

Rosenwald, G.C. (1978). The Art Work as a Force in the Artist's Life—Thomas Mann's Exile and Joseph and his Brothers. *Psychoanal. St. Child*, 33:519-562.

The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child

(1978). Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 33:519-562

The Art Work as a Force in the Artist's Life—*Thomas Mann's Exile and Joseph and his Brothers*

George C. Rosenwald, Ph.D.

The work proceeds as it can and often presents itself to the author as something independent or even alien.

FREUD (1939, p. 104)

WITHIN TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS, MANIFESTATIONS of creativity are viewed predominantly as products of human activity, bearing the stamp of the artist and expressing his or her character in the widest sense. Creative activity is seen as mainly expressive, but the reflexive effect of the work on the artist is proportionately neglected. This approach, though in consonance with psychological interest in talent, genius, and the process of creation as well as with ancient sources in the philosophy of art, does not do full justice to the insights of contemporary psychoanalytic scholarship. In tracing the effect of the work on the artist, psychological theory is more fully mobilized, and a more rounded picture of both creativity and art results. The present paper seeks to demonstrate this broadening by reference to a study of Thomas Mann.

Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 519 -

Psychoanalytic investigations of creativity usually proceed from the general working hypothesis that a literary text presents us with a partial, coded reflection of the author's—and, by extension, our own—inner life. We look for correspondences between the writer's own biographical experience and his fiction. Such correspondence can pertain to the material of fiction (Beres, 1959); (Kanzer, 1959) or to the choice of art as expressive medium (Deutsch, 1959); (Greenacre, 1957). In its general form, this hypothesis states that the author reproduces and stabilizes himself in the medium of his craft. The creation of aesthetic novelty equilibrates him. The psychoanalytic interpreter may emphasize—this varies from case to case—the literary precipitates of lifelong unresolved conflicts, repetitive patterns of object relations, traumatic experiences and the modes of their mastery, problematic ego states, morally significant struggles and resolutions. Sometimes he demonstrates that the author depicts a private state or tension in the work and sometimes that the author corrects or nullifies such a state by means of artistic transformation. In either case, the writer is assumed to be the source of the literary objectivation, revealing himself, though indirectly, as he is or strives to be.

This psychoanalytic approach to life-and-letters, as I shall call it, has met with far less acceptance in literary circles than another psychoanalytic contribution—that of symbolic interpretation—which has been easily absorbed into the traditional apparatus with which critics undertake the clarification of literary symbols, themes, and images.¹ A common objection by writers and readers to the life-and-letters approach is that it introduces extraneous and reductive categories into the field of aesthetics. In this paper I shall, however, explore a different sort of objection, namely, that this approach also oversimplifies

¹ These two approaches coincide roughly with Eissler's concepts (1968) of exopoietic and endopoietic interpretation. He regards the former as beset with grave methodological difficulties, as does Beres (1959).

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 520 -

the psychology of the author—and, by extension, that of the reader.

Does artistry produce novelty only for the reader? Is it one sublimation among many, encountered in those with a specific endowment? Is the impact of the art work on the artist's own life completely under his (unconscious) control? I shall argue that the literary work can be, and perhaps always is, more than the author's product; that its status as cultural object, accessible to a multitude of readers, endows it with values which have psychological *force*, even though they are not wholly derivable from the author's psychology; and that, by virtue of this greater value which it acquires as an objective symbol, it can have a formative effect on the author himself. That is, the author becomes one of the beneficiaries of his own creation. The implications for our view of human development are significant: Whereas the traditional life-and-letters hypothesis guides us toward an appreciation of how the author corrects an imbalance in himself and achieves an archaic equilibrium consonant with the pleasure principle, my intent is to show that art may, in addition, develop the author and bring him to new syntheses.

The argument shall rest on the evidence of material from a single case rather than on the collation of multifarious research studies. Drawing selected themes from the life and work of Thomas Mann, I shall suggest that a political and familial crisis which he underwent in his early 40s was partially healed through his subsequent literary productions. My point will be that his art proved formative and

reintegrative, rather than merely cathartic or curative. Most of the paper will set forth the terms of his crisis and its resolution in detail. I shall supply relevant biographical material as well. In conclusion, the implications for the psychoanalytic theory of creativity will be discussed.

POLITICS AND ART

Twice in his life, Thomas Mann cut himself off from a major current of his nation's life—each time in deep, painful conscientiousness. Toward

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 521 -

the end of World War I, he published a passionate political pamphlet of 600 pages, the *Reflections of an Apolitical Man* (1918), in which he expressed his horror at the rise and spread of political democracy in Europe. He declared his support of the German national destiny and of the freedom of mind and art which could flourish only in a monarchy.

Not long afterward, Mann saw these ideals being sullied by the fascists and, in effect, repudiated his stand. After the rise of the Weimar Republic, he began to accept the principles of democracy, finally taking a firm stand against National Socialism. In essays and on lecture tours he attacked Nazi policy and even expressed sympathy with Socialist thought insofar as it upheld humanism and freedom as its goals.

When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Mann, then on vacation in Switzerland, was warned by his son and daughter not to return to Germany. Mann eventually settled in America and became the acknowledged spokesman for German refugees the world over. During the Second World War, he made many anti-Nazi broadcasts into Germany. Having abjured all participation in politics in his 40s, he devoted himself unstintingly to political tasks in his 60s, actively espousing the principles he had previously denounced. On his eightieth birthday he was hailed as a "free spirit ... [who] during a time of enslavement ... preserved the honor of Germany" (Mauriac, 1955, p. 21). After World War II, he was approached with an offer of the presidency of the new German republic. But Mann never returned to live in Germany, choosing to remain an exile for the rest of his life.

In the years intervening between his first and second dissents, Mann was occupied with his largest and perhaps grandest work, the tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers*. I shall explore in the following pages the role this work may have played in mediating a personal change in the author.

THE CRISIS

The *Reflections of an Apolitical Man*, three years in the writing, were the result of a long and painful personal struggle precipitated

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 522 -

by the political events of World War I. On the horizon Mann saw the inevitable defeat of Germany not only in the military sense, but in the national and moral sense as well. With Germany's defeat, he forecast, Europe would collapse spiritually. All of life would soon be seized and politically organized by the merchants of democracy. So frightening was this prospect that his own work on *The Magic Mountain* was stalled; his life as a German artist seemed menaced by the tide of Western politization. In the *Reflections* he championed the Germanic tradition of freedom and individualism against the leveling effect of political organization, which would surely snuff out the ethical humane passion of the German *Bürger*. He praised the authoritarian state as the form of government best suited to the German people. His political struggle was potentiated by a bitter quarrel with his older brother. For the novelist Heinrich Mann was an ardent advocate of republican egalitarianism on the French model.

What Thomas Mann stood for, considering his later clarifications, was sufficiently ambiguous that reactionary elements gaining strength after Germany's defeat felt confident that they could count on Mann as one of them. With the appearance of the *Reflections*, Mann cut himself off from many liberal-minded people who had been his readers for two decades. On the other side, it has been argued that the *Reflections* were more democratic than Mann himself indicated when he later spoke of them apologetically (Flinker, 1959). It is clear, then, that some controversy surrounds the depth and nature of Mann's change in conviction. While some critics at the time of his second dissent looked askance at his abrupt shift from right to left, Mann himself played down the difference, declaring that his own commitment to humaneness was steady—that he had been just as opposed to terror and obscurantism in 1918 as he was now to the politization of art and inwardness.

This ambiguity is characteristic not only of Mann, but of all personal change, as we know from the psychoanalytic study of life histories. It is not surprising that even a man of unusual resources does not turn over an entirely new, unmarked leaf. To

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 523 -

expect such disruptive psychological effects from a work of art would be to mock the self-formative effect of creativity which is under discussion in this paper. This much seems clear: throughout his life, Mann's ethical relationship to his society was and remained that of exile; this theme recurs in his fiction no less than in his essays, letters, and public acts. But his exile underwent a transformation in the course of the years, and the present discussion focuses on the contribution made by literary creativity to this transformation.

Thomas Mann had felt all his life that, as a child of the nineteenth century and as an artist, he was a stranger in his time and in his society. This sense of strangeness gathered momentum from the time when he made his dramatic entrance on the world stage of literature with his first novel, *Buddenbrooks*, until the crisis recorded in the *Reflections* some 20 years later. Even in *Buddenbrooks* he charted the decline of *Bürgerlichkeit*, the patrician order of the past century. The Buddenbrook family whose fall he chronicled was closely patterned on his own family. In spacious, wistful, dignified chapters he related the advancing decadence. His ironic tone revived the moribund era once more. *Tonio Kröger*, a novella written shortly thereafter, dealt with the artist as outcast. He yearns for the simple, strong, and mindless life of the blue-eyed burgher, but he is suspect in society, marked by the sympathy for morbidity and wickedness which he must cultivate if he is to be a true artist and to fathom true morality. The theme of an exile identity was already discernible in these early works.

It extended into the political realm when he wrote an essay on Frederick the Great during the second year of World War I. In this he glorified the misunderstood military hero, the great sufferer. A weakling and dandy in his youth, Frederick became a self-denying, intrepid leader and an ambitious, relentless conqueror. All Europe, wrote Mann (1915), stood united against him, challenging his right to invade neutral Saxony in a preventive war that had been forced on him. But his right, Mann asserted, "was the right of a rising power. As a right it was still problematic, still illegitimate, still unrecognized;

² All quotations from the German editions are my own translations.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 524 -

it was a right which had yet to be fought for, yet to be created" (p. 55).² But he was chosen by God and scourged by Him, "a sacrifice to and instrument of a higher will" (p. 63). The essay was offered as a contribution to the "order of the day" and was widely understood as a justification of Germany's invasion of Belgium under the pretext of defending Prussia's invasion of Saxony 150 years earlier. Mann was less moved by the turmoil of a nation or a people than by the struggle of a hero, the redemption of a splendid sufferer by Fate. Not the soldiers who died in the Seven Years' War were celebrated, but the great man who expired after years of loneliness and illness, silently and stubbornly endured. Later on, Mann looked back on this essay as a tribute to Nietzschean psychology and ethics; but at the time, its impact was prosaically political.

