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THOMAS MANN'S WRITINGS ON GOETHE

(With special reference to his novel "Lotte in Weimar")

A thesis presented for the Degree of Bachelor in Letters

by

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Trinity College, Dublin.
THOMAS MANN'S WRITINGS ON GOETHE.

(With special reference to his novel "Lotte in Weimar")

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Chapter I

THOMAS MANN AND GOETHE'S WORK.

Thomas Mann's non-fictional writings form an essential part of his work. In sheer bulk they cannot come far behind the heavy tomes of his long novels. Often they interrupted and delayed his creative work, but at the same time they provided Mann with the necessary stimulus to continue on the always unexpectedly long and hard road to the completion of a work, which he would first envisage as a short story, only to find invariably that the subject demanded a far wider canvas than he had originally thought necessary.

Lessing was the first German writer who was also a great critic. Mann himself has written that it was Lessing "in whom Germany actually experienced something that might be described as the birth of poetry out of the spirit of criticism." (1) Schiller, Heine and Nietzsche are also mentioned by Mann as examples of writers whose creative work depends to a large degree on their critical faculty.

It is to this need for mental relaxation which

(1) Order of the Day, P. vi
Thomas Mann has always found in the study of other writers that we owe his many critical essays. These are by no means confined to his writings on Goethe: taking only one volume of essays ("Adel des Geistes") we find, in addition to four studies of Goethe, contributions on Lessing, Chamisso, Kleist's "Amphitryon", Schopenhauer, Wagner, August von Platen, Theodor Storm, Fontane and Tolstoy. But although Thomas Mann did not begin to direct his attention to Goethe's work until a comparatively late stage in his life he has contributed during the years between the commemoration of the centenary of Goethe's death and the bi-centenary of his birth a number of important studies devoted to the work of Goethe, and also in articles and lectures not specifically concerned with Goethe we find interesting and illuminating references to Goethe's work, which, in turn, tell us a good deal about Thomas Mann himself.

Few poets have given to the world as vast and as varied a literature as Goethe. It is therefore only natural that Thomas Mann has been attracted by and has written on only some of Goethe's works, and has omitted others. Thus Thomas Mann has very little to say about Goethe's lyric. Mann himself is not a lyric poet, and perhaps one has to be a poet in order to be able to
appreciate and discuss poetry. On one occasion, after reviewing the work of a contemporary writer, Mann added that the same writer had also published a volume of verse, but that he, Mann, did not propose to include it in his review, as he does not feel that he has the necessary experience for discussing poetry. (2)

Nor has Thomas Mann written very much about Goethe's dramas, with the exception of "Faust". Indeed, Thomas Mann has no high opinion of the theatre as a means of producing works of literature on the stage. He believes that most of the plays which are admired for their dramatic effectiveness have little literary merit, whereas those dramas which are the work of a poet will fail on the stage.

Thomas Mann relates that the reason why Goethe resigned from his post as director of the Weimar Theatre was because the Duke had insisted on the presentation of a certain melodrama, the hero of which was to be a trained poodle, and Goethe felt that the appearance of such a canine actor would lower the prestige of the theatre. Thomas Mann comments that perhaps Goethe was wrong in objecting as he should have realized that the theatre as entertainment is one thing, and drama as
literature quite another thing. (3) He feels that it is more satisfactory to read Goethe's dramas than to see them performed. On the other hand, in the same essay, published in 1922, he expresses his regret that no theatre in Germany was then able to stage a worthy production of "Faust".

When Mann refers to Goethe's "Iphigenie" and "Tasso" he quite rightly does not apply the criterion of their dramatic effectiveness, for these are works the greatness of which does not depend on theatrical presentation. The significance of both "Iphigenie" and "Tasso" lies for Thomas Mann in the fact that they are examples of Goethe's renunciation which he considers to be one of the most important traits of Goethe's philosophy of life. They are works of renunciation, works of the German's self-denial of what he calls "the advantages of barbarism in favour of civilization and the rights of society". (4)

It is not surprising that we find numerous other references to "Tasso" in particular, for the dilemma of the artist as he faces his environment is a theme which runs through almost all of Mann's work, from "Tonio Kröger" to "Doktor Faustus". Thomas Mann stresses the

(3) Rede und Antwort, P. 51
(4) Adel des Geistes, P. 257
pathological element in "Tasso". He quotes with approval from a letter to Schiller in which Goethe stated that it was difficult to please nowadays without showing interest in what is pathological. (5) Indeed, for Mann, psychology and pathology are inseparable, no clear border line can be established between them. Goethe's Tasso - like the artists whom Mann himself has portrayed - is a pathological case.

It may not be an original discovery to say that elements of Goethe are to be found in the characters of both Tasso and Antonio. But it is at least interesting to note that no one less than Thomas Mann has taken the example of "Tasso" to support his claim that all characters in literature, no matter in how hostile a position they may be mutually placed, are "emanations of the creative artistic ego." (6)

Thomas Mann's Lecture on "Faust", delivered at Princeton University in 1938, is in many ways an original contribution to the densely crowded field of "Faust" research. Mann begins his lecture by reminding his students that in "Dichtung und Wahrheit" Goethe remembers having possessed at the age of twenty-five a secret archive which contained a number of literary

(5) Adel des Geistes, P. 77
(6) Rede und Antwort, P. 9
sketches. The lecturer continues that such a revelation need not surprise us because Goethe liked to keep his literary plans to himself. One of the reasons was that he could not have expected anyone whom he might have taken into his confidence to have the necessary understanding and sympathy for a work of which he himself would have at that stage only a vague conception. But there was a second reason which is of great importance for a true understanding of Goethe as a man and as an artist. Goethe believed that pure art was only for the few, and that the majority of men would only be disturbed and confused when confronted with such a work. Goethe did not wish to "shock" the masses, and for that reason he preferred to keep his plans and sketches to himself. It follows that if we confine our studies of Goethe merely to his work, to what he actually dared to express, then we will not obtain a true idea of Goethe, whose nature was much more intricate and problematic than is generally realized. In his writings on Goethe Mann constantly probes beneath the calm and serene appearance of Goethe to point to the conflicting forces which he had to overcome and harmonize.

In this secret archive there were three fragments
of considerable length and importance. They were "Hans Wursts Hochzeit", "Der ewige Jude" and - "Faust", e.g. the "Urfaust". Mann tries to discover any elements that these three fragments might have in common. With regard to the fragment "Der ewige Jude" Mann suggests that at the back of Goethe's mind there was the theological problem of Original Sin, the question whether Man had inevitably to be a sinner unless saved by Grace over which he could exercise no control or whether he had inherited sufficient goodness to enable him to become master of his destiny, and by constantly striving for the Good and doing worthy deeds was able to earn Grace, if Grace were still needed. The young Goethe already held the latter view, and the words spoken by the Angels at the very end of the Second Part of "Faust", although they were written much later, express the belief of the author of the "Urfaust" and of "Der ewige Jude":

"Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
Den können wir erlösen."

Thomas Mann draws attention to the fact that in the latter fragment the Lord appears in person, as he was to do again in the "Prolog im Himmel", which was first published when Goethe was a sexagenarian.

Mann then proceeds to an examination of the fragment of "Hans Wursts Hochzeit", quoting extensively to show
the great similarity between it and some of the coarser scenes in the "Urfaust", such as the original Student Scene. Thomas Mann gives us evidence of the young Goethe's surprisingly copious use of vulgar language, which he considers to be merely an expression of the general dissatisfaction with life which he then felt and of his desire to revolt against his environment, a revolt of which Faust was to be the symbol.

Mann shows how this fragment gives us a clear indication of the great influence which folklore and the puppet theatre had on Goethe at this time, an influence which is manifest in the selection of the Faust legend for dramatic treatment. The young Goethe modelled his style on the verse of Hans Sachs, and Goethe never forgot his debt and never lost his love for this simple Nürnberg cobbler, this sixteenth century "Meistersinger".

This Lecture is not the only instance when Thomas Mann distinguishes between Goethe's "German" works, among which he includes "Götz", "Faust", "Wilhelm Meister", "Sprüche in Reimen" and "Hermann und Dorothea", and his classical works. (7) There is no doubt that it is the former which Thomas Mann loves best; he himself prefers to give to his own works the imprint of a German background,

(7) Adel des Geistes, P. 123 & P. 273
whether we think of "Buddenbrooks" or of "Doktor Faustus", a work written more than four decades later. Thomas Mann's admiration for the "Faust" verse knows no bounds. It is this purely German poetry which has made "Faust" such a popular work which every educated German knows by heart, and many quotations from which have passed into everyday language. Mann relates how he himself once heard an uneducated man exclaim during a performance of "Faust" that Goethe had really made things very easy for himself for he had used nothing but quotations!

Mann reminds us of the circumstances under which the "Urfaust" was composed. Goethe had just deserted Friederike Brion and his conduct towards her was weighing heavily on his conscience. In order to purge himself of the episode and the memory of it he created the character of Faust. Along with Faust Mann classes Clavigo and Weislingen as two of the other characters, by the creation of which Goethe gave poetic satisfaction for the shortcomings in his life: they being part of him, he inflicted on them the punishment which, he felt, might justifiably have been imposed on him. But they are only one part of Goethe in whom there always dwell the "two souls". The other part of Goethe is portrayed in Carlos who persuades Clavigo of the necessity of
leaving Marie Beaumarchais, and in Mephistopheles who, according to the legend, stipulates in the pact that Faust was not to marry, and Thomas Mann believes that it was this stipulation which first attracted the young Goethe who had just deserted Friederike Brion. For Thomas Mann's interpretation of the Pact with the Devil is that it is a pact with Genius. Goethe, having made a pact with genius, could not marry, for the genius cannot live as other men live. Thus Thomas Mann looks upon Mephistopheles as one of the dual aspects of Goethe: in creating the character of Faust he atoned for his desertion of Friederike; in the character of Mephistopheles he defended it.

