion of a marriage created as a tribute to Nazi artistic endeavour, and the Nazi Reich.

In the earlier part of the novel, his relationships with two of the other characters at the Hamburger Künstlertheater reveal aspects of Hendrik’s character. As mentioned earlier, Hedda von Herzfeld is described as fulfilling the role of sisterly confidant and friend. A kind of surrogate mother to Hendrik, she is the person to whom he confesses his feelings of inadequacy, but this does not prevent him

ridiculing her in front of the other members of the Hamburger Künstlertheater. Angelika is an actress who suffers from unrequited love for Hendrik, which blights her marriage to a film director. She helps to secure Lotte Lindenthal's protection for Hendrik, hoping that this will win her his favour. Initially this act of kindness moves him to tears, however he quickly forgets about Angelika when he finds a greater prize in the form of Lotte herself. Both Hedda and Angelika serve to illustrate Hendrik's callous disregard for the feelings of others, and readiness to exploit other people.

Otto Ulrichs is Hendrik's long-standing friend, a man who is politically engaged in every sense, sacrificing his time, money, career, eventually his life, in the service of his cause. He is eventually tortured to death by the Gestapo, while refusing to betray his comrades. Hendrik initiates the chain of events which culminate in Ulrichs' death, by arranging to have Ulrichs released from the concentration camp in which he is detained, following the fire at the Reichstag. This release and subsequent partial protection by Hendrik allow him the opportunity to begin his political work again. Ulrichs' death represents a turning point for Hendrik, the moment when Hendrik can no longer ignore what is happening around him. He cannot keep hiding behind another persona, which precipitates the crisis of his failed performance of Hamlet, and his recognition of how his marriage to Nicoletta has left him feeling isolated.

As well as having genuine political commitment, Ulrichs is also seen to be more tolerant of other opinions, he is 'väterlich belehrend' (164) towards Barbara, and tries to win Miklas over, even requesting Miklas not be dismissed from the

Hamburger Künstlertheater, when he and Hendrik quarrel over Lotte Lindenthal.

While Hendrik sees political convictions as a useful pose, Ulrichs is a true political idealist, and a completely unselfish figure. Mann uses him to contrast with Hendrik, by representing everything that Hendrik should be, and also show how plausible Hendrik is. Perhaps because of his own honesty, Ulrichs is taken in by Hendrik, and cannot imagine ulterior motives for both Hendrik's procrastination when planning the Revolutionary theatre and his post-1933 political stance.

At the chronological beginning of the novel, Dora Martin is the most celebrated actress in Germany. It is frequently remarked that she and Hendrik are similar types, which may explain why she sees a depth in his abilities that others dispute. The Jewish actress helps further Hendrik's career, but later she flees Germany on the night of Hendrik's first performance as Mephistopheles. Her decision to leave is prompted by her sense of self-preservation, and she ploughs her energies into establishing her career in the English speaking world, where she meets with great success. There is no indication in the text that she takes an active political stance against Nazism. She does however, represent an alternative path which Hendrik ignores, namely that of a new start outside Germany. Though this choice means an uncertain future, without any guarantee of success, it is a means to avoid identification with the regime, and ensure artistic freedom.

The young actor Hans Miklas represents the generation of young people attracted to Nazism; bewitched by the Führer, he is the main exponent of Nazi politics in the novel. Miklas believes that Hitler is Germany's saviour. He is seen to be

alienated by many of his colleagues, resulting in an anger which drives him into the arms of the Nazis. From the first time Miklas is introduced it is clear he has a great dislike of Hendrik. Hendrik ascribes this merely to Miklas' Nazi politics; however Miklas also hates Hendrik because of his personality: in particular his vanity, and his superficiality. He is the only person who consistently sees that Hendrik's political convictions are a pose.

His argument with Hendrik over Lotte Lindenthal, though ostensibly a clash between Nazi and non-Nazi politics, can also be viewed as a conflict between those with political ideals and opportunists who exploit politics for their own ends. Hendrik has no real interest in striking a blow against Nazism, he only wishes to humiliate Miklas, possibly as a means to spite Barbara, and demonstrate the extent of his influence at the Hamburger Künstlertheater. The irony continues when the very woman whose honour cost Miklas his post becomes Hendrik's protector in Nazi Germany. This is the beginning of Miklas' realisation of his betrayal by the Führer. Once Miklas is no longer taken in by the Führer's "spell", and he does not hide his discontent, he is on a path which inevitably ends in his death.

Ironically the woman Hendrik castigates as an abysmal actress and a whore becomes his first Nazi patron, and protector. Lotte Lindenthal appears at the beginning of the novel, celebrating alongside her lover the Fliegergeneral. She is described as a provincial actress, who lacks breeding, intelligence and talent. Lotte adopts a gracious, sentimental mask to hide the fact that she is the mistress of a blood-thirsty tyrant. She is called the Fliegergeneral's good angel, but she is

in reality an angel of death, watching over her lover's shoulder as he arranges executions. Hendrik determines to win her over as a means of securing the protection of the Fliegergeneral, against enemies he had made before 1933 by ridiculing Nazi art.

In den ersten Wochen seines neuen Berliner Aufenthalts hatte er keinen anderen Gedanken im Kopf als nur diesen: Lotte Lindenthal muß mich lieben [...] ich muß alle meine Künste spielen lassen[.] (244)

In the same way that he used Dora Martin and Barbara to influence the Professor, Hendrik makes his way to the Fliegergeneral via Lotte. Similarly, after sending flowers of thanks to Dora Martin for help in securing him a position in Berlin, Hendrik sends a similar token of gratitude to Lotte. Hendrik's feelings about Lotte's lack of talent do not alter as he spends more time with her. On occasion he feels like shouting at her, yet he manages to convince her of his admiration of her talent and that he is enamoured of her. He has stooped to using his own abilities to curry favour from a person he neither likes nor respects.

Hendrik's Nazi-era career progresses largely because of his political connections, despite the fact he has no real interest in politics. The Nazi regime uses theatre as part of the propaganda machine. Hendrik's ability to assimilate himself and his talents to whichever expedient cause is a useful tool for those who wish to use the theatre in this way. Theatre directors Kroge and the Professor believe Hendrik lacks substance as an actor; this is arguably a reflection of his lack of substance as a person: Hendrik is an actor, both on and off the stage. In the Nazi period, where politics is so intimately related to theatre that fondness for show permeates every aspect of society, once Hendrik has become part of the Fliegergeneral's propaganda machine, he appears "substantial".

The Fliegergeneral is clearly based on Herman Göring. As with his protégé Hendrik, the Fliegergeneral likes to play roles, characterising himself as a great and popular leader. He wears ostentatious ‘Phantasieuniform[en]’ (23), devises spectacular events and entertainments which mask his bloody exploits. He is a brutal, conscience-less despot, presiding over murder and violence; he looks forward to the start of war as though it were some thrilling game. This dimension of sadism and cruelty distinguishes him from Hendrik, as is seen by their conflicting reactions to Ulrichs’ murder. He is drawn to Hendrik because of his talent to amuse; Lotte sees that the Fliegergeneral finds Hendrik ‘unwiderstehlich[]’ (258) in his role as Mephistopheles. Their attraction to one another is a kind of mutual seduction, both men are tempted by the power or influence they could achieve through the other.¹⁰¹ As the personification of power in the novel, the Fliegergeneral is seen to exemplify all the evils of the regime he governs, he is grotesquely ugly, cruel and corrupt, with a veneer of cheap joviality which serves to make him even more abhorrent.

By contrast, the Führer is a shadowy presence in the text. Hendrik only has one audience with this person who is described as a godlike being; where Hendrik’s speechless fear makes a favourable impression on ‘Die Macht’ (358). The narrator

¹⁰¹ According to James Keller ‘[p]ower is the source of Höfgen’s motivation. He must maintain a favourable connection to power, personified in the figure of “der Dicke”, [...] the minister-president who resembles Hermann Göring.’ James Robert Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), p.123.

describes the Führer as a second-rate prophet, lacking insight, nobility or wisdom, once more reflecting characteristics of the Nazi regime.¹⁰² Kroll writes that:

Sogar bei der Begegnung mit dem “Führer” mischt sich seine Bewunderung der Macht noch mit Hohn[.]¹⁰³

Despite his fear, Hendrik is no disciple, he sees through Hitler's primitivity.

Again he shows that he is able to see the truth of the regime, therefore his failing is a moral one rather than a lack of understanding.

¹⁰² His face ‘hat nicht die Würde des Geistes, und es ist nicht geadelt durch Leiden.’ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.267.

¹⁰³ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.2 Repräsentant des Exils: 1934–1937. Im Zeichen der Volksfront* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.706.

2 The Mind and the World

The world portrayed in the novel is the artistic world, above all the theatrical world. In Mephisto, performance and illusion do not stop on stage, and in a place where the world literally equates to a stage, absolute power is wielded by the person who decides which parts are played by whom, and which story is acted out. In the novel, the stage is a political arena and the actor is a political instrument. This reflects the wider politicisation and “theatricalisation” of human relationships; as well as the manipulation of the masses by politicians using theatrical spectacle. As already stated, Hendrik’s relationships with the three women in his life all exhibit this tendency towards pretence and role-playing. Under the Nazi regime, politics has become a theatrical spectacle, where audience participation is encouraged (the raid on Bruckner’s house, the burning of books) rather than a forum for discussion and debate. At its most extreme it is a multi-sensory experience, prefiguring the theatrical experiences in Der Vulkan, such as the brutalising of Bernheim.

Kroge, Ulrichs and others see the theatre as having a didactic and informative purpose, the corollary of this is to view the theatre as an instrument of propaganda and indoctrination. Theatre director Kroge’s career dates back to the period towards the end of the First World War when social unrest and upheaval caused a change in German theatre. Although he regards the theatre as a moral institution, he believes at first that political and artistic apathy prevails too strongly for Ulrichs’ idea of revolutionary theatre to work in the current climate. After the Nazis come to power, Kroge and his colleague Schmitz emigrate to Prague, not because they are facing imminent persecution, but because of the new atmosphere

in their country. As liberals and intellectuals, they believe there is no longer a place for them in Germany. Ulrichs sees the theatre as a political instrument, and when he is upbraided for compromising the Hamburger Künstlertheater's political neutrality by going to Communist assemblies, he offers to resign. His political work supersedes anything else in his life, and as such he gives half his time and salary, and eventually his life to the political cause. Barbara's friend Sebastian, a poet, abandons art for art's sake, and determines to use his artistic talent for the political struggle.¹⁰⁴ By contrast, Hendrik's view of the theatre is entirely superficial, it is a chance for him to showcase his acting prowess. His ultimate goal is only his own fame:

Wenn er es erst erreicht haben würde, daß ausnahmlos alle Welt ihn als "Hendrik" anerkannte, dann war er am Ziel, ein gemachter Mann. (68)

He does not wish to use his ability to help others, he only wants public adulation and the material trappings which accompany commercial success. To this end, regard for his fellow actors, consideration of the significance of his work, even respect of the material are minor matters. Despite Hendrik's pose of being the dedicated artist, as when he tells Hedda that private matters must not distract from work, "Schließlich ist man zuerst und vor allem Künstler" (161); he only means this in as much as his own career takes precedence over personal matters. He even fails to recognise his own significance in the Nazi regime or the wider significance of the theatre in the regime, despite his protestations of his own and the theatre's indispensability to the political world. He is happy to play one of the 'Trägern des deuschen Kulturwillens' (361), and his main worry about having

¹⁰⁴ „Der Kampf hat andere Gesetze als das hohe Spiel der Kunst [...] Meine Aufgabe ist es jetzt nicht, zu erkennen oder Schönes zu formen, sondern zu wirken[.]“ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.303.

sold himself to the Nazis, is not how he has betrayed his artistic vocation, but how he will be in danger if the Nazis are ousted. When he is the head of theatre in Berlin he struggles to find a repertoire of plays acceptable to both the Nazi regime and people with a genuine appreciation of art, and he occasionally despairs at the ineptitude of leading actress Lotte Lindenthal.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately however, Hendrik can tolerate this decline of the theatre, because artistic integrity means nothing to him. By compromising his political aesthetic, Hendrik also compromises his artistic ability. He becomes like Lotte Lindenthal, turning in a second-rate performance, and relying on his relationship with the Fliegergeneral to ensure he has glittering reviews in the press. Unlike Lotte, he knows how he has failed himself.

Both the Propaganda Minister and the Fliegergeneral use the theatre for their own ends.¹⁰⁶ For the Propaganda Minister, the theatre can be used to disseminate what the narrator terms lies, whereas the less intelligent, but outwardly more amiable Fliegergeneral thinks of entertainment and pageants where he can take the leading role:

Während der Kleine, zur Rechten des Thrones, die Lügen ersann, dachte der Dicke sich täglich neue Überraschungen aus – zur eigenen Unterhaltung und zur Unterhaltung des Volkes –: Feste, Hinrichtungen oder Prunkkostüme. (265)

¹⁰⁵ Although Mann's main concern with the Nazi regime is its political tyranny, he also sees the effect on the prevalent artistic culture. As James Keller writes: '[i]n the novel, political power becomes inextricably bound up with artistic production that is answerable to it, leading to an arts landscape devoid of any experimentation, refinement, progress, new ideas, or development.' James Robert Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), p.123.

¹⁰⁶ Lutz Winkler terms the function of the Prussian Schauspielhaus as 'Reichsrepräsentation' Lutz Winkler, '...ein richtig gemeines Buch, voll von Tücken". Klaus Manns Roman Mephisto', in *Klaus Mann: Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984), pp.46–80 (p.50).

The grouping of the last three nouns together implies that all these entities (festivals, executions, grand costumes) exist on the same level. An execution is merely part of the all-important political pageantry. The Fliegergeneral's superficial good-humour makes him popular, and he overcomes his lack of articulacy by his use of extravagances and spectacle. His finest hour will be the aerial bombardment of other nations which will be the perfect marriage of his need for pageant and his destructive streak. This guise of violence as entertainment is merely an elaborate trick to hide the Fliegergeneral's true nature, and also that of the regime.

At the beginning of the novel, the two foreign diplomats at the Fliegergeneral's birthday party discuss, in hushed tones, the suppression of the poorly paid workers demanding higher wages, while a vast amount of money has been spent on the ball in honour of the Fliegergeneral. The two diplomats are not fooled by the spectacle, though they are too nervous to voice their opinions. Immediately Mann establishes the idea of show and splendour hiding corruption and self-aggrandisement. The diplomats sense the militaristic mood, and understand that the German enthusiasm for peace is going to be short-lived. War is a means of making a quick profit, and this is conveyed in the connection Mann makes between the finery and opulence, and the preparation for war.¹⁰⁷

Frau Bella lächelte huldvoll[...] Aus weiten, grünblauen Augen schaute sie mit einer reservierten, nachdenklichen Freundlichkeit auf die geschwätzige Dame, die den lebhaften deutschen Kriegsvorbereitung ihr wundervolles Collier, ihre langen Ohrgehänge, die Pariser Toilette und all ihren Glanz verdankte. (11)

¹⁰⁷ The marzipan weapons, and the jewelled swastika are other examples of this.

Appearance is more important than anything else in the public eye: almost as though everyone in the world has lost the ability to look beyond the obvious and formulate their own conclusions. The Nazi regime sets great store by appearance. Foreigners who visit Germany for a week, praise the cleanliness and order. They report back that everyone is cheerful, the Führer is loved and there is no discontent. The removal of all political opposition, and the Propaganda Ministry's staging of "spontaneous" support for the Führer has convinced the visitors that not only is the regime benevolent, but also popular. The native press also fails to notice that Hitler, the peace-loving, 'sanfte Mensch' (366) is having thousands murdered.

Es rollten die Köpfe von Männern, die kein anderes Verschulden kannten, als daß sie ihrer sozialistischen Gesinnung nicht hatten abschwören wollen – auch der Messias aber, der sie hinrichten ließ, nannte sich Sozialist. Der Messias behauptete, daß er den Frieden liebe, und ließ die Pazifisten in den Konzentrationslagern martern. (366)

The illusion, the 'dreckige Lüge' (225), is that preceding values were an expression of weakness and incompetence, and what now rules is strong and honourable. The current regime represents pure German culture, and benefits all good German patriots. Lotte Lindenthal, herself both the symbol of new German womanhood, and the symbol of Nazi artistry, is fooled by this. She cannot imagine a future where her lover is not in power, because she cannot comprehend that anyone reasonable would object to what they are, or what they do, despite being a witness to 'die schauerlichen Geheimnisse des totalen Staates' (25).

The Propaganda Minister has a net of spies and provocateurs, an entire machinery for supporting the "lie": staging the fire at the Reichstag; masterminding the "spontaneous" indignation at the showing of Jewish actress Dora Martin's film.

This machinery makes the “lie” believed, and, once believed, it will be real. The “lie” covers the smallest illusion, believing that Hendrik’s failed Hamlet is a success, to the largest illusion, which sustains one section of society, while demonising another. Hendrik, in his own way, believes the “lie”, because the regime he once detested has given him what he wanted. He is blind to anything going on in the world around him in his pursuit of fame, and once he has fame he becomes wilfully blind to what is happening, despite his bad conscience. When Hendrik hears of the fire at the Reichstag, he recognises it as a theatrical trick being used to eliminate Hitler’s potential opposition:

‘Wie stark das Böse ist!’ dachte der Schauspieler Höfgen unter ehrfürchtigen Schauern. ‘Was es sich alles leisten und ungestraft herausnehmen darf! – Es geht in der Welt wirklich zu wie in den Filmen und Stücken, deren Held ich so häufig gewesen bin.’ (231)

The only difference between real life and Hendrik’s work, is that in the former the villains do not always receive punishment. He later participates in another theatrical trick when he meets the Fliegergeneral, a performance witnessed by the whole theatre, which ultimately overshadows the play. At the opening of the novel, the young diplomat from Scandinavia has a sense of the party guests as puppets playing roles which they have not chosen and do not enjoy. He sees ‘Angst’ (9) and ‘Grausamkeit’ (9) in their faces; and even their smiling contains a disturbing quality:

Hier haben die Gelächter etwas Höhnisches und etwas Verzweifeltes; etwas Freches, Provokantes, und dabei etwas Hoffnungsloses, schauerlich Trauriges. So lacht doch niemand, der sich wohl fühlt in seiner Haut. So lachen doch Männer und Frauen nicht, die ein anständiges, vernünftiges Leben führen... (9)

The concept of feeling uneasy in own’s own skin is a consequence of the continual suppression of a person’s authentic identity. These images are echoed

later in the novel during Hendrik's wedding reception, itself a celebration of Nazi culture. In the novel, performance is not restricted to the theatre, nor is it an artistic conceit. Men and women play roles to hide the truth about themselves and what they represent in Nazi Germany, only those characters who can dissemble, and who are insincere, are successful and safe. Those who cannot perform as they are required, have to leave or be destroyed. People are perceived as what they play or try to play, in this world Nicoletta and Hendrik are attractive; the Fliegergeneral is brave, honourable and heroic; Lotte is an unsurpassable actress, and the female symbol of German purity. Conversely their enemies are also cast in suitable roles: while the regime casts unwanted elements as impure, unpatriotic and treacherous, Hendrik castigates his own enemies as snobs, rivals for his wife, or ruffians.

The subtitle of the novel, 'Roman einer Karriere', reminds us that the novel is a laceratingly bitter success story. The measure of Hendrik's success will be the extent to which recognition is granted to his constructed identity. He wants the world to recognise him as Hendrik Höfgen, his assumed name. Significantly he is chosen as the representative artist of the Third Reich; he is considered to be emblematic of this new "pure" Germany. The prologue of the novel shows us the zenith of his career; he is powerful, successful, rich and admired. From this high point the reader is taken back in time to experience the progression of this career and Hendrik's various performances. From the first chapter it is clear Hendrik is insecure, and only feels comfortable when he is playing a role. He feels most comfortable with those who play roles (Nicoletta), and tries to manipulate those close to him into playing roles ranging from the sexual (Juliette) to the moral

(Barbara) and political (Ulrichs), often to facilitate or complement his own role-playing.

Having won over the Fliegergeneral in the guise of Mephistopheles, he also plays the repentant sinner by confessing his “terrible” past, and artistic folly. He does this ostensibly to bid for Ulrichs’ release, but also to dispel any doubts the Fliegergeneral may have had about Hendrik’s own political past. His actions are not those of a man who fears his political master. He is so comfortable manipulating the Fliegergeneral that he even uses the same routine that he employed on the harmless Schmitz.¹⁰⁸ By the end of the novel, Hendrik’s calculated sacrifice of his own authentic identity has rendered him incapable of functioning fully without an audience, and even at times when he gets close to genuine despair, he needs an audience to witness that emotion.

Es wäre angenehm gewesen, jetzt ein wenig zu weinen. Aber er wollte nicht Tränen vergießen, die niemand sah. (387)

He cannot resist the opportunity for using his own feelings as a piece of drama, because for him, unless life is played out as performance, it is meaningless. Other characters are attracted by Hendrik’s versatility and ability to change how he appeals to each individual, and are taken in by him. His appeal is to both genders, and political extremes. Both the Fliegergeneral and Marder are renowned for helping actresses, but they also promote Hendrik. The potential of his popularity to enhance their reputations is one factor, but equally important is his ability to adapt himself to people and circumstances.

¹⁰⁸ ‘[E]r eilte wie ein nervöser Sturmwind durchs Zimmer.’ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.278.

Hendrik's female counterpart Nicoletta is another constant performer: from the moment she appears at the Hamburger Künstlertheater, everything about her is calculated for effect: how she moves, and talks, what she wears, and what she says. Even Hendrik, who sees through Nicoletta's performance, finds her artifice increases his attraction to her. However, even honourable characters are forced to play roles in this topsy-turvy world. After securing his release from the concentration camp, Hendrik persuades Ulrichs that he should outwardly appear to be reconciled with the regime in order to work towards its downfall.

Ulrichs aber sagte: “[...] Ich ekle mich davor, von diesen Mördern eine Gnade zu empfangen und den reuigen Sünder zu spielen – und ich ekle mich überhaupt.” [...] Mit Emphase versetzte Hendrik: “Du wirst dich zwingen müssen. Ich habe mich auch gezwungen.” Und er belehrte den Freund darüber, wieviel Selbstüberwindung es ihn gekostet habe, so mit den Wölfen zu heulen, wie er es nun leider tue. (279)

Ulrichs still believes in his friend's integrity and follows his advice, winning over the other members of the Staatstheater, including Lotte. Although they are suspicious at first, he has learned the 'Kunst der Verstellung' (349) from those around him. When granting Hendrik an audience, even Hitler himself feels the need to dissemble by altering his voice, accent and vocabulary, although he possesses sufficient power to destroy any man in his presence. Hendrik and Hitler share a sense of inferiority which makes them perform, and causes others to be taken in by them.

As well as deceiving others, characters also deceive themselves. In particular Hendrik's perception of himself and others is often utterly distorted. When he becomes involved with Barbara, he believes that his love for her is genuine, even though it has also crossed his mind that her father is both influential and rich.

Later in the novel, he still fools himself about his personal and political relationships, believing himself to have a viable relationship with Barbara, and a revolutionary calling, despite sleeping with Juliette and taking no interest in the political events happening around him. When the Nazis come to power, Hendrik assuages his bad conscience by insisting that the emigration is an opportunity for ‘Schwächlinge’ (318) to desert, while the ones who stay are really the ones who are fighting. Similarly Nicoletta deludes herself about her reasons for abandoning Marder, assuring Hendrik she loves her husband more than ever, while in fact she just wants to be rid of a husband whose erratic behaviour is consuming her energies. The Fliegergeneral deceives himself that there is something magical about his present life, Lotte tells herself that their world is perfect and not built on the blood of innocents. Their supposed good nature and kindness is merely cheap sentimentality,¹⁰⁹ disguising their lack of sympathy for the tortured and murdered masses. The best example of this is how Lotte callously breaks the news of Ulrichs’ death to Hendrik.

“Ich mache mir Sorgen um Otto Ulrichs”, sagte Höfgen. – “Wieso denn Sorgen?” rief die Ährenblonde aus ihrem Rokoko-Boudoir zurück. “Er ist doch tot.” (370)

The disgust that Mann’s narrator feels for this regime is a reaction to its cheapness and vulgarity as well as its falseness. Most importantly though, this monstrous, calculated deception leads ultimately to a betrayal of the German people. Hendrik and Nicoletta betray everyone who ever trusted and relied upon them, and the Nazi leadership does the same with the German people. Hendrik betrays those people who have helped him to achieve the professional success he craves above

¹⁰⁹ Lotte is impressed by the Fliegergeneral’s kitsch, clichéd and ridiculous display in front of his dead wife’s portrait: ‘Lotte hatte Tränen in den Augen, da sie berichtete, wie ihr Ministerpräsident zuweilen um Mitternacht, im Bärenfell und mit dem blanken Schwert an der Seite, eine kleine Andacht vor dem Porträt seiner verschiedenen Gattin verrichtete.’ *Ibid*, p.275.

all else: Barbara, Marder, even Dora Martin, by criticising her to ingratiate himself with Lotte. He betrays his political convictions, his artistic integrity, and his affection for Juliette, all to gain favour with the Nazi regime. The particular irony of this fact is that before 1933, he is liked by everyone except the Nazis. Similarly the Nazi leaders betray the hopes of those who had supported them pre-1933: Miklas is the most poignant example of this, but Knurr and Angelika's husband are also disappointed Nazi disciples; even Muck is demoted, the Fliegergeneral stating that his long-standing loyalty to the party is not enough to save his job. Mann characterises Hendrik and Nicoletta's betrayal as not only an injury to their former spouses, but as a betrayal of the better part of themselves. Despite the rest of this topsy-turvy world presenting it as a triumph, their union is both punishment and a permanent reminder of their perfidy.

Hendrik's ascent in Nazi Germany is mirrored by the loss of favour of those he had once envied, or emulated. In this world gone mad, everything is turned on its head, previous values are trampled on, viciousness, barbarity and amorality are its new virtues. Power in the new Germany is wielded by those who are seen to have no merit of any kind: morally, intellectually or creatively. Bruckner loses his home, his possessions and eventually his nationality. He is a criminal, allegedly having committed 'Rassenschande' (300) by marrying a woman with Jewish blood. Like him, his daughter Barbara is driven into exile. Barbara's Grandmother, the Generalin, is denounced and degraded. A former society beauty, and friend of Wilhem II, Liszt, Wagner, and Ibsen, figures who are seen to represent a distinguished cultural and aristocratic pedigree, she is no longer deemed to be part of the 'nationalen Gemeinschaft' (301). Dora Martin, once the

most celebrated actress in Germany, has had to leave a country which bans the showing of her films. As she herself states, she is no longer a German actress, and her place as the leading German actress is filled by a woman whose only claim to the position is that she is the partner of the head of the Luftwaffe.

From feeling insecure and inadequate in the elevated society of his wife's family, Hendrik reinvents himself as the head of the new aristocracy in Nazi Germany. He retains his servant Böck partly as witness of his ascent. Hendrik's mother has also changed, modelling herself on the Generalin, the grand dame whose presence overawed her at Hendrik's first wedding. She now condescends to overlook the Generalin's Jewish blood and lack of money, to extend her own hospitality. The Höfgens are now occupying the place in society once held by the Bruckners, however this society is seen to consist of second rate artists, gossip-mongers and blackmailers. This reversal of fortune is not restricted to characters in Hendrik's circle, it is the same for the rest of Germany. According to the narrator, the innocent are hunted like murderers, because of their political sympathies, and murderers are revered for the same reason. In the new Germany, pacifism is a dirty word, German youth is taught how to shoot, and bomb; they trample over and burn the works of great writers and thinkers.¹¹⁰ The only art deemed acceptable is Nazi propaganda. The persecution of a minority becomes the occasion for celebration, and public office is held by the most inappropriate candidates imaginable. The narrator's disgust is only too evident in the following passage:

¹¹⁰‘Die wahre deutsche Jugend trampelte auf den Werken Goethes und Kants, Voltaires und Schopenhauers, Shakespeares und Nietzsches herum.’ *Ibid*, p.305.