Within a few months, Heinrich Mann published an *essai-à-clef* about Emile Zola, intended as a contribution to the contemporary political debate. He recounted Zola's merits as social critic, visionary, meliorist, and political activist on behalf of the common man. To praise Zola meant praising the republican form of government as the remedy for Germany's mounting catastrophe. Only a republic could create happiness for the people, wrote Heinrich Mann (1915) speaking for Zola, for happiness has to be created by an inner impulse, not by great men who let it soak down: "Democracy strives not for great men, but for man's greatness!" (p. 1350). The artist and the man of letters had their obligations: "The novel should not merely describe; it should ameliorate" (p. 1315). Also: "[The writer] knows that his work becomes more human insofar as it becomes more political. Literature and politics, both of which have man as their object, cannot be separated" (p. 1324). The essay began with a description of young Zola's early groping and intellectual uncertainties. The second sentence read: "Those whose fate it is to dry up in young years have a way of stepping before the world complacently and self-righteously even in their early 20s." Not for a moment did

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 525 -

Thomas Mann doubt that he himself was the sole intended target of this reproach. Together with other ambiguous references, he referred to it as an unforgivable, an "inhuman excess" (Mann, 1956, p. 113). Heinrich rejected the imputation, but Thomas remained unappeased for years. The *Reflections* were his ardent reply.

Although Thomas Mann was reluctant to descend to political discourse, political consternation had paralyzed his creativity. He felt he owed his audience an explanation of his perturbed artistic silence. He sensed the interplay of general European problems with his personal upheaval: "It is destiny to be placed into time in such a way that the turning point in one's personal life coincides with a catastrophic turning point in one's era" (1918, p. 207). The exile identity became enunciated by the exile himself as a psychosocial constellation.

Mann had reached the age of 40 when, as he put it, one's future is no longer the general future, but merely one's own particular future. At this stage his values no longer mediated adequately between himself and his society. An artist for whom "art is, above all, a means of fulfilling my life ethically" was particularly vulnerable to the revolution in contemporary values: "I am, therefore, concerned about my *life*, not my work" (1918, p. 97). If politics were allowed to dominate art and all the rest of life, ethics would no longer take precedence over aesthetics. Ethics was the deep concern of the *Reflections*: "This work grew out of scrupulosity, a moral and aesthetic quality to which I owe any success I may ever have had, which [is] now playing a trick on me ... it borders on pedantry, and one might aptly call this entire book an immense childlike hypochondriac pedantry" (1918, p. 7).

The *Reflections* began with a rigorous distinction between German *Bürgerlichkeit* and the inimical spirits which jeopardized it from every quarter. The patrician ideals had been at their peak in the nineteenth century, in the culture of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche. Mann longed for their irony, their cynicism, and their refusal simply to please. But in our own days, he lamented, nineteenth-century romanticism, music, nationalism, humor, and pessimism had given way to

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 526 -

the politicization of all public life. Reason and the Heart were trumps once again, as they had been in the eighteenth century. Our air, he wrote, is polluted with activism, meliorism, and voluntarism—nothing but ornate sentimentalities covering up the opportunism of power motives. Wherever one looked, mind had been put in the service of what is desirable. Although Wagner had once boasted that the ardor of music could melt politics as the sun melts the fog, now, in the twentieth century, that seemed an empty boast—politics would surely freeze out music!

The notion that Germany might soon "grow up to democracy" revolted the author deeply, for the German soul could not be reconciled with the political mentality: "We are not a social people, and we are no mine for vagrant psychologists!" (p. 27). The Germans' staunch, mute, crass Lutheran protest had been the chief historic irritant to the "masonic, republican bourgeois-rhetoricians of 1789" (p. 28). Germany stood for mind, not for politics; culture, not civilization; soul, not society; freedom, not voting rights; art, not "literature"; cosmopolitanism, not internationalism. More than a military victory was at stake in its survival. Its recalcitrance was directed, above all, against Latin garrulity, flattery, meddling, and exploitation, and against the oily insinuating elegance of the French. French manners, French asceticism, French political morality, and French history had forged their own propaganda instrument in the midst of Germany—the *Zivilisationsliterat*, the writer-of-civilization, kin to the boulevard-journalist. His was the business of cheapening all values, catering to the mob, and hoodwinking the individual in the name of Progress. What these writers offered, declared Mann, did not honor humanity, but the rabble.

His brother was such a culprit. Mann's despair over the cultural heritage was deepened by that over the personal. As the familiar (and familial) landmarks and symbols of his identity betrayed him, his suspicion and detestation spread from society and brother to himself and his own artistry. Nietzsche had described the Germans as an antiradical people, a people of life, not of letters. An awful contradiction dawned on Mann as

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 527 -

he extolled the German essence: He himself was one of the most voluble and literate Germans of all time. More than anyone else in his day, he had appropriated the French genre of the novel, had developed it, and contributed heavily to the internationalization and democratization of art. He was himself tainted with the abomination: "One does not care about something in this degree, if one does not need to care, if it does not concern one, if one does not know about it, if one does not find it in himself, *if one does not have it in his own blood*" (p. 32). Nietzsche, too, had contributed an international style, and Wagner had a universal appeal.

Mann discovered that the German artist was, if not a contradiction in terms, an unstable qualification. His life seemed at an end: "What after all is this long soliloquy and scrawl, but a review of what I was—what I was for a time, justly and honorably—and what I apparently cannot remain any longer, though I do not even feel old yet!" (p. 208). Moving between the artist's and society's viewpoint, he wrote with only a glimmer of irony:

Those who have perused my writings will recall that I have always reacted with utter distrust to the artist's or the writer's form of life. My astonishment at the honors which society bestows on this species will never cease. I know what the writer is since I am avowedly a writer myself. To put it briefly, the writer is a chap who is absolutely useless in any field of earnest endeavor, always bent on mischief, and not merely useless to his country, but downright offensive. Further, he need not be endowed with unusual intellectual gifts, but may well be as slow-witted and obtuse as I have always been myself. Further, he is childish in his inner life, inclined to extravagance, and in every respect a disreputable charlatan. From his society he should not, and in fact does not, expect anything but silent contempt. However, the fact is that society grants this breed the opportunity to attain the highest honors [p. 565f.].

The writer-of-civilization, who dedicates his talents to the creation of *bellezza*, that is, who prostitutes art by creating a slovenly sort of beauty for the satisfaction of the masses, escapes

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 528 -

the artist's predicament. But the true artist cannot be satisfied with being virtuous; his morality must be broad and uncompromising. This requires him to confront sin, man's primal urges, suffering, and death: "Sin is doubt, the attraction to taboo, to adventure; sin is to lose oneself, to surrender, to experience, to search, to know!" (p. 391).

An artist in tune with sober German *Bürgertum* was unthinkable. Mann chose, in all his fiction, to reconcile the contradiction between art and life by his ironic style, by what he referred to as his sublimated mindlessness, the artist's skeptical, modest self-reflection. This was morally preferable to, and in better taste than, the unabashed lordly proclamations of those progressive writers who always stood on soapboxes, one hand upon the heart, the other on the *Social Contract*, spouting universal love of mankind—a love which was humbug, a peripheral eroticism substituting for a defective one at the center.

Freedom, Mann declared, was a matter of the individual mind, not of society: "The basic law of German life had always been the unfolding, development, differentiation, multifariousness, and wealth of individuality" (p. 271). Democracy as a political force should yield to democracy as the cultivation of individual personality. As a form of government it rendered people "crude, vulgar, and stupid; envy, arrogance, ambitiousness is all it teaches" (p. 251).

Mann's dissent came to an end, as we have seen, with the perversion of his ideals by the fascists, who claimed the very same spiritual forebears whom he had honored in his book. In 1922, he announced his support for the Weimar Republic. When questioned about his change, he replied that, like Goethe and Nietzsche, he was and remained antiliberal, but without any concessions to human reason and dignity. Humanity was now his overarching concern; he quoted Whitman at length. His pen was no longer directed against politics, but

against terror, vulgarity, and fanaticism. In *The Magic Mountain*, which he shortly resumed, "the critique of liberalism is freely confronted with the critique of that critique, and an opening is sought for the transcending of the dialectical deadlock" (Heller, 1955, p. 1015). "Western liberalism, the *bête*

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 529 -

noire of the [*Reflections*] is accepted ... as at the worst a lesser evil" (Hatfield, 1956, p. 210). Nonetheless, this change in political viewpoint did not put an end to Mann's scruples about the artist's morality, which continued to appear in his fiction in sublimated ironic form until the end of his life—in *Doktor Faustus* and in *Felix Krull*.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Thomas Mann was born in the North German city of Lübeck in 1875. He had an older and a younger brother and two younger sisters. His mother had come to Germany as a child. She herself had been born on a plantation in Brazil of German and Greole parents. She was of southern temperament, bohemian in her tastes, "talented as a female," inclined to the arts, and in most ways remained an alien in Hanseatic society (Mann, 1963, p. 101). It is reported that she liked to reminisce about the jungle with its colorful plants and parrots and about her black nurse. According to Mann, her leanings toward the south remained latent until after her husband's death, at which time she promptly moved to Munich with its gayer, more casual atmosphere. We are told that Thomas was closer to his mother than were the other four children. The ethnic origins of his fictional heroines is often a significant factor in the corruption of a man's morals, for example, in the case of Clavdia Chauchat in *The Magic Mountain* or of Mutemenet in *Joseph in Egypt*. Yet, despite his lavish autobiographical borrowings, he never directly depicted her in any of his works. All the more, his inclination toward dissent and exile may have been derived, at least in part, from her model.