Thomas Mann then tells his students about the oldest version of the Faust story, the Faust-book published in 1587 by Spies in Frankfurt. The reason why he mentions it is because even in this early version Faust is brought together with Helena. Thomas Mann who, when delivering the lecture, was still working on the last volume of his tetralogy "Joseph und seine Brüder", that attempt to penetrate into the world of myth with its timelessness, was fascinated by the meeting of two people separated in time by two thousand years. Mann sees a similarity between the two periods, the end of ancient Greece and the Reformation, which thus cancels the span of the
years between. Thomas Mann relates the story of a certain Simon who lived at the beginning of our era and who is mentioned in the Gospels. This Simon, a cheat and magician, claimed to be divine and founded a heretic sect, bringing with him on his wanderings a woman of bad repute whom he called Helena. The pair became known for their magic tricks - it is related that before the Emperor Nero they were the first who ever made the attempt to fly - until in a story of the early Christian period Simon changed his name to Faustus. Fifty generations later, this early story, "Recognitiones", was rediscovered and republished, and once again it became so popular that the name of Faustus was adopted by a magician whose real name was Georg Helmstätter. In order to conform to type, Faustus, alias Georg Helmstätter, associated himself with a woman whose name was Helena, as might be expected. Thomas Mann's comment is that this is not merely a case of imitation or succession, but that here we are faced with what he calls "identity, mythical reoccurrence, reincarnation, annulment of individuality in the type." (8) These terms, although because of the very nature of the subject matter they are necessarily somewhat vague, are nevertheless a key that Mann has given us for an understanding of his own

(8) Adel des Geistes, P. 679
"Joseph und seine Brüder".

We are told by Thomas Mann that originally Goethe had intended to bring Faust into immediate contact with Helena, but that his own experiences triumphed for the time being over the legend, and thus that it is Gretchen, the symbol of his own loves, who is the heroine of the whole of the First Part whereas Helena is introduced only in the third act of the Second Part. Gretchen's part in the drama is much more important than that of Helena, for whereas Faust forgets the latter after his dream, he is never entirely oblivious of Gretchen, and Mann admires the wonderful unity of the drama which opens and closes with Gretchen who reappears at the end as "una poenitentium".

Mann expresses his delight at lecturing on Goethe's greatest work to an audience of young people, for it is a work of youth. How refreshing and how true is such a simple statement after all the dust and cobwebs of much of the Faust literature! It is a work of youth; Goethe the student is speaking through the mouth of Mephistopheles, disguised as a professor; Goethe is making fun of his university, Goethe is enjoying himself. This is a plain fact, but one that is all too often overlooked by the more orthodox literary critics who study every scene and every line of the text as if it all contained
a hidden meaning, forgetting that Goethe, at times, liked to relax and write merely in order to delight himself. It is therefore valuable to observe Thomas Mann's fresh and common sense approach to Goethe's work. A striking example of it is to be found in the seventh chapter of "Lotte in Weimar" when Goethe, in the course of his early morning meditation, is looking forward to writing the "Klassische Walpurgisnacht" which will give him "tremendous fun" and will compensate him for the political scenes which he did not at all enjoy writing. (9) At that stage August, his son, enters and informs him that there are some difficulties concerning the arrangements of a carnival which is to be held at court. The father thinks immediately of a magnificent plan for the entertainment which is to include the appearance of an elephant, on which a winged goddess is to ride and which is to be flanked by two chained figures, Fear and Hope, the significance of which is to be explained by the herald. August objects, saying that it will be quite impossible to provide an elephant for the occasion, and he incurs his father's anger because he produces one objection after another. To-day we all know about the carnival, not because it ever took place at the Court at Weimar, (9) Lotte in Weimar, P. 354
but because Goethe, determined to utilize the idea, found a place for it in the Second Part of "Faust"!

Mann clearly realizes that Goethe wrote certain scenes, such as both the "Walpurgisnacht" scenes, for the sake of sheer enjoyment and he regards them accordingly.

"Faust" is a work of youth, even though Faust himself is made to look rather old in the first scene, but his impatience with his present condition, his yearning for new adventures, his rebellious spirit—these are characteristics of youth.

Faust, as Mann sees him, does not at all conform to the type of the voluptuary. For Thomas Mann he represents a man of the spirit—a term which in his language denotes both the artist and the intellectual—who seeks life which is ever removed from the children of the spirit. If we accept this interpretation of the character of Faust, then Mann's own heroes, from Tonio Kröger to Gustav von Aschenbach, may be said to be possessed of the Faustean urge.

Yet Goethe never portrayed only one aspect of his character, of his soul; if he was a heaven-storming rebel he was also his own critic who ironically watched his own efforts, he was also Mephistopheles. Enthusiasm and irony, Faust and Mephistopheles, they are the "two souls" which abide within Goethe's breast. Mann suggests
that Faust's "ach" in the line
"Zwei Seelen wohnen ach! in meiner Brust"
is half feigned as Faust must be aware that it is
duality which is the basis of all creative effort.
Thomas Mann (as will be shown in the chapter on
"Goethe's Personality") finds the greatest and
noblest example of duality in the figure of Goethe
himself who, throughout his long life, has striven
to find a harmonious synthesis between many opposite
and opposing trends.

One of the most intriguing parts of Thomas Mann's
Lecture is a study of the character of Mephistopheles.
It is not surprising that Mann, the master of irony,
should be fascinated by a being whose very essence is
irony which culminates in the moments when he begins
to question his own existence as when, for example, in
the "Hexenküche" he says:
"Den Bösen sind sie los, die Bösen sind geblähten".
Thomas Mann also points to Mephistopheles' ambiguous
position; it is he, the nihilist, who rebuilds for
Faust the world which the latter has destroyed.

The third last scene of the First Part, "Trüber Tag",
is of special interest to Mann. It differs from
all the other scenes not only because it is left in
prose, but because this is the only instance when Goethe wanted to achieve a social reform through his work. Mann has reminded us repeatedly that Goethe was not and did not want to be a social reformer; Faust's speech in this scene may be looked upon as a condemnation of a system by which infanticides were being treated as ordinary murderesses, but Goethe omitted it when the tragedy was produced in Weimar. We are also reminded that the same Goethe, as minister of state, is said to have signed the death sentence of a young woman who had killed her child and whom even the Duke had wanted to pardon.

Thomas Mann stresses the importance of the "Prolog im Himmel" which, though written much later than most of the First Part, is vital for an understanding of the import of the drama. Whereas Mephistopheles attempts to debase man's noblest deeds and loftiest feelings to evil ways, God raises the lowest instincts of man to a higher plane. Both the Lord and Mephistopheles take part in every human action, but in the "Prolog" we are left in no doubt that it is God's interpretation of life and of love which will be triumphant, for Mephistopheles is but a servant of the Lord.

Mann ends his Lecture on "Faust" by emphasizing Goethe's tolerance and love for the human being.
"Es irrt der Mensch, so lang er strebt",
these words spoken by the Lord in the "Prolog im
Himmel", epitomize for Mann that tolerance and that
true humanity in which lies for him the greatness
of "Faust".

The reader of Mann's Lecture is struck by the
fact that this is the work of what the Germans like
to call an "investigator" ("Forscher"), the work of
a scholar. But at the same time it is far more than
a scholarly contribution to the whole field of Goethe
criticism, it is also an individual interpretation.
Anatole France once said that he was writing about
himself "à propos de..." and there followed the name
of the author whose work he happened to want to discuss.
To some degree this must be true of every literary
critic, for in criticism the individual factor cannot,
and indeed should not be eliminated. Thomas Mann is
not satisfied with merely investigating the text at
its various stages and its sources; he is concerned
with the interpretation of these facts, and that
interpretation will be a personal one. Mann says
somewhere that he can write about Goethe only from
his own personal experience, and this applies also
to his literary criticism. (10) Elsewhere he asks

(10) Adel des Geistes, P. 105
whether it was not Goethe who said that language could not really express what was individual and specific, and that therefore the writer could be understood only if the reader shared his views, thus stressing the importance of a common link between the experiences of author and critic. (11)

It has been noted that in the Lecture Mann states that Faust's pact with Mephistopheles was to be interpreted as a pact with genius, and that therefore, like so many of Thomas Mann's own heroes, Faust estranges himself from the world of the ordinary man and its laws. A different, but equally personal interpretation of the pact is given by Mann in an article entitled "Germany and the Germans", written in 1945. (12) Here the pact symbolizes for him the willingness of the German to sell his soul to the powers of darkness and of tyranny in order to conquer the world. Thus the problem of Faust's pact, like the whole drama, is open to countless interpretations. Whenever we re-read the work we find something new in it, and therefore it is only to be expected that such an avowedly subjective critic as Thomas Mann will look upon the work from different angles. There can be little doubt that it was at least partly his preoccupation with Goethe's "Faust" that

(11) Rede und Antwort, P. 355
(12) Die Neue Rundschau, Oct. 1945, P. 7
prompted Thomas Mann to write his own "Doktor Faustus".

Seeing that Thomas Mann has written hardly any lyrical poetry at all, that his one and only play he himself has referred to as "those dramatic-undramatic 'Fiorenza' dialogues", (13) that his literary fame rests entirely on his novels and short stories (hardly an adequate rendering for what the "Novelle" stands for), it is not surprising that his main interest in Goethe's work lies in the novels - "Werther", "Wilhelm Meister" and "Die Wahlverwandtschaften".