[...] sehr nette Mörder, die jetzt große Stellungen ausfüllten bei der Geheimen Staatspolizei; einen Oberlehrer, der, erst unlängst aus dem Irrenhaus entlassen, jetzt schon Kultusminister war; Juristen, die das Recht für ein liberales Vorurteil, Mediziner welche die Heilkunst für einen jüdischen Schwindel, Philosophen, welche die “Rasse” für die einzig objektive Wahrheit hielten[.] (273)

The new rulers are murderers, madmen and academics who have perverted their learning. The only aspect unchanged in this new order, is that ordinary people are still powerless. Hans Miklas realises he has been betrayed by his beloved Führer when, instead of a levelling of society, he witnesses the ascent of his enemy Hendrik. Since he has no protectors, when Miklas offends the regime, he is murdered. Miklas has always believed that he will experience an era of revolution, when the world will be transformed. He is seen to be correct: he does witness profound change – but not in the way that he expects. Germany is still governed by a minority, and the masses are still powerless. Decency is replaced by depravity, integrity by mendacity. Instead of Germany becoming a better place, it has descended into lunacy and horror.

Bruckner represents German intellectual distinction, the Generalin symbolises Germany's illustrious and noble past, and Dora Martin embodies Germany's artistic talent. Yet the new Germany is moving in a new direction, vilifying everything that has made it great, and everything that could help it succeed in the future. The works of some of Germany's (and the world's) greatest minds are torched, while the new German cultural senate, made up by many members who are proud of not having read a book since school, meets to eat sausage and get drunk, while doing animal impressions, singing raucous songs, and telling dirty stories.

The new Germany worships death and destruction; the Reich does not represent a new beginning, but instead the celebration of the end of German civilisation. The poet Pelz's admiration of Nazism is precisely because of its destructive character. He believes that the new regime heralds the advent of the rebirth of an ancient 'archaisch-magisch-kriegerischen' 'Menschentyps' (296) and the annihilation of current civilisation, which has become too safe, sensible and bourgeois. Again decency is turned on its head, and destruction is deemed to be desirable, while 'Vernunft' (296) is disparaged as a form of tyranny, and progress is rejected as merely 'spießbürgerlich' (296). The terms Pelz uses to illustrate the new order are both vivid and terrifying: the rivers of blood, the public torture, and the ' “[...] besessenes Tanzen der Überlebenden, der noch Verschonten um die Leichen!” ' (297). Though Pelz describes this monstrous vision to him, Hendrik only appreciates the reality of Pelz's image when he hears of Ulrichs' death. Pelz casts Hendrik and Nicoletta as the public face of this welcome catastrophe, likening them to gods of the underworld, bewitching mankind and leading it into a blood-spattered hell where enemies copulate and lovers murder each other:

Der Dichter Benjamin Pelz war es, der den Einfall hatte, sie als "Oberon und Titania" zu bezeichnen. "Ihr führt den Tanz, ihr unterirdischen Majestäten!" schwärmte der Lyriker, für den die Diktatur des rassistischen Faschismus eine Art von blutig-phantastischem Sommernachtstraum bedeutete. "Ihr verzaubert uns mit eurem Lächeln und mit euren wundersamen Blicken. Ach, wie gerne vertrauen wir uns euch an! Ihr geleitet uns unter die Erde, in die tiefste Schicht, in die magische Höhle, wo das Blut von den Wänden rauscht, wo die Kämpfenden sich begatten, die Liebenden sich töten, wo Liebe, Tod und Blut in orgiastischer Kommunion sich vermischen..." (344)

This combination of magic, myth and brutality is seen to underpin the Nazi mentality.

Even before his assumption of the role as Nazi deity, Hendrik shows his propensity to worship the barbaric by his submission to Juliette's savagery, but which he calls purity and strength. In his eyes she is a ferocious god, demanding sacrificial victims to satiate her blood-lust. This is a clear portent of the blood-thirsty gods he later worships. In fact as the narrator states, though Hendrik saw Juliette as a murderous icon, she is not the one "treading on corpses" to get what she wants.¹¹¹

The idea of National Socialism as a religion is established by the frequent reference to the Nazi leaders as gods, and demi-gods, and even as the 'fürchterliche Triumvirat – der Führer, der Dicke und der Hinkende' (365), echoing the holy trinity. Pelz uses the word communion to describe the surrender of mankind to Nazism, and Hendrik confesses his ideological sins to the Fliegergeneral, inviting the Fliegergeneral to destroy him if that punishment is necessary. Mann uses the word 'vernichten' (278) which has connotations of a divine or superhuman act. Both Hendrik and former Marxist theatre-critic Ihrig are ashamed of their prior infamy, their former political opinions are thought of as a sin. Hendrik's ascent to Nazi favour is also like a religious experience, he is called from the masses, like a 'Beförderung' (269) which was 'schlagartig' (269) in typical Nazi fashion. This instantaneous transformation has intimations of both the unnatural and the divine. The politics of Nazism is all-powerful, its leaders are worshipped blindly, and it governs all aspects of its disciples' lives.

¹¹¹ 'Am Ende lag es gar nicht in ihrer Art, über Leichen zu spazieren.' *Ibid*, p.288.

Mephisto is the first of Mann's novels which engages directly with Nazi politics. He is trying to characterise a regime which he feels has successfully fooled the populace both at home and abroad. Therefore his message is condensed, urgent and unashamedly overt. Some of his more traditional themes have been sacrificed in favour of an absolute focus on the regime and its representatives. The result is a depiction of a society rushing towards a disaster of its own making.

3 Community

Mephisto shows the specious communities that contextualise the spectacular career of this charismatic actor. However, Mann shows the antithesis to Hendrik's poisonous and poisoned world by giving us positive images of groups which had appeared in earlier novels: loving families, unified exile communities. There are two family groupings central to Mephisto, that of the Höfgens and the Bruckners. The Höfgens are a typical middle class family, who have a comfortable, if not luxurious, existence. Despite this, Hendrik believes himself to have had a deprived and unhappy childhood. Largely this is a way to justify his ambition, and his abhorrence of the milieu his family stems from. Both his parents are portrayed as sympathetic, if unsophisticated. His mother in particular is a source of comfort for Hendrik, and the final image in the novel is of Hendrik being consoled by her. Therefore Hendrik's psychological insecurity cannot be explained as having its roots in his family circumstances, it is instead seen to be a character flaw. The Bruckners have a higher social position than the Höfgens, boasting eminence in intellectual achievement and lineage. They are also portrayed as unpretentious, close, and genuinely caring towards one another. In Mephisto, there are no family breakdowns, there is no real family tension, the family unit does not disintegrate as in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen or Flucht in den Norden, rather it is a source of strength and comfort for those who care to draw on it.

Mann chooses not to dilute the focus on the situation in the Reich by devoting much space to the exile community. Those exiles he does portray are characters who have a relationship with Hendrik, and thus represent alternative choices available to him. Hendrik's first wife Barbara, as well as other friends and

colleagues, all make the decision to go into exile, rather than remain in Nazi Germany. Barbara, Sebastian, and Hedda von Herzfeld go to Paris, Bruckner, and Marder to rural France, while Kroge and Schmitz seek refuge in Prague. Bruckner in particular is the rallying point for unhappy Germans:

Er empfing viele Briefe. Menschen, die früher seine Schüler gewesen waren und nun in der Emigration oder verzweifelt in Deutschland saßen, wandten sich an ihn um Zuspruch und geistigen Rat. „Ihr Name bleibt für uns der Inbegriff eines anderen, besseren Deutschlands“, wagte jemand aus einer bayrischen Provinzstadt ihm zu schreiben – freilich mit verstellter Schrift und ohne daß er seine Adresse verraten hätte. Solche Geständnisse und Treueschwüre las der Geheimrat halb mit Rührung, halb mit Bitterkeit. ‘Und alle diese, die so empfinden und schreiben, haben mit-geduldet, mit-verschuldet, daß unser Land zu dem werden konnte, was es heute ist’, mußte er denken. (307)

Clearly these characters are the forerunners of the émigrés Mann portrays in Der Vulkan. These early exiles have to gain strength from one another, if they are to achieve even a small victory against the might of the German Reich.

Unlike the exile community, which is seen as an isolated, albeit important, minority, the theatrical world represents a microcosm of the world at large. The characters have diverse political and moral beliefs; each individual is moved by varying motives of ambition, lust and altruism. Prior to 1933, the Hamburger Künstlertheater is seen as a community of artists some of whom are only motivated by vulgar ambition, among them Hendrik, and others who are politically and socially engaged, helping their colleagues, and trying to use the theatre to promote political and social awareness. Though Hendrik is a rising star from the beginning of the novel, it is not until he has the Fliegergeneral's patronage that he becomes the figurehead for the new artistic community. When Hendrik returns to the Hamburger Künstlertheater, in his capacity as the face of

Nazism, fittingly the only people left there are those whose interests have always mirrored his own.

Regardless of whichever community he is in, Hendrik is an outsider. Though the focus of the novel is on Hendrik, the reader is shown that communities can be built, families can be close, people can form meaningful friendships while fighting a common enemy. Mann seems to trust more in family and friendship than in the previous novels, perhaps as a means to offer hope to his readers. Life is going to be difficult for those in exile abroad, or suffering the inner emigration explored in Der Vulkan, therefore, they have to be able to rely on one another. The exiles also have to realise that whatever they do is important, even though it may seem insignificant given the enemy they are facing.

4 Language and Narrativity

4.1 Structure

We begin and end with Hendrik at the climax of his career, what happens in between is the rise of that career. The opening shows us the triumph of an actor in a political world in which politics of a particularly grandiose and theatrical kind find an appropriately stage-managed climax. Though the celebration is ostensibly to honour the Fliegergeneral and his mistress, it is Hendrik, the Staatsintendant who is the real star of this “show”. Both vying factions of Nazi power, the Fliegergeneral and the Propagandaminister, pay court to him. As the representative artist of the Third Reich, he is at the height of his magnificence, and the height of his career.

The bulk of the novel is a kind of flash-back in which we see various of Hendrik’s personal and professional relationships at various stages of his career. Mann’s concern is as much with the creation of a career as with the fine details of Hendrik’s psychology. Where psychology is involved it is grounded in the relationship between Hendrik’s feelings, affections, desires, needs, and the furtherance of his career as an actor and figure in the social and institutional context of his times.

The final chapter reveals the price of Hendrik’s pact with the devil, as well as his recognition of the true nature of the political regime he has identified himself with, a recognition prompted by the murder of his friend Ulrichs. In the closing pages of the novel, which bring us back to the spectacular success portrayed at the beginning, there is a moment of reckoning: the reader is asked to evaluate the

human price of this success. While Hendrik is not without an uneasy conscience, he ultimately exorcises that conscience by saying⁰ that he was only “doing his job”. Yet the implied judgement on him is devastating: he has cheapened his art by always being mindful of popular acclaim, and, like so many people in Germany in the 1930s, simply to be “doing one’s job” meant service to a monstrous regime, and sacrificing moral integrity at every turn. Despite the adulation of the masses and the material finery he has amassed, Hendrik knows he is a failure both as an actor and a human being.

Thus the novel finishes before the scene depicted in the prologue, but this scene is finally put into its proper context, and the reader discovers the truth behind the mask of success expressed in the prologue. Although Hendrik’s despair could easily engender sympathy from the reader, Mann passes unambiguous judgement by having the prologue take place after the events portrayed in the rest of the novel. We know that Hendrik does not redeem himself by the recognition of his own sins, he still continues with the charade.

4.2 Style

Mephisto is not a subtle novel, not least because it is quickened by Mann’s outrage at the world he evokes. Some of the more sophisticated narrative techniques employed in his earlier work have been abandoned in favour of a much more forceful approach. In his attempt to make an impression on the reader, Mann changes his style, abruptly going from mocking to condemning, from abstract to specific, or suddenly confronting the reader with images which are stark and have greater impact because they are unexpectedly brutal. A good example of Mann’s

unsettling his reader is his reporting of Ulrichs' death. Ulrichs is arrested, and then the reader discovers alongside Hendrik that he has been killed. Neither Hendrik nor the reader has any real preparation for this revelation. We are told he is dead and then this shock is compounded by the discovery that he was deliberately and brutally tortured to death. The description of his body leaves no doubt as to the cruelty of those responsible for his death:

[D]as Opfer starb ihnen beim dritten "Verhör" unter den Händen. Da war sein Körper nur noch eine blutige, entstellte Masse, [...] seine arme Mutter hätte das verschwollene, aufgeplatzte, zerrissene, von Eiter, Blut und Kot verschmierte Gesicht nicht wieder erkannt, welches das Menschenanlitz ihres Sohnes gewesen war. (372)

Mann uses a different technique when describing Miklas' murder, the reader sees the build up to the execution and witnesses it happening, rather than just the aftermath. It has an eerie peacefulness. While Miklas' murder is designed to arouse sympathy, Ulrichs' killing is to provoke shock and anger. The immediate prelude to Ulrichs' murder is more appalling detail of the mass-murder in Nazi Germany. Mann indicates to the reader that what has happened to this one character is happening to thousands of people. He wants to direct the reader, and leave no doubt as to the character of the regime, by building up layer upon layer of horror. Fredric Kroll expresses some concern about Mann's narrative style on some of these occasions:

In den letzten Kapiteln wird die Diktion des Erzählers immer polemischer. Im Gegensatz [...] verstimmt es den Leser, wenn der allwissende Erzähler seine Meinung ihm aufzudrängen sucht. [...] Im letzten Kapitel steigert sich die Polemik zu einer Heftigkeit, die bisweilen schlicht unglaublich wirkt.¹¹²

¹¹² Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.2 Repräsentant des Exils: 1934–1937. Im Zeichen der Volksfront* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2006), p.709.

However, this kind of overblown, occasionally lurid style is in keeping with the character of the regime being evaluated. Mann is trying to shock, and arguably some of his descriptions are only as shocking as the historical reality they convey:

Der Messias behauptete, daß er den Frieden liebe, und ließ die Pazifisten in den Konzentrationslagern martern. Sie wurden getötet, den Angehörigen ging ihre Asche in versiegelter Urne zu, samt der Mitteilung, das Pazifistenschwein habe sich erhängt oder sei auf der Flucht erschossen worden. (366)

He uses repeated patterns of contrast and repetition, of certain key concepts and ideas to drive home his intense vision of a world sliding into depravity.

Throughout the novel Mann describes the Nazi regime almost as though it were a living entity. By contrast Hitler is dehumanised both by being referred to as 'Die Macht' (358), and by being kept at a distance from the reader.

Klaus Mann empfindet Hitler nicht als Mensch und will sich darum lieber mit der kleinen "Arabeske am Rande...der Katastrophe" [...] beschäftigen – mit Hendrik Höfgen[.]¹¹³

Mann is concerned to understand not the fanatics but rather those people who stand by, sacrificing moral integrity for material reward. In his construction of Hendrik Höfgen, Mann is attempting to create a wholly believable character. By being convinced by him and being forced to judge his actions, Mann's readers can evaluate their own choices. As Fredric Kroll states:

Am Beispiel dieses Buches sieht man vielleicht klarer als in sonst irgendeinem Werk dieses Autors, daß das dichterische Einfühlen in die menschliche Seele didaktisch wirksamer sein kann als die bestgemeinte Polemik.¹¹⁴

Though the focus of the novel is very much on Hendrik, it is not told entirely from his perspective. The prologue is seen from the point of view of the two foreign

¹¹³ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.2 Repräsentant des Exils: 1934–1937. Im Zeichen der Volksfront* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.716.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.716.

diplomats. These two characters are litmus paper for the mood of those around them, and with that the mood of the whole country. They act almost as a modern Greek Chorus, setting the scene and then never appearing again. As foreigners their perspective is different, and thereby illuminating.

Initially the reader is deliberately kept at a distance from Hendrik by the narrative spending the first few pages of the chapter with the remarks of others about him.

In chapter one Mann again spends much time describing the other characters and setting the mood before introducing Hendrik. While in the prologue this device stimulates the anticipation of the reader; here it serves to show how Hendrik is unremarkable. The reader is privy to the opinion of Kroge who is established as having artistic as well as humanitarian credentials. He believes that Hendrik is both overrated and overpaid, and that Hendrik himself is aware of that fact. It is the ignorant faction of the theatre-going public that enjoys his work, the same type of people we see celebrating the Nazi high officials in the prologue.

Mann uses repetition to reiterate or underline a particular idea, as well as to establish a connection between Hendrik and the regime he comes to represent. ‘Es ist doch nicht zu schildern’ (183) is a phrase repeated often in chapter six, and used to describe the events leading up to the accession to power of the Nazis, which is happening alongside the rise to prominence of Hendrik. This is the same phrase used by Hendrik’s servant Böck to proclaim their rise in fortune. The events are so incredible as to be outside of human comprehension. Hendrik’s rise to prominence is so swift as to be beyond description, equally unbelievable, for different reasons, are the actions of the new government.

In the final chapter the narrator repeats the phrase ‘Das Regime geht weiter seinen schauerlichen Weg. Am Rand des Weges häufen sich die Leichen.’¹¹⁵ This striking image occurs at the beginning of a section dedicated to the horrors of the regime, and concludes that section. Mann encapsulates in one short phrase the substance of those paragraphs, which is that the regime is unstoppable and huge numbers of people are dying. By repeating this phrase, Mann is forcing the reader to confront this ugly truth. Characters also echo each other’s words: Hendrik confesses his great moment of shame and asks Barbara if she can understand him. This is the same question Nicoletta puts to Hendrik when she has abandoned her husband. Mann describes the advent of Nazi power as being the occasion of blood and tears flowing through the streets. This echo of the blood red lips and tearful pierrot face of the Mephistopheles make-up indicates the connection between Hendrik’s stage villains and the Nazi regime, as well as being a portent of the future relationship between Hendrik and the regime when he literally becomes the face of Nazism.

4.3 Language

Mann tends to use emotive language to drive his point home, to buttonhole the reader. Mephisto is anything but subtle; rather, it is fuelled by outrage. To repeat a quotation:

[d]as Regime geht weiter seinen schauerlichen Weg. Am Rand des Weges häufen sich die Leichen. (386)

¹¹⁵ ‘[D]as Regime der totalen, militanthochkapitalistischen Diktatur [ging] seinen schauerlichen Weg weiter, und am Rande des Weges häufen sich die Leichen.’ Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), pp.365–368.

His use of the word ‘Leichen’ conveys the reality of what the Nazi regime is doing; its rhetorical cleansing and regenerating the body politic is based on murder. Mann is also careful to vary the strength of images and arguments. An example of this is how he shows his references to the victims of Nazi Germany. There is a sliding scale from a murder which is tragic, but quick and bloodless (Miklas), to the mass slaughter of people unknown to the reader, and then the extremely brutal killing of a sympathetic character (Ulrichs). Similarly the coming to power of the Nazis is described in vivid, apocalyptic images:

Wehe, der Himmel über diesem Lande is finster geworden. Gott hat sein Anlitz weggewendet von diesem Lande, ein Strom von Blut und Tränen ergießt sich durch die Straßen aller seiner Städte [...] Wehe, dieses Land ist beschmutzt, und niemand weiß, wann es wieder rein werden darf [...] Wehe, die Apokalyptischen Reiter sind unterwegs [...] Ihre Häßlichkeit soll bewundert sein als die neue Schönheit [...] An jedem Orte, wo sie oder ihre niedrigen Helfer erscheinen, erlöscht das Licht der Vernunft, und es wird finster. (225–226)

We note the repetition of ‘Wehe’; powerful images of dirt, darkness, and biblical destruction herald the trauma and suffering to come. Not until later in the novel does Mann bombard the reader with specifics as to what crimes the Nazis have perpetrated, for example when he alludes to the murder of Röhm and the other SA leaders:

Der Mann, dem der Diktator seine Privatarmee verdankte, den der Propagandachef noch vorgestern bezaubernd angegrinst und den der Staatschef noch gestern seinen “treuesten Kameraden” genannt hatte – er wurde eines Nachts vom Führer höchstpersönlich aus dem Bett gerissen und ein Paar Stunden später erschossen. (365)

Mann also employs recurrent word patterns to emphasise the contrast he has established between Barbara and Nicoletta, always associating Nicoletta with harsh-sounding words such as ‘funkelte[]’ (100), ‘knisterte’ (144), ‘glitzernd[]’ (95), ‘klirrend’ (91), while Barbara is described with gentle words such as ‘reif’,

‘zart’, ‘ernst’, ‘schalkhaft’ (98). As with the other novels, Mann employs a third person narrative. In Mephisto, the narrator is particularly partisan, always ready to direct and question the reader. When assessing the three most prominent men of the Third Reich, the narrator both offers an opinion on Hitler and directs the reader as to how to react:

Dieses Gesicht birgt kein Geheimnis, das uns lange reizen oder fesseln könnte. Es hat nicht die Würde des Geistes, und es ist nicht geadelt durch Leiden. Wenden wir uns von ihm. (267)

A similarly direct address to the reader can be heard when the narrator mocks Hendrik as well as the Nazi regime:

Gebt es zu: er paßt nicht übel in diese Gesellschaft, er hat ihre falsche Würde, ihren hysterischen Elan, ihren eitlen Zynismus und die billige Dämonie. (268)

Both noun and adjective here are deeply dismissive. The inferiority of Hendrik’s qualities is a perfect match for the equally inferior nature of the Nazi regime. On occasion though, the narrative voice shifts its ground and expresses a measure of admiration for Hendrik’s talent, as in the following passage where we feel that the narrative is not only quoting contemporary responses to Hendrik:

Dieser Höfgen kann alles! Seine brillante, vor keiner Zumutung versagende Wandlungsfähigkeit scheint genialen Einschlag zu haben. Wollte man jede seiner Leistungen einzeln betrachten, so käme man wohl zu dem Resultat, daß keine von ihnen allerersten Ranges ist: als Regisseur wird Höfgen niemals den Professor erreichen; als Schauspieler kann er es mit seiner großen Konkurrentin Dora Martin nicht aufnehmen, die der erste Stern an einem Himmel bleibt, über den er sich als ein schillender Komet bewegt. Es ist die Vielfalt seiner Leistungen, die seinen Ruhm ausmacht und immer wieder erneut. (213)

Hendrik is adaptable, his brilliance lies in his ability to adapt to all circumstances, and to utilise all of his different tricks and skills. At times even the narrator is seen to be susceptible to the spell he weaves.

Essentially Mephisto is a forthright and judgemental novel; and frequently these judgements express themselves through the recurrence of certain key motifs. One of these is the use of words and images associated with light, glittering spectacle and ultimately blindness. In the novel, the idea of blindness underlines the failure of characters to appreciate the world around them for what it really is. As evident in the other novels, eyes are important to Mann, not just as the window to the soul, but because they are connected to the idea of seeing, how mankind looks at things, what we choose to see or to ignore. Blindness in the novel is understood by Klaus Mann to have three different aspects: the dazzling light of spectacle and illusion which renders the viewer temporarily blind; the failure to see what is happening, whether deliberate or otherwise, and the innate inability to see.

It is fitting that Mann makes particular use of these images in the opening of the novel, where Nazi magnificence is there for the cream of Germany and all the world (in the shape of diplomats and journalists) to see. At the Fliegergeneral's birthday party, all senses are appealed to: sound (the orchestra), scent (perfume, flowers, cigarettes), sight (lights, dress, jewellery, decor), but it is the eyes which are overpowered and so overloaded that their perception is distorted: they are blinded by the show, and ultimately deceived.

“Kolossal”, sagte schließlich einer von den beiden jungen Leuten leise – diesmal ohne jeden Sarkasmus, sondern wirklich beeindruckt, beinah verängstigt von dem riesenhaften Aufwand, der ihn umgab. Das Flimmern der von Lichtern und Wohlgerüchen gesättigten Luft war so stark, daß es ihm die Augen blendete. (8)

When Hendrik is at his best he is ‘blendend’ (55) and dazzling – we are told that he ‘brillierte’ (55) so much that even his enemy Miklas listens to his storytelling. Hendrik yearns for success, which he identifies with the ‘glänzend[es] Milieu’

(127) from which Barbara stems, and eventually comes to bathe in the ‘Glanz’ (264) from his association with the Fliegergeneral. Hendrik is attracted to Barbara, a woman who looks at him with a ‘forschend[en]’ ‘Blick’ (95). She is trying to see the real Hendrik, thus he has to dazzle her with his splendour to win her. Nicoletta too is described as ‘blendend’ (144): ‘alles blitzte, verführte, knisterte wie geladen mit Elektrizität’ (144). Nicoletta is imbued with a dazzling and deadly electricity. She lacks natural talent, but makes up for this by tricking people into seeing what she wants them to see. Both Hendrik and Nicoletta dazzle so much that the truth cannot be seen.

Klaus Mann takes us into a world where people can no longer see the truth; mendacity rules their lives at every turn. The populace blindly worships the dazzling Nazi demi-gods, but Hendrik is the main character guilty of blindness. Focussing solely on his career, he sees nothing of the world around him, not noticing the tension, persecution, or fear on the streets in the months preceding Hitler’s ascent to power.

Eingesperrt in seinen Ehrgeiz wie in ein Gefängnis; unersättlich und unermüdlich; immer im Zustand höchster hysterischer Spannung genießt und erleidet der Schauspieler Höfgen ein Schicksal, das ihm außerordentlich scheint und das doch nichts ist als die vulgäre, schillernde Arabeske am Rande eines todgeweihten, dem Geist entfremdeten, der Katastrophe entgegentreibenden Betriebes. (212)

He is genuinely surprised when Dora Martin flees Germany, and when Hitler comes to power. Once ensconced in the Nazi hierarchy he chooses not to see the murder, or abuse of power that is all around him, and he chooses not to see himself as contributing to that abuse. At the end of the novel, when faced with the

condemnation of the young man who visits him, Hendrik throws his glasses, breaking them, at the window after the boy. He does not want to see the truth.

Others are unable to see clearly. Bruckner says ‘[m]an ist geschlagen mit Blindheit’ (205), unable to see the truth of what is happening in Germany. Hitler is described as having eyes which are ‘blicklos und stumpf, wie die eines Blinden’ (267). The blindness of Hitler has infected and bewitched the nation. The inverse of this is when characters stare into space, and see that which is invisible to everyone else. Dora Martin looks ‘ins Leere’ (224) as she predicts her place in the hearts of the German people will be taken by another actress. After Hitler comes to power, Hendrik witnesses the exiles in Paris, staring into the distance, frozen by grief, while the rest of Germany is celebrating. Nicoletta and Hendrik see the reminders of their betrayal which are unnoticed by their wedding guests. Ihrig and Hendrik look into the ‘Leere’ (247), aware that they are betraying their politics by seeking reconciliation with the Nazi regime. For them it is easier to see nothing, than to face the truth.

Another major motif is that of magic. The most significant statement is that the Nazis have cast a spell on Germany and the rest of the world.

[D]as Ausland schaut gebannt auf dies imposante, grauenerregende Schauspiel, wie das Kaninchen auf die Schlange, von der es gleich gefressen sein wird. (367)

Like the Nazis Hendrik can bewitch other people. He is described as having a ‘bezaubernd[]’ presence (162), this explains his plausibility, but as with his “dazzling”, his magical charisma hides his ugliness, in the same way the

figurative ugliness of the Nazis is regarded as beauty,¹¹⁶ Hendrik's effect on the Fliegergeneral is viewed by Lotte as a kind of enchantment:

Dies ist Liebe auf den ersten Blick. Höfgen hat es meinem Dicken angetan – was ich nur zu gut begreife. Denn der Bursche ist ja zauberhaft, und in seinem schwarzen Kostüm, mit der diabolischen Pierrotmaske, wirkt er unwiderstehlicher als je. (258)

Magical, or fairy-tale characters abound in Mephisto, the Fliegergeneral is a 'Riese' (260), Lotte is a 'Fee' (261), Hendrik and Nicoletta are Titania and Oberon. This terminology underlines the insubstantiality of the regime and its representatives. Reality is distorted to resemble something some would call a fairy tale, or a nightmare.