The father, by contrast, was the descendant of a line of successful grain merchants. He became, in addition, an outstanding public figure, senator of Lübeck, a great elegant orator, and a revered statesman of many offices and honors. He has been described as a person of great savoir-faire and appears to have been somewhat vain and self-indulgent. The paternal house was a meeting place for high society. Hanseatic officers, searching the patrician houses of Lübeck for wives with substantial

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 530 -

dowries, enjoyed the Manns' hospitality, but the family also received musicians and artists of the stage. While mother sang and played the piano, father's literary and artistic interests were more genteel and circumspect, easily yielding to the demands of business. It is said that he read Zola's revolutionizing novels, but only when he thought himself unobserved!

In the *Reflections* Mann made only brief mention of foreign influence, hinting that it disqualified him from taking up the cause of Germany. Even when he spoke of such contaminations, he emphasized his artistic estrangement from the German tradition more than ethnic impurity. The struggle for purity in the austere terms of his definition took the form of an ideological nostalgia, a wish to return to the generation of his grandfathers. The figures of Goethe, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche represent ancestral idealizations designed to erase the blemishes of his parents' and his own generations. The crisis he sensed was that his identity would expire along with the ambient cultural and moral decline. The atavistic yearning for the giants of the nineteenth century is understandable in part as a family romance canceling his inherited corruption—the Latin influence coursing in his blood, aggravated by his closeness to the exotic mother. His longing for the nineteenth century complements his longing for a purer blood, and his tribulation about the society of his day complements the struggle with his brother.

What does it mean that two brothers became renowned novelists and engaged in such a bitter dispute over their common patrimony? Not enough is known to speak confidently about the *interplay* between Thomas Mann's virulent denunciation of democratic equality and the troubled relationship with his brother. That he sensed the vileness of modernity in himself, but concentrated his fight against it on the person of his brother, is evidence for the deepening mutuality of historical and life-historical issues. The themes of troubled fraternity, of creeping degeneracy and moral jeopardy, which reached their rhetorical and sociopolitical climax in the middle of Mann's life, were already unmistakably present in *Buddenbrooks*, his

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 531 -

first great work, and resounded still in *Doktor Faustus* at the end of his creative career.

EXILE AS WORKSHOP

In the model of his mother, Mann experienced the coincidence of physical (national) and cultural (ethical) displacement. Closeness and affection for one who was herself a stranger in the midst of proud Northern families may have supported the youth's artistic sensibilities at the risk of estranging him from the immediate setting. The idea of distance from one's native context became linked with the ideas of a return to an authenticating personal artistry and of exposure to moral dubiety. His life bears witness to the fondness for peace and forbidden zones. They offered him an opportunity to be away from home and yet all the more loyal at a distance. Mann grew up peacefully, without sympathy for rebellious movements. As a child, he played shop rather than soldiers or Indians. Apart from a penchant for impersonation and dramatic displays, he was a patient, if not phlegmatic, youth. When, as an adult, he was asked about his childhood, he

appeared bored by the questions. Though he may not have known what turns his life would take, he regarded (or later recalled that he regarded) his youth as an unimportant prelude. After his father's death, Thomas had sufficient funds to quit his job as office clerk and to join Heinrich, who was then living in Rome. There, living in a two-room apartment, surrounded by the sensuous countryside and wild sunsets, he dedicated himself to a trunkful of German, Scandinavian, English, and Russian paperback novels and tried to resist adventure. His days were filled not only with Tolstoy and Turgenyev, but also with the growing manuscript of *Buddenbrooks*. It was typical for this author to linger skeptically in the heartland of *bellezza* while charting the decline of German *Bürgerlichkeit*: Ethics before aesthetics!

Subsequently he moved to Munich. Surrounded by Bavarian peasantry, Catholicism, and exuberance, he lived sedately

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 532 -

and without artistic extravagance. *Fiorenza* and *Gladius Dei* continued the dialectic of ethics and aesthetics. Later he recalled his attitude toward Munich:

The entry of a Neo-German spirit and the Americanization of the German style of life [in Munich] were manifest in a certain gross corruption, in a shysterdom and commercialism of a peculiarly naïve sort. That I remained and did not move, say, to Berlin, was, however, more than mere inertia. It would be pointless to ask me what I would have become, had I spent these years in the keen air of the Prussian-American cosmopolis. In any case, *there is challenge and value in living under protest and in irony against one's surroundings—it heightens one's vitality to live more individually and more self-consciously under these conditions* [1918, p. 133; my italics].

As early as May 1937, Mann wrote to a friend that he planned to spend a part of every year in the United States, in the hope that such removal from Europe would increase his composure and spiritual freedom. After his permanent move to America, his work on the *Joseph* novels and on his novel about Goethe eased his discomfort about Germany: "Everything will be all right once my books arrive; the desk is set up, and the help, a Negro couple, is learning how we like our food. That an ocean lies between me and the liberation of the Sudeten Germans, will, I suppose, facilitate the completion of *The Beloved Returns*... Visit us one day soon, there in the robust realm of the dead!" (1975, p. 82).

This last phrase was meant as a humorous parallel between Mann-in-America and Joseph-in-Egypt. Yet how painful was this humor, how unhappy this adaptation! A year later, he wrote to a friend: "What do you suppose, when will Germany be able to read me once again? This is, after all, the question with which I lie down at night and rise in the morning!" (1963, p. 117).

In his American exile, Mann occupied a position intermediate between refugee and citizen-of-the-world. Throughout the war, his mind was on those left behind. He prepared weekly radio programs, beamed into Germany by the BBC, calling

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 533 -

for the defeat of the Nazi leadership. Mann's exile created in him not only solicitude for his compatriots, but a heightened need to keep his work and his personal sense of tradition integrated. It was in this spirit, rather than one of immodesty, that he proclaimed: "Where I am, there is Germany!" (Flanner, 1941, p. 38). At the same time, Mann served as a representative of Germany and the German people to the West. This was a remarkable realization of a position he had enunciated as early as 1918: "I stand between two worlds and am not at home in either; that makes things somewhat difficult for me" (p. 103). In America, he was intent on rescuing the imperiled past into the new and safer realm. At the same time, however, he wanted to be the exponent and protector of culture in a land on which he smiled dubiously. This was indeed "somewhat difficult." He expressed his anxiety about this precarious position, and his fear of losing touch with his native country, in a letter written in 1941 to an émigré friend in Switzerland: "Let us hope that the connection with Europe does not break off completely! The very possibility that this might happen reinforces my wish that you might join the transatlantic European community here in this country, which will, after all, willy-nilly surely assume the leadership of the world... Exile has become something wholly different from the past; it is no longer a condition of waiting, oriented to a homecoming, but a foretaste of a dissolution of nations and a unification of the world" (1975, p. 101). And: "I fear that the longing for Europe will have almost been put to sleep by the time your desperate part of the world becomes accessible again" (p. 103). In fact, Mann remained wide awake on behalf of Germany.

The main difference, seen outwardly, between Mann's first and second dissents was that this time execration was mixed with loyalty and sorrow. He respected the elements he had joined in condemning his own country but remained skeptical about them nonetheless. In contrast, his proclamation of 1918 had been totalistic and remorseless.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 534 -

II

The story of Joseph concerns a youth who failed to find tolerance in his community, was expelled by his brothers, became one of the most illustrious exiles in the history of Western mythology, and eventually bestowed great benefits on the family he had left behind. In the next two sections I shall explore how the literary creation of the *Joseph* novels may have contributed to the increasingly productive and loyal exertions of their author on behalf of his native land.

THE FORMATIVE EFFECTS OF ART

Several difficulties attend the demonstration of art's formative effect, that is, of its reflexive action upon the creative artist: (a) It is always problematic to establish that a thought or complex of thoughts has indeed influenced the conduct of the thinker unless the connections are supplied by him, as happens in the psychoanalytic situation. One is bound to suspect that the thoughts merely echoed changes which were prepared "on another level" and are themselves inefficacious. In the present case, one might suppose that if Mann's exile in the 1940s differed from his dissent during World War I and if he wrote novels dealing with exiles at the same time, then perhaps the novels were only an expression of life changes already under way and these changes owed nothing to the novels. (b) More specific to creativity, there is a presumption that literary works derive their vital qualities from the author's experience of life, rather than the reverse. That is, the traditional theory which is under discussion in this paper is in principle opposed to the assumptions favoring any formative effect. (c) When drafts, diaries, or discarded versions are available, one may be able to trace an author's intentions and their consequences. But Mann indulged his gift of ironic humor in pretending that he reported, rather than created, details of the Biblical legend. Thus, the role of the creative artist was itself artistically

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 535 -

mystified by him. Rather than granting us any view of the effect which the work might have had on him, he took care to present himself as authoritative historian.