Thomas Mann has once distinguished between three types of the novel. (14) Admittedly this was written at a time when Mann was more concerned with guarding the ivory tower of the novelist lest his art be lost in the battle of political controversy than in establishing canons of literary criticism, but nevertheless this division of the novel into three classes can still be regarded as valid. The first type of the novel which he considers is what he calls the "democratic" the social reform novel, the novel that has a propagandistic message. On a much higher level he sees the "individualistic", the autobiographical novel, the novel which describes the individual's

(13) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 745
(14) Rede und Antwort, P. 65
initiation into life. This he considers to be the German contribution to the novel. Then there is the third and undoubted the greatest kind of novel, the only type of novel that can be truly called "popular" because it has captured the people's imagination so that it can be compared to the Bible. Such works are "Robinson Crusoe", "Don Quijote" and "War and Peace".

Goethe's novels do not come under the first category, for they are not concerned with social problems nor do they preach remedies for them. It is true that in "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre", a work of Goethe's old age, there is a vision of a new world and of man's place in society, but Goethe would have been the last person to desire anything in the nature of a revolution.

Nor does Thomas Mann place Goethe the novelist on the highest rung of the ladder, in the company of those few great novelists who have succeeded in creating works which have enriched the literature of every people. Goethe belongs to the second class of novelists who write about themselves, about their progress in the ceaseless process of self-development, of "Bildung" which is the name that the Germans have used in order to describe this novel as a "Bildungseroman".

At least two of Thomas Mann's novels, "Der Zauberberg"
and "Joseph und seine Brüder", may be looked upon as modern examples of the "Bildungsroman" or "Erziehungsroman" as Heinrich Mann has called the latter work. (15) In addition to these two novels, mention must also be made of "Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull" ("Confessions of the Swindler Felix Krull"), that attempt to parody this type of novel which has, nonetheless, exercised a great influence on Thomas Mann. Goethe's first novel, "Werther", and his first drama, "Götz", Mann points out, were his most popular works. (16) Never again during the sixty years for which he was to continue to produce his works did he achieve such an immediate success with the general public. It may be noted that at the same age of twenty-six Thomas Mann finished "Buddenbrooks" which has remained his most popular work. Death is as inevitable in "Buddenbrooks" as it is in "Werther", and this is not surprising for, as Thomas Mann has himself observed in an essay on Schopenhauer, young people are much more intimately acquainted with death and know much more about it than their elders because they know more about love. (17) It is therefore significant that these two works of the young author end in unmitigated tragedy. In all their

(15) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1945, P. 8
(16) Adel des Geistes, P. 161
(17) Adel des Geistes, P. 374
later works we find that even at the moments of greatest despair there is an element of hope. We think of the end of the First Part of "Faust" when we learn that Gretchen is "saved", and of the "Wahlverwandtschaften" which ends on a vision of the dead lovers awakening beyond the grave; of the "Zauberberg" where Hans Castorp is dismissed with the word "farewell", or even of "Doktor Faustus" where both Adrian Leverkühn's symphonic cantata, the "Lamentation of Doctor Faustus" and the utter ruin of Germany, of which it is the symbol, are viewed with the "hope beyond hopelessness", a "miracle even greater than faith". (18)

Thomas Mann accounts for the tremendous success of "Werther" by suggesting that the world was just waiting for such a work, which mirrored the general feeling of its time, its "mal du siècle". (19) Its effect was that of a spark exploding a powder-barrel, for the world was ready for a work which would give free rein to its feelings and longings. Mann reminds us of the fact that a number of young men committed suicide after reading "Werther". They evidently believed that they had to turn poetry into reality whereas the author of "Werther" (18) Doktor Faustus, P. 745 & P. 773 (19) Corona, P. 188
had transformed reality into poetry and had thus found catharsis and freedom. Werther killed himself, but Goethe remained very much alive.

In his essay on "Werther", published only in 1941, but which must have been written very much earlier, Thomas Mann examines the transformation from fact to fiction as achieved by Goethe. He does not question the sincerity of Goethe's feelings of joy and sorrow in his relations with the real Lotte and Kestner, but he does suggest that all the time Goethe must have realized that in this relationship there was to be found the subject for a novel and that thus his undoubtedly poignant emotions must have mingled with utilitarian observations.

What Thomas Mann has to say on the autobiographical element of the novel in general is illuminating in view of his own literary method. He says that in order to create a death-bound character who cannot live because he is either too good or too weak for life, the writer has only to give a self-portrait, omitting that creative power which enables him to do so, and which leads him on towards the mastery of life through art. This applies to Goethe as it also applies to Thomas Mann himself. The works of both writers hold up the mirror to their lives, to life itself, for, as Thomas
Mann has said, the writer is a man whose life is symbolical. (20)

It is therefore the duty of the writer to make himself the centre of his studies. "Love of oneself", Mann has written, "is the beginning of all autobiography; it is something stronger, deeper and more productive than self-complacency." (21) As Mann points out, Goethe realized that the artist has to be an egoist for he had planned a novel on the life of an artist which he was going to call "The Egoist". This study and artistic expression of the ego has a very beneficial effect on the writer for, as Mann says, he cannot help believing that evil and repressed experiences are set free and purified by being expressed in words. (22) But by thus purging himself of his emotions, the writer will have contributed also to the moral education of his readers. Goethe was never a moralizing poet, but by enlarging man's knowledge of himself, he helped us to overcome the hidden powers of darkness. In this sense Mann calls Goethe a "liberator". (23)

Thomas Mann stresses also Goethe's psychological insight. As an example he mentions the fact that Lotte says that she wants Werther to love one of her own

(20) Rede und Antwort, P. 347
(21) Rede und Antwort, P. 296
(22) Rede und Antwort, P. 10
(23) Adel des Geistes, P. 124
girl friends. But as she thinks of each one of them in turn, she does not find any of them good enough for her Werther. Mann suggests that in "Die Wahlverwandtschaften", which is a much subtler work, Goethe would merely have left it at that without adding, as he does in "Werther", a comment to the effect that Lotte felt thus, without being consciously aware of it, a vague longing to possess Werther for herself. Elsewhere Mann has referred to Goethe as "a psychologist of the first order, from 'Werther' to 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'" (24) Remarks such as these show us that Thomas Mann does not approach Goethe's work with the awe due to a classic, but that instead he applies his own standards and he finds that Goethe the novelist has indeed stood the test of time, a period of more than a century during which the novel has developed to such an extent as to have become the most important literary genre.

Mann regards Werther's longing to break away from the world of limits and restrictions into the infinite and boundless a very Faustean urge. On the other hand, in "Lotte in Weimar" Mann shows us that the old Goethe was thoroughly ashamed of having introduced into the novel a social motive; Werther's
desire to rebel against society and his hatred of the nobility are now scorned upon as being immature and as not corresponding to the truth. (25)

Mann concludes his "Werther" study by referring briefly to the one and only occasion when Goethe and Lotte (now Frau Hofrätin Charlotte Kestner) met again after the Wetzlar episode. This meeting took place in 1816, when Lotte visited Weimar. Although they had not seen each other for forty-four years, Goethe was none too pleased with her visit, and she expressed her disappointment at the meeting in a letter to one of her sons, from which Mann quotes. This apparently trivial incident of the meeting between two former lovers fascinated Thomas Mann who expressed the opinion that it would provide very suitable material for a study of the old Goethe. He himself was to realize this ambition in "Lotte in Weimar".

When Thomas Mann speaks of "the two great monuments of Goethe's life" (26) he means "Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister". It is a pity that Mann has never written a study of "Wilhelm Meister" as he has of Goethe's two other great novels, "Werther" and "Die Wahlverwandtschaften". Indeed, in his "Epilogue" to the latter

(25) Lotte in Weimar, P. 320
(26) Adel des Geistes, P. 191
work he tells us that originally he intended to write on "Wilhelm Meister", but that the selection of "Die Wahlverwandtschaften" is no disloyalty to the sphere of "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre", for it is well known that the former was first conceived as an interlude in the long epic masterpiece. (27)

But Goethe had deceived himself as to the scope of his theme, as will sometimes happen to an author when a work insists on enlarging its horizon beyond all expectation. Thomas Mann here speaks from experience, for both "Buddenbrooks" and "Der Zauberberg" had been first envisaged as short stories, and even "Joseph und seine Brüder", a much later work, was originally to have been a one-volume novel and not the tetralogy that it has become. Yet although we do not possess a study by Thomas Mann devoted exclusively to "Wilhelm Meister" we find scattered through his essays many references to this work which show that for him this novel is one of Goethe's most significant achievements.

He is less concerned with the "Lehrjahre", which he has called a novel of the theatre, adding that the theatre has indeed been honoured by having been made the central theme of this novel (28), than with the

(27) Past Masters, P. 100
(28) Die Neue Rundschau, Sept. 1929, P. 300
"Wanderjahre", its sequel. These two novels move on an entirely different plane. The "Lehrjahre", although published only in 1795-96, had been planned and partly written as early as 1777; it is concerned with the fate of an individual, with a young man's apprenticeship to life. But the "Wanderjahre" (1821-29) is focussed not so much on the individual as on society. The transition from the "Lehrjahre" to the "Wanderjahre" is analogous to that from "Faust - Part One" to "Faust - Part Two". Goethe has renounced his intense individualism in favour of a study of the social organism and of the duties of each of its members towards his fellows.