This sense of distortion can be seen in the recurring images associated with the human body. There are two main recurrent preoccupations in respect of Mann's use of the body as a motif: the unhealthy and the artificial. A person whom Mann describes as artificial or unhealthy or both, is marked out as being susceptible to the spell that Nazism casts. For example the naïve Miklas is unhealthy, so is deceived by the promises made by the Nazi party. Hendrik and Nicoletta both prize body parts which the narrator calls obese. Mann even describes Hendrik's fingernails as being made from inferior material.¹¹⁷ Hendrik and Lotte are both pale people. Her skin is milky-white, and more than once his face is described as phosphorescing, lighting up in an unattractive deathly shimmer. Whereas Barbara

¹¹⁶ 'Überall soll ihre Mißgestalt verehrt und angebetet werden. Ihre Häßlichkeit soll bewundert sein als die neue Schönheit.' *Ibid*, p.225.

¹¹⁷ 'Höfgens Hände waren aber keineswegs gotisch [...] Die Handrücken waren sehr breit und rötlich behaart; breit waren auch die ziemlich langen Finger, die in eckigen, nicht ganz sauberen Nägeln endigten. Gerade diese Nägel waren es wohl, die den Händen ihren unedlen, beinah unappetitlichen Charakter gaben. Sie schienen aus minderwertiger Substanz zu sein: bröckelig, spröde, ohne Glanz, ohne Form und Wölbung.' *Ibid*, p.56.

has brownish, healthy-looking skin, as has the young man who haunts Hendrik at the end of the novel. Not surprisingly Mann inclines towards portraying the Nazis as obese and over-fed, the Fliegergeneral's colourful uniforms cannot detract from his monstrous size. Once again, Mann chips away at the superficial splendour of characters to reveal their true tawdriness and inferiority.

When Hendrik has to rely on his ability and hard work to gain promotion in Berlin he loses weight, and psychologically he becomes more attractive to Barbara, because he feels free to be himself. Nicoletta and Hendrik are almost always performing, and the narrator stresses that they are both unnatural and unhealthy. The strain of maintaining continual pretence means that Hendrik is always close to breaking point, hence his need to indulge in hysterical fits. Once Nicoletta has married Hendrik and is ensconced in the role of prominent Nazi wife and actress, her greatest triumph is her portrayal of Ophelia's madness. The fact that these two people represent the ideal Nazi couple supports the sense of society being so distorted that even at a cellular level everything is degenerating and turning upside down.

Mann christens the Nazi propaganda machine “the dirty lie”. Nazi power renders Germany a land which is ‘beschmutzt’ (225) and no longer ‘rein’ (225). When Hendrik shakes hands with the Fliegergeneral, the public sign of his pact with the “devil”, Hendrik feels ‘Ekel’ (262) mixed with his happiness, and pride.

‘Jetzt habe ich mich beschmutzt’, war Hendriks bestürztes Gefühl. ‘Jetzt habe ich einen Flecken auf meiner Hand, den bekomme ich nie mehr weg...Jetzt habe ich mich verkauft..Jetzt bin ich gezeichnet!’ (262–3)

He knows he has tainted himself. The earlier allure of being bad has been replaced by the reality that it is not attractive to be a rogue; it is simply dirty, and disgusting.

The idea of artificiality versus the genuine also separates the Nazis from their opponents. This involves not just the idea of pretence, but artificiality in the sense of entities being formed from non-living material. Hendrik has ‘Juwelaugen’ (89): they are shiny and beautiful, but hard and dead; Hitler’s face is made of a ‘porösen Substanz’ (358), implying weakness as well as artificiality; the description of Nicoletta’s deadly electricity makes her appear reminiscent of the robot from the 1927 film *Metropolis*:

Alles an ihr schien gespannt; alles blitzte, verführte, knisterte wie geladen mit Elektrizität. (144)

On the occasions Mann describes her clothing, she is always wearing either metallic or plastic garments. The contrast between Nicoletta and Barbara is constantly stressed: when Hendrik first meets her, Barbara is wearing a simple black dress made by a ‘Hausschneiderin’ (97), which is the opposite of Nicoletta’s metallic evening dress (shiny, hard, artificial, non-living matter). Everything about Barbara is natural and understated, from her un-made up face and bare arms, to her quiet but open demeanour. Even her voice, which lacks the contrived mannerisms of Nicoletta, and Hendrik himself, is attractive. Despite her modesty she appeals to Hendrik more than any other woman he has met.

‘Was ist das Geheimnis dieses Mädchens?’ sann der Entzückte. ‘Ich glaube, es ist das Geheimnis der vollkommenen Anständigkeit. Sie ist der anständigste Mensch, den ich jemals gesehen habe. Sie ist auch der natürlichste Mensch, den ich jemals gesehen habe. Sie könnte mein guter Engel sein.’ (105)

Her complexion and face remind Hendrik of a Da Vinci painting. She is a rare and valuable work of art, as opposed to the artifice of Nicoletta's vulgar demonism. Mann emphasizes that Hendrik's attraction to Barbara is because he values her openness and honesty. Barbara represents Hendrik's potential to be an honest version of himself. However he comes to resent Barbara, perhaps resenting that part of himself which would make him sacrifice his career for political or humanitarian principle. That affinity he has long felt with Nicoletta becomes expressed when they marry, and appropriately they marry not for love, but for their public image.

For the poet Benjamin Pelz, Hendrik and Nicoletta's union is symbolic of the bacchanalian frenzy he believes society will descend into. The idea of hysterical ecstasy, and the succumbing to baser human instincts, links to Pelz's idea of civilisation being destroyed, as well as the themes of spectacle, and corruption. It is the inevitable result of the overheated activity Mann portrayed in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen: a dissipated society teetering on the brink of anarchy and self-destruction. In his pre-Nazi years, Hendrik is linked with Dionysian ecstasy when he dances or acts on stage.¹¹⁸ Once the Nazis come to power, this kind of frenzied, insane action spreads to the streets. According to news sources there is a 'Delirium der Begeisterung' (229) for Hitler. For Miklas the first few weeks of Nazi power is akin to experiencing heaven; he dances on the streets as though

¹¹⁸ 'Schien er nicht Dionysos, der Gott der Trunkenheit zu sein, wie er nun die ekstatisch Glieder warf? [...] Ohne Übergang war er nun verfallen in bacchantische Raserei. Verzerrungen ließen über sein weißes Gesicht, die Edelsteinaugen verdrehten sich vor Verzücktheit, und von den geöffneten Lippen kamen heisere Lauten der Wollust.' *Ibid*, p.181.

possessed.¹¹⁹ Although he becomes disenchanted, the masses continue to lose themselves in the worship of the Nazi gods.¹²⁰ The tradition of ‘Volksfeste’ (367) carries on, celebrating everything from the frivolous to the horrific:

Man amüsiert sich auch unter der Diktatur. “Kraft durch Freude” ist die Parole, Volksfeste werden arrangiert, die Saar ist deutsch –: ein Volksfest. Der Dicke heiratet endlich seine Lindenthal und lässt sich Hochzeitgeschenke im Wert von Millionen machen –: ein Volksfest. Deutschland tritt aus dem Völkerbund aus, Deutschland hat seine “Wehrhoheit” wieder: lauter Volksfeste. Zum Volksfest wird jeder Vertragsbruch, ob es sich um den Vertrag von Versailles oder um den von Locarno handelt und das obligate “Plebiszit”, das sich anschließt. Lang ausgedehnte Volksfeste sind die Verfolgung der Juden und die öffentliche Anprangerung jener Mädchen, die mit ihnen “Rassenschande” trieben[.] (367)

The feelings that Nazism induces are a mixture of irrational hysteria and destructiveness. Madness and frenzy affect anyone who succumbs to the Nazi spell: the morning after his pact with the Fliegergeneral, Hendrik remains in bed hysterical with joy, destroying objects in his happiness.

The reference to Goethe’s devil in the title of the novel stresses the significance of the devil as absolute evil. Mann adapts elements of the morality play to tell his story, not least as a sign to the reader that he is dealing with the clash of good and evil. The two most apparent occurrences of this idea are the choice between good and evil, and the pact with the devil. The most significant instance of the choice between good and evil is when Hendrik chooses between remaining as an exile in Paris with his wife, and returning to Nazi Germany to resume his career.

¹¹⁹ ‘[D]er Tag der Erfüllung, [...] nun war er da! Was für ein Jubel! Der junge Miklas hatte vor Seligkeit geschluchzt und getanzt. Damals hatte sein Gesicht gestrahlt im Licht der echten Begeisterung: auf seiner Stirne war Glanz gewesen, und Glanz in seinen Augen [...] wie hatte er da auf der Straße gebrüllt und gleich einem Bessessenen die glieder geworfen[.]’ *Ibid*, p.254.

¹²⁰ ‘Eine schöne Versammlung von Göttern! Eine reizende Gruppe grotesker und gefährlicher Typen, vor der ein gottverlassenes Volk sich im Delirium der Verehrung windet.’ *Ibid*, p.267.

Throughout the novel, Barbara is described as his good angel; a force in his life which Hendrik thinks could redeem him. As Uwe Nauman writes:

Das in Barbara personifizierte Motiv des guten Engels ist das Pendant zum Teufelspankt-Motiv. Das erste steht für politische Moral, das zweite für Macht.¹²¹

However when given the choice, Hendrik turns his back on his good angel, and subsequently concentrates his attention on a woman later described as an evil fairy: Lotte Lindenthal. His attempt to win Lotte's aid is similar to how he tried to win over Barbara earlier, he endeavours to make Lotte love him, and to that end he has to adapt himself to what he thinks will appeal to her the most. Through Lotte, he is granted an audience with the Fliegergeneral and it is at this point Hendrik publicly pledges his allegiance to the diabolical regime in Germany. Appropriately, his second wife Nicoletta, whom he marries to dispel the scandal from his association with Juliette, is described as a demonic young lady, the opposite of Barbara (good angel and Madonna). The novel describes how Bruckner found the young Nicoletta 'unheimlich' (150), a feeling which foreshadows Nicoletta's betrayal of the only people who care for her, by manipulating Hendrik into pursuing Barbara, and later by marrying him herself.

However, good versus evil is not just a choice between the "good girl" or the "bad girl", it also informs the portrayal of Hendrik's artistic leaning. The characters Hendrik plays which win him fame, even before the Nazi days, are attractive devilish criminals: Knorke, a rogue; a blackmailer, described as the incarnation of evil, who destroys the lives of others; the 'Schwarze Satan' (200), a criminal out

¹²¹ Uwe Naumann, *Klaus Mann* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p.79.

of principle;¹²² and finally the devil himself, Mephistopheles. An obvious progression is depicted, Hendrik's characters gradually become more wicked, going from committing crime as an opportunistic act, then as a way of life. Significantly the switch from the 'Schwarze Satan' to Mephistopheles involves the symbolic wearing and shedding of layers, from wearing a black mask, and black clothing, to having the mask painted on to his face, and wearing a tight black costume. In effect the more exposed Hendrik is, the more evil he becomes.

Offstage Hendrik is tempted by the idea of being evil: while exiled in Paris, he imagines setting himself up as a confidence trickster, thinking it would be droll to live a role he has played in theatre and film. He is 'besessen' (234) by the idea; it is a 'bezaubernde Vorstellung' (234), again reiterating the idea of magic and demonic possession. When he hears of the Reichstag fire, he perceives it as a kind of theatrical trick, even relishing the thought that the Nazis learned this from the kind of films and plays that he appears in. He has taught the evil-doers how to commit evil. The similarity he sees between himself and the Nazis shows how even before being given the choice, he unconsciously shows his leanings towards evil and thus the Nazi regime.¹²³ The rest of Germany is also seduced by the idea of evil. Characters aspire to be demonic, it seems to be fashionable, and alluring. Rahel Mohrenwitz and Nicoletta compete to be the Hamburger Künstlertheater's resident demonic young lady:

Alle bemerkten sogleich, daß [Nicoletta] eine Persönlichkeit war [...] und niemand mochte ihr widersprechen, selbst Rahel Mohrenwitz nicht, obwohl

¹²² 'Übeltäter aus Überzeugung[.]' Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.201.

¹²³ Hendrik calls the Nazis 'Unterwelt-Typen' which can mean both criminals and devils. Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.232.

diese sich über die Ankunft der Neuen ärgerte; denn ganz entschieden war auch Nicoletta eine dämonische junge Dame, sie brauchte weder Monokel noch lange Zigaretten spitze um es der Welt zu beweisen. (87–88)

Similarly it is the ‘himmlisch [B]öse’ (198) of Hendrik that brings in the audiences, and will later win over the Fliegergeneral:

Höfgen aber hat sich durchgesetzt und mittels seiner erstaunlichen Bösheit definitiv alle Herzen erobert. (199)

As well as playing the devil, Hendrik also becomes a Faustian figure in that he sells his artistic and moral soul to the devil. The pact with the devil involves two contractual partners: the devil and the mortal who makes the agreement for a particular gain. The difference in Mephisto is that the mortal is not misled into signing away his soul, rather what we see at work is a calculated strategy for success. Hendrik seduces the Fliegergeneral as much as he himself is seduced by the idea of power and success. The idea of the unholy alliance is first introduced at Hendrik’s wedding to Barbara. Hendrik’s sense of social inadequacy makes him imagine that all the guests are mocking him. He feels a sudden affinity with Nicoletta, as neither belongs in this setting, but both are determined to utilise these people to their own advantage.

Sie waren beide im tiefsten dazu entschlossen, sich von dieser Gesellschaft [...] nach oben tragen zu lassen, und ihren Triumph über sie zu genießen als ihre Rache. (135)

He toasts her as though they have made that bargain together. This is a portent of the other unholy pact that Hendrik will make, and their later betrayal of the people to whom they promise their fidelity and love. The coming to power of the Nazis is described in the chapter entitled ‘Der Pakt mit dem Teufel’. This can be viewed both as the pact which Hendrik makes with the Fliegergeneral later in the novel, and the pact that the German people make with Hitler in 1933.

After he has Lotte's protection, Hendrik fights for the role of Mephistopheles, believing that without the part he is finished in Germany, and will have to leave. If he cannot play the devil for the Fliegergeneral, then there is no point in him remaining:

Der Mephisto ist meine große Rolle. Darf ich ihn nicht spielen, dann ist es erwiesen, daß ich in Ungnade bin. [...] Mir bliebe dann nichts mehr übrig, als meine Koffer zu packen und nach Paris zurück zu reisen[.] (250)

However this is not a battle for survival, but a battle for success; the reader knows he has other options, because we have seen what other characters can achieve outside of the Reich. Having set himself the task of establishing himself with the regime, Hendrik wins over the Fliegergeneral first as Mephistopheles and then as the public persona he has adopted. He assumes the role of the Fliegergeneral's private entertainer, providing a diversion from the important matters of state:

Nach all seinen blutigen und glanzvollen Geschäften weiß der Mächtige sich keine nettere Erholung, als mit dem Schalksnarren zu tändeln. (294–5)

Their relationship is so intimate that Hendrik enters the Fliegergeneral's office or home, almost as comfortably as he used to go into Schmitz or Frau Bernhard's offices. They are more like friends than master and servant, and the Fliegergeneral demonstrates an unprecedented loyalty to Hendrik. Indeed when he battles with the Propaganda Minister over the appointment of a new Intendant, it is as much a reward for his favourite, as a desire to control the Staatstheater. The offer of this position constitutes Hendrik's second pact with the devil. It is less symbolic than when he publicly shakes hands with the Fliegergeneral, while dressed in his Mephistopheles costume, but nonetheless more significant. Hendrik is aware of

how he will irrevocably identify himself with the regime, and asks for time to consider the offer. This is not just because of his bad conscience, nor because he must decide whether he wants to be part of the Nazis' public face, rather he wishes to enjoy the feeling of being indispensable to the regime.

Einerseits reizte die Aussicht auf die Intendanz gewaltig seine Eitelkeit und Wirkungssucht; auf der anderen Seite gab es Bedenken. Wenn er einen hohen öffentlichen Posten in diesem Staate bekleidete, identifizierte er sich ganz und für immer mit dem Regime: auf Gedeih und Verderb verband er das eigene Schicksal mit dem der blutbefleckten Abenteurer. Wollte er das? War dies seine Absicht gewesen? Gab es nicht Stimmen in seinem Herzen, die ihn vor solchem Schritt warnten? [...] Hendrik zögerte immer noch, teils wegen der inneren Stimmen, die nicht schweigen wollten, teils weil er es genoß, sich bitten zu lassen von der blutbefleckten Macht. Sie brauchen mich, jubelte es in ihm. Beinah war ich schon Emigrant, und jetzt bittet der Gewaltige, ich solle ihm seine Theater vor der Pleite retten. (325)

Hendrik knows he has chosen to align himself with an evil force, hence his need for 'Rückversicherung[]' (330), in the form of his Jewish assistant Lehmann, and paying for Ulrichs' funeral.

Hamlet and Mephistopheles are two great theatrical roles, two major performances in Hendrik's life, and both are described as being significant for the German people. Mephistopheles is the role that makes Hendrik's name, both in pre-Nazi Berlin and in Nazi Germany, and the role which wins the favour of the Fliegergeneral, sealing his allegiance with the Nazi regime.¹²⁴ According to the

¹²⁴ Daniela Trautmann also notes how Hendrik re-interprets the role of Mephistopheles to fit in with Nazi ideology: '[s]o spielt er den Mephisto in seiner ersten Faustaufführung als unglücklichen und einsamen Zyniker und Skeptiker. In der nächsten Inszenierung ist sein Mephisto plötzlich ein durchtrieben anmutiger, ruchlos charmanter Zyniker. In den zwanziger Jahren ist Mephisto ein leidender und schwermütiger Gehilfe des Teufels. Im Dritten Reich blüht er zu einem verschwenderischen, werbenden Mephisto auf, ganz wie die neuen Machthaber.' Daniela Trautmann, *Mitläufer im Nationalsozialismus und ihre Darstellung in der Literatur* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2005), p.46.

Fliegergeneral,¹²⁵ Mephistopheles is a deeply German character, a suitable representative of the regime. The ease with which Hendrik plays this creature of evil contrasts with his struggle to play Hamlet. The role of Mephistopheles represents Hendrik's need for adulation over artistic integrity. Hendrik's first incarnation of Mephistopheles is a logical continuation of the other evil creatures he has played. When he revisits the role it becomes a symbol of his acceptance into the Nazi elite. Hamlet, however, represents an enormous artistic pinnacle for Hendrik. The first time Hendrik plays this role, he does not recognise its significance and puts comparatively little effort into the performance. The next time, at the height of his fame, and having achieved his dream of success and fortune, Hendrik realises that his Hamlet will be a true test of his skill as an actor, and agonises over his interpretation of the role.¹²⁶ He knows that, however well he does on stage, he will be applauded, but he still wants to prove to himself that all his compromises have not ruined his artistic ability. This struggle is represented in the appearance of the spirit of Hamlet, who articulates everything Hendrik fears about himself, namely that he is not a good enough person to be able to play Hamlet and that he has chosen career before 'Vornehmheit' (377).¹²⁷

"Du bist nicht Hamlet [...] Du besitzest nicht die Vornehmheit, die man sich allein durch das Leiden und durch die Erkenntnis erwirbt. Du hast nicht genug gelitten, und was du erkannt hast, war dir nicht mehr Wert als ein hübscher Titel und eine stattliche Gage. Du bist nicht vornehm; den du bist ein Affe der Macht und ein Clown zur Zerstreuung der Mörder." (376)

¹²⁵ "[D]er Mephisto, das ist auch ein deutscher Nationalheld. Man darf es nur den Leuten nicht sagen." ' Klaus Mann, *Mephisto: Roman Einer Karriere* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.276.

¹²⁶ ' Ich muß dich spielen können! Wenn ich vor dir versage, dann habe ich ganz versagt. [...] [M]ein großer Verrat und all meine Schande sind allein zu rechtfertigen durch mein Künstlertum. Ein Künstler aber bin ich nur, wenn ich Hamlet bin.' *Ibid*, p.376.

¹²⁷ ' Du hattest die Wahl [...] zwischen der Vornehmheit und der Karriere.' *Ibid*, p.377.

The reader does not know whether this is Hendrik's conscience, or some kind of supernatural presence manifesting itself. Fredric Kroll believes:

Theoretisch wäre es denkbar, daß dieser idealisierte Phantasie-Hamlet Höfgens Gewissen oder sein Ich-Ideal verkörpert; es ist jedoch schwer vorstellbar, daß Höfgen so unerbittlich sich selbst gegenüber zu sein vermöchte, wie dieser Hamlet es ist.¹²⁸

Regardless of its origins, the Hamlet presence vociferously reinforces the opinions of the narrator and Hendrik's detractors. Hendrik is not Hamlet, he is Mephistopheles. Unable to assume the persona of Hamlet, Hendrik makes Hamlet a caricature of himself: a Prussian officer with neurasthenic traits: one minute stiff, the next screaming, or fainting. His second Hamlet is overblown, exaggerated, and empty, reflecting the militarism, and melodrama which are seen to be prevalent traits of Nazism. His rendition of Hamlet's soliloquies reminds the reader of how he has lived his life, saying the right words, but having no conviction or feeling behind them.

[M]an spürte nicht, was durchdacht und was durchgelitten worden war, ehe diese Worte über diese Lippen kamen; weder Gefühl noch Erkenntnis adelten die Rede: sie blieb kokette Lamentation, schmollend-gefallsüchtige kleine Klage. (379)

Hendrik's failure to make the role of Hamlet his own shows that as an actor he will be forever identified with the role of Mephistopheles. This identification with Mephistopheles shows that as a man Hendrik Höfgen will always be known as Göring's jester.

¹²⁸ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 4.2 Repräsentant des Exils: 1934–1937. Im Zeichen der Volksfront* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.710.

Just as Hamlet is haunted by a ghost, so the ghosts of the past Hendrik has betrayed resurface when he makes his way with Nicoletta to the Fliegergeneral to accept the post as Intendant. As they walk through the Tiergarten, they meet the Generalin, Barbara's grandmother. She is a reminder of nobler times, and "old-fashioned" values such as honour, fidelity and freedom. Even at their wedding reception, they are not free from the shadow of those they have betrayed.¹²⁹ Hendrik too has become a ghost for the people who were in his life: the last time Juliette sees Hendrik she looks at him as though he is a ghost,¹³⁰ Barbara's final thought of Hendrik, which is prompted only by Herzfeld mentioning him, is of him as a ghost. He is dead to her:

Barbara sagte trocken: "Lebt der noch? Ich wußte gar nicht, daß es ihn noch gibt. Für mich ist er lange tot. Ich liebe nicht die Gespenster der Vergangenheit, am wenigsten so dubiose Gespenster wie dieses." (305)

The motif of the boy, either characters who are young men or resemble young men occurs very frequently in the novel. The boy represents lost innocence, a youthful integrity that Hendrik possesses but wastes, and the desire of the young to work for a better Germany which is exploited by the Nazis. Miklas is a boy who haunts Hendrik in life and death, Barbara is often likened to a 'Jüngling[]' (97), and at the end of the novel Hendrik is disturbed by a visit from an unknown boy on the night of what the uninformed regard as his greatest triumph, his portrayal of Hamlet. Although Miklas is introduced as a character in 1926, and he dies in 1933, he is always described as being a boy. Hendrik plays the role of fate in his life first by having him sacked from the Hamburger Künstlertheater, and then by destroying his faith in the Nazi party.

¹²⁹ 'Was für Schatten stiegen denn auf und besaßen so traurige Macht[?]' *Ibid*, p.363.

¹³⁰ 'Juliette schaute ihn an, als wäre er ein Gespenst.' *Ibid*, p.287.

So vertrauensvoll war dieser Knabe noch immer. Den entscheidenden Schock aber empfing er, als er auf dem Probezettel las, daß Hendrik Höfgen den Mephisto spielen werde. (256)

This loss of faith causes him to take rash action which precipitates his own murder. Miklas is part of a doomed generation, having lost his father in the First World War, he has no-one to advise him or teach him, and hence he falls in with the Nazi Party. He is never given the opportunity to fulfil his potential. The first time Hendrik meets Barbara, the woman he sees as the symbol of his potential to do good, he likens her to both Madonna and 'Jüngling' (97). After Miklas' dismissal from the Hamburger Künstlertheater, 'Barbaras stille Mißbilligung warf einen Schatten über seine Triumphe' (179). Though he briefly manages to win her over again, both she and Miklas will continue to haunt Hendrik in his later life. Finally in the closing pages of the novel, Hendrik has an eerie visit from a young man, who hovers at the window, and then disappears as though he were not real. He delivers a warning to Hendrik and his Nazi protectors; even in his "kingdom" (Hendrik Hall) it would seem that Hendrik is not safe from those he has betrayed.

Words are a powerful weapon, and to deprive people of their voices is to take away their keenest weapon. While in Nazi Germany the free press is silent, words are used to either disseminate political propaganda, or society trivia, Bruckner and Marder (Germany's intellectual past) have lost their voices. In exile in France, Bruckner passes days where he says nothing other than a few words of French to the maid. Marder has had a break down, and been almost struck dumb by the catastrophe in his homeland. On the occasions he regains his lucidity he claims to hear the screams of those tortured. Barbara tells Sebastian that every word they print is damaging to the Nazis even though their journal is not widely distributed

(303). In the final chapter though the threat made to the regime via Hendrik is a verbal one, it still terrifies him.

Hendrik is a socially representative figure. What is particularly impressive about this novel is Mann's remarkably precocious understanding of the Nazi regime. We feel that he is speaking to the silent majority, who may have fallen for the idea of a strong Germany, but are not enamoured by the bloodshed and repression they now see around them. Those people who do nothing to aid the regime, but also do nothing against it, are being addressed and judged. For this reason, although Mann uses the Faust motif, he diverges in a particular and deliberate way from the legend: rather than the brilliant Faust who over-reaches himself, his main character is talented, but no more than that, and he has the potential to use that talent for higher purposes, but instead only seeks his own self-aggrandisement. To make Hendrik an over-reacher would be to ennable what he does. Hendrik's failure is not the result of his own genius, it is the triumph of the self-serving over the self-sacrificing in the same person. Hendrik is capable of doing the right thing, we see genuine affection for his mother, even Ulrichs, his fault really is being too self-interested to risk himself. Although Mann has exaggerated some aspects of Hendrik, his weaknesses are all-too human; but in the particular socio-political context in which he finds himself, those weaknesses prove catastrophic.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to return to an issue that I have already touched on – the almost melodramatic luridness of the narrative tone in Mephisto. It is my central contention that Klaus Mann, as a novelist, works above all through the depiction of characters, and through the constellations that result from their interaction with each other. Hence I have sought to comment in some detail on the characters in Mephisto and on the groupings in which they occur. I have found it necessary to quote frequently; and it becomes apparent when one produces a fairly full selection of quotations that almost every line from Mann's text is judgemental, often luridly so.

In one sense Mephisto is an unashamedly partisan novel. It marks the point in Mann's career where the preoccupations of the early novels – the quest for individual identity, the quest for fulfilling relationships – moves into political territory. Mephisto is an impassioned denunciation of Nazism. Yet at the same time it is also a curiously unpolitical novel in that it has very little to say about (for example) the cultural institutions in Nazi Germany, the structure of theatre funding and management, the mechanisms of recruitment to the profession and so on. Rather the novel centres on characters – and, for the most part, on the moral and aesthetic enormity that they embody. The narrative commentary which is present in well-nigh every line of the novel asks us to attend to the betrayal of human values and the betrayal of aesthetic values, both in the arts themselves and in society at large, that are so corrosively at work in Nazi Germany. Hendrik Höfgen's pact with the devil is an act of virtuosic cheapness, and in that sense it parallels the propaganda appeal of the National Socialists and the erosion of

human decency in society as a whole. Mann does not choose to explore the problem posed by those artists who stayed on in Nazi Germany, but whose work was manifestly of the first rank, such as Wilhelm Furtwängler. Instead Mann offers us a simplified, black and white picture, and his response to that picture is neither sophisticated, nor differentiated, nor subtle. It is, quite simply, outrage. *Mephisto* is an outraged book. That stridency may, admittedly, damage, or at the very least, diminish its artistic quality. But it is a work that remains both impressive and valuable, not least because it insists on the sheer monstrosity of Nazi Germany. Arguably, to that monstrosity, narrative outrage may be a not inappropriate response. I suggested a moment ago that Mann was writing not in an attempt to convert the convinced adherents of Nazism, nor in an attempt to enlighten the victims or opponents of the regime; rather he was addressing the silent majority. Perhaps his hope was that silence would give way to outrage.