Other considerations favor the hypothesis of a formative effect: (a) For this work, Mann chose existing material, the well-known Biblical tale with which every reader can be assumed to have an acquaintance. Although he chose it freely, that is, in consonance with his artistic and personal requirements, the antecedence and objectivity of the material weaken the presumptions of a strict expression theory of creativity such as underlies the traditional life-and-letters strategy, and allow for the possibility that the material had the power to attract Mann's artistic interest. (b) The *Joseph* material occupied the author from about 1926 until 1943. Its beginnings lay in Munich and its completion in California. It deals artistically with the struggle between loyalty and adaptation, and this struggle was also the author's—from the time of his crisis in World War I to the period when he wrote these novels and beyond that time as well. It is therefore equally difficult to establish that the works merely echoed life changes which had been independently wrought as it is to prove that their author drew edification exclusively from them. The best assumption is rather that the work accompanied the author during his travails as German artist and that they were the medium through which he integrated the earlier contradictions. (Children's play is commonly said to be the paradigm and matrix of artistic creativity. If so, then the interplay between actor and medium, which is recognized in the psychology of play, should be just as seriously explored in the psychology of creativity.) (c) Whether the artist *intends* his work to form him is not a critical point. Mann did occasionally hint at parallels between Joseph's times and the contemporary world situation, for instance, when he likened Joseph's economic administration of Egypt to Roosevelt's New Deal. A better test of the formative effect, but one which cannot be undertaken in these pages, would be to evaluate the differences between Mann's essayistic treatment of the German artist prior to *Joseph* and his subsequent novelistic treatment of the artist in *Doktor Faustus* (1947). (d) Finally,

³ Eissler (1968) has argued that Freud's early attempts to find psychological meaning in *Hamlet* were neither a polemic for the validity of the oedipus complex nor a useful contribution to literary criticism. Rather, they contributed to Freud's own initial formulation of the theory of infantile sexuality at the time when his seduction theory had collapsed. Freud's literary experience is said to have had a formative effect on his theoretical work (which, especially at that time, was most intimately interwoven with his "life"). That Freud did not write *Hamlet* and that Mann did not formulate a psychology of identity and exile does not significantly diminish the convergence of my argument with Eissler's. I postpone for later my discussion of the methodological questions raised by the traditional distinctions between author and reader and between work and life.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 536 -

Mann did want the *Joseph* novels to have an impact on the moral chaos of the times. They were received by the world as the last legacy of German culture (and denounced by the Nazis as decadent and traitorous). An extraordinary assumption of dispensation would be called for if the author himself were to be declared immune to the hortative and healing effect of his theme.³

FORMATIVE THEMES

A central symbol in the legend of *Joseph and His Brothers* is God's blessing of Abraham. But the major spring of action is the careless preservation of this blessing throughout the generations of patriarchs. After receiving the blessing from God, Abraham passed it on to Isaac, the son he was once ready to kill in sacrifice and who barely escaped his father's knife. Isaac, in turn, meant to bequeath it to Esau, whose merit was that he could prepare a spicy lamb stew. But a less prudent choice of heir is hard to imagine; Esau had once upon a time demonstrated his heedlessness in matters of heritage when he lightly bartered away his birthright. Only by a deception was Jacob able to wrest it from the intended heir. Jacob, in turn, was careless and self-indulgent in administering the blessing. Instead of passing it to the lawful heir, his eldest son, Reuben, he planned to shunt it to Joseph, the eleventh-born and favorite son. Jacob was crazily infatuated with Joseph because he resembled Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin and

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 537 -

Jacob's favorite wife, who had recently died in childbirth. The coat of many colors which Jacob bestowed on Joseph was, in Mann's version, Rachel's retailored wedding gown. With this gift, a symbol of womanly vanity, Jacob, who once deceived and enraged his own

brother over the stolen blessing, provoked his sons to murderous hatred of Joseph and initiated his expulsion to Egypt. "Inconsiderate love" is Mann's designation of this preferment.

Given the background of carelessness in the administration of the Hebrew blessing by the patriarchs, the novel narrates a reversal in the relations between generations. From a beginning in which Jacob, through inconsiderate paternal infatuation, instigates an adolescent crisis in his favorite son, we are gradually brought to an ending in which the adult son, in mature filial devotion, arranges the fulfillment of the father's most secret longings. This journey, as I shall try to show, is not only Joseph's; it is also his author's.

As the story unfolds, we meet Jacob, aged 67, under a moonlit sky in his Canaanite tent-city at the very moment when he apprehends the 17-year-old Joseph, nude to the waist and engrossed in a somewhat hysterical worship of the moon and stars, rolling his eyes back in his head and murmuring fervent incantations. Intensely and searchingly Jacob questions him, remonstrates with him about these pagan attitudes, warns him against idolatry and shamelessness before God, and extracts from him a promise of fidelity to the religion of the patriarchs. He warns him especially against the abominable morals of the Egyptian land to the south, where incest, necrophilia, and bestial customs rule. He does not know yet that this is the land in which Joseph will attain highest esteem through his service to mankind nor that Jacob himself will, at the end of the novel, follow him there with all his tribe and that he will die in that godforsaken land.

The remarkable personal transformation which Joseph underwent in his exile can be approached through an understanding of the dynamics of Jacob's conflict and their effect on the son's relationship to his father. Certain interpersonal patterns familiar from the study of pathological as well as normal

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 538 -

development are helpful in this connection. Joseph cultivated a life that Jacob had declared abhorrent. He succeeded in a political career in the midst of a forbidden culture despite his father's remonstrations. The key to his success was his father's ambivalence. We have already seen how Jacob's ruinous love for Joseph represented a lapse from the pious wisdom and tact to which he admonished his people. The patriarchal blessing itself—a reification of the identificatory link between one generation and the next—was at risk in the contest between Jacob's piety and vanity. Mann relates Jacob's self-indulgence and stubbornness, his appetite for dynastic glory, his erotic excesses, his vindictiveness and pride, his hoodwinking of his father, brother, father-in-law, and his slyness even toward his grandsons. Not infrequently, vanity outweighed piety. Jacob appears to the reader as a man of great political ambition and possessing a keen eye for opportunity and advantage. To him the covenant with God was at least as much a warrant of Israel's future as a pledge of divine service.

Despite the execrable setting of his exile, Joseph excelled in the very virtues in which his father had shown himself lacking. Not "despite his exile"! Joseph's morality was *supported* by his exile. A high point in these 1,800 pages is the episode between Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the Egyptian temptress to whom Joseph almost succumbed, but whom he eventually resisted—not out of prudery, but out of deep loyalty to the fine Hebrew conception of the divine. Seven reasons are cited for his abstention, but the conclusive deterrent at the moment of highest temptation was the vision of Jacob's admonishing countenance appearing in Joseph's mind—the same Jacob who in his own erotic life knew no restraint and indulged the most comic and histrionic sensuousness.

The Egyptian exile proved salutary for Joseph because it removed him from the heat of Jacob's seductiveness which stimulated regression, promoted narcissistic aims and modes, and cast him into a feminized role. By dint of removal Joseph could preserve those moral features which his father meant to present as a model. So long as Joseph remained in Canaan, his father demanded total emulation of himself. This is a well-known

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 539 -

feature of parents whose own identification is tainted with ambivalence and guilt. Only a guilty father needs to be totally vindicated by his son. In the novel, and in the Bible, Jacob's fastidiousness in bestowing the patriarchal blessing is properly understood against the background of his own illicit accession to it. But Joseph escapes this vicious cycle. Having acquired the secular blessing of the Egyptians' love on his own merit, he was free of Jacob's demands for vindication. He could obtain moral guidance uncorrupted by the father's own needs for absolution. Filial autonomy, as opposed to enforced emulation, could only evolve in exile. Joseph's social talents, which he had used to best his brothers as an adolescent, became object-directed in a different way in Egypt. His youthful presumption that others loved him more than they loved themselves, which had been utterly false in Canaan, became eminently true in Egypt. This can be reckoned as a consequence of the emancipation of exile.

A second aspect integrated the experience of exile into the larger allegiance to his background. Jacob's political ambitions had won the upper hand over pious resignation when he tricked Isaac and Esau out of the blessing. After that, guilt stopped him from acknowledging his ambitions. He became unctuous and severe in godly matters. But his son, sensing the extent of the father's ambivalence and its suppressed components, could implement what the father could not. Removed from his father's censorious sight, he could pursue a career which he sensed his father yearned for himself behind his denunciations. Even at the time when Joseph was sold by his brothers to a caravan and laid eyes upon the land of Goshen, that is, still under the unmitigated impression of his trouncing and expulsion, he conceived the seemingly farfetched thought that these would be fertile fields for his father's herds. He forged his career in Egypt with an eye to Jacob under the motto: Removal, Elevation, Drawing-After. It was the belief in an ultimate reunion with Jacob *in Egypt* which supported Joseph's loyalty to the Hebrew heritage. It is this belief in reunion which transformed the outcast from a narcissist into a circumspect leader. But the reverse seems also true: because

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

Joseph realized his father's forbidden dream, he could resist the temptations of the alien environment. In Jacob's view, Joseph's secular success was equivalent to the divine blessing. At the time of their reunion, Jacob withholds the blessing from Joseph because he now regards him as disqualified. Instead Jacob adopts Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasse, once again giving unlawful preference to the younger.

A silent pact seems to have been observed by the two men. Joseph did for Jacob what Jacob could not, in good conscience, do for himself. Whereas the father made impressive displays of devoutness, with only occasional eruptions of a greedy appetite for worldly success, the son gave the deceptive appearance of suave, political elegance and opportunism while guiding his life in accordance with the highest self-discipline and culture. The exiled person is perhaps never a mere outcast, but the repository of truths which those who are left behind cannot afford to uphold.