Goethe has learned that the individual is after all not self-sufficient, that he needs society even as he is needed by the community, and when Thomas Mann speaks of Goethe's self-conquest which such a realization implies, we think of his own progress along these lines. Thomas Mann, too, had been a fervent individualist, concerned only with the fate of the individual. But gradually he began to realize that the individual had to play his part in society, and that for the writer it was no longer merely a question of the life and death of one man, but of the continued existence of mankind. "Der Zauberberg"
marks a turning-point in Thomas Mann's life; he himself has referred to it as "a book in which he renounced much that he had loved, many a dangerous fascination and temptation". (29) In both works, "Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre" and "Der Zauberberg", the individual is seen for the first time by the respective author in relation to society.

Thomas Mann quotes from the passage in "Die Wanderjahre" when Wilhelm Meister declares his intention to study anatomy. (30) This he regards as significant because these words express Goethe's own belief that the artist should have a thorough knowledge of the human body. Mann approves of this view and asks whether anyone could deny that it was very useful for the artist to be able "to see below the epidermis". Thus he finds in Goethe a justification for the use of his detailed knowledge of the science of medicine in "Der Zauberberg".

It is therefore not surprising that Thomas Mann should have been attracted by "Die Wanderjahre", quite apart from his avowed weakness for the works of writers who have become old, to which he confesses in a study of "The Old Fontane". (31) It is, however, purely for

(29) Bemühungen, P. 272
(30) Adel des Geistes, P. 283
(31) Rede und Antwort, P. 108
the sake of its ideas, and not for its story or style, that Thomas Mann admires "Die Wanderjahre", a work to which J. G. Robertson has referred to as "the most formless and fragmentary of all Goethe's books". (32) Weigand states the position with regard to "Die Wanderjahre" even more bluntly when he writes that "'Die Wanderjahre' are shunned by most readers as a notoriously dull performance, because of the utter lack of tension in the handling of the very meagre plot", but he adds that "it may be that perhaps more than one reader who has come under the spell of the 'Zauberberg' has been induced by it to return to the 'Wanderjahre' and rediscover in it for himself a wealth of mature thought and profound insight that has lost none of its vitality despite the lapse of a century since its appearance." (33) Perhaps it is therefore not surprising that the author of "Der Zauberberg" should be the most enthusiastic admirer of "Die Wanderjahre". Indeed, it is only in the twentieth century when psychology has invaded more and more the realm of literature that the German novel with all its diffuseness has come into its own.

Of "Die Wahlverwandtschaften" Mann has said that

(32) Robertson: A History of German Literature, P. 446
(33) Weigand: Thomas Mann's Novel "Der Zauberberg", P. 26
it is not the greatest German novel but that it is the noblest ever written in that language. (34) He admires Goethe for having succeeded in blending to perfection form and feeling, clarity and suggestion. He states that even to-day the boldness of using the symbolism of chemistry in order to describe a very delicate passionate relationship between four persons has not been sufficiently recognized.

Its theme, as is the case in so many of Goethe's other works, is renunciation. It is Goethe's "most Christian" work for Ottilie and Eduard have to die. It is true that Goethe tried to mitigate the tragedy by ending the novel with a vision of the two lovers reunited beyond the grave, but, as Mann has pointed out elsewhere, Goethe added this consolatory sentence, in which he himself did not believe, because he did not wish to distress his readers too much over the fate of the protagonists. (35)

It has already been noted that Mann has great admiration for the subtle psychology of this novel. Thus, in an essay on Schopenhauer, he quotes as an example the passage where Goethe makes Eduard say after his first meeting with Ottilie, with whom he

(34) Die Neue Rundschau, Apr. 1925, P. 392
(35) Adel des Geistes, P. 153
had immediately fallen in love, that she was a very entertaining person to which his wife retorts that she had never opened her mouth once. (36)

Another reason for Thomas Mann's predominant interest in Goethe's prose work is his admiration for Goethe's style. He appreciates the discreet boldness of Goethe's language which, even when it expresses daring ideas, never loses its dignity, measure and moderation. "Everything is uttered in the middle register and volume; it is measured throughout, entirely matter-of-fact. And yet this is the most marvellously compelling matter-of-factness the world has ever seen." (37) The language is precise and exact and yet full of rhythmic charm. It is the work of a conscientious writer who never leaves a subject without having analysed it in detail. Both Goethe and Thomas Mann represent what the latter once named German "Meistertum" when he attempted to find a formula for what constituted the basis of the German novel. (38) In their case "industry becomes profundity, exactness becomes greatness". But in spite of certain resemblances between the prose style of Goethe and Thomas Mann it would be wrong to deduce that these are due to Goethe's

(36) Adel des Geistes, P. 395
(37) Adel des Geistes, P. 121; also Lotte in Weimar, P. 85
(38) Die Neue Rundschau, 1931, P. 608
influence. Thomas Mann's style was already formed when he wrote his first novel, "Buddenbrooks", at a time when he had not yet thoroughly studied the work of Goethe.

Goethe had achieved not only complete mastery over language; with him it became also a means of artistic expression. Thomas Mann considers Goethe's prose to be poetry. Once he asked the rhetorical question whether "Werther" and "Die Wahlverwandtschaften" were not poetry. (39) Elsewhere he has pointed out that beginning with Goethe, language has greatly developed so as to keep in step with the vastly expanding sphere of consciousness. (40) Prose, he says, is the language of the conscious, poetry the language of the unconscious. Nobody can deny, he declares, that poetry has been more and more superseded by prose, but, on the other hand, prose has become poetical. He believes that this development which began with Goethe is producing a language which is a combination of prose and poetry.

Thomas Mann attaches great importance to Goethe's scientific and medical studies which form part of his all-absorbing "interest in man". (41) Thus architecture, sculpture, painting, mineralogy, botany and zoology

(39) Rede und Antwort, P. 29
(40) Bemühungen, P. 252
(41) Adel des Geistes, P. 282
represented for Goethe merely different aspects of man's world which should all be studied. Goethe who took an intense interest in almost every branch of human activity would have had little patience with the modern tendency towards specialization. Mann believes that Goethe would not have welcomed the tremendous advance which Science has made since his time. In an essay, which Mann wrote while crossing the Atlantic, he felt disturbed by the thought that the vast ocean could now be crossed, through the invention of artificial means, in an unnaturally short time. (42) He continued by stating that Goethe, in spite of his interest in all branches of natural science, would have approved of his scruples, for Goethe had not liked microscopes and telescopes as they only artificially increased our perceptive faculty. Goethe did not divorce science from the arts because for him science was still part of his all-embracing humanism, and not a means for transcending it into an age of mechanism and robots. "The proper study of man is mankind". (43) Goethe was interested in science only as long as the study of its phenomena told him more about man.

(42) Adel des Geistes, P. 603
(43) Adel des Geistes, P. 625
Apart from his studies of Goethe's works and his many valuable incidental remarks on Goethe's art which are to be found throughout the volumes of essays, articles and speeches which he has published, further evidence of Thomas Mann's deep understanding and appreciation of Goethe's work is to be found in the many apt quotations which we meet in his work. He quotes not only from well-known works, and above all from "Dichtung und Wahrheit", but also from the lesser known letters and remarks made to Eckermann and others. It is interesting to note that it was Goethe's opinion that the Joseph story should be told in greater detail which encouraged him during his long work on "Joseph und seine Brüder", (44) and that another quotation from Goethe ("dass du nicht enden kannst, das macht dich gross") was his favourite motto while he was writing "Der Zauberberg". (45)

Thomas Mann stresses, above all, the diversity of Goethe's work, and the synthesis of opposites that he achieved and which is the essence of great literature. For Thomas Mann the question does not arise whether Goethe is a Classic or a Romantic, for he is both. (46)

He has succeeded in combining in himself both what is

(44) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 763
(45) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 761
(46) Adel des Geistes, P. 392
classic and what is romantic, and this is one of the reasons for his greatness. Similarly Goethe is both "naïv" and "sentimentalisch" (using Schiller's terms) for he is a wonderful example how "pure naïveté and mighty intellect can go hand in hand". (47) Thus Thomas Mann does not attach any one label to the poet whose work he has studied so closely, for Goethe stands high above any school or movement. He has achieved that complete synthesis which represents unity in diversity.

Goethe himself has said that the individual work does not matter so much compared with the totality of the work. (48) The question is not whether one can praise one work and condemn another, the only really important consideration is the general trend of a succession of works and the effect of this accumulation of effort on the individual himself and on his contemporaries and eventually on posterity. Thomas Mann has not merely studied the various works of Goethe; even more important for him than all the literature is the man who has revealed himself in these manifold works.

(47) Corona, March 1933, P. 279
(48) Adel des Geistes, P. 163
Chapter II

THOMAS MANN AND GOETHE’S PERSONALITY.

At the beginning of a lecture which Thomas Mann delivered in 1932 on the subject of "Goethe als Repräsentant des bürgerlichen Zeitalters" he recalled the impression that had been made upon him years previously when he had visited for the first time Goethe's birthplace, the house at the "Hirschgraben" in Frankfurt. (1) In spite of the awe with which this occasion inspired him, he felt as if he were at home, as if he had known this house all his life. Goethe's home bore a striking resemblance to his own early environment, to that house in Lübeck which he has described in what he has called "the book of his life", in "Buddenbrooks".