V Der Vulkan (1939)

Introduction

The product of a two-year gestation period, Der Vulkan was published in the summer of 1939, and although this was ten years before Mann's death, it was his last completed novel. Having been in exile since 1933, Mann was well-placed to write about the émigré experience. Apart from some concern regarding his depiction of homosexuality and drug abuse, Der Vulkan was considered a great success by his contemporaries. However, the outbreak of war meant a lengthy delay in its publication, and Der Vulkan was deprived of the audience for whom it was created. Some later critics also praised the novel as Mann's finest.¹³¹

Mann's story is of exile, a chronicle of the lives of those who have rejected the Nazi regime, and are now forced to live outside their country. Some of the many characters are clear descendants of other creations of the author: Marion is a stronger, more complex version of Flucht in den Norden's Johanna, Marcel is modelled on Sylvester Marschalk from Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. Fredric Kroll also identifies similarities between the prologue of Mephisto and the opening chapter of Der Vulkan, where the narrative moves from group to group in order to set the scene and establish the characters.¹³² As with Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, the novel has a large cast of characters, and the events and experiences portrayed are set in many different countries. It is clear from the way that Mann takes such pains to introduce his characters that he wants the reader to become involved in

¹³¹ Armin Strohmeyr calls it 'Klaus Manns bester und bedeutendster Roman.' Armin Strohmeyr, *Klaus Mann* (München: DTV Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p.107. Although Fredric Kroll considers it to be one of Mann's lesser works.

¹³² Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 5 Trauma Amerika: 1937–1942* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.136.

their individual stories.¹³³ Frequently it seems that he is interested in the characters for their own sake, we witness little cameos of their lives, and see glimpses of the world which they inhabit and carry around with them. But what, across this remarkable range, holds this world together is the sense of crisis, of lives lived in precarious, threatened exile, lives that await the volcanic apocalypse that looms over a whole European generation. This sense of crisis accounts for the luridly judgemental feel of the novel. It is that climate, of judgements constantly being made because the Last Judgement is imminent that ultimately makes the novel coherent. The characters pass judgement on themselves, and on each other, the narrator passes judgement on the characters, and in this overheated universe both the characters and the narrator have a sense of angels and God watching, and evaluating them.

¹³³ ‘Mit sicherem Blick für psychologische und soziale Zusammenhänge stellt er die Emigration nicht nur als eine Geschichte der großen historischen Ereignisse und Massenvorgänge, sondern auch als Chronik singulärer Einzelschicksale dar.’ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.138.

1 The Characters and their Relationships

In the world of Der Vulkan, relationships are marked, sometimes even destroyed, by the outward situation, although this is the one novel of the four in my discussion where some relationships have a happy outcome. Most of the émigrés we meet in Paris in the opening chapter are unattached, and quickly begin to find partners amongst their fellow-exiles. The search for love is as important to them as the search for a home and a living. Though the reader is given the hope that love can survive the adverse circumstances within which the émigrés live, the reality is that day-to-day existence is too hard for some of the gentler people to survive: Tilly commits suicide, Martin becomes a heroin addict, and evades all attempts to help him free himself from addiction, eventually succumbing to pneumonia at the age of twenty-eight. Both characters are the victim of a chain of events started by the loss (albeit temporarily in Martin's case) of a loved one. Other relationships end in the death or loss of a partner, Marcel dies fighting in Spain, leaving Marion a widow; while Dora Proskauer is betrayed by the person she loves. Only two partnerships survive the novel; that of Marion and Abel who settle safely in America, and Meisje and Mathes who go together to support the International Brigade in Spain.

As in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen and Flucht in den Norden, Mann has chosen a female figure to illustrate many of the salient concerns he is trying to explore. While Marion is not the only significant character in the novel, she occupies more of the narrative attention than any of the characters. She is the character who most often sees the image of the volcano, from which the title of the novel is taken, and by seeing the volcano, she sees the truth as to how the exiles must act. Marion is

also the most politically articulate figure in the novel. She has three relationships during the course of the novel, all of which are profoundly influenced by the time in which she lives, and the political events which dominate.

Marion and Marcel are in a relationship before she goes into exile in Paris. Their partnership is a meeting of intellectual equals, and a sharing of political ideals, providing Marcel with a newfound stability, and affection. Like Marion, his focus is on using his artistic abilities to fight Fascism, though he confesses he would like to be able to write without the burden that this struggle places upon him. They marry so that Marion is able to remain in France. When together, their relationship is akin to that of mother and child:

Sie küßte ihn; die Gebärde, mit der sie ihn an sich zog, war nicht jene, die eine Liebende für den Geliebten hat; vielmehr glich sie der anderen, mit der die Mutter ein erschrecktes Kind umarmt.¹³⁴

Marion herself only betrays any vulnerability within the relationship when Marcel announces he is going to join the International Brigade in Spain:

Sie ist sehr geschockt, als er ihrs gesagt hat: Ich gehe nach Spanien. Marion, die sonst nur tröstet und hilft, zur Besinnung oder zum Kampf ruft – Marion hat geweint. Ihr Mund hat kindlich gezittert, aus den schönen, schrägen Katzenaugen flossen Tränen: “Tu es nicht! Ich sehe dich niemals wieder! Bleibe hier, es gibt hier genug zu leisten! Bleibe meinewegen! Ich bin deine Frau!” (280)

Failing to dissuade him, she asks to go with him, but his reply is an indication that he is expecting not to return:

“Es gibt Wege, Marion, die man allein zu gehen hat! Du kannst nicht mit mir kommen. Ich will nicht, daß irgendjemand mit mir kommt.” (281)

¹³⁴ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.267.

Marcel knows he will die, but more significantly he has realised that despite having found domestic happiness with Marion, his final path has to be one he travels alone. The loss of Marcel, combined with that of her sister and best friend, persuades Marion she has to leave Europe, and go to the United States. Marion meets second lover Tullio while isolated and lonely in New York; like Johanna in Flucht in den Norden she needs to establish a connection with another person when feeling alone in a new country. It is significant that Tullio enters her life at a moment when she is feeling particularly vulnerable and lonely:

Die Sehnsucht nach der Luft, dem Licht, den herben Dünften von Sils-Maria überfiel sie mit schmerzender Heftigkeit wie die Sehnsucht nach einem Menschen. Übrigens mischte sich das Heimweh nach der verlorenen Landschaft in ihrem Herzen mit der Trauer um den verlorenen Freund. Marcel war tot, ins Herz getroffen, tot –: unter fremden Himmeln gestorben. Und hier kein Himmel, der hätte trösten können. Und hier – kein Himmel. Marion hatte das Gesicht in die Hände gelegt – aber ohne zu weinen –, als es an der Türe klopfte. (405)

Tullio functions as a replacement for Marcel, his eyes remind her of her dead husband's, and occasionally their faces merge into one:

Wenn sie die Augen schloß, zeigte sich ihr ein Gesicht, das mehr dem des fernen Toten, als dem des Lebenden an ihrer Seite glich; es hatte aber die Züge von beiden. (412)

There are also many similarities between the two relationships. As with Marcel, Marion is in the position of being the stronger, more adult partner in the relationship. Tullio's moods are childishly erratic, he cannot control his emotions. His manner of declaring his intention to return to Italy is juvenile, contrasting with Marion's dignified practicality. Tullio's lambasting of intellectualism and thinking is a more extreme and immature version of Marcel's need for action, rather than words:

Marion dachte: ‘Auch sein kindlicher, ungeübter Verstand ist berührt und ergriffen von den Stimmungen, den gefährlich starken Tendenzen der Zeit. Marcel – erfahren und viel zu bewandert in allen intellektuellen Raffinements – hat die großen Worte verflucht und nach der Tat, dem Opfer verlangt. Dieser Überdruß an der Vernuft, dieser aggressive Zweifel an der intellektuellen Kritik scheint die Krankheit unserer Generation[.]’ (417)

Marion is drawn to Tullio’s rawness, roughness, and aggressive energy, she loves to watch him eat, because he looks like an animal, and she enjoys seeing his eyes light up when he launches into a tirade against Fascism. She believes she loves him, but their relationship is based primarily on physical attraction, and perhaps a fascination with the unfamiliar. They both want the end of Fascist politics in Europe, but aside from that they have nothing in common. Tullio remains incomprehensible to Marion,¹³⁵ and his outlook represents the rejection of the intellectualism that is the cornerstone of Marion’s art. Like Marcel, Tullio leaves safety to fight Fascism, and their relationship ends when he sets off for Europe. When he leaves, Marion knows she will not hear from him again, regardless of whether he lives or dies. The only real importance of the relationship with Tullio is that Marion becomes pregnant, which makes her susceptible to the idea of domestic bliss offered by her next suitor, Benjamin Abel.

Marion and Abel do not meet until the final part of the novel; although they are linked by mutual acquaintance with David, and by their reverse parallel experiences in America, which are covered in more detail later in this chapter. They finally cross paths in an obscure mid-west university town, when Marion is publicly challenged by a Nazi-sympathising student, after one of her talks.

¹³⁵ ‘Manchmal glaubte Marion: Er ist schön, aber einfach dumm; dann wieder: Er ist begabt, aber er muß wahnsinnig werden.’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.420.

Unknown to Marion, she is in the early stages of pregnancy and suddenly feels too sick to reply:

Sie öffnete schon den Mund, um ihre Replik zu beginnen; da wurde ihr schwindelig, sie taumelte, griff hinter sich, ihr Gesicht war weiß. Sie spürte: Gleich werde ich stürzen... (437)

This is a few hours after Marion receives a letter from Tullio ending their relationship. She has already reached the point where she thinks she cannot carry on, she is alone and unwell, in an unfamiliar place, and therefore vulnerable to the advances of anyone who pursues her. Abel calls the heckler ‘unritterlich gegen eine Dame’ (438), the use of the word ‘unritterlich’ establishing him as Marion’s manly protector. Abel immediately assumes a dominant position as chivalric knight, casting Marion in a correspondingly passive position. Despite his “rescue” of her, Marion’s immediate response to Abel is one of unease and aversion:

Er sprach zu dem Kreis am Kamin; seine Blicke aber gingen in die andere Ecke des Zimmers. Dort saß Marion mit Mr. Piggins. Sie dachte: ‘Warum starrt er mich so an? Es ist unangenehm. Seine Augen passen nicht in sein Gesicht. Figur und Miene sind die eines behäbigen Familienvaters; der Blick aber wirkt sowohl dumpf als auch feurig. Ein enorm eigensinniger Blick... Die Mischung aus Pedanterie und Leidenschaft ist gefährlich.’ (442)

Instead, she is attracted to one of Abel’s younger colleagues. When Abel notices this, he tries to gain her attention by criticising her method of resistance. Marion responds to his pedagogic lecture with: ‘Danke für die Belehrung’ (445).

Abel redete strenge und pedantische Worte – was ihn keineswegs daran verhinderte, die Dame, welche er attackierte, mit gierigem, verzücktem Blick zu betrachten. (445)

This initial exchange establishes the pattern their relationship follows: Abel justifies his domination of her by arguing that his superior experience means he

knows her better than she knows herself, and if she wants to be happy, she needs to do what he says:

“Du hast dich noch niemals lieben lassen, wie eine Frau sich lieben lassen soll –: jetzt geschieht es dir zum ersten Mal, oder du duldest es zum ersten Male. Du hast zu viel experimentiert, das war sehr gefährlich. Du bist doch kein Junge [...] Du warst zu aktiv. Du hast deine jungen Freunde geliebt – beinah wie ein Mann die Frau lieben soll. Dadurch hast du dir viel Schmerz angetan, und bist reif geworden, weil du gelitten hast. Jetzt beginnt etwas Neues für dich, auf der Höhe deines reichen Lebens. Du wirst ein Kind haben, und du erlaubst einem Mann, dich zu lieben.” (460–1)

He realises early on that if he is to make an impression on her, he has to dominate her.¹³⁶ The morning after they have met, he appears at her hotel room, knowing she has a prior engagement, and instructs her how to decline the invitation. Abel tells her what to say, and she repeats it like a robot. His domination takes the form of casting himself as rescuer, protector, teacher, and Marion as incorrect, juvenile and weak. She remarks to herself that he talks to her as though he were a teacher, and wishes he would not. However Abel’s greatest asset is Marion’s pregnancy, he is glad to discover that she has been abandoned by the father:

Sie erklärte ruhig: “Mein Kind ist von einem jungen italienischen Fensterputzer. Ich habe ihn in New York kennen gelernt. Er hat mich verlassen.”

“Er hat Sie verlassen?” Die Spannung wich von Benjamins Zügen. Sie glätteten sich, wurden sanft. Ein Lächeln ohnegleichen – ein Schimmer der Erleichterung, des Triumphes, des Erbarmens, der unendlichen Zärtlichkeit – verschönte das unjunge Anlitz des Liebenden. (458)

When he proposes, she also thinks to herself that, like many lovers, he is using the circumstances of her pregnancy to his advantage.¹³⁷ While the reader sees Marion as a fighter and political activist, Abel sees her solely as a woman, and presses her into the conventional female roles of wife and mother. This is illustrated when Marion becomes distressed at the thought of the suffering that will be caused by

¹³⁶ ‘Die gediegene Passion des Alternden wird Marion überzeugen, überwältigen, gewinnen.’ *Ibid*, p.450.

¹³⁷ ‘Wie schlau sie sind – diese Liebenden! Sie nutzen alles zu ihrem Vorteil’.’ *Ibid*, p.459.

Europe falling to the Fascists, Abel's first thought is 'Wie schön sie ist!' (507). He has reduced her value to that of an ornament, he does not hear what she is saying because he only responds to her beauty. Her words which used to be her weapon against the Nazis are no longer important. Their relationship develops into a reversal of the positions we found them in at the beginning of the novel; passive Abel, who used to hide away, is now the centre of attention, Marion who used to be the centre of attention, is now his audience:

Der philosophische Liebhaber unterhielt seine Dame, die lächelnd lauschte.
(452)

After their marriage, they create a happy home life in North Carolina where 'Marion galt als charmante Hausfrau' (505). Marion is happy, yet her happiness seems to be at the cost of her independence, and her political vocation. It is highly unlikely that without being pregnant, she would have even entertained the thought of marrying Abel and settling in small-town America accepting the conventional role as wife and mother favoured by her sister. Abel's insistence that Marion must have the baby, and the baby needs a father, seems to be a tacit recognition of that fact. While Abel is besotted by Marion, doing anything to win her, even accepting another man's child as his, her feelings towards him are left unexplained. When they meet she is exhausted and alone, Abel offers her a sanctuary, and an escape from her predicament. He wins her because of the position she is in, not because she agrees with his assessment of her. The closing image of Marion and Abel is one of domestic happiness against the backdrop of the impending war. In their little house they listen to news of Chamberlain's imminent flight to Berchtesgaden. Marion wants to switch off the radio because it is disturbing the

baby. As a mother all her energy is concentrated on the child; her political vocation has been supplanted by her maternal role.

Marion and Marcel's best friends, Martin and Kikjou, share a passionate and volatile affair. Their love is spontaneous, instinctive and powerful. Yet this need for Kikjou prompts Martin to begin taking the heroin which ultimately kills him. Staunch Catholic Kikjou also suffers because of his guilt at succumbing to the "sin" of his relationship with Martin. The relationship brings out a self-destructive tendency in both men, but particularly Martin. Martin begins taking drugs to help him cope with Kikjou's temporary absence. Kikjou begins taking heroin, so that he is not excluded from this part of Martin's life. Heroin has an adverse effect on their lives and relationship:

Die Beiden magerten ab. Ihre Gesichtsfarbe wurde grau, die Haltung schlaff, der Appetit ließ nach, auch die sexuelle Potenz. Es gab Zeiten, da Kikjou beinah gar nichts mehr bei sich behalten konnte; er übergab sich fast nach jeder Mahlzeit. (221)

Following the misunderstanding which nearly ends in Kikjou's death, Kikjou realises that Martin's death-wish, whether conscious or unconscious, will also destroy him, and Kikjou decides that his life is more important than his relationship. He determines to cure himself of addiction and leaves Martin with the ultimatum that he will not return unless Martin can also wean himself off heroin. Martin makes a half-hearted attempt to cure his addiction, but his love for his soul mate is weaker than his desire to live in his fantasy world, and he does not complete the cure that will save his life and bring back his lover. Eventually Martin dies without seeing Kikjou again. Arwed Schmidt writes that:

Ein Wendepunkt scheint erreicht, eine Überwindung der Isolation, eine Beziehung zur Umwelt und zum Mitmenschen als er den anderen Homosexuellen des Romans, Kikjou, kennenlernt.¹³⁸

Instead, their relationship just serves to isolate Kikjou. Martin has talent, but he is a dreamer, and his inability to achieve anything infects Kikjou. Martin fails to fight either as an artist or as a man. Once Martin has died and the relationship has ended, Kikjou grows up. He assumes the burden that Martin had the potential, but not the will, to shoulder. He follows in the footsteps of his “brother” Marcel to fight in Spain, returning to Paris to speak at the celebration given in Marcel’s honour. When the second angel visits him he expresses the intention to complete the book which both Martin and Marcel had wanted to write. By doing so he proves that the goals of artistic endeavour and political engagement are compatible.

This relationship exemplifies Fredric Kroll’s concept of non-possession where love is not enough to dissuade a person from the self-destructive path they have chosen. Kikjou accepts that Martin has to make his own choices, and he will not remain to support Martin, once he has seen that slow death via heroin is not for him. Having made this decision, Kikjou hides from Martin and any mutual acquaintances. Even at the moment he hears of Martin’s death he is resolute, telling David he would not have come back, even if David’s messages had reached him. In abandoning Martin, Kikjou has saved his own life and found his place in the world.

¹³⁸ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.179.

More than any other of Mann's novels, Der Vulkan portrays a complex dynamic of people, and their relationships. We see relationships develop, change and die, and lives played out against a backdrop of political upheaval and uncertainty. Like her sister Marion, Tilly has relationships with a number of men in the novel, but in contrast to her sister, she has essentially conventional goals, and has no interest in politics. Tilly accompanies Konni to left-wing political assemblies solely to spend time with him, thus she has to leave Germany when the Nazis gain power. She writes to Hans in Prague, because he was a friend of Konni's, and starts to fancy herself in love with him. Despite having many admirers in Zurich, she still hankers after the missing Konni and the intriguing "HS". When Hans' roommate Ernst appears in Zurich, she is attracted to him because in her mind she sees him as Hans, rather than a stranger. Subsequently she falls pregnant, and has an abortion which ruins her health, and this contributes to the despair which eventually makes her end her life.

As she writes in one of her suicide letters, she was never politically-minded, and yet politics has robbed her of everything: her lovers, her baby, and finally her life. Fredric Kroll considers Tilly 'überhaupt eine der rührendsten Figuren Klaus Manns'.¹³⁹ Her weaknesses are understandable, and she is seen not to deserve her eventual fate. It is particularly poignant that the night she spends with Ernst, which the narrator states is to comfort her for all the years spent alone, results in the pregnancy which is the catalyst for her suicide. This sense of tragedy is compounded by fact that when we see Ernst for the final time, Tilly is little more than a pleasant memory for him.

¹³⁹ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 5 Trauma Amerika: 1937–1942* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.140.

The equally pitiable Dora Proskauer works on a committee helping Jewish refugees. Her valuable work causes her to be targeted by Nazi spy Walter Konradi, who has inveigled his way into the émigré group by posing as a friend of Martin's at his funeral. He flatters and seduces her, persuading her to return to Germany on the pretext of undertaking a mission for the resistance. Once there, she is arrested and imprisoned. When the reader first meets her, Marcel feels a great sympathy for her because of her outward appearance. It is therefore easy for an attractive man like Konradi to trap her. The angel tells Kikjou that even in prison, she cannot recover from their relationship, because he is the only man she has ever loved.

Meisje and Mathes, who meet in Paris, are well suited, and serve to remind the other émigrés of a happiness that many of them do not share. They become inseparable, and even go to Spain together, underlining that Marcel's choice of going to Spain alone was partly a desire to do something for himself. For Fredric Kroll, 'Meisje und ihr Mann Dr. Mathes demonstrieren die Realisierung des Entschlusses Marion und Benjamins, glücklich zu sein, ohne ruhig und kalt zu werden.'¹⁴⁰ Friendships represent another strong bond between individuals, and a source of considerable strength in the difficult world surrounding the émigrés. We see how friendships are shaped by the circumstances in which they live, they flourish and collapse. They both provide strength and sap energy. Martin follows his best friend Marion to Paris in 1933; he has no real need to leave Germany, but wants to go with her. They drift apart as she becomes increasingly politically

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.129.

involved, and he becomes more and more drug-dependent. She tries to stop him destroying himself, but cannot rally him, as she has too many other people to support and comfort to give him the undivided attention he would need to get him through the crisis of his addiction. Martin's death causes David to have a kind of breakdown, and he is unable to carry on with the academic work he now finds futile. The depiction of these many relationships is Mann's way of evoking the rich tapestry of exile life. We see their collective struggle against circumstances, against a powerful enemy, even against each other. They illustrate the concept that mankind is locked in a desperate battle with an omnipotent God as onlooker and judge.

2 The Mind and the World

Der Vulkan is a novel about the exile experience: the reality for both those who have chosen to leave their homeland, and those left behind. However Mann also blends in other themes which he considered in his earlier novels. In Der Vulkan, the characters struggle to establish their identities, their future paths, and their place in society in a world where they are exiles and refugees: unwanted and misunderstood. Notwithstanding the threat of Nazism, characters are still searching for the same things that every person searches for: a place where they feel they belong, whether in a geographical, professional or psychological sense. The catalyst for the events which unfold in the novel is the ascent to power of the National Socialists. In the world of Der Vulkan, Mann's characters respond in three different ways: some fight, some flee, others endure the regime in Germany, and all experience varying degrees of fear, loneliness and powerlessness. The psyche of the characters is influenced by the political situation in which they live, and the idea of exile is established as entailing both leaving and remaining in a country which is deteriorating (as both inner and outer emigration).

We hear comparatively little of those that remain in Germany: the figure of Dieter in the prologue gently admonishes his friend Karl for leaving, putting forward the many arguments to stay. He believes that Karl has abandoned his duty to his country and should have stayed to participate in creating the new Germany. However, Dieter's eventual decision to flee shows us that the emigrants did make the right choice in 1933. He has not been safer by remaining in Germany, neither has he suffered less, being subject to the disappointment of his hopes for a new Germany, finally having to risk his life escaping from the Reich before he can be

sent into battle. The angel calls him a deserter, a phrase Dieter used for the émigrés at the beginning of the novel. Dieter represents the inner emigration, the ‘[H]eimatlos in der Heimat’ (539). They too are guarded by the ‘Engel der Heimatlosen’ (540),¹⁴¹ who tells Kikjou:

“Ja ja – nicht nur im Exil wird gelitten. Nicht die Vertriebenen allein erfahren, wie bitter Einsamkeit ist und wie müde es macht, langen, zähen Widerstand zu leisten gegen die Macht, von der doch alles teils entzückt, teils eingeschüchtert scheint [...] Wenn ihr zurückkehrt, werdet ihr auf den Gesichtern eurer daheim-gebliebenen Kameraden Zeichen finden – jenen sehr ähnlich, die ihr selber tragt.” (540)

Herr Korella is the other main representative of those who stayed behind. He considers the Paris emigrants to be unpatriotic and self-pitying. He feels that he has endured worse treatment from the Nazi regime than the émigrés, having had so much taken from him by the country he fought for in World War One. Nevertheless he considers his son’s friends to be enemies of Germany, and will not ally himself with them. Like Flucht in den Norden’s Suse, he identifies the reigning government with its people, opposition to the Nazis is opposition to the German people. Even so he is clearly worried about Nazi spies during the funeral.¹⁴² On the day of his son’s funeral, Mr Korella criticises the luxury of Martin’s emigration. He believes that the right and patriotic thing is to remain in Germany and stoically bear any privation:

[Herr Korella] hat in Deutschland manches durchgemacht, und vieles ist ihm von den Nazis angetan worden – mehr vielleicht, als all den jungen Leuten hier im Kreise, und als dieser Madame Schwalbe, die den Mund so voll nimmt –; aber Herr Korella, ein deutscher Bürger – obwohl die Deutschen ihn als ihresgleichen nicht mehr anerkennen – findet doch eine tiefe Kluft zwischen sich und den Vaterlandslosen. ‘Keinesfalls möchte ich zu denen

¹⁴¹ ‘[...] Ich, Schutzpatron der Expatriierten, kümmere ich mich auch um sie.[...]' Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.539.

¹⁴² ‘Wer weiß, ob nicht unter der Trauergästen ein Spitzel ist, man muß immer mit sowas rechnen.’ *Ibid*, p. 314.

gehören, die im Ausland sitzen und ihre Heimat beschimpfen' – so denkt er.
(320)

Enduring the regime is not enough to protect Herr Korella from persecution, and on his return to Germany, he is thrown into a concentration camp, after Konradi has made false allegations about him. Other reasons to stay in Germany are articulated by exiled Russian Anna Rubinstein, who stresses the cost of losing one's homeland, and Marie-Luise's Swiss friends, who believe that Hitler's regime will benefit both Germany and the rest of Europe:

“Die Männer des Volkes, die jetzt in Deutschland draußen Gott sei's gedankt, an der Macht sind, erfüllen eine eminente historische Aufgabe.”
(74)

Herr Korella may be correct to question the value of the emigration, but Mann makes it clear that for the most part his characters flee with the intention of resisting the Nazi regime rather than just staying on the sidelines lamenting the direction of their homeland. Those characters who remain in Germany serve a manifold purpose: they are seen to be wrong to assume that remaining quiet and keeping a low profile will protect them; the reader witnesses the betrayal of their hopes for the “new” Germany, it also shows that even escaping direct persecution can still mean oppression and suffering.

Despite having good intentions, some of the émigrés are content simply to absent themselves from Germany without actively resisting the spread of Fascism. While those who fight may find solace in their political work, those who flee may use drugs or sex to find an escape from their circumstances. The two characters associated with suicide are two of the most politically apathetic figures in the novel: Tilly and Martin. Their emigration is a result of following another person's

political direction, rather than a conscious choice. Without the advantage of having a fight to focus them on the “bigger” picture, they become wrapped up in their individual woes, and cannot find a solution for them. Martin’s apathy and self-absorption is detrimental to his own well-being. Arwed Schmidt views Martin’s emigration as the expression of his status as an outsider as much as his political interest.¹⁴³ He is given the opportunity to work with the other political activists, but he is only interested in borrowing money for heroin. He takes the drug to fill the gap left by Kikjou, and then continues taking heroin even though this has driven Kikjou away from him. Tilly is unable to cope with being pregnant and unmarried, the same situation her older sister manages to resolve later in the novel.

The politically indifferent Abel flees to Amsterdam, but he is not free from persecution, even though he keeps a low profile. Mann shows him suffering from loneliness, fear and persecution. Eventually he determines to engage with the outside world and manages to escape far enough away to rebuild his life. Martin and Tilly’s journey towards suicide is seen to be a result of their own actions, they opt to go down a path which is likely to end badly for them. Early in Part Two of the novel, the narrator gives an overview of what is happening in the world of the émigrés:

Die Zeit verging, auch für die Emigranten. Schriftsteller schrieben Bücher – manche davon waren gut, andere ließen zu wünschen übrig –; Politiker entwarfen ihr Programm und stritten mit den Kollegen darüber; Zeitschriften wurden gegründet und gingen ein; Frauen gaben sich hin, erwarteten ein Kind, ließen es abtreiben oder bekamen es. (218)

¹⁴³ ‘So ist die Emigration für Martin nur die Bestätigung einer Unzugehörigkeit, die er seit frühesten Zeiten erfahren hat und die für sein Empfinden die Heimatlosigkeit längst vorwegnahm.’ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.177.

There are two ways of interpreting this passage, on the one hand this is a list of a series of activities, all of which seem to exist on the same level – as helpless, ineffectual attempts to find meaning in a world that no longer makes sense. On the other there is a sense that life goes on, ordinary human activity still progresses. Indeed life perhaps has to carry on, those characters who remain at a standstill will be left behind. The émigrés have to adapt to survive. This life may be meaningless, but there is nothing else, and it is each person's duty to make the best of it.