What textual indication is there that these psychological developments healed not merely Joseph's crisis, transforming him from a gossip and egotist to a celebrated benefactor, but radiated beyond him, to the author as well? One recalls that Thomas Mann himself was once rebuked by his older brother on account of insufficient social feeling, of exploiting the mob's chauvinist passions, and of giving himself grand airs. If the hypothesis is correct that the *Joseph* novels mediated a personal and political transformation of the author, then one should look to the text itself for pertinent evidence and not mistake a merely possible connection for a plausible or probable one. To raise the question more explicitly, did Mann use the genre of the novel in such a way that it served not only as a *screen* for the projection of personal fantasies, but as a *source* of reflexive action on himself? The argument for the self-formative effect of literary creativity will be more cogent if, instead of maintaining that such effects are common to all writing, selected features of particular stories, plays, novels, and poems are shown to be consistent with such an effect.

Mann supplies us with a mythological psychology of his own, that is, with a "topographic" framework in which the

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

events of the story are experienced by the characters themselves. The categories—or types—of his psychology are the ethics and aesthetics of men who model themselves after the moon, in contrast with those who labor under the sun. The heroes of this story are men of the moon in ancient struggle with the followers of the sun. The moon is an identity symbol for Jacob, even though he repudiates it as an object of religious veneration. The moon is transformed in unhurried cycles but retains its original identity. It stands for patience and for sameness in change. Abraham founded his allegiance to a supreme Being when he left his father's heathen house and began to wander with the moon. His adaptation to various host lands did not impair his fidelity to the covenant. Abel, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men with the moon's cool mildness, had wandered with their sheep, curious and hopeful, seeking greener pastures and more fruitful grounds for their relationship to God. Their solar counterparts were Cain, Ham, Ishmael, and Esau, their violent and faithless brothers. Laban, too, Jacob's father-in-law, was one of these: working the soil, himself red, rough, and furrowed like the sunburnt clod of earth. No blessing was upon them; they were not free. Their minds and bodies were heavy, crude, and fierce from laboring and sweating behind the stolid oxen. They lacked the grace and ironic adaptability of the moon-men. The Egyptians to the south, it goes without saying, worshiped the sun.

The moon was also a filter for reality: history took on a mythic iridescence in its beguiling light. The names of the patriarchs referred to shifting, timeless, idealized figures as well as to the familiar, husky shapes of Joseph's kinsmen. Time had a way of contracting, and circumstance melted away as Isaac, Joseph's bodily grandfather, dreamily mistook himself for that son long ago who was nearly sacrificed by his father. The moon stripped reality of its divisive facts. Thomas Mann once remarked on this point:

I do not conceal from myself the difficulty of writing about people who do not precisely know who they are, that is, people whose self-awareness rests much less on a clear discernment of their point of existence between past and future than

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

on their identity with their mythic types... With this acknowledgment I touch upon a psychological nerve of this entire extraordinary project, the source from which ... emanates the greatest incentive to my artistic venturesomeness ... the ideas of recurrence, incarnation, and celebration, a dreamy psychology of the ego which stands ajar as it were to the rear [1928, p. 768f.].

We know that Mann is mocking us with the "difficulty" because these slightly moon-struck characters are his own canny creation and because the mythic-atavistic form of discourse had been his refuge even during his crisis, in the *Reflections*, when the irony of fiction had slipped from his hand.

Another stylistic feature is in line with a formative effect. Joseph, that is, Thomas Mann's Joseph, has the knack of regarding himself with detachment. He treats the vicissitudes of his life with ironic resignation because he knows himself to be the well-known Biblical Joseph. Setbacks are tolerable for him because he knows the outcome of his own story. He is both inside his own story as a character and living out that story in Mann's novel. Joseph's forbearance in defeat and injustice was made easier for him by this device. Falsely accused of improprieties toward Potiphar's wife, he spoke not a word in his defense; willingly he went to jail, his "second pit," expecting to be elevated to a higher position than ever. I note for later discussion that the novelist's mythic-ironic treatment of Joseph's attitudes toward his expulsion, his temporary reverses, and his elevations—that is, the novelistic treatment of Joseph's attitudes toward himself *as hero in a story*—requires a determinate collaboration of the reader. What the reader knows before he reads Mann's novel and what use Mann makes of this knowledge, presupposing and yet overlaying it, constitutes the novelist's subject matter and is indispensable to his craft.

Mann's toying with the consciousness of the hero as possibly knowing his own story is a toying also with the role of the narrator in regard to the story:

The narrator ... should be in the tale, one with it, and not outside it, reckoning and calculating. But how is it with God, whom Abram thought into being and recognized? He is in

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 543 -

the fire but He is not the fire. Thus He is at once in it and outside it. Indeed, it is one thing to be a thing, quite another to observe it. And yet there are planes and spheres where both happen at once: the narrator is in the story, yet is not the story; he is its scene but it is not his, since he is also outside it and by a turn of his nature puts himself in the position of dealing with it. I have never tried to produce the illusion that I am the source of the history of Joseph. Before it could be told, it happened, it sprang from the source from which all history springs, and tells itself as it goes. Since that time it exists in the world, everybody knows it or thinks he does—for often enough the knowledge is unreal, casual, or disjointed... And now it is passing through another [medium], wherein as it were it becomes conscious of itself and remembers how things actually were with it in the long-ago, so that it now both pours forth and speaks of itself as it pours [1938, p. 180f.].

Subtly and ingeniously Mann confuses the reader as to the narrator's position with respect to the events and thereby, at one further remove, as to the relationship between author and audience. The narrator himself alternates between self-effacement before the grandeur of universal history and claims to historiographic omniscience. The ironic, playful use of a mythic self-consciousness is the literary device whereby the author lulls not only the heroes of the story, but the audience and himself, into a moon-psychology, a susceptibility to imitation and substitution, borrowing of identities and reenactment.

In his earlier comment Mann declared that this "psychology ajar to the rear" or, as one might say, the opportunity to rework old material in new versions, exerted the greatest incentive in this artistic enterprise. The abounding ambiguities of narration and the coy treatment of the novel's solemn themes suggest that the author was camouflaging private concerns of long standing with thematic material of utmost objectivity. Under cover of retelling an old story, he seems to have reinterpreted his own life story as well. The dreamlike mentality of the lunar heroes in this story allows such reworkings. Of course, great self-conscious mastery is required to produce

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 544 -

such an effect; the author is in no dream state as he composes the work. But we are entitled to suppose that he struggles with such states and with the possibilities they furnish for putting "ethics before aesthetics"!

INFANTILE ROOTS

The material so far presented suggests that the author's struggle to resolve the earlier political-fraternal crisis would have had to deal with the full meaning of that crisis, including the infantile sources and contributions. The adult author's shifting political and moral profession probably had its antecedents in the ambivalent bond to the mother's un-German artistic influence, and, as we shall see, in a conflict of wills and values with his father. Therefore, if we attribute a self-formative effect to Thomas Mann's writing of the *Joseph* novels, we should be alert to its possible connections with early dynamic conflicts.

Thomas Mann was conscious of writing about a "Jewish" theme at precisely the time when his godforsaken countrymen were exterminating this people. The four *Joseph* novels appeared as clarion calls of human protest against the gathering violence and inhumanity in the Third Reich. "It is essential that myth be taken away from intellectual fascism and transmuted for humane ends. I have for a long time done nothing else," he wrote to Karl Kerényi in a letter about *Joseph* (1975, p. 103). He was no longer concerned with the future of the German race, as in the *Reflections*, but with the human race. Thanks to his gift for irony, he wrote about the ancient Hebrews with affection and yet without mawkishness or glorification; they became flesh-and-blood and yet stood for transposable universal ideals of virtue and failure. These novels, too, were a contribution to the "order of the day."

I have suggested that Joseph, by his success, unmasked Jacob's saintly pretensions and brought out, indeed lived out, a truth which Jacob could not muster. The parallel between the truth around which Joseph's exile revolves and the contemporary truth for which Mann himself went into exile is deepened

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 545 -

for us by a childhood memory he recounted in 1942, when addressing an audience in the Library of Congress at the age of 67. The fourth novel had not yet appeared. Speaking about the impetus behind the tetralogy, he began by reminding his listeners that Goethe, too, had been tempted by the same project in his youth. Mann then explained that he had reached a stage of life, when one feels attracted to perennial themes of humanity and therefore to myth. Third, he mentioned the dehumanized forces collecting in Germany in the 1920s which he meant to oppose, and then, rather abruptly, he offered, as though in confidence, an incident of his private life.

The narrative enters into the highly developed and sophisticated cultural sphere of the Nile Empire, which through sympathy and reading had been familiar to me since the time of my boyhood, so that I knew more about it than even the teacher who during Religion Class had questioned us twelve-year-old boys as to the name of the holy steer of the ancient

Egyptians. I showed that I was eager to answer, and was called upon. "Chapi," I said. That was wrong in the opinion of the teacher. He reproached me for having raised my hand when I knew only nonsense. "Apis" was the right name, he corrected me angrily. But "Apis" is only the Latinization or Hellenization of the authentic Egyptian name which I had given. The people of Keme said "Chapi." I knew better than the good man, but discipline did not allow me to enlighten him about it. I kept silent—and all my life I have not forgiven myself for this silence before false authority. An American boy would certainly have spoken up.

Occasionally I thought of this early incident while I was writing *Joseph in Egypt*. A work must have long roots in my life, secret connections must lead from it to earliest childhood dreams, if I am to consider myself entitled to it, if I am to believe in the legitimacy of what I am doing. The arbitrary reaching for a subject to which one does not have traditional claims of sympathy and knowledge seems senseless and amateurish [1943, p. 95].