This reaction to his visit to Goethe's home is characteristic of Thomas Mann's approach to Goethe. Others may think of Goethe as an Olympian, but for Thomas Mann Goethe has always been a very human person and he can speak of him only with that love and familiarity that exists between those who share a similar background. On another occasion Mann said that he was no Goethe but that, to quote Adalbert

(1) Adel des Geistes, P. 104
Stifter’s words, he felt that in some way at least he belonged to his family. (2)

There is one word which immediately accounts for that intimacy which Thomas Mann experiences when he speaks of Goethe; the common link between them is that they are both "Bürger". This is a word which defies translation, as does, for example, the English term "gentleman". A "Bürger" might be defined as a person belonging to the middle-classes, but it means much more than that. To the German mind, "Bürger" denotes a solid tradition of hard work and great industry, of wealth (if any) that has been acquired with tremendous care; it stands for respectability and conservatism. Both Goethe and Thomas Mann have frequently expressed their pride in belonging to this class of the "Bürger". Goethe's well-known lines:

"Wo käm die schönste Bildung her
Und wenn sie nicht vom Bürger war"

have often been quoted by Thomas Mann (3) who, again and again, reminds us of his own origins which lay in the "Bürger" tradition. (4)

Yet although Thomas Mann is the scion of a long established "Bürger" family he also attaches great

(2) Bemühungen, P. 148
(3) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 74; Adel des Geistes, P. 141
(4) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 90 ff
importance to the fact that his mother's background was an entirely different one: she had been born in South America. Mann considers this combination of the German and the foreign, the northern and the southern elements to be of such significance for his own development, that many of his heroes, notably Tonio Kröger and Thomas Buddenbrooks, are also descended from a foreign mother or else they marry a lady from the exotic south. He therefore does not fail to point out that Goethe, too, had a non-German grandmother. (5) Even if Goethe's parents were both German, there was a great difference between them in their temperament; the father was a stern and rather a forbidding man, whereas the mother, who was much younger, was a very cheerful person. Goethe has himself summed up his parents' different qualities and his debt to them in lines that Mann quotes in his "Sketch of My Life" in order to estimate the respective influence on him of his own parents: (6)

"Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,  
Des Lebens ernstes Führen,  
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur  
Und Lust zu fabulieren."

It is not surprising, therefore, that Thomas Mann should feel at home in Goethe's surroundings and

(5) Lotte in Weimar, P. 328  
(6) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 732
regard him with that naturalness with which one sees others who belong to one's "milieu".

Given Goethe's background, Thomas Mann's main interest lies with the old Goethe, the Goethe of the nineteenth rather than of the eighteenth century. In the many essays that Thomas Mann has written it is almost always the old Goethe whom he has in mind, and the hero of "Lotte in Weimar" is Goethe at the age of sixty-seven. Old age has always fascinated Thomas Mann. He takes a special interest in that period of a man's life when he is wisest and most mature and, at the same time, experiences in ever increasing measure the phenomenon of decay and the approach of death, stages in the cycle of human existence which Thomas Mann likes to describe so well.

Reference has already been made to his partiality for great works which were written when the author had become an old man. Such works are of special interest to Thomas Mann because of "their secrets, their symbolism which has already become mechanical, their magic ceremonial, their dreaming anaemia, their majestic fatigue." (7) The greatest wish of his author-hero in "Der Tod in Venedig", Gustav von

(7) Rede und Antwort, P. 108
Aschenbach, is to reach old age, as he has always believed that only the artist to whom it had been granted to be productive at all stages of human life could be regarded as "veritably great, comprehensive and truly venerable". (8) Similarly Goethe, the hero of the novel written twenty-eight years later, believes that greatness can be realized only in and with old age. "A young person may be a genius, but he can never be great." (9)

Yet this ripe old age, which Mann likes to describe so well, was not reached without great danger to his life. Contrary to the common conception of Goethe as the very incarnation of good health and longevity, Thomas Mann insists on the fact that Goethe was not a healthy person. For it is one of Thomas Mann's fundamental beliefs that genius cannot be normal and healthy. He reminds us of Goethe's long and grave illness after his student days in Leipzig and that the bursting of a blood vessel suggested a tubercular tendency. (10) It was a victory of the will over the body that Goethe succeeded to live until he was eighty-two.

Thomas Mann enjoys describing the appearance

(8) Novellen, P. 746
(9) Lotte in Weimar, P. 294
(10) Adel des Geistes, P. 133; P. 276
and surroundings of the old Goethe. Goethe's clothes were neat and tidy just as the clothes of a "Bürger" should be. For Thomas Mann the important question is not: what did Goethe do? but rather: how did he live? how did he eat and drink and sleep? how did he look after himself? These are questions which are of great and personal interest to Thomas Mann and he answers them in abundant detail in his Goethe novel. But already in his earlier lectures Thomas Mann showed his interest in the everyday habits of Goethe. He tells a little story which, he says, has helped him to bring Goethe, the man, nearer to him than many a revelation of a loftier nature. (11)

It is the story of Martin Friedrich Arendt, a scholar and explorer, whose table manners were not all that might be desired. One day, as a guest at a luncheon in Goethe's house, he caused some embarrassment by lifting his plate to his mouth in order to be able to relish the better the excellent gravy. Yet Goethe was not at all perturbed by this strange way of eating, and with great naturalness he encouraged his guest to continue consuming the tasty food at his ease. This homely little story serves Thomas Mann as an example to show that below the outer appearance of

(11) Adel des Geistes, P. 111
pompousness and aloofness Goethe was and remained a very human person.

For one who has given to the world such lofty works of literature, Goethe was a surprisingly practical man. True to his "Bürger" inheritance he kept his feet firmly planted on the ground. Mann refers to him, not without some admiration, as a "vigilant, distrustful and keen businessman" (12), quoting as an example the very careful timing of the first edition of "Hermann und Dorothea". Mann has also pointed out that Goethe did not refuse to accept medals and decorations from different and not always friendly sovereigns. (13) Goethe's retort to Eckermann on this subject that they help to ward off many a blow is another illustration of Goethe's very practical sense.

Goethe remained a "Bürger" even as an artist; he applied to his art the same industry, workmanship, patience and conscientiousness which is characteristic of the "Bürger", no matter what his occupation. The "Bürger" does his duty - that is his main task in life. Thomas Mann admires Goethe because for him he is the supreme example of the artist who has always done

(12) Adel des Geistes, P. 112
(13) Rede und Antwort, P. 74
his duty. It has been said that "l'art pour l'art", when applied to the German author, means to do one's duty for the sake of doing one's duty. (14) Thomas Mann is himself an indefatigable worker; one need read only his "Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus", the diary which he kept while working on his latest novel, to marvel at his truly remarkable tenacity and his will to do his duty which enabled him to complete this work in spite of serious illness, in spite of many other tasks which he also considered to be his duty and in spite of his deep and heart-searching concern for the struggle of conflicting ideologies which was going on in the world around him.

Mann does not believe that inspiration is the result of intoxication; inspiration means freshness, daily work after regular rest. (15) A recent observer has spoken of "his rhythm of work and rest, as reliable as Kant's, whose daily walks, as is well known, regulated the clocks of the citizenry". (16) No one can therefore better appreciate than Thomas Mann Goethe's love for order, his "bürgerliche Ordnungsliebe" (17), and it is this quality which has enabled him to make

(14) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1925, P. 573:—
Strich: Thomas Mann und die bürgerliche Zivilisation
(15) Rede und Antwort, P. 377
(16) The Stature of Thomas Mann, P. 35:—
Borgese: Wanderlied
(17) Adel des Geistes, P. 113
such astonishing use of a single life's span.

If Goethe had been as inspired and spontaneous as he is often thought to have been, he would have needed none of the "Bürger's" application and industry. But Thomas Mann has recognized that Goethe or, at least, the old Goethe, was a slow and hesitant writer, that in his case genius did, indeed, mean "an infinite capacity for taking pains". In "Lotte in Weimar" Thomas Mann draws the portrait of a Goethe whose genius was by no means as spontaneous and as impromptu as he would have liked the world to believe. His secretary, Riemer, tells Lotte, not without some glee, how he discovered that a certain statement about the Germans which Goethe had made in the course of a conversation with him, had not been thought of on the spur of the moment as it had then appeared, but had actually been written down, word for word, by Goethe in a letter to Zelter one week previously. (18)

In another part of the book Goethe thinks of the many travel accounts and works on philology which he has read or will have to read before he can finish a work like "Westöstlicher Divan". (19) He realizes

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(18) Lotte in Weimar, P. 76
(19) Lotte in Weimar, P. 335
that people would be surprised if they knew of all the work and research which has to be done in preparation for a small volume of poetry which gives the impression of having been divinely inspired. Furthermore Goethe knows that when confronted with really intelligent persons he cannot rely on his brain for it works too slowly.

All the time Thomas Mann endeavours to show that Goethe, although one of the greatest poets and men that ever lived, yet remained a human being and experienced many of the difficulties which are the lot of mortals. In one of Mann's early short stories we find the remarkable words that a writer was a man for whom writing was a more difficult task than it was for other people. (20) It must have been a comfort for Thomas Mann to think that this statement might apply even to Goethe.

Thomas Mann admires Goethe's great patience in producing his works. Often he would carry a plan in his head for years before putting pen to paper. There is hardly a work which Goethe did not conceive in his mind for a very long time before it was finally completed. He is a poet, as Mann has said, who has lived all his life on his youth. (21) He was not a man

(20) Novellen: "Tristan", P. 515
(21) Adel des Geistes, P. 115
who had always new ideas or projects; in the main he utilized ideas which can be traced back to his youth. Mann can appreciate this caution of the writer who prefers to write only after years of mature thought. With reference to his own "Joseph und seine Brüder" he has written that "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." (22)

Another example of Goethe's conscientiousness as a man and as an artist is to be found in the economy which he practised in the selection of his material. Mann has said that one does not become a writer by imagining things, but by perceiving them. (23) Goethe did not need to invent his story out of thin air, he found abundant material in his own experiences and observations. Again the parallel with Thomas Mann suggests itself immediately, all of whose works are autobiographical in character.