The difficulties which Tilly and Martin face are the same faced by many of the other characters, except that they manage to turn them into something catastrophic. After her night with Ernst, Tilly begins to think she is being followed by the police, and imagines that she is cursed. Her judgement and priorities are confused, she asks Marion for help to find Ernst, but not to help her arrange an abortion, or to allay her fears of persecution. Instead, she goes to her hairdresser for a recommendation, solely because her French accent makes her sound trustworthy. At the doctor's she feels uneasy and afraid because of the nurse's dirty uniform, and the cries of the other patients, but instead of leaving, she greedily breathes in the ether she is offered, wanting to be unconscious as quickly as possible. After the traumatic abortion, she sees herself as 'kaputt' (285). Broken and useless, Tilly feels she no longer has a valid function in the world. She believes she will never recover, and that the pain is symbolic for everything she has lost in her life:

Die Schmerzen im Unterleib waren wohl nur Symptom und Ausdruck eines größeren, tieferen Leidens. (285)

Later, on the night of her suicide, she thinks:

Die Zeit ist nicht dazu geeignet, in ihr glücklich zu sein. (292)

She sees herself as victimised, doomed and powerless. Tilly's acceptance of her destiny (her injuries after the abortion) is fatalistic. It is as though the state of the world has deprived Tilly of her life, not her own mistakes. Tilly plans and executes her suicide very carefully, this is the one area of her life where she shows resourcefulness and organisation. She ensures that she will not be disturbed as she enacts a ritual of beautification and leave-taking. She takes far more care to control the enactment of her suicide, than she did with any other aspect of her life. This mirrors Martin, who is essentially passive, apart from when facilitating his own destruction, demonstrating energy and ingenuity when escaping from the clinic in Zurich. While Tilly seeks solace in imaginary or fruitless relationships, Martin's chosen route of escape is to take drugs. When approaching Martin, drug-dealer Pepe says he has an instinct for addicts which causes him to target Martin. Like Tilly trusting her hairdresser, Martin trusts Pepe, a complete stranger, when he offers heroin. Martin regards heroin as providing him with the 'Erleichterung' (98) he deserves. His drugs not only help him forget his woes, but provide an alternative reality. They allow Martin to assume the mantle of someone else, and he becomes a glittering entertainer, as well as forgetting his yearning for Kikjou and his despair at his creative impotence. Shortly before being approached by Pepe, Martin thinks back to a time in his childhood when he was happy: he was ill, and had been given a pain-killing injection for a kidney infection, which gave him wonderful dreams. Martin finds it comforting to be in a position where he had no responsibility because he was a child, and was incapable thanks to his sickness. By taking drugs he renders himself once more helpless and dependent. Martin

claims his depression about the world makes him take drugs, but this is not enough to explain his waste of his life. It is because he cannot function in the real world. He faces the same despair, and privation as the other characters, yet he gives up where they do not. Martin's lack of application is indicated early on in the novel, he becomes a writer, because he lacks the skill to be an actor. His parents support him financially, yet despite being able to dedicate himself to writing, he has published very little. While his skill as a writer seems evident, he is lazy, hence his negligible output.

Jetzt war er fünfundzwanzig Jahre alt, und hatte noch nichts veröffentlicht, außer ein paar Gedichten und kurzen Stücken lyrischer oder essayistischer Prosa [...] Martin war hochmütig genug, um ordinären Ehrgeiz gründlich zu verachten. Übrigens war er auch träge. Er schlief bis zum Mittag und verbrachte dann Stunden auf Spaziergängen durch die Stadt. Er las wenig, und immer nur die gleichen Autoren. Es gab Wochen, Monate, während deren er keine Zeile schrieb. Dafür durfte er sich rühmen: "Etwas mittelmäßiges ist von mir niemals gedruckt worden" (19)

Arwed Schmidt feels that Tilly and Martin's suicides are, for Mann, the equivalent of 'Fahnenflucht'.¹⁴⁴ They are both naturally gentle, and sensitive, but they fail because they will not fight for what they want, instead fleeing reality, yearning for the security they associate with childhood, and failing to seek help from the stronger people around them. Their deaths are tragic, but avoidable.

Fredric Kroll writes:

[...] im Vulkan [wird] Kritik an Tilly und Martin getübt, die von der eigenen Kindheit nicht loskommen und sich zugrunde richten. Ihre Selbstvernichtung wird zwar nicht verurteilt, aber die Beispiele der drei Hauptfiguren, die sich für das Leben entscheiden – Abel, Kikjou und Marion – werden ihnen entgegengehalten.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.219.

¹⁴⁵ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 5 Trauma Amerika: 1937–1942* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.137.

They try to hide from what pains them, but in doing so they render themselves even less capable of coping. Life has to be an active choice. Fleeing the volcano will not save them.

For those who left Nazi Germany to defy the regime, every act can be an act of resistance, all their efforts work towards that. Indeed they censure those who leave Germany solely because they have to.¹⁴⁶ Characters such as Marion, David and Dora Proskauer feel the need to fight in a tangible sense. Despite their zeal, and commitment, the fight takes a tremendous toll on all of them. Marion and Marcel represent different ways of fighting, she spreads the message, using her artistic talents to reveal the truth about Hitler's regime, and show a different kind of Germany to the one that the Nazis promulgate. Marion says she has left Germany because of the hatred and disgust she feels towards the regime; thus she believes it is her duty to fight Fascism, and does not surrender to the apathy or melancholy of others. She sees her role as an ambassador for German opposition to Hitler, recognising that interviews and socialising constitute part of her remit. She has to play a part both on and off stage, and she must therefore be 'immer gut in Form' (425). Marcel takes up arms, fighting alongside ordinary men with whom he has little in common. He is desperate to flee the impending disaster represented by the volcano, and his choice to fight in Spain can be viewed as an act of escape, as well as resistance, leaving behind the realities of the world he had once despised, and martyring himself for the collective. After his death, Hans wonders if Marcel's sacrifice was worth the loss of the work he might have written, concluding:

¹⁴⁶ David criticises those Jews who would happily subscribe to Nazism if it were not anti-semitic. Marion tells Martin he might as well have stayed in Germany for all the good he is doing.

‘[...] Natürlich ist ein Sinn dabei. Der hat schon gewußt, warum er hergekommen ist, und hier mit uns gekämpft hat, und sich hat totschießen lassen von den verfluchten Faschisten. In Paris hat er wahrscheinlich so für sich gelebt – so ein begabter Einzelner, was kann der schon machen? Und als es dann hier losging, hat er sich gedacht, da muß ich dabei sein [...] Er wollte nicht mehr allein sein, sondern lieber mit den anderen zusammensterben [...]’ (355)

Like Marcel, Tullio feels compelled to offer himself up for sacrifice on the battlefield.¹⁴⁷ When Marcel’s sacrifice is celebrated by the Spanish in Paris, the speech given by the French novelist predicts the same fate for their entire generation, emphasising the sacrifice rather than the victory:

“Camarades – wir werden alle keines natürlichen Todes sterben!” prophezeite er gräßlich. “Unsere Generation wird aufgeopfert!” – Er war ein vorzüglicher Redner [...] Man war entzückt und entsetzt. Er weckte Enthusiasmus und Grauen. Er sprach nicht von Siegeshoffnungen; nur von dem Inferno, das sich vorbereite. An seinem fürchterlichen Ernst aber war zu ermessen, wie entscheidend wichtig der Kampf war. Der Sieg mußte unendlich kostbar sein, wenn es sich lohnte, ihn so teuer zu bezahlen. (379)

This language of sacrifice and glory has strong echoes of Nazi rhetoric. The exposure to the Fascist jargon of war and apocalypse has also affected its opponents, yet despite this, they are seen to be correct to fight by any means at their disposal. Again, many of the other young characters are defined by their need to sacrifice themselves, showing a commitment to their political ideals which goes further than mere rhetoric. Marcel believes that the struggle can only be won through the shedding of blood. The association with sacrifice and blood echoes Johanna’s idea of Georg giving his blood for the political cause in Flucht in den Norden, and Pelz’s assertion that blood will be spilled by the new Reich in Mephisto. Hans considers it his duty to fight Fascism wherever the battle is. While Ernst drifts from place to place, Hans goes to Spain to fight, and then when

¹⁴⁷ Tullio tells Marion: ‘“Ich muß mich opfern...Es wird das Opfer verlangt...”’. Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.423.

no longer required, he leaves without rancour,¹⁴⁸ planning to go wherever he is needed next. Even those that cannot go into battle share the desire to face danger for the cause. Despite her valuable work with the Jewish committees, Dora Proskauer feels the need to do something heroic and risky. Hence it is easy for Konradi to manipulate her into returning to Germany where she is imprisoned. She is in love with the idea of adventure, as much as she is in love with Konradi:

Alle Emigranten bewunderten "die Illegalen" und erzählten sich Anekdoten über ihre Listen, ihren Opfermut, ihre Ausdauer. Was leisteten nicht alles die Illegalen! (341)

Fighting the good fight, even without taking up arms, takes its toll. For some of the characters, the situation becomes overwhelming, and they have to flee. David is eventually too crushed to carry on with his political work, abandoning Europe in an attempt to find a paradise where he can find the 'Ruhe' and 'Unschuld' (483) he craves. His ideal of 'Weib und Kind ernähren' (482) echoes Marion's eventual escape into domestic bliss.

As the principle advocate of anti-Nazi political opinion, Marion is confronted by other characters who challenge her opinions. On her ship to New York she meets a Jewish couple who tell her that the Jewish predicament has been brought on by European Jews having become too 'frech' (401). They believe the Nazi government will eventually realise its mistake and welcome them back. The idea that the Reich is at its core benign, and mistaken in its actions, is shared by the English author Marion meets in Mallorca. After hearing her recital, he tells her that her message is too aggressive, and that they must all strive to avoid war:

¹⁴⁸ "Ich habe gegen den Faschismus gekämpft. Das war meine Pflicht. Ich kann nicht verlangen, daß man mich ewig durchfüttert, weil ich meine Pflicht getan habe." *Ibid*, p.535.

Wenn man leben will, muß man auf das Gute im Menschen vertrauen können. (264)

Though agreeing with Marion on the evil of the regime, Abel also believes her way of fighting Fascism is incorrect, and that her tactics are too much like the ones the Nazis themselves would use. According to him, she is simplifying and degrading the ‘Geist’ for propagandistic purposes, and in danger of becoming like the people she is fighting.

“[...] Was hassen wir denn vor allem an der falschen Ideologie und bösartigen Praxis des totalitären Faschismus? Die Vergewaltigung der Wahrheit; die Entwürdigung des Geistes – die nichts anderes, als die Entwürdigung des Menschen ist. Vom Geist verlangt der Faschismus, er müsse immer und mit allen seinen Kräften den propagandistischen Absichten des Staates dienen. Der Geist als ein Propaganda-Instrument der Tyrannis –: dies ist seine letzte Entwürdigung. Machen wir uns nicht mit schuldig an ihrer Vorbereitung, wenn wir unsererseits die geistigen Werte rhetorisch ‘benutzen’, in der Auseinandersetzung des Tages – anstatt sie zu lieben, gerade weil sie dem Tage entrückt sind, und das Unvergängliche, Unverlierbare, das schöne Menschliche repräsentieren?” (446)

The purpose of positing these opinions would seem to be to refute them.

Konradi’s conduct alone would appear to disprove what the English author says.

He manages to earn the trust of all the émigrés, and uses it against them.

Konradi’s entrapment of Proskauer and Herr Korella shows that the Nazis act out of ‘Gemeinheit’ (344). The émigrés have not begun to fight in earnest, therefore they are easy to betray, and meeting their enemies with conciliation would merely weaken them. Similarly Abel is wrong about what its opponents most hate about Fascism. The Nazi use of propaganda is depicted as far less disturbing than the realities of the murder and destruction they wreak on the innocent. Both the English author and Abel assume a position of wisdom based upon their generational superiority: the author addresses Marion as though she were his daughter, Abel as though she were his pupil. As a foreigner, the English author

has been fooled by the image of Germany disseminated by the Reich, while Abel's desperation to prove Marion wrong seems to stem from his desire for her, and his wish to distract her from another rival. Moreover, the response from other Germans, whether in Germany or elsewhere, implies her strategy is effective.

Immer zahlreicher, immer inniger wurden die dankbaren, enthusiastischen Briefe. Häufig kamen sie von Deutschen – Feinden des Nazi-Regimes, die es aber im Reiche aushalten mußten und nur für kurzen Aufenthalt im Ausland waren. „Wir hatten angefangen, unsere Heimat zu hassen“, schrieben sie. „Das Deutschland, in dem wir leben müssen, ist hassenwert. Sie haben uns wieder an ein anderes erinnert, haben ein besseres Deutschland für uns lebendig werden lassen. Das vergessen wir Ihnen nie.“ (230)

Marion gives them hope, and the comfort of knowing that they are not alone in their hatred of the Reich. Her choice of material reminds the audience that they are not alone, and that their problems have been faced before. The Nazi tactics we see in this novel are those of the faceless government who still influence the lives of the exiles, and the spy Konradi, who manipulates the gullible and vulnerable, falsely accusing people who have never stood against the Reich. Any similarity with these representatives of Nazi power is tenuous at least, and Abel's own tactics for fighting the proliferation of Nazi politics seem ineffectual by comparison. Firstly he hides himself away in Amsterdam, then finally carries on his study of 'Das Jahr 1848 und die deutsche Literatur' (362) as a way of spiting the Nazis:

‘Schon aus Trotz will ich tätig sein’, beschloß er grimmig. ‘Schon aus Wut und Haß bin ich widerstandsfähig [...]’ (361)

Though he helps other émigrés, he takes no positive action to counter the spread of Fascism. In a world where some consider words to be redundant, and God calls for action, the Third Reich is hardly going to be impeded by Abel's attempts to

preserve the German ‘Geist’ (446). This clash between Abel and Marion is typified by a conversation discussing the future of Marion’s unborn child. She predicts that the child will have to fight when he grows up, but that he will win. Abel counters that surviving is the victory, echoing his own strategy for coping with exile. He believes that surviving is more difficult than dying heroically. Seen in the context of God’s call to action at the end of the novel, Abel’s attitude seems mistaken. The victory itself is not paramount, instead it is the attempt to make a difference that counts. There is no guarantee of victory, but God is judging the deed as much as the outcome.

The example of the two friends Hans and Ernst shows that active participation in the fight has a better outcome than merely trying to survive. Fighting in Spain has given Hans a sense of dignity and self-worth despite having no material possessions, while Ernst has descended into petty crime and feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. He has no place in society because he has failed to occupy the place which is really meant for him, namely as a soldier in the “good fight”. For Nicole Schaenzler, Marion is the most perceptive figure in the novel, seeing most clearly the increasing necessity of war as the means of neutralising these oppressive regimes:

Dabei verweist die Vulkan-Metapher nicht auf die Deutung des bevorstehenden Krieges als eines Naturereignisses [...] Statt dessen bezieht sie sich auf die Tatenlosigkeit und “Blindheit des Volkes” [...] Wenn Marion, die hier explizit mit der mythischen Gestalt Kassandra verglichen wird [...] aufgrund dessen sie den bevorstehenden Krieg nicht als schicksalhaftes, unabwendbares Naturereignis, sondern als eine von Menschen herbeigeführte Katastrophe zu begreifen in der Lage ist; dies kann allein durch deren aktiven Widerstand verhindert werden.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.129.

In the first two parts of the novel Marion exemplifies the fight against Fascism, she is the fusion of artist and activist. Her role is to use her talents to inspire political opposition and resistance. While the message in Der Vulkan is to resist Fascism by any means, Mann in particular seems to expect most from those of his characters who represent the figure of the artist. Artists like Marion believe that their talent should be used to fight Fascism by informing the world of the truth. They believe that art should no longer be produced for art's sake alone, but for a political purpose. Like Mann himself, these artists struggle to make their cause understandable to the masses, perhaps in an attempt to counter such assertions as Nathan-Morelli's that German intellectuals have never been in tune with their ordinary countrymen, perhaps also with the understanding that their arguments need to have a great impact if they are to be effective.

The fate of the characters seems to indicate that Mann regarded the artist's duty as being to fight, either by using words, or by practical activity. Artistic achievement is not found in acclaim or material gain, but in the creation of that which provokes a political response. Characters who absent themselves from the political struggle and try to carry on the same lives they had lead in Germany often suffer rejection and failure. Tilla and Marion are both actresses, they each go to America to make a fresh start. Tilla however has only an interest in reviving her career, she spends her time waiting for parts, taking no interest in politics or having contact with anyone who does, while Marion works tirelessly for her political cause. There are certain parallels in that they both feel isolated from the world around them, and seek solace with unsuitable men, but Marion's tour brings her into contact with Abel, whereas Tilla eventually returns home after she is sacked by the film studio.

Artist Professor Samuel tries to escape from the world, eventually settling in Palestine, another war zone. Martin's lack of political engagement also ends badly. In a world where the political situation has such a widespread impact, only those who work for the cause can focus enough to carry on despite personal hardship and loss. Without the sense of their part in the larger world picture, and the understanding that their personal success means nothing without political change, their small failures or difficulties will devastate them. Wherever they go, the characters cannot escape the fact that they are exiles, and therefore they need to focus on the defeat of Fascism above all other goals, if they want to regain their homeland.

Collectively the characters represent many different aspects of the exile situation; perhaps unsurprisingly these people are frequently identified as the youthful elite of their countries. In the same way that a generation was sacrificed to the Great War, youth twenty years later is being decimated by the consequences of the political situation. The émigrés are never free, the political situation has an impact, frequently detrimental, on all aspects of their lives. The stage upon which these characters live out their lives is a hard one, exile can ennoble through privation and suffering, as well as degrade and destroy. The narrator cites Helmuth as an individual who has been refined and strengthened by his exile. He becomes a gifted and committed journalist, and a popular young man helping Theo Hummler write his political pamphlets for distribution in Germany, whereas if he had remained in Germany he would have been a 'provinzieller Schöneist' (473). Dr Mathes who in the beginning of the novel is portrayed as somewhat insensitive, goes to work as a doctor in war-torn Spain, risking his life to help

others. Similarly, circumstances can cripple a person, debasing them socially, morally, and psychologically. Certain characters are desensitised by their experiences; the day-to-day stress, set-backs and poverty have made them concentrate solely on their own concerns. The narrator states in characteristically judgemental mode:

Gar zu viele und zu lang ertragene Sorgen können den Charakter verderben: mancher nimmt Schaden an seiner Seele, wenn er schier ununterbrochen über Transit-Visen und Geld-Beschaffung grübeln muß. Auch das intellektuelle Niveau senkt sich – gesetzt den Fall, daß es jemals eine Höhe hatte, von der sich herabgleiten ließ –; das Interesse für alles Feinere, alles Schwierig-Zarte hört auf, auch das Mitgefühl wird erstickt von der permanenten Angst um die eigene Zukunft, und schließlich bleibt nur noch ein Egoismus übrig, der stumpfsinnig und völlig lieblos werden lässt. (472)

The exiles have to blunt their finer sensibilities to survive the barbarians who persecute them. Ernst has been transformed from respectable ‘Schupo’ (363) to petty thief, as the result of being hounded from one place to another, and treated like a criminal.¹⁵⁰ Friederike Markus is rendered insane by the loss of her husband; highly qualified Hans Hollmann has to sell groceries to avoid starvation; and David, the sensitive and gifted academic has lost interest in the intellectual stimulus he once lived for. He now finds it frivolous to spend time in the academic analysis of the society he sees breaking down in front of him. When David echoes Nazi terminology by calling himself a ‘volksfremdes Element’ (481) he illustrates how his identity has been eroded by having to constantly legitimise his existence. Though he considers it to be the effect of watching Martin die, it is also a result of being on the outside of society for so long. When

¹⁵⁰ Ernst has lost his self-respect and his political ideals: ‘ “Man verliert alle Selbstachtung, wenn man das Gefühl hat, überflüssig auf der Welt zu sein. [...] Wie soll man denn noch an die Demokratie glauben, wenn sogenannte demokratische Staaten sich so gegen unsereinen benehmen? Behandelt wird man, als wär man ein reudiger Hund – und soll Idealist bleiben!” ’. Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.366.

David expresses his wish to become a carpenter, it is because his position as outsider has become untenable to him:

“[...] Ich ertrage es einfach nicht mehr –: dieses Monologisieren; dieses Inden-luftleeren-Raum-Sprechen...Denn wir sprechen doch ins Leere, niemand hört uns zu, das ist so – beschämend...Die Ereignisse gehen ihren Gang – ihren schrecklichen Gang –, unbeeinflußt von uns. Oft fühle ich mich so entfremdet der Wirklichkeit; so ausgestoßen vom echten Leben; isoliert, vereinsamt... Es kommt da so vieles zusammen. Man hat die Heimat verloren; man ist ein Jude, ein Intellektueller – ein ‘volksfremdes Element’...” (481)

His self-loathing has echoes of Richard Darmstädter in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. The only solution for his misery is to withdraw from the society which he feels rejects him, and live alongside other “rejects”, devoting himself to a task which seems to offer the hope of building something tangible and useful:

Diese Leute mußten sich für überflüssig halten – niemand konnte sie brauchen, die Lumpenproletarier mit dem Doktor-Titel. Jetzt begreifen sie, daß niemand überflüssig ist, wenn er sich nur einzuordnen versteht. (482)

Arwed Schmidt writes that:

Davids Anpassung an das, was an der Zeit ist, [(faschistische Neobarbarismus)] symbolisiert der Autor beiläufig mit dessen Uhrmacherhandwerk. [...] Statt das herrschende Chaos zu ordnen, scheint es dem extreme legalitätsbewußten David darum zu gehen, es zu sanktionieren.¹⁵¹

Rather than fighting, David has surrendered to an image of himself perpetrated by the Nazis. They deem him to be undesirable, therefore he is. Given the absence of welcome faced by the émigrés in other countries, this is an understandable reaction. The narrator comments:

Überall blieben sie am Rand der Gesellschaft. Es war Gnade, wenn sie irgendwo verweilen durften – bis auf Widerruf, und bis neue, strengere Gesetze gegen sie, die Fremden, erfunden waren. Sie vereinsamten, wurden

¹⁵¹ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.194.

asozial, weil sie an nichts denken, über nichts reden konnten, was nicht das eigene Elend betraf. (472)

This distortion of the individual perspective mirrors the return to barbarity of society as a whole. In a characteristic passage of ethical despair, the narrator argues that civilisation is returning to the ‘Urwald’ (484) from whence it came:

Die Vorbereitung des totalen Krieges muß notwendig eine totale, umfassende sein. Nicht nur ökonomisch, politisch, militärisch organisiert man die Katastrophe; auch moralisch und psychologisch soll die Menschheit reif gemacht werden zum großen Rückfall ins Barbarische, zur schauerlichen Heimkehr in Nacht und Tod. Alte Vorurteile könnten störend wirken, die Tradition der menschlichen Gesittung wird zum hemmenden Ballast. “Freiheit” und “Barmherzigkeit” sind skandalöse Vokabeln, sowohl lächerlich als auch kriminell[.] (484–485)

This sense of descent into primeval barbarity infects everybody, reflecting itself in Fascist-opponent Tullio’s idea that all disease is caused by thinking. As with Nazi rhetoric, some ideas are so dominant that they even imprint themselves on their opponents.

The ease with which Nazi ideology influences the exiles is explained by the trauma suffered because of the loss of their homeland. The sense of an individual’s ‘Heimat’ is an emotional attachment to one’s country, and, more than being simply the place where one feels “at home”, the Heimat represents the legitimisation of an individual’s identity, and a sense of being whole. The many protagonists in the novel have gone into exile for various reasons, some are forced to flee because of their race, their political activism, others choose to leave because they do not like the direction of the new Germany. In the opening chapter, the reader sees the émigrés celebrating together. They are relieved to be safe, and many are already showing their readiness to fight. However, Mann is quick to provide reminders of the less happy aspects of their present situation.

Marion, Martin, David, and Frau Schwalbe are introduced in an episode where, as Germans, they are mistaken for Nazi supporters and spat upon. This is followed by Professor Samuel drawing attention to the Hungarian count, whose political enthusiasm after fifteen years of exile has been quashed, with the result that he now spends all of his time sitting in a corner playing chess. In the following chapter, Marion visits some old friends of hers, the Rubinstein. Their experiences of exile from Soviet Russia also indicate what the émigrés may face. Germaine Rubinstein, who left Russia when she was a child, feels it is her home and is determined to return; later when her step-father is on his death bed, he murmurs that he can finally go home to Russia,¹⁵² having never entirely mastered the language of his adopted country. Similarly Martin's dying wish is to show Berlin to Kikjou.

Despite the political oppression in their country, despite the danger they would have faced in Germany if they had stayed, the émigrés are still missing something profound from their lives; something that nowhere but their homeland can give them. For David having lost his homeland means he is ignored and has no voice. He is 'volksfremd[]' (481) as an exile, a Jew and an intellectual. Arwed Schmidt writes that '[d]er Staatenlose [...] ist ein heimatloser Wanderer [...] der auf keine nationale, berufliche oder persönliche Identität mehr bauen kann.'¹⁵³ The exiles have nothing left in their lives which can validate their very existence. For that

¹⁵² ‘“Mon Pauvre Léon est mort”, berichtete [Anna] in ihrer altmodisch feinen und genauen Schrift. “Für ihn bedeutet es wohl eine Erlösung; er war immer melancholischer geworden, das Heimweh machte ihn krank, ganz abgesehen von seinem quälenden Nierenleiden.”’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.433.

¹⁵³ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.144.

reason David begins to assume some of the characteristics ascribed to him by the Nazis, and Marion feels most at home when she is travelling:

Marion – wieder auf Tour: sie empfand es wie eine Heimkehr [...] Unterwegs fühlte sie sich am wohlsten. (425)

It is therefore significant that the second angel Kikjou sees is the ‘Engel der Heimatlosen’ (540). Though the emigrants are for the most part not literally homeless, the fact that they are exiled from their country means they are without their homeland. According to the angel, God regards separation from the Heimat as the most fundamental misfortune that can be visited on mankind. It is intended to provoke them into fighting to regain it. Like his friends, Kikjou has chosen to be homeless, becoming an exile by letting his passport expire, rather than returning to his family.

Even refugees who manage to come to terms with the loss of their Heimat face problems in the country or countries they adopt. They are under constant threat from the Reich, which exerts pressure on foreign governments to restrict or deport German nationals, sends agents to spy on the émigrés, and promotes the spread of Fascism in other countries. Hans and Ernst have to leave Prague because of the influence of the Nazi Reich. A sign at the office of philanthropist Herr Nathan in Amsterdam warns against any political discussion as it could cause difficulties for the organisation. Marion has to fight for every line of verse in her programme because the foreign governments fear offending Germany. Both Von Kammer sisters are ‘ausgebürgert’ (229), and have to marry to remain out of the Reich, and therefore out of prison. Others, like Dora Proskauer, who are safe abroad, can be duped into returning and arrested. Even individual Germans can cause problems

for the émigrés: in Holland Abel is terrorised by his German landlady's Nazi brother, and eventually forced out of his accommodation. Characters like Tilly suffer torment because of the thought of those they left behind, others fail to recover from the trauma they suffered in Germany, such as Friederike Markus.

The émigrés cannot escape simply by moving outside the German border, many of the countries they go to are not safe, they are hounded out of Prague, Vienna, and Mallorca by local Fascists, and even the Dutch tire of the number of Germans in Amsterdam. As the novel develops there is almost a crescendo of hostile experiences (all of which take place outside Germany): being spat upon in public, being terrorised in one's home, driven out of one's home and then the adopted country, finally tortured and killed while attempting to flee. They have to think about where will be safe from future invasions by Germany, many look to other continents.¹⁵⁴ However, even in America, Marion feels the influence of the Reich. When visiting the German quarter in New York she feels uncomfortable at the number of swastikas hanging up, and the usher at the cinema there tells them he has to remain silent about being a political refugee. She also notes that all her invitations to speak come from American not German organisations. In France where the émigrés are relatively secure, they are nevertheless isolated, feeling obliged to stay in the exile community, and to spend their time with other German emigrants. They have comparatively little contact with the French, or other emigrants of other nationalities. In some cases this is deliberate. They avoid the White Russians for political reasons. But the experiences of some of the émigrés suggest that they are misunderstood and often resented by the locals. It is no

¹⁵⁴ Ilse Ill also goes to America, while Bernheim settles in Vienna, where he believes independence will be ensured by France and Britain, and Samuel moves to Palestine to escape future Fascist invasions.

surprise that the non-exiles they have contact with are characters like Marcel and Kikjou who are themselves outsiders. Even in a safe place, it can be difficult to adjust to a new country. Homesickness aside, Tilla, Marion and Abel find America an unfamiliar, uncomfortable place, with different customs and values, and they struggle to integrate. Homelessness therefore becomes an existential condition.