Within two sentences, Mann affirms the link between exile and the defense of truth: false authority can only be opposed in the shoes of the alien. This is what he has been thinking, as

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 546 -

he writes about *Joseph*, in America. One readily suspects that the incident involving the religion teacher at the age of 12 would have left a less enduring impression on Mann, had he not already been sensitized to misapprehensions by "false authority" and mortified by his own acquiescence. The "secret connections" to "earliest childhood dreams" are a matter for speculation. Yearnings, identifications, and conflicts in his earliest years are the likely "deep roots" to which he alluded. Mann, more than most writers, tapped his childhood experience with little disguise and elaborated it in his fiction.

In his own autobiographical statements he displayed a two-fold and ambivalent connection between his early love of make-believe and the divergent attitudes of his parents toward art. There is, on the one hand, a romantic, oceanic self-surrender to the epic element, its flowing rhythm, its fascinating monotony, the perennial narrative. "Making music and telling stories, marvellously united in the mother, were deeply and essentially related to each other and remained one and the same thing for him (Mendelssohn, 1975, p. 81). Mann had his first impressive encounters with the art of storytelling when his mother reminisced about her Brazilian childhood or told fairy tales to him and her other children. She was also an accomplished pianist and had a "lovely voice." He listened to her devoutly by the hour, and as an adult still felt indebted to her for the most precious musical experience of his life. During his adolescence they played duets together.

On the other hand, Mann cultivated a roguish and playful vein which was encouraged and applauded by his father. In his childhood he indulged a gift for mocking impersonation, taking teachers, relatives, townspeople, and schoolmates as involuntary targets. In adulthood this penchant reappears as the merciless precision with which he described figures in his novels and stories—figures frequently copied from life. He made numerous enemies of people who were startled to find themselves caricatured in his books. Occasionally, Mann donned the thin mantle of the trickster or confidence man whose success depends on the disdainful imitation of righteousness.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 547 -

One may assume that Senator Mann treated his wife's artistic leanings with tolerance if not slight irony. His eldest son's literary ambitions he opposed with blunt uncompromising hostility: Heinrich read too much and wrote too much instead of concerning himself with business and civic matters!

Although the brothers did not always get along in their adolescence, they were united in their dislike of school. Heinrich dropped out just before the final exams; Thomas had to repeat several grades and never finished school either. When Heinrich started school and Thomas was still a toddler, the Senator decided that Heinrich was to study law and eventually become a senator and mayor of Lübeck, and Tommy was to become a merchant and succeed the father in the business. Neither son showed the slightest willingness to follow the career which his father had planned for him. The Senator regarded Heinrich's artistic career plans as dishonorable. Only on his deathbed, he astonished him by offering to help him become a writer. Thomas, 4 years younger, did not experience such an overt confrontation with his father; the Senator died when Thomas was 15. And yet, Thomas Mann felt that he was a disappointment to his father: "I may say that his image has always stood in the background of everything I have done, and I have always regretted that I gave him so little hope during his lifetime of ever making something respectable out of myself in this world... I was a frivolous boy when I lost my father, and though I was impressionable I could not experience death spiritually. I do not know what it is like to be separated in one's maturity from a father-friend whom one is used to having beside or rather behind oneself in the shaded background of life" (quoted in Mendelssohn, 1975, p. 134). Judging by the senator's attitudes toward Heinrich's development, which was similar to Thomas's in the relevant respects, he might have become a friend in later years, once the brothers made something respectable of themselves, but he surely cannot have been experienced as a young artist's friend at the time he died.

The choice between two attitudes toward art, the indulgent and the arch, is rooted in the establishment of parental identifications. "I

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 548 -

sat in a corner contemplating my father and mother as though I were choosing between them and considering whether life was better spent in dreamy meditation or in deeds and power" (quoted from a story by Mendelssohn, 1975, p. 77). Problems of character development and identity formation are aggravated if the opposing attitudes compete for dominance in one parent instead of being neatly distributed

between both. Joseph, we have seen, was victimized in his youth by Jacob's contradictory values and motives. The intolerance with which the senator treated Heinrich only to make a turnabout in the end suggests that this father also struggled against forbidden exotic yearnings, of which his wife was the most visible symbol and exponent in the house.

It is sometimes said that the "Thomas Mann problem" resulted from the clash between his father's urbane, mercantile practicality and his mother's aesthetic, romantic temperament. This formulation is not precise, however, and does not explain Mann's preference for exile as a way of life and as an artistic theme. Rather, the conflict appears to occur between a father who was infected with languor and introspectiveness, but masked these yearnings behind sobriety and elegance, and a mother who was frankly artistic and exotic. She personified one side of the father's own conflict.

Perhaps the most direct evidence pertaining to the father's conflict comes from his last will and testament, written during his final illness.

God has always been merciful toward me, and I have prayed to Him. A joyous faith has been a heritage in our family. God will also know how to lead my survivors to Himself—I hope not through much suffering!

I pledge my children's guardians to effect their practical education. As far as possible, they shall oppose my eldest son's [Heinrich] inclinations toward a so-called literary occupation. In my opinion, he lacks the qualifications for well-grounded, successful activity in this direction, namely, sufficient study and comprehensive knowledge. The basis of his inclinations is a dreamy letting-himself-go and inconsiderateness toward others—perhaps from a lack of *thought*. My second son

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 549 -

[Thomas] is susceptible to calm deliberations; he is good-natured and will find his way to a practical occupation. I feel I can expect him to be a support to his mother.

Julia, my eldest daughter, will have to be observed more closely. Her vivacious temperament must be kept under control.

Carla is not problematic, in my opinion. Together with Thomas, she will represent an element of calm. Our little Vicco—may God protect him. Late-born children often develop especially well intellectually. The child has such tender eyes.

Would that my wife prove herself to be firm with all the children; all are to be kept steadily in a state of dependency. If she ever becomes unsure, may she read King Lear [Mendelssohn, 1975, p. 132].

These evaluations of his children were as false as those of Lear himself. The "unproblematic" daughter Carla committed suicide at age 29, and Julia took her life as well. Victor became a bank official. The senator was a man of contrasts: he had a sense of irony, even prankishness, and perhaps a yearning for the exotic. In his official self-presentation, however, he was the decorous, even self-conscious patrician, down to the clichés in his will. He qualifies as false authority especially in eyes as observant as his second son's. His blindness to his children's qualities cannot have been the result of social and moral prejudice only; it reflects a more generalized ambivalence and curtailment of human interest. Although nothing is recorded about altercations between Thomas and his father, we can guess that the son felt misjudged, but declined to protest. His aggression took more indirect forms such as school failure and the secret cultivation of a disapproved identity. (When the preadolescent Hanno Buddenbrook observed how his father pressed his tired, slack face into the mask of resilient sociability a moment before making a business call, he closed his eyes in pain; he could not contemplate such a life for himself. This frankly autobiographical portrait is a guide to Mann's exile identity.) He turned to aloofness and ambiguity because the parental figures seemed mutually as well as—in the father's

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 550 -

case—internally contradictory. Clear-cut loyalties were hard for him to build and sustain. The pattern and solution are well known.

In magnificent style Mann proved the early authorities wrong. He became himself an authoritative Egyptologist, acquiring greater mastery than one would expect even from the American schoolboy. Indeed, he took authoritativeness so far that it became a new mockery of the reader whom he confronted as the omniscient, and not merely authoritative, storyteller from whom no fact is hidden. That the senator would have been astonished to read his son's life needs no further documentation.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

ART AS ADAPTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Viewed objectively as the production of novel, self-expressive, and aesthetically satisfying artifacts, creativity is perhaps the most clear-cut example of what Hartmann (1939), following Freud, called alloplastic adaptation. The person molds or remolds a part of the external world in accordance with his needs. The resulting artifact is considered artistically successful if its subsequent reception fulfills the needs of the audience as well. In the early years of psychoanalysis, the universal matrix of libidinal desires and of their elaboration into daydreams served as the link in this transaction. Artist and audience were thought to be in analogous and complementary relationships to the art work (production, consumption). Their relationship to each other was of secondary importance. Each effected an independent adaptation by means of the text. This monadic conception, which treats writer and reader as separate and analogous, generates and maintains what I earlier designated the life-and-letters strategy: "The literary work is taken as an embodiment of the creative mind ...

[research] aims at the reconstruction ... of the author" (Eissler, 1968, p. 142). A second consequence of this conception is that, having settled on character as the major source of art's contents,

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 551 -

scientific interest shifted to the question of process. Most psychoanalytic writing on creativity deals with it in terms which are formal with respect to the thematic material and treat artistry as a series of transformations, worked on whatever subject matter and guided by motives which are common to all artists (Freud, 1908); (Greenacre, 1957); (Kris, 1952); (Kubie, 1958); (Levy, 1940); (Lee, 1947); (Rank, 1932). The difficulties which such investigations encounter, as a matter of definition and scientific logic, are recounted by Rothenberg and Hausman (1974). What I am concerned about here is that they limit our appreciation of the meaning which the work has for author and reader.

Viewed as a species of interaction between artist and audience, as I propose to view it, creativity is neither allo- nor autoplatic; it is most nearly adaptogenic (Hartmann, 1939). Therein lies the parallel to the psychology of exile. Parr (1926), from whom Hartmann borrowed the term, cited as an example of "adaptogenic adaptation" the case of a primitive horse which migrated from a region with sandy soil to a firmer tundra where it obtained better support for its hooves, making neither an auto- nor an alloplastic change. The exile, too, migrates to a social-psychological region where he obtains better support for his ontogenetically rooted needs—but with the difference that the migration may be symbolic, rather than physical, and that he may therefore preserve a symbolic, and more than symbolic, relationship to his region of origin. This is a phenomenon familiar to the clinical observer under the rubrics of struggle against identification and negative identity; indeed it is a central assumption which permits us to account for the persistence of infantile influences in later life. Artistic creativity is adaptogenic, too: the creative artist molds himself as he molds the world. To put it negatively, neither artist nor art world remains unchanged at the expense of the other. The entire field in which artistic creation takes place, including the audience, constitutes the creative act.