The life of a poet who realizes that many of his experiences will form the basis of new works is not an easy or natural one. In addition to his

(22) The Stature of Thomas Mann, P. 223
(23) Rede und Antwort, P. 337
awareness of the symbolical nature of his life, Goethe was also conscious of the "representative" function of the poet, of his heavy responsibilities towards his fellow-men who looked to him as a guide and example. Thomas Mann takes a very similar view of the writer's mission and he has stated that his life has been influenced by Goethe's conception of the artist as a representative of the people. (24)

This feeling of responsibility towards the world around him may account for the pompousness of the old Goethe and for his "stiffness" towards visitors who came to visit him from all parts of the earth. Another explanation which Thomas Mann advances for Goethe's reservedness is that although he was well aware of his incomparable superiority over all those with whom he came into contact, he was, at the same time, a very shy and easily embarrassed person. (25) Mann admits that it is surprising that a man of Goethe's stature and fame, who in Weimar received innumerable distinguished guests, should have been afraid of meeting people.

But it was not only Goethe who did not feel at ease in the presence of others. We know from many

(24) Perl: "Thomas Mann, 1933-1945", P. 26
(25) Adel des Geistes, P. 129
contemporary accounts that an audience with Goethe was usually rather a chilling experience for the visitor. Thomas Mann has made the disappointment of such a meeting the theme of his Goethe-novel which will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. In a much earlier study Thomas Mann has related the reactions of the actor Friedrich who had occasion to visit both Goethe and Schiller. (26) This man found that Schiller, in spite of his acute physical suffering, was a much kinder and more congenial person than Goethe, a meeting with whom gave one a "moral chill".

Another visitor has observed that Goethe was tolerant without being kind. ("Er ist tolerant ohne milde zu sein.") (27) Thomas Mann asks us to consider this description which appears to be a paradox for tolerance is always associated with kindness, it is a product of love. But this "tolerance without kindness", this "icy neutrality" is an alarming, almost inhuman attitude which can be understood only if we consider Mann's favourite antithetical terms, Nature and Spirit.

Goethe, for Thomas Mann, stands for Nature

(26) Adel des Geistes, P. 202
(27) Adel des Geistes, P. 252
personified. This is not an original discovery for Schiller had already identified Goethe with Nature. In his essay "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung" he distinguishes between two kinds of poets, those "who are Nature" (i.e. Goethe) and those who search for Nature. ("Der Dichter ist entweder Natur, oder er wird sie suchen.")

Nature is indifferent because she is all-inclusive. Nature consists of both good and evil or, rather, these terms cannot be applied to her because she is above all moral values. Goethe is the follower of Spinoza who believed in the completeness and necessity of all existence, in a world which is free of ultimate causes or ultimate purposes and where both evil and good have their place. (28) It is only the spirit which knows of moral values; it believes that the good can be separated from and exalted over the evil in man. This idealistic faith gives greater happiness to those of the "Spirit" who cherish it than can ever be experienced by those who belong to "Nature" and share her indifference towards the vain attempt to divide the indivisible into good and evil. The "children of the Spirit" can attain peace of mind, but "Nature does not give peace, simplicity,

(28) Adel des Geistes, P. 214
purposefulness; she has an element of dubiousness, of contradiction, of negation, of all-embracing doubt... She permits no definite decision for she is neutral. She confers on her children an indifference and deep problems which give rise to torments and maliciousness and not to happiness and serenity. (29)

Thus Chancellor von Müller wrote about Goethe's "tendency towards negation and his sceptical neutrality" (30) and another contemporary said that "out of one eye there looked an angel, out of the other a devil, and all his words represented deep irony concerning all human things". Thomas Mann quotes these observations because he wants to refute the common picture of Goethe as a happy and harmonious child of nature.

Those who belong to Nature are bound by her laws, their life and their actions are "natural" which means that they are inevitable. Nature's child is not a free agent, his conduct has been determined for him. Thus Goethe did not know that freedom of action and of thought which has been given as compensation to the men who are not Nature's children. Mann tells us that Goethe did not believe in free will because he felt that he himself was not free. "Pantheistic necessity

(29) Adel des Geistes, P. 127
(30) Adel des Geistes, P. 127; also P. 246
was the essence of his existence." (31)

Nature's ways are inscrutable whereas the spirit is guided by moral laws. Thomas Mann is repeatedly perturbed by one of Goethe's favourite phrases, the one when he speaks of "inborn merits" ("angeborene Verdienste"). (32) These two words are self-contradictory, together they form a paradox. How, asks Mann, if there is any justice, if our moral laws are true, can merit be "unmerited", be inborn? He has to refer to Goethe's belief that merit or fortune are beyond logical or human speculation, that some men are mysteriously blessed with it. Goethe realized that he himself was one of these men. There is a conversation which Mann likes to record because it illustrates Goethe's awareness of being a "favourite of the gods". (33) The subject of the conversation was Bentham, the English philosopher and legal reformer. It was suggested to Goethe that if he had been born in England he would hardly have avoided being a radical, fighting against social abuses. To this he retorted, with the mien of Mephistopheles, that it was altogether unthinkable that he should have fought against social

(31) Adel des Geistes, P. 225
(32) Adel des Geistes, P. 230 & P. 362
(33) Adel des Geistes, P. 132 & P. 231;
also: Goethe und die Demokratie, P. 9
abuses as he himself would have thrived on them. If he had been born an Englishman, he would have been a rich duke or rather a bishop with a yearly income of £30000 Sterling! To this his interlocutor replied that this was all very well, but supposing that Goethe had by chance not won the first prize but had drawn a blank, as there were, after all, innumerable blanks. Goethe's answer: "Not everyone, my dear fellow, is destined for the first prize. But do you believe that I would have been foolish enough to draw a blank?"

To be a "favourite of the gods" was undoubtedly a great blessing, and Goethe's realization that he was one of the chosen ones inspired him with both pride and humility. Thomas Mann quotes those lines from Faust's speech to the Earth Spirit in which Faust refers to the animals, the birds and the fish as "his brothers" because he believes that these words indicate Goethe's own close relationship with Nature. (34) Goethe possessed the occult power of understanding some of the secrets of Nature. As an example Thomas Mann mentions Goethe's uncanny sensitivity for factors concerned with the climate; thus in his bedroom in Weimar he sensed in some mysterious way the earthquake which at that moment was occurring at Messina. (35)

(34) Adel des Geistes, P. 281
(35) Adel des Geistes, P. 277
It was this intimate understanding of Nature which was at least partly responsible for Goethe's interest in almost every branch of science, from geology to optics, from botany to zoology.

Goethe was one with Nature, and this fact accounts for his pantheism. God is to be found in Nature, but Nature is indivisible. Abraham (in Thomas Mann's "Der junge Joseph") discovered God when he realized that God represented not only what was good but that He represented everything. ("Er war nicht das Gute, sondern das Ganze.") (36) This is a very Goethean conception of the deity.

The "child of Nature", the "favourite of the gods" soon learns that Nature can bestow sublime happiness and utter dejection. He experiences all the joys and all the sorrows, as Goethe has expressed it in lines which Thomas Mann has quoted more than once: (37)

"Alles geben die Götter, die unendlichen, 
Thren Lieblingen ganz:
Alle Freuden, die unendlichen,
Alle Schmerzen, die unendlichen, ganz!"

Goethe has indeed been blessed, but he has received a double blessing, the blessing from above, and the one from the "depths below". This biblical blessing was incorporated by Thomas Mann not only in his Joseph novel,

(36) Der junge Joseph, P. 55
(37) Rede und Antwort, P. 296; Adel des Geistes, P. 193
but also in "Lotte in Weimar". It is, as Riemer explains it, "the double blessing of the Spirit and of Nature"; the supreme task consists in establishing harmony between these two spheres. (38)

In an essay written in 1938, when Thomas Mann had almost completed "Lotte in Weimar" and was about to begin work on the last volume of "Joseph und seine Brüder", he himself referred to the identical blessing received by Joseph and by Goethe. (39) He had once been a Wagnerite, "but", he continued, "it is very likely in consequence of riper years that my love and attention have more and more fixed upon a far happier and saner model - the figure of Goethe, with that marvellous combination of the daemonic and the urbane which has made him the darling of mankind. It was not lightly that I chose for the hero of that epic which is becoming my life's work a man blest with blessings from the heaven above and from the depths beneath'. Jacob, the father, pronounced this blessing upon Joseph's head. It was not a wish that he might be blessed, but a statement that he was so, and a wish for his happiness. And for me it is the most compendious possible formulation of my ideal humanity. Wherever

(38) Joseph der Ernährer, P. 277; Lotte in Weimar, P. 88
(39) Order of the Day, P. 165
in the realm of mind and personality I find that ideal manifested as the union of darkness and light, feeling and mind, the primitive and the civilized, wisdom and the happy heart - in short, as the humanized mystery we call man - there lies my profoundest allegiance, therein my heart finds its home. Let me be clear: what I mean is no subtilization of the romantic, no refinement of barbarism. It is nature classified; it is culture; it is the human being as artist, and art as man's guide on the difficult path towards knowledge of himself."