Though the depiction of the exile experience is of paramount importance to Mann, his novel also shows what they are fighting for and who they are fighting. There are three Germanies in the novel, the first is the one depicted by the Nazis, perhaps most closely aligned with what Dieter describes in the prologue: a Germany being reborn, and finding its national identity and pride. The second Germany is the country from which the émigrés have fled, the Germany created by the Nazi party, the Germany of persecution and fear. The final Germany is the one that the émigrés hope to build once the Nazis have been ousted, and whose nature they often discuss. People like Marion keep the hope of a new Germany alive, which is evidenced by the letters she receives from her countrymen.

While Marion and the other émigrés represent the future Germany, other characters are emblematic of other faces of Germany: the émigrés' parents represent its Weimar past and Walter Konradi is the current Germany. He works as a Nazi spy, but is also a kind of gigolo, targeting women using his charms to flatter and disarm them. He shares many characteristics of the Nazi regime: he deceives the vulnerable (Dora is naïve about men, Friederike is insane because of grief, Frau Korella has just buried her only child), and creates a false image of

himself, telling people what they want to hear so that he can earn their trust, discover their weaknesses and betray them.

The truth of the current Germany is the orgy of destruction depicted in Mephisto.

War is a spectacle, an entertainment for the masses and the dictators. It is a ‘großes Schauspiel, glänzend inszeniert’ (484), something which is engineered, and co-ordinated, rather than chaotic or spontaneous. Der Vulkan sees the full realisation of the descent into barbarity predicted by Mephisto character Pelz. The intellectual elite, represented by David, is fleeing modern civilization, trying to find an escape in what they consider to be a simpler society:

Die Zivilisation – im Stich gelassen, aufgegeben von ihren klügsten, aufmerksamsten Söhnen – scheint nach dem eigenen Untergang zu lechzen. Lange genug hat sie sich üppig entfaltet, jetzt aber will sie heim, zurück, in den Urwald –: mit ihren eigenen Mitteln, mit dem Raffinement ihrer triumphierenden Technik hebt sie sich selber auf. Noch einmal entfaltet sie sich aufs eindrucksvollste, ihre Apokalypse ist pittoresk – großes Schauspiel, glänzend inszeniert –: in schaurig-imposanten Bildern führt sie sich zu Ende. “Der totale Krieg”: blutrünstige Intellektuelle, späte Erben des abendländischen Geistes – hysterisch entartet, völlig ruchlos geworden – haben ihn eifrig genug propagiert, seine stählern vernichtende Schönheit in schrillen Tönen besungen. (484)

This apocalypse is a ‘Schauspiel’, a theatrical pageant, a public display; it is staged, and performed, not only by those in power, but also by those people it is designed to impress. The brutalisation of Bernheim and the other fleeing Jews is a performance, they do not simply beat him, they make him play a degrading role by cleaning a public toilet. It is also entertainment, the bystanders applaud while their countrymen beat Bernheim’s friend to death, the atmosphere is ‘festlich[]’ (495). They sing, they dance, they stamp with joy; they are joyful, not angry. As Bernheim is forced to clean the toilet, they begin to waltz, and are almost diverted from their attack by the ‘Seligkeit’ (500) induced by this archetypal

Viennese dance. We see both Pelz's prediction about the dance of bloodshed and death coming true and echoes of Ragnar's assertions about German sentimentality going hand in hand with their innate destructiveness. They push Bernheim's face into a bucket of cleaning fluid, 'Spaßes halber' (501) and give him a toothbrush to clean the toilet. The narrator calls this 'Wiener Humor' (501), echoing the abuse of Samuel by the Spanish Fascist soldiers in Mallorca who put him against a wall and pretend they are going to execute him. Samuel asks himself if that is that the humour of the twentieth century. The only voice of reason in the Viennese orgy of cruelty, is Bernheim's chauffeur, who questions what the tormenters think they will gain from this behaviour. The atrocities perpetrated by local Fascists are a prelude to the main event,¹⁵⁵ the "total" war in Europe. Even the émigrés are playing a waiting game, waiting for the war to start, as this will enable their fight to begin properly, and allow them to perform their chosen roles, despite the cost. It is as if the whole world is sick, not just Nazi Germany. Samuel's experiences in Jerusalem confirm this fashionable love of aggression, where many sides seem to be spoiling for a fight. This refutes Ragnar's assertion in Flucht in den Norden that Germany is the fundamental cause of political instability in Europe. For Abel, the United States represents the future of civilisation, and he praises Jonny Clark and the American youth he embodies. With society fragmenting, it is not surprising that values are in turmoil. While this topsy-turvydom is strongly satirised in Mephisto, in Der Vulkan, it is poignant and distressing. The times are so "out of joint" that mothers are driven to contemplate abortion as a means of sparing their children the horrors to come. The intellectual elite comes to envy the

¹⁵⁵ In Barcelona '[z]ahlreiche Bomben fielen, es war eine Generalprobe, die fast schon der Monstre-Gala-Aufführung glich.' Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p. 485.

manual worker, and the millionaire host who entertained politicians, church leaders and famous artists is made to clean a public lavatory by a mob.

This awful world is ultimately identified as being a test for humankind engineered by God, therefore the émigrés are doing God's will, whether they have religious belief or not. This is the only of the four novels where Mann introduces the idea that there is a deity watching over human affairs. In the other novels he does indicate a clear distinction between good and evil, even drawing on biblical imagery, but in Der Vulkan Mann not only posits the idea that the rise of Fascism and the advent of the apocalypse are to test mankind, he even has God addressing the characters, and through them the reader.

Amongst the characters, religious faith is only associated with Kikjou, God has no importance in the lives of most of the other characters, aside from Marcel who is very hostile towards the Church, partly as a reaction to his mother's beliefs. Kikjou's faith gives him a sense of purpose and the courage to fight, after the visits by the angels. The message of God's purpose for humankind comes from two main sources: the second angel's conversation with Kikjou, and the narration at the end of Part Three where the narrator seems to become the voice of God. Earlier Kikjou has already debated with himself as to what God wants from him: eventually concluding that he has to fight evil, and not be distracted by questioning God or God's purpose:

Wie Gott ist! Was Gott ist! Wo Gott ist? Kindische Fragerei. Gott *ist* – da gibt es nichts zu beweisen oder zu untersuchen. [...] Die ganze Frage, wie das Böse in die Schöpfung, und besonders in den Menschen kommt, obwohl Gott doch sicherlich in Seiner eigenen Schöpfung steckt – diese Frage könnte uns ungeheuer weit führen. Keinesfalls dürfte es von Gott so gemeint

sein, daß wir uns durch diese Frage ablenken sollten lassen von einem sehr notwendigen Kampf gegen das Böse.
Da haben wir das Wort: ablenken. Wir sollen uns durch Gott nicht ablenken lassen. (336)

Kikjou has thought about his duty to God, but does not act until he has seen the first angel. He realises that his duty is to bear witness to what is happening in Spain, to make his reports in Catholic newspapers. He says he speaks for those Christians that do not use God's name to serve an oppressive regime.¹⁵⁶ The visit by the second angel also allows Kikjou to ask more questions as to what God's plans are. According to the angel, God is not punishing mankind by unleashing this apocalypse, rather:

“Von Züchtigung kann nicht die Rede sein. Der Herr verhängt Unannehmlichkeiten über euch, damit ihr nur aufwacht – ihr Schläfrigen! Damit ihr euch der Pflichten bewußt werdet und dem Neuen eifriger dient, werdet ihr in Abenteuer gestürzt. Er versucht alle Mittel, zwecks Beschleunigung des Prozesses –: die sanften, wie die weniger glimpflichen. Krieg und Pestilenz, jede Art von Ruin, jede Form des Schmerzes, der Erniedrigung –: lauter erzieherische Tricks, im Sinn und Dienst der gnadenvollen Heils-Konstruktion.” (545)

They have to fight for their “Heimat”, but the angel says there is no guarantee this “experiment” will work.¹⁵⁷ Once Kikjou has returned from his trip with the second angel, the narrator carries on the angel's call for action, eventually turning into the voice of God. Mankind's earthly welfare is as important as that of the soul, therefore rather than suffering evil and waiting for heaven, humankind has to fight on earth for what is good and right. The battle between good and evil will take place on the earth; God demands that mankind act to defeat the evil in the world of people. Men will battle without divine aid, but they can prove themselves:

¹⁵⁶ ‘ “[...] Ich bedaure die Priester, die sich dazu hergegeben haben, Werkzeuge des heidnischen Faschismus zu sein. [...]” ’ *Ibid*, p.380.

¹⁵⁷ ‘ “[...] Es ist ein Väterliches, Königliches Experiment: natürlich kann es mißlingen.[...]” ’ *Ibid*, p.546.

Seid wachsam und tapfer –: dies fordert Meine Liebe von euch! Seid energisch, seid realistisch, seid auch gut! Plagt euch! Kämpft! Habt Ehrgeiz und Leidenschaft, Trotz, Liebe und Mut! Seid rebellisch! Seid fromm! Bewahrt euch die Hoffnung! Steht auf eigenen Füßen! (550)¹⁵⁸

By fighting this monstrous regime, the characters are seen to be doing God's work. Though the young people generally deny the existence of an omnipotent God, they see their fight as that between good and evil, anticipating the final pages of God's call to action. The young Dutch author back from the Spanish front talks of the bravery of his comrades, saying that they are the better people. His enthusiasm for the glory of fighting a moral war inspires all around him. They genuinely believe they are fighting to achieve a better world. When Tullio talks of leaving Marion and joining the war in Europe he says he must fight the great "Dragon" harking back to the legend of St George. By contrast, the tactics of the Nazis employed through their agent Konradi represent '[d]ie Gemeinheit um der Gemeinheit willen' (344). Mann's very immediate style and direct moralising may seem at odds with his almost whimsical invocation of the angels in the novel. However, Fredric Kroll believes that Mann's extensive use of biblical imagery in the rest of the novel prepares the reader for the appearance of actual angels:

Der Engel fällt also gar nicht so sehr aus dem Rahmen eines im Grunde realistischen Romans, und seine Erscheinung wird sorgfältig vorbereitet.¹⁵⁹

If we accept the premise that angels are all around the characters, and God addresses them, then perhaps it is not so surprising when Kikjou, the religious

¹⁵⁸ The narrator explores the notion of solidarity with, and responsibility for, the earth. 'Es ist unsere Erde; wir tragen die Verantwortung – was hier immer geschieht. Das Übel, das die Menschenwelt verdirbt, ist zäh, nimmt auch höchst mannigfache Formen an. [...] Von uns verlangt Er dann: Handelt! Protestiert! Schreitet ein! – Er ruft die Kreatur zur Aktion, damit das kolossale Stinken nur endlich aufhöre.' *Ibid*, p.548.

¹⁵⁹ Fredric Kroll, *Klaus Mann Schriftenreihe Band 5 Trauma Amerika: 1937–1942* (Hamburg: Männer schwarm Verlag, 2006), p.135.

figure in the novel, is actually visited by them. The second angel in particular almost seems to be an embodiment of the plight of the émigrés. This angel has many names: ‘der Dämon der Entwurzelungs-Neurose, der Schutzpatron der Expatriierten, der Tröster, der Spötter, der Fluch-Spendende, der Segen-Spendende’ (527). He has seen and suffered many things that both Kikjou and his friends will have experienced:

“Viele Tränen habe ich fließen sehen [...] Ich habe den Gestank der Armut gerochen, und in den Ohren das gellende Gelächter jener gehabt, die in den Wahnsinn fliehen. Das Exil kreiert neue Krankheiten; nicht nur das Herz – auch der Verstand der Heimatlosen ist erheblich gefährdet! – Ich bin der Engel der Entwurzelungs-Neurose! [...] Meine Augen sind nur noch Schmerz, so viel Schmerzen haben sie angeschaut...” (519)

Those characters not fortunate enough to have seen the angel, do on occasion feel the divine presence. Herr Korella is said to feel the presence of an ‘unbegreiflich und unbarmherzige Macht’ (311), and he wonders why he is being punished. Schwalbe sees the preservation of the baby in Barcelona as a divine miracle (488), and Marion senses the presence of the angel when it comes to bless her baby (529). In the closing pages, Dieter responds unconsciously to the presence of God, removing his hat as though he were in church, and adopting a crucifixion pose.¹⁶⁰ Nicole Schaenzler notes that the actual logic behind the manifestation of the angels is of less significance than their message:

Der ironisch-sarkastische Unterton, der in den Worten des Engels anklingt, verweist auf die Intention des Erzählers; geht es ihm doch weniger um die metaphysische Erklärung des Himmelsboten, der die katastrophalen Auswirkungen der historischen Entwicklung als “göttliche Erziehungsmaßnahme” deutet, als vor allem darum, den Aufruf zum “Mut zur Utopie” [...] zu bekräftigen.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ ‘Zuschauer könnten es finden, es sei theatralisch, wie er nun die Arme breitet und den Kopf langsam-selig in den Nacken sinken lässt.’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.555.

¹⁶¹ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.109.

Mann's message would seem to be that there is a God, and that God has a purpose, and wishes to test His people so that they can rise to the challenge. The final few pages of Part Three would seem to be the voice of God addressing mankind. The fulfilment of God's purpose is represented by Kikjou,¹⁶² who has become an emigrant and a soldier in order to fight evil and now knows the truth of God's purpose from the angel, and by Dieter, who is subconsciously aware of the divine purpose and has set himself the task of embracing his fight and his fate:

Die Jünglinge fragen kaum nach dem Ziel, in solcher Stunde äußerster Bereitschaft und des kühnen Rausches. Wer spricht von den Mühen und Gefahren des langen Weges? – All dies ist Nebensache geworden; nur die Bewegung gilt, nur der Flug –: sieht, die Zukunft schimmert, wie das unendliche Meer.

‘Zukunft – was auf mich zukommt [...] Ich will es an mich reißen wie eine Geliebte. Die Umarmung wird auch Schmerzen bringen: ich ertrage sie gern. Selbst auf ein schnelles Ende wäre ich gefaßt, mit Katastrophen soll man immer rechnen, es kann alles schief gehen. Ein wenig Leichtsinn dürften wir immerhin gelernt haben, bei allem, was uns zugestoßen ist. – Ein Menschenleben –: was ist es? – Wie wenig! Wie Viel! Man muß es nur leben –: sonst ist mit dem Ding nichts anzufangen.

Erreichen wir ein Ziel? Gibt es ein anderes Ufer? Setzen wir den schließlich müd gewordenen Fuß in das Land der Verheibung?

Und wenn wir zu Grunde gehen – am Wege; unwissend, ohne Antwort und Trost –: wäre dann alles sinnlos gewesen? Das redet niemand mir ein! Da nichts in dieser Welt verschwendet wird; da alle Energien sinnvoll wirken, mit Plan und kluger Absicht trefflich organisiert –: warum sollten gerade die Kräfte unseres lebendigen Herzens, unsere Schmerzen und Gedanken, sich ziellos verirren und ganz verloren sein?’ (555)

Without having seen the angel, Dieter vows to do everything that God has just demanded of mankind. The angel is emblematic of what God wants from mankind, and he encourages Kikjou to fight via any means. This is also Mann's philosophical message to his readers.

¹⁶²‘Dennoch wird schließlich die Gestaltung der Kikjou-Figur Manns Ideal einer Verbindung von Religion und Humanismus verkörpern.’ *Ibid*, p.106.

3 Community

For this large group of exiled individuals, the search for community is paramount.

According to Arwed Schmidt:

Die Welt der Heimatlosen ist nicht mehr als identischer Raum für alle zu denken, sondern als eine Vielzahl von 'Exilwelten', die kaum mehr miteinander zusammenhängen und untereinander kommunizieren.¹⁶³

Though collectively they are suffering a similar fate, their circumstances are all peculiar to themselves, and often serve to isolate them from their fellow-exiles.

Many of the characters are aware of this isolation and seek to find a group with which they can identify themselves. Those who fail to align themselves with a support network are isolated and vulnerable. Abel illustrates this; he suffers loneliness and persecution until he stops hiding away from the world. Marie-Luise has a similar problem because she only seeks compatriots of a suitable social class. Rich banker Bernheim pays the ultimate price for viewing himself as separate from the other exiles. As Arwed Schmidt writes:

Keineswegs will [Bernheim] sich als Flüchtling fühlen, deshalb hält er von sich fern, was irgend geeignet scheint, ihm vor Augen zu führen, daß auch er nicht ausgenommen ist vom „Emigrantenschicksal“ aller und daß es auch für ihn Sicherheit und Bleibrecht nur auf Widerruf gibt.¹⁶⁴

He sees his natural allies as those political and religious leaders whose social circle he shares. By not recognising the precariousness of his own status as an exile, and a Jew, he is caught out when Nazi allies assume power in Austria. This need to belong is also shared by the non-exiled characters. When the Angel mistakenly refers to Kikjou as being an emigrant from Germany, Kikjou does not

¹⁶³ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.155.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.207

correct it, because this mistake implies he belongs to a community. Despite a happy marriage and moderate literary success, Marcel also feels like an outsider. He is a person who rejects convention, which makes his work difficult for the majority to understand, but conversely he needs to belong, and is tortured by his inability to make his art accessible to the ordinary reader:

Entschlossen mutig [...] stürzte Marcel Poiret sich in die intellektuellen Komplikationen. „Das Einfache ist stets nur das vereinfachte!“ proklamierte er. Andererseits quälte es ihn, daß die schillernde Zusammengesetztheit seines Denkens ihn den einfacheren Kämpfern, den „Soldaten der Revolution“ entfremdete. (155)

Marcel wants to belong to the collective. Earlier he had delighted in being different, and being an outsider, now he wants to be an ordinary man. Hence, when fighting in Spain, he refuses a commissar's position because he wants to be “one of the people”. He finally gets his wish to be one of the collective when he dies. By sharing the fate of thousands, he belongs with them. His sacrifice means he is honoured after his death, even by those who could not understand his literary work. Like Marcel, after years of being hounded from country to country, Hans has found a place amongst those fighting Franco's forces.

However, even finding a place in the exile community does not provide complete protection from the stigma of being an outsider which attaches to all of the exiles. David has an enviable intellect,¹⁶⁵ but by the end of the novel he is no longer able to write, and is desperate to learn a practical trade. His position in the society of exiles is no longer enough for him, he needs to feel useful and accepted in a more tangible way. As he tells Nathan-Morelli, the academic theory which he had once

¹⁶⁵ ‘Wirklich war die literarische Bildung des jungen Deutsch lückenlos in einem erstaunlichen Grade [...] Sein Gedächtnis war von einer fast krankhaften Stärke[.]’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.23.

lived for, now seems pointless, and sees a career as a carpenter as a way of validating his existence.

As a ‘Roman unter Emigranten’, the novel concentrates on the exile community in Paris, with Frau Schwalbe acting as the surrogate mother.¹⁶⁶ The exiles see themselves as a family, and show mistrust of outsiders such as the Korellas:

[V]on Anfang an ist Herr Korella bei Martins Kameraden Gegenstand eines gewissen Mißtrauens und sogar von Antipathie gewesen. Wer jenseits des feurigen Kreises, wer innerhalb der unüberschreitbaren Reichsgrenzen seinen Aufenthalt hat, muß sich vor den Losgelösten, den Emigranten auf eine besondere Art rechtfertigen und beweisen, um sich ihr Vertrauen zu gewinnen oder gar ihre Freundschaft. (321)

An ‘Abgrund’ exists between those who can be in Germany and those that cannot. The émigrés band together and help one another to find jobs, contacts and a niche in society. Apart from Paris, there are small émigré communities all over Europe, and even in places like China, and North Africa. In Prague the Social Democrat and Communist German exiles discuss and debate with their Czech equivalents, as with other groups they discover that their similarities are stronger than their differences, and realise they have to work together if they are to win. In the beginning these communities function well but gradually, as the numbers of refugees increase, those characters in a position to help find it more difficult to find a place for the newcomers. This is demonstrated when Abel visits Herr Nathan to seek help for Ernst; he is shocked by the way the refugees are treated, comparing it to being in a concentration camp. The ensuing chaos, and lack of resources means that organising and helping them is thankless and exhausting.

¹⁶⁶ “[...] Wir sind doch eine Familie – nicht wahr, Kinder [...]” (315). The Narrator also calls her ‘der Kapitän und die Mutter’. *Ibid*, p.315.

There are so many to help, and so many of these are beyond the help that can be offered them. As Herr Nathan explains:

Was die Enttäuschungen betraf, so waren sie mannifacher Natur. Vielen von denen, die um Hilfe baten, war kaum zu helfen. Den Unglücklichen fehlten Kraft und Lebenswillen, manchen auch die Intelligenz, einigen sogar die Anständigkeit. Herr Nathan hatte sich für Menschen eingesetzt, von denen später erwiesen ward, daß sie Nazi-Spitzel und Agenten waren: "Einige von diesen Schuftchen sind sogar Juden gewesen!" konstatierte er mit Ekel und Bitterkeit. Andere wieder waren zu keiner Arbeit mehr fähig; sie klagten nur noch, jammerten den ganzen Tag über ihr hartes Los. (371)

In the final part of the novel, characters begin to leave these traditional exile communities, either in search of new opportunities, or to flee the trauma of their exile past. We see characters helped by Herr Nathan to relocate to the colonies outside Europe to begin a new life and a new career, while Marion, Abel and others go to America to make a new start.

The closeness of the exile community is perhaps a response to the tension existing between the younger and older generations. The former is generally radical, wanting change, while the latter is willing to accept, if not advocate, the status quo, remaining on the sidelines where possible. For example, Marion's mother quits Germany, but wants to keep her social setting as before; similarly, Marcel's mother keeps the circumstances of her husband's death a secret (he dies while visiting a brothel), as it is more important to maintain the family's good reputation, than expose his betrayal of her. Marcel despises everything his parents stand for, and demonises his mother, refusing to say goodbye to her before leaving to fight in Spain.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ ' [...] Sie ist frömmelerisch; pathologisch geizig; grausam bis zum Sadistischen; intellektuell minderbegabt bis zum Idiotischen; bosaft, hysterisch, ohne einen Funken Humor, ohne eine Spur von echter Sympathie für irgendein lebendes Wesen. [...] ' *Ibid*, p.25.

Marie-Luise does not connect with any of her three daughters, only leaving Germany in response to the denigration of her late husband for his Jewish heritage. She unconsciously shows her similarity to Marion when she refuses to salute the Nazis, even risking injury by uttering her distain for them. In spite of this, she regards other emigrants as beneath her, and craves the same kind of society in her Swiss exile that she had enjoyed in Germany. The narrator says she behaves like a ‘distinguierte Fremde’ (432) around her daughters. Their estrangement is so deep that when Tilly is writing her suicide letters, she does not know what to say to her mother:

An die Mutter schrieb Tilly nur ein Paar Zeilen –: “Versuche mir zu verzeihen...ich konnte nicht anders...” Es war ein konventionelles Selbstmörder-Abschieds-Briefchen. Als Tilly ihn durchlas, schämte sie sich ein wenig, so etwa, wie man sich etwas geniert, wenn man einem guten Freund Neujahrs- oder Geburtstags- Grüße geschrieben hat, und dann konstatieren muß, daß sie zu korrekt und inhaltslos ausgefallen sind. (291)

Only the crisis of Tilly’s death helps bring about an improvement in her relationship with Marion. The telephone call from America indicates that, though far apart, they have finally found the common ground they need to re-establish their relationship. Martin and Kikjou both clash with their fathers and do not succeed in repairing their relationships. When his father dies, Kikjou knows it is his duty, as the only son, to return to Brazil to look after his family and the family firm, yet they are strangers to him, and he is reluctant to return. Having become stateless he feels that the émigrés are his real family:

‘Nach Hause –: wie seltsam es klingt! Was geht Rio de Janeiro mich an. Eine fremde Stadt. Was bedeuten mir meine Schwestern? Unbekannte Damen. Ich habe kein Zuhause. Zu lange habe ich mit denen gelebt, die heimatlos sind – ich gehöre zu ihnen, meine Brüder sind die.’ (514)

The tension between the older Rubinstains and their daughter Germaine is based on their differing views of their native country. Germaine longs to go back, reproaching her mother for depriving her of her homeland. Anna and her husband are unhappy in France and yearn for their homeland, but they cannot return as their Russia no longer exists. Eventually Germaine returns to begin a new life in Moscow, leaving Anna entirely isolated after her husband dies.

The older and younger generations do not know how to communicate with one another, generally because their core values are too dissimilar. This generational conflict is echoed in the constellation of pseudo-parental characters: and while mother figures are especially important, and the novel has both surrogate mothers, (Frau Schwalbe, Friederike Markus) and real mothers, there tend to be few positive father figures in the novel. Marcel and Marion have both lost their fathers, and it is significant that Pepe, the drug dealer who tempts Martin to start taking heroin, styles himself as a parent to his customers.

As with younger and older members of the same family, there is tension between different generations of the artistic community, as when Marion clashes with the famous English author; where he believes in the appeasement of Nazi Germany, and the avoidance of aggression, she advocates an armed struggle against them. While the younger members of the artistic community tend towards direct action whether through their work or by joining the armed struggle, the older generation of artists often try to escape to places they hope are safer. Tilla Tibori and Abel go initially to a different European country, and then to America. Professor Samuel goes to Israel hoping to experience the rebirth of the Jewish race. Instead he is

witness to more conflict and isolation. Samuel sees division as a feature of the entire world, and associates it with the younger generation:

Jüdische Freunde nehmen mir übel, daß ich das Porträt der kleinen Araberin male [...] Die dogmatische Unerbittlichkeit der jungen Generation langweilt mich bis zu Tränen, und tut mir weh [...] Die Deutschen verachten die Juden, die Juden verachten die Araber, und übrigens polemisieren sie auch untereinander: den Juden aus Frankfurt am Main sind ihre Brüder aus Krakow oder Bukarest nicht gut genug, die Sozialistischen sind gegen die Liberalen, und die orthodox Nationalen sind gegen den ganzen Rest. (490)

Samuel represents those who wish to escape the conflict because they have lost their capacity to nurture idealism or hope. They no longer believe that anything good can happen with the world, or that their actions as individuals can make a difference.

In many respects the ideal community is that of the “political family” of the International Brigade; a brotherhood made up of all nationalities, most of whom, have not been forced to flee their homelands. The German Hans Schütte and French Marcel participate in a war in Spain which neither of them has to fight. When the International Brigade is formed, Hans thinks ‘Dorthin gehöre ich! [...]’ (280) Marcel also echoes this idea of belonging when he decides to go:

Man konnte sich anschließen, sich zusammentun, gemeinsam handeln mit den Kamaraden. Sie haben nicht verstanden, sie sind stumpf und dumm geblieben, wenn man sich an sie wendete und sie ergreifen wollte durch das geschriebene Wort. Sie werden begreifen, man wird zu ihnen gehören, wenn man sich mit ihnen kämpft. (280)

When Marcel dies, he is mourned by a Spanish ‘Arbeiterfrau’ (354) and Hans. None of the three speak the same language, but they are all on the same side. Later in the novel Hans and Juan, a Spanish soldier, are described as brothers, this similarity is echoed in their names, which are the same, though in different

languages. The International Brigade is seen to embody the pure and idealistic: the idea of individuals bonding together because of love of freedom and democracy, regardless of nationality, to help another nation. While their homelands stay neutral, allowing the Reich to absorb Austria and Czechoslovakia, they risk their lives forming the only opposition to a formidable enemy.