I have tried to show that "social relations" did not enter Mann's crisis and epicrisis secondarily, but were integral to them. The psychology of exile and the psychology of creativity

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 552 -

do not coincide accidentally in this case. Exile, objectively a severance, appears to the psychological observer as the disguised affirmation and preservation of a bond; creativity, so long as it is viewed superficially, is utterance and externalization, but turns out on closer inspection to be a step in the formation of self. Two cycles of interaction, which are often neglected, are emphasized in this view and require discussion—the interaction of author and work and that of author and audience. Together, these cycles may help to determine how Mann's art functioned to transform one kind of exile into another.

During the "heroic" age of psychoanalysis, it was valuable to vindicate theoretical propositions about psychosexual development by demonstrating the coded presence of libidinally relevant themes in literary texts (Kris, 1952, p. 17). With the rise of ego psychology the emphasis of psychoanalytic literary criticism shifted from wish fulfillment and catharsis to the restoration of ego controls and the pleasure of cathectic displacements themselves. But throughout, the formulations revolved around the psychology of expression, namely, how the artist transforms a highly personal, largely unacceptable fantasy into an acceptable object the expression of which is accompanied by a pleasurable saving of energy for all concerned—to begin with, for the artist himself, then for the audience. Although Kris conceived of art as a communication or "message" (p. 39), this was difficult to reconcile with the fundamental concepts of an expression theory. On the one hand, art was "an invitation to common experience in the mind" (p. 39) and "whenever the unconscious aspect of artistic creation is studied, a public of some kind emerges" (p. 60). On the other hand, that public was not considered to be integral to the creation itself. Author and reader were regarded as distinct authorities dealing with the art work by turns. A psychological process, akin to that of the writer, would unfold in the reader—only in reverse order, from the conscious perception of the art work to the id. In this way, the audience came to share the author's experience and, if the work was successful, to respond with approval which in turn "encourages [the artist's] self-approval" (p. 38). Although

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 553 -

Kris disclaimed two consecutive phases in creation, he described two distinct types of psychological activity: "While the artist creates, in the state of inspiration, he and his work are one; when he looks upon the product of his creative urge, he sees it from the outside, and as his own first audience he participates in 'what the voice has done.' Art, we said, always, consciously or unconsciously, serves the purpose of communication. We now distinguish two stages: one in which the artist's id communicates to the ego, and one in which the same intrapsychic processes are submitted to others" (p. 61). The raw artistic conception was thus considered to be presocial, and the audience entered as corrective or respondent. The readers compensated the author for the narcissistic losses he sustained in moving from daydream to fiction; they blocked his retreat into an egocentric, regressive inner world; they relieved his guilt in sharing the experience he bestowed on them; they imposed demands for intelligibility and normativity of form. But they did not figure as primary in the act of creation itself. By recounting the various interdependencies of author and reader, they were fixed in their separateness.

CREATIVITY WITHIN INTERACTION

The study of Thomas Mann and the *Joseph* novels provides us with new hypotheses. Because these novels retell an old story, the purely expressive aspect of their theme recedes in importance, and attention is drawn to the psychological force of features which are otherwise overlooked. As Kris pointed out, the historical development and problems of an artistic medium as well as the social forces impinging on the creation determine "the frame of reference in which creation is enacted" (p. 21). In the case of these novels, however, and even more explicitly in *Doktor Faustus*, the medium and the times are themselves an integral part of the message. One might say that the personal position of Thomas Mann—the formerly apolitical Mann—and the historical setting in which he wrote (and was read) served to italicize the entire text of the tetralogy and to emphasize the difference between the ancient legend and the

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 554 -

pointed modern retelling. With his charming irony and with his ambiguous narrative attitude, Mann let the revered Biblical figures appear to us alternately as flesh-and-blood, larger than life, and again as ciphers in an allegory. This device not only is pleasurable, but has the effect of recasting the fundamental stock of our cultural ideas in a new form and of changing our outlook on ourselves and each other in the midst of our historical world. With these books Mann clarified the order of the day, adjured against resignation in the face of evil, and appealed to the infinite ethical resources of human culture. That the stories were a retelling did not weaken this effect, but strengthened it. How central irony is to the aesthetic effect is shown by the grim officious rebukes of irreverence with which book reviewers chastised Mann in the Nazi-dominated newspapers of the 1930s. They sensed that the "how" of the retelling was a cunning, an inspired blow against them. What Foucault (1972) said about variants and commentaries applies: "The novelty lies no longer in what is said, but in its reappearance" (p. 221).

The creative work is a general-cultural object and has psychological value beyond the expressive function it serves for author and reader. This psychological value arises from the fact that the work transforms the culture and us who are grounded in it, as we are grounded in our nature. I am not arguing for an opposition between aesthetic pleasure and other aesthetic effects; they can occur in various combinations. But it is important not to restrict psychological analysis of art to those effects which can be accounted for by an expression theory. We have seen that an expression theory, whether of the id- or ego-psychological orientation, is consonant with an adaptational viewpoint. Yet, to the extent that psychoanalysis deals with the process of correcting the (pathological and pathogenic) interpretation of experience and communication, an extended theory of art may be more in line with our heuristic interests. I shall return shortly to the concept of adaptation.

I have earlier shown that Mann aims his irony at the reader's recollection of the Biblical legend. He depends on

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 555 -

our naïveté and piety and then challenges them. Thus, the relationships of author and reader to content are unequal. Irony is one term we apply to such inequalities. It not a feature which is added to the "basic" story; the *Joseph* novels are unthinkable without it. Their aesthetic effect depends on it. There is no inspired material which is *then* "submitted to others." The others are part of the irony which is part of the inspiration. To put it differently, it is misleading to think of novels as being written and then distributed to the reading public. Only outwardly is this true; psychologically speaking, there are no stages and no types of activity; the novel is written and read at once.

As long as we think of authors drawing on their inspiration during a first stage, the emphasis remains psychic-structural. The element of risk in innovation is conceptualized as the product of regression in the service of the ego. But when the audience is acknowledged as psychologically integral and indispensable to inspiration, then the element of risk is also an interactive one. Irony is only one instance of a general relation of inequality or asymmetry between authors' and audiences' relationships to the form and content of art works. To the temporary alteration of psychic-structural relations, there corresponds a temporary alteration of social-experiential relations.⁴ By and large, it seems true that the artist is more candid about his experience than are the members of the audience. The risklessness in which they benefit from his work aggravates his risk.

Every author, every artist adheres to traditional norms and beliefs and yet surmounts them. Conservative and progressive tendencies constitute the authorial attitude, but that attitude is inconceivable outside a readership. It will not do to allocate

⁴ An analogy occurs when a joke is told. The discrepancy between the teller's and the listener's relationships to the joke material does not merely add to the enjoyment of the material, but makes the joke possible to begin with and often is essential to its success; we call it delivery. Whether the humor of the joke survives the first telling, which terminates the asymmetry, often depends on whether the listener manages to "surprise himself" with the punch line he already knows!

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 556 -

the innovative inspiration to the author and the normative restraint to the (internalized) audience. It is equally true that the artist innovates on behalf of the audience ("truths it cannot afford") and restrains himself for his own sake. Insofar as the author enables the audience to share in his experience, he is like them. But when we stress that he *invites* them to share it, then we recognize that he is in a more exposed, in a different position, perhaps like a host sharing a meal with his guests. The artist's sense of his own exposure is probably universal (Sachs, 1929). If only in the limited sense that authors have a headstart before their readers and invite them to share an experience, their situation resembles that of the analyst. Despite serious differences, which need not be discussed here, the analytic dialogue may serve as a

better model for a psychology of literature than dreams, play, or daydreams. In these latter models the complicity of the audience is not systematically recognized. Of course, both sets of models are compatible since dreams and fantasies are also frequently constituted in a context of potential dialogue. Just as metapsychological concepts become enriched by interactional analyses, the psychoanalytic study of creativity may begin to emphasize the social-interactive and historical aspects of artistry in addition to the traditional preoccupation with the endowment and development of genius. Loewald (1975) has discussed the connections between art and psychoanalysis in a way which is highly compatible with the present discussion.

It may be objected that only in unusual cases, perhaps when authors suffer dramatic disturbances of creativity itself, as was true of Mann at one time, will such complexities of interaction appear, and that the formative effect of art is a rare phenomenon. This is indeed possible; in the case of many artists, the work is not only a less onerous activity, but it may also touch less deeply on their lives. By the same token, these artists will perhaps also express the regnant themes of their lives less clearly in their works! That is, the life-and-letters strategy sometimes also yields meager results. A transparent instance, like that of Mann, is needed to demonstrate the methodological constraints which the life-and-letters approach has

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 557 -

been placing on our investigations. Traditional psychoanalytic studies of artistic creativity and its products can be supplemented by further studies which evaluate the art work as a force in the artist's life. Wherever the influence of life history has been illuminated in the work, the circle may be closed by studying the creation as itself a life-historical event. The closing of this circle is characteristically psychoanalytic in that interpretation moves at times from the past to the present and at other times in the reverse direction—in alternating steps (Schafer, 1978). Similarly, biography, which has always been invoked as the explanation of the creative work, is itself more thoroughly understood by reference to the later creation.