At the beginning of the passage quoted above Thomas Mann refers to the influence which Wagner has exercised over him. Wagner was only one of the "stars" of the constellation of three stars (the "Dreigestirn") which presided over Thomas Mann's youth. The other two men who held a spell over his early life are Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" he wrote that "his life stood and always will stand under the magic sign of that constellation of three stars because all three, Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, were not only writers but also musicians, indeed, especially musicians". (40) An influence as powerful as that

(40) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 306
exercised by these three men can never be obliterated. After his Goethe novel and the completion of the Joseph story Thomas Mann wrote "Doktor Faustus", a work which he himself has called his "Nietzsche novel". (41) Even more significant is the fact that the whole novel and its symbolism is based on music, an art beloved and, at the same time, held suspect by Thomas Mann. But although Goethe has not supplanted in Mann's mind the examples of Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche he has shown to Mann the dangers inherent in these three philosophers and musicians. It is true that Thomas Mann never adopted without reservations the philosophies of any of the three men. There were only certain aspects of their work which he could admire; other parts of their philosophy he had to reject. Mann realized, for example, that Nietzsche was not to be taken literally; he admitted that many of his ideas, such as his writings about the "blond beast", caused him great embarrassment. (42) In the case of Wagner, Mann has aid that his admiration is not devoid of suspicion. (43) And commenting on his introduction of Schopenhauer's philosophy at the end of "Buddenbrooks", Thomas Mann

(41) Entstehung des Doktor Faustus, P. 34
(42) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 741
(43) Adel des Geistes, P. 410
has made the significant remark that it is possible to make use of the thoughts of a philosopher and yet, at the same time, not to think as he has thought. (44)

Goethe, on the other hand, could be loved without reservations. Not, indeed, that Thomas Mann envisaged Goethe as a perfect being; he has never venerated Goethe as if he were a demigod. On the contrary, Thomas Mann's writings on Goethe and his evocation of his personality have always stressed the essentially human elements of his character, and it would be incongruous to think of Mann, the ironist, as a hero-worshipper. In fact, he likes to dwell on some of Goethe's foibles which make him all the more human. Goethe could be unjust, as Mann stated in an essay on Kleist's "Amphitryon", (45) and he was human enough to be jealous of some of his contemporaries, notably of the Romantics. (46) It was his selfishness which ruined the life of his son August. But in spite of some elements in his character of which one could not approve, Goethe represents the forces of light and of life which are strong enough to overcome the forces of darkness and of death which had held such a spell over Thomas Mann, and to sublimate them.

(44) Adel des Geistes, P. 375
(45) Ibid. P. 59
(46) Ibid. P. 164
Goethe, as has been seen, knew about the "depths below" and he knew about death. He knew that "except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit", and his own magic formula "Stirb und Werde", which looks upon death not as an end in itself but as the harbinger of new life, is an indication of his knowledge of and answer to that fascination which death can have.

In Thomas Mann's earlier works, death stood for finality; "Buddenbrooks" is the story of the decay of a family, and once its last male member has died, the end has come. But already in "Der Zauberberg", another "Bürger", Hans Castorp, begins to learn that death and life are not such opposites as they seemed to Thomas Buddenbrook. In one of the great scenes of the novel Hans Castorp loses himself on the snow-clad mountains only, however, in order to find a new vision. He ponders over "death or life - disease, health, - spirit and nature", and he sees that these are no longer contradictory terms, for man is the master of opposites which he can harmonize. (47) And in "Joseph der Ernährer" we read that "sympathy represents a meeting of death and of life... a leaning towards

(47) Der Zauberberg, II, P. 258
death alone produces rigidity and gloom; a leaning towards life alone produces dull insipidness." (48)

It was the "far happier and saner model", it was Goethe who led Thomas Mann from his preoccupation with decadence, disease and death to a realization that the human race and every member of it can, like a phoenix, rise from the ashes of what is dead and old and outworn to a new existence which will be all the more fruitful for the past experiences.

Every man cherishes, consciously or subconsciously, a favourite idea concerning life which is the source of secret delight. Thus Thomas Mann introduces his statement that "this charming idea was for Joseph the dwelling together of body and mind, of beauty and wisdom, and the reciprocal mutually strengthening consciousness of each other." (49) In "Tonio Kröger" and in all of Mann's earlier works, body and mind exist in mutually exclusive spheres. But even then mind had been yearning for body; the artist, the intellectual longed for the simple life of the ordinary blue-eyed person. Later Mann was to show that the latter, too, could experience a desire for the mind. His story about "The Transposed Heads" ("Die vertauschten Köpfe")

(48) Joseph der Ernährer, P. 277
(49) Der junge Joseph, P. 31
is symbolical of this mutual longing.

Goethe is the supreme example in Thomas Mann's view of a man who has achieved this synthesis of body and mind, of nature and spirit. "A noble encounter of spirit and nature on their yearning way to each other - that is man" (50) - these are Thomas Mann's words and they indicate Goethe's supreme achievement.

There must no longer be two distinct realms, that of nature and that of the spirit, but they must give way to a "third realm" in which they both blend. The "third realm", "das dritte Reich" is a term which Thomas Mann used long before the National Socialists adopted it to mark the era of their rule. (51) The fusion of the two realms is to be achieved by the artist. But the artist can mediate between the two spheres only if he knows, understands and sympathizes with both sides. This inevitably produces irony, for what is irony but the ability to see both sides of the question.

Goethe knew that truth was to be found only in the realization of the duality of all things. Truth cannot be expressed without apparent contradictions. It is the artist's function to analyse and then to

(50) Adel des Geistes, P. 274
(51) Bemühungen, P. 251;
(52) Die Neue Rundschau, Apr. 1925, P. 401
synthesize such contradictions, contrasts, opposites. The artist, although endowed with the knowledge of the extremities of both spheres, must not himself indulge in extreme tendencies. His is a dangerous path for he must not evade evil if he wants to overcome it.

Goethe, who was one of "Nature's children", realized that Nature which was not controlled was dangerous. He was conscious of the need for renunciation. It has already been noted that Thomas Mann stresses the fact that the theme of renunciation pervades all of Goethe's classical works. In his Epilogue to "Die Wahlverwandtschaften" Mann asks whether anybody doubts "that there were in Goethe potentialities of a greatness wilder, more exuberant, more perilously 'natural' than any to which his instinctive self-control allowed him to give rein?" (52)

The theme of renunciation which is to be found in Goethe's work after he had left behind him the "Storm and Stress" period is regarded by Professor Strich as a characteristically German theme. He suggests that whereas Italian Classicism was born of the feeling for form of the Italian and was of aesthetic origin, and French Classicism arose from the Frenchman's worship of reason and was of national...
origin, German Classicism, on the other hand, was the product of the German's ethical need for renunciation. (53)

"Entbehren sollst du! sollst entbehren!" - this command to renounce is no less prominent in the work of Thomas Mann than in that of Goethe. Thus the poet Martini, one of the characters in "Königliche Hoheit", says that "renunciation is the poet's pact with the muse, it is the basis of the poet's power and of his dignity; for him life is the forbidden garden, the great temptation to which he yields at times, but never for his salvation." (54) Martini stands for the "spirit" rather than for "nature", and he goes to extremes. Life is undoubtedly difficult and dangerous, but Goethe, the greatest artist whom Thomas Mann has ever portrayed, boldly entered the "forbidden garden" and thus showed that nature and spirit can dwell together, and that only when they meet and harmonize can true humanity be found.

This process was not an easy one and Goethe's supreme achievement loses much of its significance unless we are aware how hard he strove throughout his life in order to accomplish this precarious balance. Modern interpreters of Goethe's life and personality

(53) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1925, P. 572
(54) Königliche Hoheit, P. 231
rightly stress the problematic elements beneath the apparently natural harmony on the surface. For Thomas Mann the difficulties and conflicts which Goethe experienced and overcame in his life have been of the greatest importance. A mere "favourite of the gods" would not have held the same spell over him.

Goethe was an artist, but he was also a "Bürger", and he succeeded in both these worlds, which Thomas Mann had for a long time believed to be mutually exclusive. Goethe was a "child of nature", but through renunciation he acquired that moderation which the Germans call "Kultur". Goethe — and this is the measure of his personality — combined in him opposite and often opposing potentialities. In his work he portrayed the duality of the human being, the "two souls" of Faust; but in his own life he achieved, as the result of a noble and unceasing effort, an exemplary synthesis. Thus Thomas Mann was able to say that he does not "even accept the necessity of the contrast of popular robustness and good manners - Goethe has outgrown this contrast and reconcile it. He represents well-mannered civilised strength and popular robustness, urbane Daemonism, spirit and blood at once, namely art... With him Germany made a
Goethe is the great example to which the Germans should look. That is why, in Thomas Mann's view, Goethe's life is of even greater importance than his work. Thomas Mann has said that to-day we must think thus: "He is an artist.—He is more than that, he is a man." (56) And he has quoted Goethe who has said: "To-day the important question is what a man weighs in the scales of humanity. All the rest is vanity." (57) It is because Goethe represents humanity in its noblest form that he has become an example and a guide for Thomas Mann at a time when the very concept of humanity had and has to be defended.

(55) The Listener, June 12, 1947, P. 896
(56) Mass & Wert, Nov./Dec. 1938, P. 144
(57) Achtung Europa, P. 124
Chapter III

THOMAS MANN AND GOETHE'S VIEW OF GERMANY.

Thomas Mann has written a great deal on the subject of Goethe's view of Germany. Indeed, his earliest references to Goethe are concerned with Goethe's attitude towards his country. They are to be found in that remarkable volume of political essays, entitled "Reflections of a Non-Political Man" ("Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen") which Mann wrote during the First World War.

Until the outbreak of that war, in other words, until Thomas Mann had reached the age of forty, he had shown no interest whatever in politics. This in itself is a significant fact for, as will be shown more explicitly, it is one of the characteristics of the cultured German that he completely ignores all things political. This early non-political-mindedness accounts for the apparent paradox of the title of Mann's first collection of political essays.

It was only with the greatest reluctance that Thomas Mann entered the arena of politics. He found some consolation in the fact that Goethe, who had also wanted to be "non-political", had been forced, also at the age of forty, to try and come to terms with a political upheaval of such magnitude that it
could not be ignored. (1) Goethe's writings and pronouncements on the subject of the French Revolution were carefully studied by Thomas Mann when, 125 years after that event, the First World War broke out.