As in Mann's other novels, there is both political and generational conflict. We see different generations struggling to communicate with each other; parents find it hard to express affection for their children, their children reject the values of their parents' generation. In loss and grief however, these individuals can find common ground, others unite in a common political purpose. Many of the characters die without their loved ones beside them, but most do not die alone. Those that search for a community can find one. However the new sort of community may be different, being lead by surrogate mothers (Schwalbe) and non-biological fathers (Abel). Society is changing. Nicole Schaenzler feels that Tilly's suicide functions as a 'Sinnbild für den Untergang des bürgerlichen Zeitalters',¹⁶⁸ because her desires are seen as atypically bourgeois: marriage and children. Only those characters who can adapt to this changing society are the ones that will survive the volcano.

¹⁶⁸ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.123.

4 Language and Narrativity

4.1 Structure

The novel is set in many different places, mainly in European exile countries: France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Austria, but also the USA, even former colonies Palestine and China. Germany hardly figures; Mann is telling the story of those that left Germany, not those that stayed behind, and he does not portray any major Nazi figures, though the shadow of the Third Reich is ever present, and there are vivid scenes of persecution in the latter stages of the novel.

The narrative covers many different viewpoints and experiences; one character would not be sufficient to convey the multiple experiences of exile Mann wants to portray. Indeed, Mann's greatest achievement with this novel resides in the sheer plurality of the exile experience he manages to incorporate into the story, without compromising the narrative lucidity and flow.

The reader is told first-hand stories of privation, persecution, and death. Mann also skilfully interweaves the different fates of the characters, showing how they drift in and out of each other's lives, never knowing the impact they have had on the people they meet. The novel even ends without informing the reader about the fate of some of the characters. The plot of the novel is loosely structured, lacking a governing event sequence, in part because of the unconnectedness of the lives chronicled. Mann's narrative moves in and out of people's perspectives and stories. If there are figures who could be considered to exemplify Mann's message in the novel, they are Marion and Kikjou. As individuals they are seen as the heart and soul of the "good fight". Marion exemplifies the non-military struggle, she is

seen as being at the centre of non-military resistance in Europe. Kikjou is seen as the ideal synthesis of soldier, priest and writer.

The world of Der Vulkan has evolved from that depicted in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen; ideas carry weight, characters use their words (whether spoken or written) for political ends, others take up arms, and the abstract fear felt by the characters in the earlier novel has a name and a face. Not surprisingly Mann incorporates much discussion, and reflection. Despite the intensity of political debate however, the novel is not abstract. Der Vulkan conveys a vivid sense of the everyday realities that the émigrés face: poverty, deportation, false papers, fake marriages, continual displacement, and loss of status. Though it would be a mistake to consider this to be an autobiographical novel, it clearly contains elements of Mann's own life, particularly his experiences as a refugee and an exiled author.

The novel is framed by the story of a minor character, Dieter, told mainly in the prologue and epilogue. Dieter represents those who stay behind in Germany when the Nazis gain power. His story begins in 1933 with a letter to a friend who has recently fled. Dieter reproaches his friend's "desertion". Yet the novel ends with his own escape from Germany, and the beginning of his new life six years later. While setting out the arguments for staying on (the hope that, in spite of its political masters, the new Germany will offer scope for change and improvement) the prologue also subtly hints at some of the reasons to leave, namely the climate of oppression and persecution:

Diesen Brief gebe ich dem Kurt B. mit, der morgen auch nach Paris fährt. Man kann sich schon nicht mehr trauen, einen solchen Brief mit der Post zu schicken...Der Kurt B. sagt, hier wird es bald nicht mehr auszuhalten sein, und nächstens werden auch noch die Grenzen gesperrt, da ist es schon besser, man macht sich rechtzeitig auf und davon. Aber der Kurt ist ja Jude, da beurteilt er die Dinge natürlich von einem etwas anderen Standpunkt als wir; von seinem Standpunkt auch, finde ich, hat er recht. (9)

This tentative admission of concern about the nature of Nazi power is reinforced by mention of the SA troops marching past singing. Dieter's response is to close the window; his repudiation is made on both aesthetic grounds (he likes neither the song nor the singers' voices), and subconsciously on political grounds.

However, by closing the window, Dieter shows his refusal to see the truth of the new regime, he has decided to shut his eyes and ears to that which troubles him:

Draußen zog ein Trupp von S.A.-Leuten vorbei. Sie sangen. Dieter trat ans Fenster, um ihnen zuzuhören. Das Lied gefiel ihm nicht. Auch ihre Stimmen klangen nicht angenehm. Er machte das Fenster zu. (10)

Mann uses Dieter as a starting point, to frame the world of the émigrés. Once he has told their stories, Mann returns to this young man, who represents what the angel calls inner emigration, and finishes with an image of him looking at a new world, and a new life of emigration which he has finally had to choose. Thus this framing technique establishes in microcosm the story of the emigration, and shows that the émigrés have an affinity with those who stayed behind. The reader is not faced with two conflicting Germanies based upon which side of the German border the characters sit, but rather a conflict between the repugnant, aggressive Nazi Germany and its potential democratic alternative.

Unlike the other novels in this thesis, which are organised in a simple chapter sequence, Der Vulkan has a three part structure, with each part containing five chapters. The first chapter introduces all the major characters in the Parisian

emigration: the reader meets them in groups and learns about their backgrounds and why they have emigrated. This in turn leads into a brief description of what has been happening in the Reich. Despite this, and the hostility they face because they are German, at this stage, the émigrés feel a palpable optimism. Mann starts with the artists, intellectuals and bohemians, then moves on to the more practical and politically engaged people. The remaining characters are introduced in the following chapters, as the émigrés begin to be tested by circumstances and their precarious position in society. Part One closes with Martin's foreword to his planned novel, a section which could almost have been written by Mann himself. This section ends positively, and with a sense that the émigrés are finding their direction: Marion formulates her strategy for combating the Nazis, Martin starts his defining work (he is not yet hopelessly drug dependent, despite regularly using heroin), Tilly secures herself a passport, and Abel begins to re-integrate himself into society. The first difficulties have been faced by the émigrés, they have all dealt with them and are looking to the future.

Part Two begins with Hans and Ernst having to flee Czechoslovakia, after a summary of major public events (the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Dollfuß, and the occupation of Alsace). The separate groups of characters scattered across Europe now begin to overlap with one another as they are once more displaced (Tilly and Ernst, Ernst and Abel, Hans and Marcel). The circumstances of the émigrés are changing and many of them find that their situation worsens. At this stage the problems they face tend to be personal, and the events portrayed occur regardless of the prevailing political situation: Tilly faces a pregnancy on her own, and Martin struggles with his drug addiction. However

these problems are triggered or exacerbated by circumstances unique to their exile situation, and the characters are seen to be powerless to manage their personal dilemmas because their corporate public world gives them no security or comfort. Nicole Schaenzler calls this 'die Phase der Entscheidungen',¹⁶⁹ characters face challenges, and either battle through them or surrender, which effectively means death. Part Two ends with Marion and Abel planning to leave for America, she to escape her painful memories, he to start afresh. The pace in Part Two is much faster than in Part One; the sense in the text is that the characters are plummeting towards disaster.

Part Three, which Arwed Schmidt calls the 'Prozeß der Etablierung',¹⁷⁰ has the largest scope in terms of the geographical scale of the emigration, and the scale of events taking place. Although seen by many as the future hope for Western civilisation, America is no universal paradise; the émigrés themselves have to determine the success or failure of their move to the new world. We learn of the horrors occurring in the Reich and its conquered territories. There is a clear sense of the European crisis now unfolding. Mann leaves many of his characters in varying states of happiness and despair. Finally we return to Dieter, whose situation in the epilogue parallels that in the prologue, again writing a letter to a friend, this time looking ahead to the challenges of the emigration.

4.2 Style

Der Vulkan is a novel with many different character perspectives, changes of scenery and parallel stories; hence it requires scrupulously sustained narrative

¹⁶⁹ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.118.

¹⁷⁰ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.133.

cohesion. Mann employs a number of techniques to link the various storylines, and keep the reader apprised of the progression of events without compromising the flow of the narrative. One technique for scene linkage is to have one character think about another and then to move to that person. For example, the final scenes with Samuel lead into the end of Bernheim's story. A further technique for moving between stories is to link them via phrases, hence Schwalbe's ‘“[...] Es ist ihm gar nichts geschehen!”’ (488) is followed by Samuel's ‘“Es wird ihr doch nichts geschehen sein?”’ (489). Another method is for a character to make general remarks about the state of the world, and then the narration moves to a concrete exemplification of what they are saying. David and Nathan-Morelli discuss the catastrophe about to befall Western civilisation. This leads into a more detailed, but equally discursive comment on this subject by the narrator, followed by an illustration in the form of the destruction of Barcelona witnessed by Meisje, Mathes and Schwalbe. The angels, while fulfilling many other functions, also enable the narrative to move quickly through different scenes without Mann having to spend too much time putting them into any (socially or psychologically) specified context.

Letters exchanged between the characters inform the reader of what is happening to other figures. This is especially relevant in Part Three, where much of the focus is on the American scenes, but with much action still taking place in Europe, Mann needs to maintain the threads of these stories too, so he has Marion receive various letters which inform the reader about her family and friends. Similarly, the exchange of information between Hummler and the newly-arrived émigrés

summarises what has been happening both in Parisian exile circles and in Germany.

I have already stated that Mann works primarily through his characters, and Der Vulkan is probably the best example of this, containing as it does the largest set of characters in these four novels, as well as the most varied settings and scenes.

Mann tells the story of the emigration via his characters, but they never become one-dimensional mouthpieces for anti-Fascist resistance. Mann describes the characters in great detail, exploring their thoughts, hopes, and motivation. They represent different opinions, philosophies, and world views; Mann strives to make them as real as possible,¹⁷¹ and to touch his readers emotionally, as well as involving them in political reflection. Though some of the characters deliver long speeches denouncing what the Third Reich represents, it is the depiction of their own struggles that gives substance to Mann's political analysis.

With so many characters Mann has to vary the amount of focus on each character, some peripheral characters have to be dismissed before the end of the novel. However, even the most minor characters have sufficient detail to make an impression on the reader. The figure of Friederike Markus, who has been driven mad by what happened to her husband in Germany, is a minor character who haunts the reader. She invents for herself a new reality where she is being persecuted by her husband, and feels compelled to spend her spare time writing illegible letters to famous people, even sacrificing a warm meal for stamps. Her

¹⁷¹ One device he employs is to include many incidental details about his characters, for example, Marion is very clumsy, and Abel takes a room in an area of Amsterdam where the streets are named after composers, because he thinks it may have a civilising effect on the residents. Though not necessary to the furtherance of the plot, these features do make the characters more vivid and real.

suffering is convincing and moving. Another peripheral character, Franklin Schneider, has his entire life history summarised in a brief and brilliant cameo. To a greater or lesser degree, all these people are affected by the situation in Germany. The larger crisis of war and the resulting transformation of society has an impact on all of them. Nicole Schaenzler believes that Mann is at pains to paint a general picture, one that encompasses not only the intellectuals:

[...] die Exilproblematik in Der Vulkan nicht allein auf die spezifische Lage der verfemten deutschen Intellektuellen beschränkt bleiben soll.¹⁷²

The exiles are simply the first wave of people to be affected by the coming “volcano”, but they will not be the only ones. For Arwed Schmidt the changing of modern society means that:

Heimatlosigkeit wird zur Chiffre des modernen Lebens. Der Mensch, wie er hier verstanden wird, ist immer Emigrant, Flüchtling, ausgestoßen, ein Fremder.¹⁷³

All the characters are symptomatic of this larger crisis, this is the crisis we see in politics, in relationships and even at the cellular level in Mann’s other novels. Mankind has nothing left to rely on, and hence each individual has become an exile, and each has a battle to fight.

As well as fully describing his characters, Mann also takes much trouble, as in Flucht in den Norden, to enhance the narrative with realistic detail. He takes time to evoke many cities, to express their atmosphere and character. He describes the living spaces of his characters, from the many trinkets in the Rubinstein’s flat, to the view from Marion’s hotel in New York. The striking force of his realistic

¹⁷² Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.109.

¹⁷³ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.140.

attention to physicality extends to the often ugly disarray of the characters. He goes into vivid detail about how Martin descends into a state of infantilism (he defecates on himself and cries like a child) and animalism (he makes animal noises and flaps around like a fish).¹⁷⁴ He does the same when describing Tilly waking up on the operating table, being unable to speak, and feeling the doctor cutting into her.¹⁷⁵

As in the closing pages of Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, which references the political events in the wider world and their impact upon his characters, Mann is at pains to evoke contemporary historical events. In Der Vulkan this conveys a clear sense of how the events in Germany impinge on the lives of the characters. Marion's first recital coincides with the news of the massacre of the SA, which her audience mistakenly thinks signals the end of their exile. The deterioration of the situation in Germany is worked into the novel; at one point the characters wonder when (if ever) other European countries will intervene:

Wie weit wollen die Nazis gehen, damit England und Frankreich die Geduld verlieren? – Irgendwo aber muß eine Grenze sein – empfanden sie alle. [...] Manche meinten: Die Grenze ist Österreich. Wien bekommt er nicht. Andere blieben skeptisch: England würde auch Wien opfern, um des lieben Friedens willen. [...] Da erklärten die Tschechen: Wenn es keine andere Grenze gibt – unsere ist unüberschreitbar. Wenn er uns angreift, ist es der europäische Krieg. Der Weltkrieg ist es, wenn er sich an uns wagt. (197)

¹⁷⁴ ‘[...] Keine Krankheit war je annähernd so schlimm gewesen. Fieber und ein solider, kontrollierbarer Schmerz waren positive Gerühle, verglichen mit dieser kolossalen Unannehmlichkeit. ‘So muß sich ein Fisch fühlen, der aufs Land geworfen wird’, dachte Martin. ‘So wie ich jetzt zapple, zappelt ein Fisch auf dem Trockenen! Mein Gott, mein Gott: Was habe ich getan, daß ich wie ein armes Fischlein zappeln muß?...’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.246.

¹⁷⁵ ‘“Noch nicht anfangen!” schrie sie, und erschrak selber über den dumpfen Klang ihrer Stimme, die von sehr weit her zu kommen schien. [...] Das eisige Metall fuhr knirschend in ihre Eingeweide. Der Schmerz war ungeheuer, Tilly fuhr in die Höhe.’ *Ibid*, p.274–5.

Der Vulkan appeared in the Summer of 1939. Again we see how its stridency is part of the desire to alert its readers to the horrors that were about to engulf them all.

Another echo of Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is Mann's use of the device of the parallel journey. In Der Vulkan, however, the implications are different. In the earlier novel, the characters journey in opposite directions, one character leaving as another arrives. Here Abel and Marion take the same journey, and stay in the same place, but at different times. The importance of this is less the fact that they take the same journey, than the difference in their responses to what they experience. Abel loves the sea, does not talk to other passengers, and spends his time reading. He enjoys the journey so much that he hopes it will not end. Marion is disappointed by the sea, the sight of it compounds her sadness. She hardly reads, being unable to concentrate properly, and can best gather her thoughts when she is with other people. To her the ship is a luxury prison, and she cannot wait to arrive. The differences between them do not lessen once they arrive in New York. Though they stay at the same hotel, with the same view from their rooms, and befriend the same barman, they have the opposite experience. Abel hides from New York, and hates nearly everything about it, while Marion throws herself into life there, determined to enjoy everything.

Marion has parallels with other characters in the novel. She and Tilly both face pregnancy alone, and, like Kikjou, Marion loses her soul mate when he embarks upon a course of action he knows will end in his death. In both instances Marion's responses are different from those of the other characters: she works out a strategy

for dealing with her pregnancy and getting on with the rest of her life. After Marcel's death she does not hide from the world, but carries on with her political work. Mann reminds us of the parallels between the two sisters when they both recall the same memory, while in a similar situation. Marion consumes a small dose of Veronal, which Tilly used to poison herself, while planning what she will do now she is pregnant. After thinking about her sister, Marion then recalls the same childhood memories that Tilly recalled when she was waiting to take the fatal dose.¹⁷⁶ Marion and Tilly both try to replace lost lovers with another person. The difference between them is that Tilly yearns for an impossible ideal, while Marion accepts the ending of her relationship with Tullio, understanding that Marcel is the person whom she truly misses. There are also echoes of Tilly's meeting with Ernst, when Ernst appears on Abel's doorstep. Like his future wife's sister, Abel is struck by Ernst's red woollen shirt. Mann also parallels characters with countries, having misfortunes which befall an individual mirrored by what happens to a larger group: Tilly's abortion scene is followed by the terrible events taking place in Mallorca.

¹⁷⁶Tilly suddenly remembers her aunt's house with its wonderful garden where she and Marion used to play, and the peacock that Tilly was too scared to touch: 'Plötzlich erinnerte sie sich mit fast erschreckender Deutlichkeit eines Hauses, in dem sie als Kind Jahre lang einen Tag der Woche – den Sonntag – verbracht hatte. [...] In dem Garten, so schien es Tilly jetzt, hatten immer die Vögel gesungen, und zwar auf eine sehr besondere, zugleich gedämpfte und eindringliche Art. Es war ein reizender und etwas verwunschener Garten. Nie wieder in ihrem Leben hatte Tilly einen Garten gesehen, in dem die Blumenbeete so starke, liebliche Farben hatten und wo die Brunnen so hübsch und einschläfernd rauschten.' *Ibid*, p.294. Marion remembers: Warum fiel es ihr ein, gerade jetzt, und mit solcher Deutlichkeit? Sie sah einen Garten, Blumenbeete und Brunnen – alles ein wenig verwunschen. Eine Terrasse war da, mit Malerleien geschmückt, die verblaßten und zerbröckelten. Schöne Räume mit dicken Teppichen; eine Freitreppe, die auf halber Höhe einen kleinen Balkon oder Erker bildete; dort stand ein ausgestopfter Pfau –: 'ich habe niemals Angst vor ihm gehabt [...] Ich habe seinen seidig weichen Bauch gestreichelt, und immer lachen müssen, wenn Tilly behauptete, er könne beißen. [...]'. *Ibid*, p.455.

The contrasting responses to the same experience show a fundamental difference between the two sisters. If the garden is a metaphor for life, then Tilly responds with fear, her refusal to stroke the peacock shows her inability to cope with the challenges of life, unlike the resilient Marion.

Significant incidents are repeated with a slight variation. Twice David is spat upon, when he is first introduced, and in his final scene. This shows us both how he has been broken by his time in exile, and how he is protected by the 'Engel der Heimatlosen' (540). We also see that France has become unsafe for the émigrés, in the opening chapter David is spat upon for mistakenly being thought to be a Nazi, later it is because he has been identified as a Jew. In the prologue and the epilogue, Dieter pens a letter to a friend in exile, the first time to say he opposes the emigration, the second to indicate he is joining the cause. The final view of Dieter finds him in Marseille not Paris, because the crisis has extended beyond Europe, and he will have to travel further than France. Dieter starts the novel in a room, where he has to shut himself away from the noise of Nazi supporters. He finishes the novel in a great expanse of space, he is finally free.

The parallelism in the novel conveys the sense of the characters being linked, which underlines the concept of a grand plan, supporting both the comments of the Angel and the narration at the end of the novel. Contrast is also an important device in the overall structure of Der Vulkan. Mann contrasts the fortunes of various characters, and also their responses to similar situations. He shows how those who engage with the world will at least achieve a sense of usefulness, whereas those who live in a fantasy world are doomed. The contrasting trajectory of these lives reinforces the moral tenor of Der Vulkan. Mann contrasts Martin's increasing dependence on heroin, and thus physical and mental incapacity, with Marion's artistic success. Like Martin she gets tired and depressed, but she does not give in, and tries to rally everyone around her, while Martin cannot even motivate himself. Similarly the description of Meisje's domestic happiness, just

after Ernst has been deported from Zurich, emphasises Tilly's unhappy situation.

In both instances Tilly and Martin have contributed to their adverse situations by starting on a course of action which leads to despair.

4.3 Language

The moral tenor of Der Vulkan is enriched by Mann's continual use of biblical imagery, underlining the idea that God is all around mankind, and that God's work is there to be done, even when humanity does not realise it. The characters are surrounded by angels (who can be both good and bad), and devils. Martin's heroin is called 'Teufels-Dreck' (243), and the nurse at the clinic is called an angel by Martin. He has the choice between the devil (apathy and physical decline) or the angel (hard work and vitality). Pepe acts as a mephistophelean figure to Martin, tempting him to the drugs which will eventually destroy him. Konradi, the Nazi spy, is a demonic figure, and the way he appears to Friederike Markus seems supernatural.

Ein Windhauch hatte sie angerührt; aber diesmal war er nicht frostig böse, vielmehr tröstlich mild: Hauch, Glanz und Wohlgeruch in einem. Friederike, die ihren Blick sehnüchtig ausschickte, erkannte Gabriel; in höchst anmutiger Pose stand er gegen die Theke gelehnt. Er trug einen grauen Sportanzug mit weiten Pumphosen; von den Schultern wuchsen ihm silbrigblaue Flügel, starr und leuchtend, wie angefertigt aus einem biegsamen, starren und spröden Metall. (219)

Friederike herself views Konradi as an angel, but when forced to accept the truth about him, she calls him the devil. The dead Tilly looks like an angel. When Kikjou appears at Martin's apartment just after Martin has died, David compares him to an angel of death. Kikjou in turn describes Martin's death as a surrendering to the dark angel of his addiction. Martin has a halo when he is dying, as does the Dutch author back from the Spanish Civil War. Dieter calls Nazi Germany 'eine

Hölle' (552). It is important to note that both the narrator and the characters themselves invoke the supernatural realm. However, where the supernatural actually manifests itself, it is always a force for good.

The recurring image of the volcano, which gives the novel its title, symbolises the destruction of civilisation by Fascism. It haunts the characters; a shadowy, but constant malevolent presence in the novel. The volcano is a natural and therefore unavoidable phenomenon, which destroys everything in its path. The fires caused by the volcano are reminiscent of the fires of hell, echoing Mann's religious references. However the volcano also brings new life in the wake of its destruction, it represents God's call to action. It can be seen as pointing to potential for the future. At the end of the novel Dieter looks out at a sunset of red and gold, echoing the colours of the volcanic flames, but bringing a new day, and the promise of the future. This image first appears when Marion and Marcel visit the seaside town of Deauville. At night when their little hotel is shaken by a storm, it feels as though they are suspended in the air, while the ground shakes beneath them. The volcano is an image of the fear both feel at the thought of what their future holds:

Aber auch ihre Augen hatten den entsetzten Blick, als wäre ein Abgrund jäh vor ihnen aufgesprungen.

Aus dem Abgrund stiegen Feuerbrände, auch Qualm kam in dicken Schwaden, und Felsbrocken wurden empor geschleudert. Es war der Krater eines Vulkans. (165)

The same image appears again to Marion and Tullio. Tullio tells Marion he will have to go back to Europe to fight. Like Marcel, he must sacrifice himself. Mann repeats the same phrases:

Marion und Tullio hatten den entsetzten Blick, als wäre ein Abgrund jäh vor ihnen aufgesprungen.

Aus dem Abgrund stiegen Feuerbrände, auch Qualm kam in dicken Schwaden, und Felsbrocken wurden emporgesleudert. Es war der Krater eines Vulkans. (422)

Marion is tormented by the volcano, it claims both Marcel and Tullio. Tilly is herself lost in the volcano: she imagines herself falling into an ‘Abgrund’ while she is being anaesthetised for the abortion: ‘[d]ies war die Besinnungslosigkeit; der Abgrund – sie stürzte hinein’ (274). When she wakes up on the operating table, and has to be re-anaesthetised, she imagines herself and her child falling:

‘Weh mir, ich falle... Mit mir stürzt das Kind...Niemand da, um uns aufzufangen. Wie tief ist die Tiefe ¹⁷⁶: bodenlos...Niemand hält mich, ich sinke, weh mir, ich sinke hin...’ (276)

The volcano image is echoed once more at the end of the novel. The first time the volcano appeared, the narrator asks whether Marion and Marcel have the strength to reach the shore. As he looks out to sea, in the closing pages of the novel, Dieter wonders if there is another shore they can reach. Arwed Schmidt also sees a link between David’s wish for the simple life and an acknowledgement of the catastrophe of the volcano awaiting the characters:

Deshalb, weil der Autor Davids Pathos des *Retour à la nature* als eine Antizipation der kommenden gesellschaftlichen Naturkatastrophe des Weltkriegs verstanden wissen will, setzt er es mit der Vulkan-Metapher in Beziehung.¹⁷⁷

The Italian Fascist bombing of Mallorca is called a ‘Donnerschlag’. The term invokes a natural phenomenon, and, like the volcano, lightning can cause fire, which again is reminiscent of hell-fire.

¹⁷⁷ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.148.

Sind nicht finstere Wolken über diesen Himmel gezogen, dessen Bläue sonst vorbildlich war? Mallorca, wehe –: was ist mit dir vorgegangen. Welcher Donnerschlag hat deine holde Szenerie verändert? [...] Die Hölle ist losgelassen; tausend Teufel präsentieren sich in den kleidsamen Uniformen römischer Faschisten. (276)

Martin sees the impending crisis in Europe as a kind of storm:

Die Horizonte unseres Daseins sind verfinstert. Die drohend geballten Wolken künden schon lange das Gewitter an. Es könnte ein Gewitter ohnegleichen werden. Die Katastrophen aber sind kein Dauerzustand. Die Himmel, die wir heute so tief verschattet sehen, erhellen sich wieder. (191)

The greatest significance of these images of natural destruction is expressed by Marion when she laments that people are accepting the events in Europe and Indochina as though they were something natural and unavoidable.

“Das neue Barbarentum, die Faschisten, die Hunnen – nicht einmal kämpfen müssen sie! Ohne Kampf lässt man sie siegen! Sie begegnen keinem Widerstand, keinem Gegner! ... Man lässt das Scheußliche rasen, zerstören, sich austoben – als wäre es eine Naturkatastrophe! Als lebten wir auf einem Vulkan, der Feuer speit! Es gibt keine Hilfe. Jeder wartet, ob es ihn trifft...” (507)

Her despair that no-one is fighting the progression of Fascism anticipates God’s call for action from mankind in the final passages of the novel.

The sea and the mountains symbolize the gentler side of nature, and therefore the possibility of survival, and renewal. The sea represents refuge, potential for the future, emptiness and stillness. While the volcano’s fire destroys, the sea is frequently a calming, comforting force: Dieter sees the sunset over the sea at the close of the novel, Marcel and Marion go to the coastal town of Deauville to recuperate, and escape from a world which is making them physically ill; Abel enjoys the crossing to America, spellbound by the sea’s quiet and infinite changeability. The sea will outlast human relationships, human worries and human lives: the sea forms the background to Marion’s disagreement with the

English author, and Martin and Kikjou's final stormy goodbye is played out in front of a window framing the shining sea outside.

Die Pantomime ihres bitteren Abschiedes hatte sich vom Hintergrund der hellblauen Wand gelöst. Nun wurde sie vor dem geöffneten Fenster zu Ende gespielt; dahinter leuchtete das Meer mit den braunen Segeln. (225)

The mountains also represent a refuge from the volcano: cold, clean air which provides relief from the hot, choking smoke. Marion and Marcel go on honeymoon in the mountains, where they can breathe more freely. To Dieter the alps represent escape, and a path to hope and a new life.

The unborn child and the unwritten book are two motifs which are interlinked in the novel. While Marion chooses to keep her baby, Tilly feels obliged to have an abortion. Nicole Schaenzler points out that Tilly's decision to have an abortion is based primarily on 'einer schicksalsgläubigen Vorstellung, die sogar mit Verfolgungswahn einhergeht[.]'¹⁷⁸ Tilly fears what might happen to the child in the future. Marion looks to the future and plans how to look after her child, Tilly yearns for the past (her childhood, and past relationships) when her life was simpler. Tilly's inability to be a mother parallels Martin's inability to write his book. The child and the book represent an investment in the future, and a committed engagement with the outside world. As Martin said, his book is for the 'Kommenden' (191), not the emigrants themselves, his failure to progress his great work is ultimately another catalyst to his slow suicide by addiction. David too gives up his work on the sociology of emigration, believing it to be futile. It is left to Kikjou to complete the chronicle of emigration which Marcel and Martin

¹⁷⁸ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.123.

had both wished to create, the angel of the ‘Heimatlos’ gives Kikjou the courage to write it. The baby rescued from the rubble in Barcelona is a sign of the resilience of humankind and an indication of hope for the future. Against all odds the child has been rescued by the ideal couple, and the mother of the exile family. The child will survive, and perhaps mankind can also.