TEXT AND CONTEXT

To say that novels are written to be read, or, more precisely, are written and read at once is to say that the author derives benefits which depend on the benefits he brings to the audience. It serves to emphasize that the art work is more than a product, that it continues to influence the author as a value after—and because—it has achieved public status independent of his artistry. The *Joseph* novels represented a high value at the nadir of German culture. The racist mythology of the Nazis was unmasked and ridiculed. If one considers Mann's own political history, the novels also represented a conversion or rectification. The motif of unmasking and rectification occurs on three levels: (1) The work unmasked the fascist corruption of the author's and the readers' shared cultural tradition and reflexively rectified Mann's own earlier political aberration. (2) Within its text, it unmasked the pieties of Jacob and the patriarchs and rectified Joseph's youthful narcissistic excesses. (3) Within the realm of Mann's own recollection, it proved the "false authorities" false and it rectified Mann's old acquiescence in the face of misapprehensions which he had "never forgiven himself." The integrity of the art work—personally expressive and culturally objective at the same time—requires that we consider these three levels of analysis together. The discovery of formative effects would seem to rest on this methodological guideline.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 558 -

If the task were to outline a general theory of the formative effect of literary works on authors (and on readers), account would have to be taken of the fact that the third-mentioned thematization of the motif was private, that is, tied to Mann's particular life history and that the first thematization was historically specific to readers who became acquainted with the novels when they were published, rather than 30 years later, and who had one kind of relationship to the historical personage of the author rather than another. But the task is not a comprehensive theory; it is to sketch and support an example that extends existing theory further. Only a brief discussion of the work's effect on the author is therefore offered.

It would be absurd to imply that Mann had committed himself to a tetralogy of 1,800 pages so as to prove his father wrong or to rehabilitate himself as a humanist before a partially skeptical readership. It seems reasonable, however, that the creation of these novels was psychologically sustained by their role in reinterpreting, for Mann himself, the meaning and relevance which his childhood experience had for his current engagements in the object world. The novels could help in this reinterpretation because they were anchored in material which is antecedent and independent of the author; they had, as I have tried to show, an innovative, formative effect on the author to the extent that they were more than self-expressive. Mann was attracted to myths not only because they are perennial, we may suppose, but because writing about them meant to invoke them and to be developed by them as though celebrating a ritual.

When self-expression is taken to be the chief operative factor in artistic-creative efforts, we usually think of the discharge or masking of tension. By contrast, the experiential transformation of the object world on which the present analysis focuses concerns the categories of meaning. The transformation, in Mann's case, can be traced in his biography. The *Reflections* of 1918 had been an earlier, but unsuccessful attempt at resolving the conflict with false authority. The difference between the two attempts is that the later solution free Mann for communication and action in the contemporary world, whereas the former had paralyzed and disqualified

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 559 -

him. The writing of these novels, I suggest, was helpful to him in converting the exile identity from the political expropriation of his

midlife into the moral arrival of his later years.

It would be an error to suppose that he overcame an infantile rebelliousness against false authority. Rather, he intensified his protests against a new and timely target. The threefold vindication of the exile identity by unmasking-and-rectification—in the literary text, in private recollection, and in social relations—probably strengthened Mann's sense of fraternal loyalty, freed him from conflicts about his own creative talents, and energized him for the struggle against tyranny. The former grumbler was installed as herald in all three domains. The severe antinomies of the *Reflections* were abandoned, supplanted by the gentle dreamy mythopsychology of the ancients. The hero was no longer menaced by the encircling enemy. Rather, he sheltered himself in the midst of distractions, safe from a greater distant threat. The shift which occurred in Mann's own ethics can also be interpreted as a displacement of emphasis in identifications. From the exclusionary and inflexible values of his father, he turned to the comprehensive, tolerant authority of his mother. Paradoxically, he preserved himself as symbol and exponent of German culture by integrating his exotic and indulgent vein.

HISTORY AND ADAPTATION

Was he now better adapted? I have dwelt on the exile identity and its transformation by art to show how little is signified by speaking of artistry as adaptive. Mann's art sustained his symbolic relocation in his world. This relocation was nothing so gross or simple as a reconciliation after an altercation, the development of a skill or relationship, the muting of a style, or a "getting along." He was still an exile, still unhappy, still aloof. Exile, the protection of the self as a carrier of culture and humanity, does not correspond to adaptation in the usual sense and may even be opposed to it. By achieving a transformation of his self, Mann made history—both for himself and for us

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 560 -

all. He arose as a moral challenge and offered moral solace. Art formed him to become what we needed, but it formed him through us. Just as exile was not an adaptation, so artistry was not adaptive. If we wish to speak of the benefits provided by the art work, we must analyze it through life history, which lies within general history. Only if artistry, talent, or genius are treated as merely processual terms or formal types, may one say that they are potentially adaptation-producing per se. But this will tell us little about the place and meaning—the benefit—of particular works. The significance of an adaptation concept within psychoanalytic hermeneutics requires a separate investigation.

REFERENCES

- BERES, D. 1959 The Contribution of Psycho-Analysis to the Biography of the Artist *Int. J. Psychoanal.* 40:26-37 [→]
 DEUTSCH, F. 1959 Creative Passion of the Artist and Its Synesthetic Aspects *Int. J. Psychoanal.* 40:38-51 [→]
 EISSLER, K. R. 1968 The Relation of Explaining and Understanding in Psychoanalysis *Psychoanal. Study Child* 23:141-177 [→]
 FLANNER, J. 1941 Goethe in Hollywood *New Yorker* 17 31-42 (December 20).
 FLINKER, M. 1959 Thomas Manns politische Betrachtungen im Lichte der heutigen Zeit s'Gravenhage: Mouton.
 FOUCAULT, M. 1972 A Discourse on Language In: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* New York: Harper & Row, 1972 pp. 215-237
 FREUD, S. 1908 Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming S.E. 9 141-153 [→]
 FREUD, S. 1939 Moses and Monotheism S.E. 23 1-137 [→]
 GREENACRE, P. 1957 The Childhood of the Artist *Psychoanal. Study Child* 12:47-72 [→]
 HARTMANN, H. 1939 Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1958 [→]
 HATFIELD, H. 1956 The Achievement of Thomas Mann *Germanic Rev.* 31 206-214
 HELLER, E. 1955 Thomas Mann's Place in German Literature *The Listener* 53 1014-1016
 KANZER, M. 1959 Autobiographical Aspects of the Writer's Imagery *Int. J. Psychoanal.* 40:52-58 [→]
 KRIS, E. 1952 Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art New York: Int. Univ. Press.
 KUBIE, L. S. 1958 Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. Kansas Press. [→]

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 561 -

- LEE, H. B. 1947 On the Esthetic States of the Mind *Psychiatry* 10 281-306
 LEVEY [LEE], H. B. 1940 A Theory Concerning Free Creation in the Inventive *Arts Psychiatry* 3 229-293
 LOEWALD, H. W. 1975 Psychoanalysis as an Art and the Fantasy Character of the Psychoanalytic Situation *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assoc.* 23:272-299 [→]
 MANN, H. 1915 Zola In: *Die weissen Blätter* 2 1312-1382 Leipzig: Verlag der weissen Bcher.
 MANN, T. 1915 Friedrich und die grosse Koalition In: *Das essayistische Werk: Politische Schriften und Reden* 2 20-65 Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1968
 MANN, T. 1918 *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [Reflections of an Apolitical Man] Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1956
 MANN, T. 1928 Ein Wort zuvor: Mein Joseph und seine Brder Stockholmer Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Thomas Mann: *Reden und Aufsätze* 1 767-770 Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1965
 MANN, T. 1938 *Joseph in Egypt* Vol. 1 New York: Knopf.
 MANN, T. 1943 The Joseph Novels *Atlantic Monthly* 171 92-100
 MANN, T. 1956 Letter to Heinrich Mann of January 3, 1918 In: Heinrich und Thomas Mann ed. A. Kantorowicz. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, pp. 110-114
 MANN, T. 1963 *Briefe 1937-1947* ed. E. Mann. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag.

- MANN, T. 1975 *Mythology and Humanism: The Correspondence between Thomas Mann and Karl Kernyi* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press.
- MAURIAC, F. 1955 Letter reprinted in: *Hommage de la France Thomas Mann* Paris: Editions Flinker, p. 21
- MENDELSSOHN, P. DE 1975 *Der Zauberer: Das Leben des deutschen Schriftstellers Thomas Mann* Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag.
- PARR, A. E. 1926 *Adaptiogenese und Phylogense* In: *Abhandlungen zur Theorie der organischen Entwicklung* Berlin: Springer, pp. 1-60
- RANK, O. 1932 *Art and Artist* New York: Agathon, 1968
- ROTHENBERG, A. & HAUSMAN, C. R. 1974 *Creativity* In: *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science* ed. L. Goldberger & V. H. Rosen. New York: Int. Univ. Press, 3 70-97 [[↔](#)]
- SACHS, H. 1929 *Kunst und Persnlichkeit* *Imago* 15 1-14
- SCHAFFER, R. 1978 *Language and Insight* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 562 -

Article Citation [[Who Cited This?](#)]

Rosenwald, G.C. (1978). The Art Work as a Force in the Artist's Life—*Thomas Mann's Exile and Joseph and his Brothers*. *Psychoanal. St. Child*, 33:519-562

Copyright © 2014, Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing.

[Help](#) | [About](#) | [Download PEP Bibliography](#) | [Report a Problem](#)

WARNING! This text is printed for the personal use of the subscriber to PEP Web and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form whatsoever.