Light and darkness represent the dialectic of engagement with the world and flight from the world. Martin’s favourite part of the day is dawn, however this represents only the promise of the day. In his life, he wants the light, but settles for the ‘Dämmerung’.¹⁷⁹ This is evident in his work: he avoids the risk of failure by seldom finishing anything, so he will not endanger the promise of his potential. He continues taking heroin even though it separates him from Kikjou, thereby deluding himself that the failure of their relationship is based on an external element over which he has control. He wishes to disappear into the darkness, because of his inability to function in the light of day:

Warum ist es mir nicht gestattet, mit geschlossenen Augen ins Dunkel zu stürzen, wenn ich in der Helligkeit doch nichts auszurichten vermag – außer dem Einen: meine Hilfslosigkeit, meine Ratlosigkeit, meine Angst, die Melancholie des Umstandes, daß ich zu früh oder zu spät auf diese Welt gekommen bin, immer wieder leidend zu erkennen. (245)

By contrast Marcel strives for the light:

Er gierte nach Licht, nach Erleuchtung, nach Helligkeit, wie der Kranke nach Sonne. Das Dunkle im tiefsten Grunde seines eigenen Wesens mußte wohl mächtig sein, sonst hätte er nicht mit so gereizter Heftigkeit nach dem Hellen verlangt. (155)

¹⁷⁹ ‘Am besten sind die Stunden der Dämmerung.’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.190.

For Marcel, light represents the ‘materielle und moralische Besserung [des] Schicksals’ (154).¹⁸⁰ When Marion and Marie-Luise grieve over Tilly’s death, they are interrupted by Susanne in the doorway, who asks disapprovingly why they are sitting in the darkness:

Hinter ihnen stand die junge Susanne – drohend aufgerichtet in der offenen Tür, blank und hart beschienen vom Licht; kühlt und ehrgeizig, nicht sehr intelligent; eine Fremde; das Kind einer fremden Zeit. (303)

Susanne’s appearance, representing the harsh light of the new world, implies that Marion and Marie-Luise cannot afford to stay in the darkness of despair which has already claimed Tilly. Yet the light brings little comfort: Susanna’s later marriage and return to Berlin shows that she has already identified with the new order in Germany.

The need for silence, stillness and peace is something which is felt by all of the émigrés, they need to shut out the world or absent themselves from it. Martin looks for silence in drugs, Marcel in fighting and death, David in practical work and Marion in motherhood. The first indication that she is pregnant occurs when she is on stage and is unable to speak. Marcel’s need for silence stems from the words which constantly stream from him, exhausting and suffocating him.

Marcel redet. Worte schießen hervor, so wie das Blut stürzt aus dem Munde des Kranken. Worte Worte Worte –: sie verwirren sich, steigern sich, überschlagen sich; sie jammern, prahlen, untersuchen; sie klagen an, spotten, verdammten; sie wollen nicht aufhören, können nicht verstummen: Marcel scheint verdammt zum Sprechen, wie der Ewige Jude zum Wandern. (256)

¹⁸⁰ ‘“Hier soll es hell werden!” verlangte er stürmisch. “Hier – wo wir leben und uns plagen!! – Es wird hell sein! [...] Weit hinten am Horizont sehe ich eine feurige und schwefelnde Sonne. [...] Aber die Dunkelheit nimmt sie fort!”’ *Ibid*, p.154.

This inability to be silent is further frustrating because Marcel hates words, believing nothing more can usefully be said.¹⁸¹ Marcel's death in Spain fulfils several purposes: it confirms his assertion that now is the time to shed blood rather than write and speak, it allows him to finally be silent, and by dying as one of the collective, he has finally found a place in which he belongs.¹⁸² While Marcel rejects the word as weapon in the war against Fascism, other characters embrace words as weapons, both against enemies, and lovers: Abel wears Marion down with his words, Marion battles the Nazis onstage with hers. Even when faced with a non-German speaking audience, her words still affect them:

Von den Engländern freilich verstand fast keiner etwas; indessen waren alle entzückt von Marions Stimme und von ihren Augen. (259)

Like Martin and Marcel before him, Kikjou begins to doubt the effectiveness of the written word as a weapon against the world around him:

Vielleicht sind Bücher nicht mehr zeitgemäß? In den meisten Ländern werden sie verboten – und wo sie noch erlaubt sind, machen sie kein besonderes Aufsehen. Die Leute gehen lieber ins Kino. (523)

The fashion is to reject words and thinking, modern society craves either mindless destruction or mindless entertainment. The angel reminds Kikjou that words are still a good weapon. For Nicole Schaenzler, Kikjou's ability to be both soldier and writer is the reason he survives many of his friends:

Sowohl Martins zunehmender Verlust als auch Marcels [...] Rausch der Worte sind (zeittypische) Krisensymptome: Keinem der Beiden ist es mehr möglich, die Wirklichkeit dichterisch zu erfassen oder gar die unmittelbaren Auswirkungen der [...] Katastrophe durch den schöpferischen Impuls zu bewältigen [...] In Abgrenzung zu Martins selbstzerstörerischer Haltung

¹⁸¹ ‘[...] Die Demokratie ist fertig, weil sie sich an die verbrauchten, großen Worte klammert. [...] Wir sollen töten und leiden; nicht mehr reden und schreiben. Genug geredet! Genug geschrieben! Genug gedacht! [...]’ *Ibid*, p.257.

¹⁸² ‘Er ist einer von Tausenden, von Zehntausenden – Marcel Poiret, ein Soldat –, er gehört zum Ganzen, zum Kollektiv: dies hat er sich immer gewünscht, es ist seine Sehnsucht gewesen, erst im Tode soll sie sich erfüllen.’ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), p.354.

oder Marcels Bereitschaft, im Krieg sein Leben zu lassen, steht [Kikjou] für die Verbindung von Intellektualität und Vitalität, im dem er sich schließlich dazu entscheidet, seine persönlichen Erlebnisse dichterisch zu verarbeiten[.]
¹⁸³

Kikjou's successful engagement with the world in the role of warrior for the good and writer of the truth, comes after his repudiation of the dream world of heroin addiction occupied by Martin. The dream world, which Johanna had to escape in Flucht in den Norden, manifests itself under various aspects in Der Vulkan. Martin wants to dream, prior to his first experience with heroin, he remembers the pleasant dreams he had when given painkillers as a child. The heroin allows him to dream again, and as he increases his dosage the dream world becomes more real than the world around him.

Die Zeit hat keine Realität wenn man sie nur noch mit Träumen füllt. Zuweilen erschrickt Martin, tief im Herzen, wenn er konstatieren muß, bis zu welchem Grade er sich von der Wirklichkeit schon entfernt hat. 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen', denkt er entsetzt. 'Fehle ich ihr? Sie kommt ohne mich aus...Das Entscheidende aber für mich ist, daß sie mir kaum fehlt und daß ich sehr leicht ohne sie auszukommen weiß...' (235)

The real world no longer attracts him, he is not interested in spending time with his friends, even in the discussion of politics. He just wants to return to his room, and his heroin, where everything is 'friedlich' (253). Marion says Martin is finding 'billige Trost in den künstlichen Paradiesen' (255). She believes it is cowardly of him to hide away from what is going on in the world. Martin's dream world links him to Friederike Markus who lives in a world surrounded by characters Proskauer describes as 'erträumt' (163). By contrast Marion's dreams are disturbing, she dreams about being back in Germany and being caught carrying illegal newspapers. Abel likens his life in Amsterdam to a bad dream.

¹⁸³ Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler. Studien zu seinen Romanen "Der fromme Tanz" und "Der Vulkan"* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p.90.

The ideal of the positive dream world links to the idealised childhood memories some of the characters remember. Tilly and Martin recall their childhoods at a time of trauma: Martin remembers just before he has his first dose of the heroin which will eventually cause his death, Tilly as she is waiting for the veronal tea which will poison her. It is a yearning for a time when life was simpler, and there was someone to look after them. Martin remembers his childhood fondly, especially the time when he was ill.

Es ist die eigene Kindheit, nach der ich Heimweh habe. Ich möchte wieder mit Marion im Garten Murmeln spielen oder Krocket, und mich vom Vater ein bißchen schimpfen lassen, weil ich zu spät nach Hause komme zum Abendessen. Was für gute Zeiten sind das gewesen! (92)

Significantly this anticipates Tilly's nostalgia for the garden associated with her childhood. Marion's criticism of Martin's false paradise links to the portrayal of Mallorca, another false paradise, enjoyed by affluent exiles, and idle intellectuals. While war is raging in Spain and Fascism threatens to spread throughout Europe, the residents of Bernheim's villa believe themselves to be safe from danger. When Marion goes to lecture there, the only person interested in what she says is the English author, and he believes her assessment of the Nazi regime is incorrect. Bernheim calls it the 'Insel der Seligen' (258), his guests have only a cursory interest in the progress of the civil war which rages nearby. Bernheim urges Marion to stay there, safe from the outside world. For him it is a place he can be secure, and watch the progression of events in mainland Europe. They discover that this is not the case; Bernheim and his friend Samuel only barely escape with their lives when Mallorca is invaded. Arwed Schmidt calls Mallorca representative of the twilight of Bernheim's world:

Die blauen Tage auf Mallorca sind Reflexe eines letzten Widerscheins der dahinschwindenden Epoche Bernheims.¹⁸⁴

Like the destruction of Tilly's bourgeois domestic ideal, Bernheim's tropical paradise is obliterated. The description of the idealised landscape is reminiscent of the hot heady days in Flucht in den Norden. Those people who flee the realities of what is happening are more at risk than those that try to resist.

As in Mephisto, the narrative presence is assertive, occasionally addressing the characters or becoming a second voice for them. The narrator directly addresses Kikjou in his cell,¹⁸⁵ and Bernheim while he is being assaulted. Later the narrator seems to become one with Marion and Tullio:

Wie kannte Marion diese Worte! Wie vertraut waren ihr diese Blicke, diese stolzen und verzweifelten Gesten! Der italienische Proletarier schien den Pariser Intellektuellen zu kopieren – und meinte es ernst und ehrlich wie dieser. 'Es wird das Opfer verlangt...' Dies ist nicht die Stunde des kleinen Glückes, und auch das große wird uns kaum gewährt. [...] Wir umarmen uns, und das Glück ist heftig, weil es flüchtig bleibt. Leb wohl, und vergiß mich nicht! Wir sind Emigranten, du und ich, das Böse hat uns die Heimat gestohlen, die Heimatlosen kennen keine Treue. En somme, Madame, vous êtes sans Patrie. Hatten Sie sich denn ein stilles Eheglück mit mir erwartet, chère Madame? Ich bin ein anarchistischer Fensterputzer[.] (423)

In essence, this passage captures Tullio's point of view, but many of the words are those of Marion and Marcel; it is as though the narrator has merged with these characters and expresses their thoughts. The narrator also directs the reader, advising that we are saying goodbye to Ilse Ill, and listing the possibilities of what

¹⁸⁴ Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p.208.

¹⁸⁵ The narrator tells Kikjou to confess the truth, almost like the voice of God. Like God, the narrator is privy to all Kikjou's faults: 'Parasit du – niemals hast du richtig arbeiten können [...] Tugendhaft warst du immer nur im falschen Moment, zum Beispiel, als du Martin alleine ließest mit der chose infernale; zunächst aber hattest du ihn zu seinen Exzessen eher ermügt, auf deine hinterhältige Art.' *Ibid*, p.348.

her future may hold. This variation in the narration adds emphasis to the particular passages, directing the reader to respond to certain things, and underlining the idea that, in terms of the events portrayed, we are being shown snapshots, but not the entire picture. Yet what holds these snapshots together is the overarching moral vision of the novel. The narrative voice tends to change where crisis is being described, such as the invasion of Mallorca, or anticipated, like the appearance of the volcano, expressing anger, contempt or bafflement. Eventually this morally and philosophically judgemental mode becomes a voice of metaphysical reckoning, turning into the voice of God, addressing Kikjou, the other exiles and through them the reader. It might appear quixotic that, in the context of what is predominately a realistic novel fiction, Klaus Mann should introduce metaphysical agencies, angels and the divinity, as instances of judgement and arbitration and admonition. While this could be judged as a flaw in narrative logic and artistic taste, two observations should be made in Klaus Mann's defence. Firstly: the presence of these more than human entities does not distract from the main concerns of Der Vulkan. We as readers do not find ourselves moving into theological or speculative territory; rather, the metaphysical voices relate centrally to the socio-cultural-psychological world that constitutes the heartland of the novel. They provide commentary and judgement; in no sense do they deflect us from its central purpose. Secondly: it is worth remembering that a number of key German novels of what might be called High Modernism also gesture towards metaphysical issues. For example Thomas Mann's Der Zauberberg (1924), Hermann Hesse's Der Steppenwolf (1927), Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929), Hermann Broch's Die Schlafwandler (1932), and Robert Musil's Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften (1933). All these works are

informed by an acute sense of cultural crisis; and in all of them the narrative moves beyond the depiction of disarray, confusion and anguish to hint at a redemptive possibility (the invocation of love at the end of Der Zauberberg, the magic theatre in Der Steppenwolf, the possibility of a new solidarity at the end of Berlin Alexanderplatz, of a new leader at the end of Die Schlafwandler, the mysticism of incestuous love in Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften). While Der Vulkan is clearly not in the same league as these canonical achievements of the modern European novel, it does share with them the sense of acute crisis; the intensity of the quest for a solution beyond the everyday condition indicates how profoundly felt that crisis is.

5 Conclusion

Reflecting the very real political crisis within which the author lived, Der Vulkan expresses a kind of desperation at every turn. Arguably that desperation is less a diagnosis of the era portrayed than a symptom of it; it partakes of the rhetoric of the years of the Third Reich in Germany, of a culture in which experience was judged by criteria of authenticity by means of which individual experience could be transported into the higher purposes of the national community, or rejected out of hand. For Mann and the rest of the exile generation that judgement was, of course, repudiation, therefore so much of their day-to-day experience bears the imprint of their anguish. They cannot take for granted their right to live; they have to ask what they amount to, sitting in constant judgement of their own being. That sense of judgement extends to the highest level possible, God himself.

With its exhortation to action, and an ending promising both sorrow and hope, it is perhaps fitting that Der Vulkan is the last novel that Mann wrote. Its stylistic flaws do nothing to detract from the effectiveness of its heartfelt message, and the power of its portrayal of a world facing an apocalyptic crisis. Even more than half a century after its publication, and Mann's own death, it remains a compelling depiction of its time.

VI Conclusion

Having discussed each novel individually, I want to highlight a number of overarching issues which merit further consideration. I have alluded to the development of Mann's political voice over the course of these novels. Perhaps curiously, Treffpunkt im Unendlichen, the earliest novel, written before the Nazi party assumed power, portrays the world at its most hopeless, whereas Der Vulkan, written at possibly the bleakest hour for German exiles, and despite depicting the brutality visited on the countries invaded by Fascism, still conveys a message of hope for the future. While Treffpunkt im Unendlichen imparts no political message, it explicitly depicts social instability and corruption, and alludes to the undercurrent of resentment felt by those suffering social injustice and poverty. There is also a clear alignment of "evil" characters with Fascist politics, and a continual sense of menace which is often associated with the Nazis, for example when they march past Massis' gathering. In Flucht in den Norden, this unspoken dread of the Nazis has become a concrete depiction of the abuses of power committed by the new regime. However despite this obvious anti-Fascist political stance, and the portrayal of the protagonist's fight against Nazism, the novel is also a love story and the themes tend towards the existential rather than overtly political. The novel establishes that the regime is wicked, and attempts to convince us that Johanna, like all free-thinking adults, has to fight, but does not play down the loneliness of that fight, and the fact that fighting Nazism will necessitate great sacrifice without guarantee of success. It is less a call to arms than a call to sacrifice. Mephisto takes us further in the depiction and condemnation of the Nazi regime and those who support it, the reader has a clear sense of who is being addressed, and what is expected of them (namely to fight),

but Mann concentrates on the iniquity of the regime rather than the virtue of the alternative. By contrast, Der Vulkan essentially explores the story that unfolds beyond the German border, showing the hardships of exile as well as showing the fate of those who fail to go into exile. The message here is crystal clear, the fight is both necessary and viable.

This progression from hopeless dread to a call to arms becomes especially clear when one considers the two panoramic novels Treffpunkt im Unendlichen and Der Vulkan. In both narratives Mann has taken care to create convincing and compelling characters, but while the figures in the former novel are constructed to illustrate the empty, profligate, hopeless society which has produced them, those in Der Vulkan are designed to elicit the reader's sympathy. Arguably Treffpunkt im Unendlichen's characters are seen as weak, and in some way responsible for their own predicament, failing to make any concerted effort to fight what is happening around, or to them. This lethargy makes it harder for the reader to identify with them, and creates an overriding sense that there is no salvation for these people or this world. Mann warns in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen that a crisis is on its way, but offers no advice as to a solution, whereas in Der Vulkan, he has both a political message and a call to action. For this to be effective, the reader has to be emotionally engaged with the characters. The overall picture cannot be one of hopelessness, because otherwise resistance would not be viable.

Yet one also has to register that the development of Mann's political voice did not always betoken stylistic improvement. It could, for example, be argued that Treffpunkt im Unendlichen is the best written of the four novels, displaying as it

does a range of stylistic effect which continually reinforces the idea of a world out of joint and doomed. In the later novels, Mann's style reverts to being a very conventional third person narrative, with little evidence of the more interesting narrative techniques glimpsed in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. It is worth reflecting that Klaus Mann is not the only writer in whom the need to express a clear political message can produce simplified, slightly one-dimensional writing, with the focus on the message rather than the method.

This focus on the argument rather than the stylistic methods is evident in the development of Mann's narrator. Again, Treffpunkt im Unendlichen's narrator is also the most restrained of the four novels. As the novels progress, the narrator develops from a generally, though not entirely, dispassionate observer to almost being a participant in the narrative. The narrator in Flucht in den Norden addresses the main character, Mephisto's narrator voices anger and contempt for the characters, while in Der Vulkan the narrator both becomes the word of God, and addresses the reader through God's instruction to the characters. The reason for this development, as with the change in his style, would seem to relate to the urgency with which Mann is trying to impart his message. He is not content to leave his readers to infer his message, but needs to spell it out to them.

A shift can also be seen in the depiction of Mann's female characters. In three of the four novels, there is a considerable focus on female characters (namely Sonja, Johanna, and Marion). Sonja is seen to define herself through the men in her life, and she is part of a male/female duo who together can be taken as the main character in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. Although Johanna is the protagonist of

Flucht in den Norden, she is less interesting than some of the more peripheral characters. Mann's many references to her boyishness temper her femininity, but she has passivity which can be seen as derivative of some of the female characters in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. Karin, the most capable female in Flucht in den Norden, is weakened by her too feminine flaws of self-sacrifice and the desire to mother everyone. One could say that as a group in the first two novels, the female figures all tend to be more or less dependent on the men – although many of them turn out to be anything but dependable. Mephisto is dominated by a single character and the female characters, like all of the other characters, tend to pale in comparison to him. Juliette, perhaps the novel's most memorable female character, could be described as the cliché of the sexy savage. Whereas in Der Vulkan we meet independent, politically articulate, complex women who seek to achieve stable relationships and sustainable communities.

One explanation for the lack of variation in the portrayal of women in the earlier novels is that they are frequently victims: one could even suggest that their sole function in the novels is to be victimised, and Mann contents himself with registering that. For those characters therefore, their function takes precedence over their psychological portrayal. In Der Vulkan, Mann's women are seen as politically committed, and like the other characters, need to be convincing if they are to make an impact. It would be inaccurate to suggest that all of Mann's early women are clichés; it is more that Mann equates their gender with weakness, and can only see them in their relation to the male characters. Therefore they have a similar tendency towards passivity and dependence, accepting what happens to them, rather than forging their own destinies. Johanna is a forerunner of Marion,

and if one interprets the references to her boyishness as an indicator that she in some way represents the cross between male and female (intellectually and emotionally) then the struggle between love and politics is almost a struggle between Johanna's girlish, immature, dependent side and her stronger, masculine, independent side. The only way for her is to choose one or the other, she is not allowed to be both strong and independent, and in a relationship. Marion then represents a breakthrough in that she is a complete woman: politically articulate, independent, but also capable of preserving her autonomy when in a relationship.

We have a consistent portrayal of generational conflict across the four novels (although less the case in Mephisto). In Treffpunkt im Unendlichen particularly the younger characters are seen to be weak, easily swayed and persuaded towards destructive acts by the older people in their lives. However Der Vulkan's Marion is strong enough in her opinions to dispute the arguments of the older generation (represented by Benjamin Abel and the English author). In Treffpunkt im Unendlichen the generational conflict is a clash between those figures representing the establishment (Massis, Gregor, although only five years older than Sebastian, and W.B.). In Flucht in den Norden parents battle their children, often in an attempt to preserve an outmoded way of life, whereas in Mephisto older characters often represent moral authority (Kroge, Bruckner, Die Generalin). Der Vulkan depicts generational conflicts or disagreements which are based on both personal as well as political differences. The generation of parents, teachers and bankers is not the enemy, but they need time to understand the nature of the struggle, and the part they need to play in it. Arguably the marriage of Marion and Abel is indicative of an accord between the generations, and while theirs is a

union based on compromise and rather unconventional circumstances, it seems to have the promise of a achievable and contented future. We do not feel that Marion has been forced by external circumstances to marry Abel, and despite the disappointment that she has sacrificed her political self. It is a life she has chosen.

It is worth noting that Mann returns to the Roman des Nebeneinanders in order to express the message he comes to regard as the most important. This is perhaps an acknowledgement that the choice faced by his Individualroman protagonists is too black and white, and that there are factors at play other than individual weakness.

It is also possible that the scope and scale of the crisis is too broad to be fully realised in the story of one character. The corporate destiny we see experienced individually in Flucht in den Norden and Mephisto comes down the choice between doing the right thing or doing the expedient thing. While Johanna's dilemma represents the existential struggle between doing something and nothing, the narrator suggests there was no real choice because of the 'entscheidende Instanz', the destiny which Johanna cannot escape. For Hendrik, the choice between active participation in an evil regime and working for democracy and freedom, becomes, once he has placed the furthering of his career above all else, reduced to the question of how best to serve that career. In Der Vulkan, the far-reaching choices faced by Johanna and Hendrik have become a series of choices which can have different outcomes. We see how different characters cope with the same set of circumstances, how they compare with each other, and recognise that their choices are not made in a vacuum, but are influenced by other factors beyond the characters' control. While Marion and Kikjou ultimately represent the most effective opponents of Nazism, other characters also contribute by spreading the

message, shedding their blood, or helping the victims of persecution. Each individual comes to recognise the role that he or she must play, even if the choice is not so obvious for some of them. We have a sense that collectively they are one mind, with the consequence that even if we lose individuals, the struggle can still be won. By telling his story through so many characters, Mann shows that the choice to participate in the struggle is open to all who wish to help, not just the soldiers and activists, but to anyone who cares to listen to his message.

On a number of occasions I have made the claim that Klaus Mann speaks for the generation that lived through the 1930s in Germany and in exile. I have focused particularly on the characters and the constellations in which they occur. It follows from that stress on the characters' experience that his works have a concreteness for us as readers; Mann gives us the feel of that time, and arguably he does so more immediately than do so many of the other German-language writers of the 1930s (Broch, Döblin, Fallada, Feuchtwanger, Hesse, Kästner, Musil, Wassermann, and dare one say it, Thomas Mann). It is, I think, not going too far to claim that Der Vulkan has real value for historians as a testimony of exile as experienced by those who, at that time (the late 1930s), could have little prospect of the ultimate defeat of Nazism.

In one sense, then, I have wanted to make the case that there is a measure of historical specificity to Klaus Mann's achievement as a novelist in the four novels that concern me. But one should not overlook a certain generality of theme that informs these works. Mephisto is a particular case in point. As I have already remarked, critical discussion of this work has tended to narrow the focus so that it

becomes a *roman à clef*, it is seen to be about Gustaf Gründgens. Yet, in my view, it raises a number of wider issues. One is the role of art generally and specifically theatre in Fascist politics. But, more broadly, the novel asks about the position of art and the artist in totalitarian society. Hendrik's major roles are in two plays, Faust and Hamlet. They are works that have a particular centrality within German culture. But even so, one asks oneself if, in the 1930s, some of the audience were not perhaps enriched by the confrontation with two works that, however hard the authorities tried, were never reducible to simple propaganda. Something similar would apply also to (say) performances of Beethoven symphonies under Furtwängler. Moreover, it is worth remembering that Mephisto is subtitled 'Roman einer Karriere'. As a result we are alerted to a general issue concerning totalitarian (but not only totalitarian) society – the ethos (if that is the right word) of "I was only doing my job". That self-defence sounds at the very end of Mephisto; it was heard on countless occasions in Germany after the war. Indeed one could say that Gründgens in some way symbolises all who stayed in Nazi Germany, hence one can interpret the defence of his position (via the campaign to ban the publication of Mephisto) as the defence of all those who remained. This issue was particularly pertinent there, but it is not, of course, confined to Germany, or to that particular period. Finally, Klaus Mann's intense focus on characters and their relationships raises a general issue of the interplay of private and public concerns. Put most simply: in an inhumane world can individuals retain their humanity (or some of it at least) intact? If so, how? By 'inner immigration' (as it was called in the 1930s)? Or is it the case that the poison of certain regimes is so omnipresent as to be irresistible? The judgemental fervour of

much of Klaus Mann's writing is the measure of the urgency with which he agonises over such questions.

This reflection brings me, by way of a conclusion, to Klaus Mann's style. I have on frequent occasions registered his shortcomings. But, despite the weaknesses, there are strengths – the broken prose before Greta's car crash, the breathless montage and collage of Berlin, so reminiscent of Döblin, in Treffpunkt im Unendlichen. There can be a real vividness to Klaus Mann's prose, not only in such scenes as those mentioned above, but also in his feel for character, and for dialogue. It is not inappropriate to reflect that, had he loved longer, Klaus Mann might have become an important screen-writer.

However, in spite of such considerations as these, the problem of the stylistic over-emphasis remains. Klaus Mann is a resolutely old-fashioned narrator, one who is addicted to an assertive third-person mode. At times one feels that it is almost as though he cannot allow his characters and their interaction to speak, he cannot trust his readers to get the point; he needs to hammer it home at every turn. In his defence, I would like to suggest that, in the four novels I have analysed, he was writing about a world in which a monstrous threat was at work.

Understatement and dispassion were perhaps not the most appropriate responses. To recall a wonderful remark made by Gräfin Orsina in Act IV Scene 7 of Lessing's Emilia Galotti: 'Wer über gewisse Dinge den Verstand nicht verliert, der hat keinen zu verlieren'. Or to put the matter in more specifically literary terms: both Balzac and Dickens delighted in luridness and melodrama; yet precisely that overheated quality is part of the socio-historical diagnosis that they

have to offer. Not, of course, that I wish to claim that Klaus Mann is in their league as a novelist. But interestingly, all three of them, as writers of fiction, were engaged by characters and cared deeply about what happened to them.

This observation leads me to reflect that much of my thesis has been devoted to the somewhat, in literary-theoretical terms, old-fashioned process of character analysis. Yet I feel that this approach is necessitated by the nature of Klaus Mann's novels. He works through characters, characters seen in various constellations; and at every turn he asks us, the readers, to care about these characters, to attend to them, to evaluate them in ethical, philosophical, or political terms. If the thematic purpose of Klaus Mann's works is somewhat old-fashioned, the same holds true for his narrative relationship to his readers. He buttonholes us, he demands that we react to the lives that are put before us. None of this is exactly subtle. Yet there is real verve and passion to what he writes. Above all, in the four works that have concerned me, he gives us an unforgettable picture of the spiritual, moral, and political crisis that gradually engulfed Germany in the 1930s. It is perhaps true to say that Klaus Mann always was a strident writer, but when, as in these four novels, the stridency interlocks with historical diagnosis, his art acquires the power to speak to us, and move us even today.

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