Yet, although Thomas Mann intensely disliked having to concern himself with politics and stated that he hoped that soon "his soul would be cleansed again of all contamination with politics" (2), he realized that he was living in a momentous epoch, and he quoted from Goethe who, too, had fully recognized that in spite of many disadvantages it was nevertheless a privilege to live in a time when great events were taking place in the world. In the course of a conversation with Eckermann Goethe mentioned the Seven Years' War, the American War of Independence, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era as some of the events which he had witnessed in his lifetime and which had enabled him to gain a more complete view of life. (3) Mann continues to quote Goethe's prophetic remarks concerning the future, commenting that they applied word for word to the outlook of the present situation. It is a grim vision, for Goethe fears that the world will not find peace again. For

(1) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 189
(2) Ibid. P. 508
(3) Ibid. P. 480
Thomas Mann, who could not fail to share this view, it was nevertheless a comfort to realize that Goethe, too, had to face a future of such unrest and uncertainty, after having first believed that he was living in a period of great stability.

In his "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" Thomas Mann felt obliged to answer those German authors who, unlike himself, had always been very vocal in the propagation of their political views, a group of writers which included most of the Expressionists, among them his own brother Heinrich. He looked upon his part as a defensive one; his only aim was to counter certain propagandistic views which he considered to be unworthy of a German writer. He himself did not wish to take the initiative; in the Introduction to this collection of essays he wrote that he was no leader and did not wish to be one (4) and elsewhere in the work he stated that he himself was no enthusiastic patriot. (5)

A study of the development of Thomas Mann's political thought, beginning with the outbreak of the First World War, is a very instructive commentary on the events of this most critical period in the

(4) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. XXIII
(5) Ibid. P. 136
history of Germany and the world. In the work under consideration Thomas Mann opposed those of his contemporaries who attacked their own country and allied themselves with Germany's enemies. Only two decades later he himself was to leave his country and during the Second World War he was to become one of the bitterest opponents of its rulers.

The main theme of the "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" is the conflict between "Zivilisation" and "Kultur". "Zivilisation" for Thomas Mann stood for foreign ideologies, for worship of politics for their own sake, for the socialization and communication of the life of every individual; whereas "Kultur" represented freedom for the individual to develop his potential qualities, it meant respect for German "inwardness" ("Innerlichkeit"). It was when the "Zivilisationsliteraten" claimed to find support for their unpatriotic activities in Goethe's attitude towards his country in the preceding century that Thomas Mann proceeded to his counter-attack. It was at this stage that he began to take a deep interest in the life of Goethe and its significance for posterity.

The "Zivilisationsliteraten" pointed approvingly to Goethe's contempt for German nationalism, to his negative attitude during the War of Liberation. Thomas
Mann, however, maintained that it was a fallacy to conclude from Goethe's position in 1813 what his views might have been a century later. Mann refuted the validity of an analogy between the two wars, stating that the enemy in 1813, Napoleon Bonaparte, had been of an entirely different calibre from the enemy in 1914. (6) Goethe had admired Napoleon, as earlier he had admired Frederick the Great, because Napoleon was a genius, a unique phenomenon, a truly daemonic personality. Goethe was essentially an aristocrat, an aristocrat of the mind who admired greatness wherever he found it, even if among the enemies of his people. But the twentieth century is the century of the "common man" and not of the great man, and Thomas Mann, writing at the period of the First World War, said that it was impossible to imagine a man of Goethe's stature living at this time when, in the name of Equality, greatness was being suppressed by mediocrity.

Even if the "Zivilisationslitteraten" praised Goethe's hostile attitude to nationalism and were able to point to his admiration for Napoleon, yet at the same time they could not condone his lack of interest in politics. Thus Thomas Mann was indignant

(6) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 142
at their criticism of Goethe because Goethe had said that a work of art can and will have a moral effect, but that to demand a moral aim from the poet was to spoil his work. Mann reminds us that Goethe had himself foreseen that in spite of his life's work he would be attacked because he had refused to join a Jacobin club. (7)

Goethe's indifference towards the sphere of politics was very typical of the "Bürger". Thomas Mann asked himself whether the anti-political attitude of the Germans was due to Goethe's example or whether Goethe had himself been influenced by that tradition. (8) Whatever the answer might be, it was a fact, said Mann, that Goethe's dislike of politics, of revolutions and of any doctrines advocating a more "progressive" political or social system, was a fundamentally German attitude, which he, in turn, helped, for better or for worse, to perpetuate. Goethe's fear of the French Revolution was a very German fear, which, as Thomas Mann later saw in retrospect, was experienced again by himself when, during the First World War, he was faced with the coming German Revolution. (9) Still

(7) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 192
(8) Adel des Geistes, P. 124; Die Neue Rundschau, Oct. 1945, P. 13
(9) Adel des Geistes, P. 126
more recently Mann has pointed out that all the German revolutions - the Peasants' revolt of 1525, the one which Goethe witnessed in 1813, the Revolution of 1848 and the one in 1918 - had failed miserably because Germany was never ripe for democratization. (10)

For Thomas Mann, the state and politics were something technical rather than spiritual, a machine which has to be looked after and supervised by the experts. This is one of the key passages of the "Betrachtungen". (11) Its sentiment is very German, for the educated German has a horror of the "amateur", and he likes to leave everything which does not belong to his specialized subject, to his particular "pigeon hole", to the expert, the "Fachmann". Mann looked upon politics as one of life's pigeon holes which, for the first forty years of his life, he was perfectly happy to ignore. He was quite content to leave politics, the government of his country, to the expert, as long as he himself was not in any way troubled or restricted by the State. The State was a necessary evil, but Thomas Mann had at that time no reason to feel that it encroached upon his personal liberty. Politics, the State, he claimed, would never again be able to

(10) Deutsche Hörer, P. 58
(11) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 132
subjugate the spirit. "There would never again be a political force which would gag the mind and send it to the stake." (12) This is a literal translation of Thomas Mann's words written during the First World War. It is tragic irony to look back upon them, for less than twenty years later, on May 10, 1933, the very stake, the very "Scheiterhaufen", of which Thomas Mann had said that it would never again be witnessed, reappeared in all too literal a form, when the National Socialists burned in public the first batch of books of which they did not approve. Three years later, in 1935, Thomas Mann himself was finally included among the "undesirable" authors and his books were burned by the state. In 1933, a government had usurped power which assumed control not only over the lives but also over the minds of every citizen and which ruthlessly eliminated any person who failed to conform to its authoritarian doctrine and who refused to become what was called "gleichgeschaltet". Thomas Mann's vision of horror of the glorification of the State and its teachings with the subsequent liquidation of the individual and the world of the mind had become all too true. But this government was not one of democrats and parliamentarians, to whom
(12) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 360
Thomas Mann had earlier attributed these ideas of the absolute supremacy of the State; on the contrary, it was a government which was, like him, although for very different reasons, opposed to any form of democracy. Thomas Mann's attitude of "laissez-faire", his desire to leave politics to the expert and not to drag them into the life of every citizen, remained possible only as long as there was a government which left the individual free, giving him above all freedom of thought and of speech.

Goethe had lived in a time when the intellectual freedom of the individual was not threatened, and he could therefore afford to remain aloof from the political scene. Mann pointed to the example which Goethe has set when, in the course of a conversation with Eckermann about Uhland, the "political" poet, he expressed a warning that the politician (in Uhland) would destroy the poet. (13) Yet Thomas Mann was to learn that conditions had changed since Goethe's day. In 1945 he wrote that it had been a tragic error on the part of the Germans not to include the political element in their view of life, and that this was largely due to the example of Goethe. (14)

(13) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 93
(14) Die Neue Rundschau, Oct. 1945, P. 13
In the introduction to "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" Thomas Mann stated that he was absolutely convinced that the German people would never be able to embrace democracy, simply because it would never like politics, and that the much abused authoritarian state was and would always remain the only form of government which was proper and suitable for the German people, and the one which, at heart, it really wanted. (15) These words were quoted by Edmond Vermeil, Professor of German at the Sorbonne, in his "Doctrinaires de la révolution allemande 1913-33", in which he pointed to Thomas Mann as a spiritual precursor of National Socialism. Thomas Mann's record during the Hitler régime, his genuine and unequivocal opposition to it which he voiced even before 1933, demonstrates beyond a shadow of doubt that when he wrote about the authoritarian state, he did not envisage a régime like the National Socialist one which, far from leaving the individual free to pursue his quest for knowledge and self-knowledge, which was Thomas Mann's great aim in life, enslaved him, body and mind, in its all-embracing pernicious doctrine.

On the contrary, the author of "Betrachtungen

(15) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. XXXIV
eines Unpolitischen" believed that it was Democracy which would destroy the individual and his liberty as, for the sake of equality, it would attempt to make all men equal and take away from them the liberty to be "not equal", to be different. It was because he cherished the liberty of the individual which was the "Bürger's" greatest heritage, that he was opposed to any attempt to spread the sphere of politics. Thus he wrote that he hated politics and the faith in politics, because "it makes man arrogant, doctrinaire, callous and inhuman". (16) He did not believe in a formula for the "human ant-hill", the "human beehive", he did not believe in the "république démocratique, sociale et universelle"; he did not believe that mankind was destined for happiness or that it even wanted happiness; he did not believe in faith, but rather in despair which opens the way to redemption; he believed in humility and in work, work on the self, the highest, most moral, most severe and serene form of which was art. These lines, written during the First World War, might well have been written by Goethe.

In another place in the same work Thomas Mann justified his opposition against the coming of "Democracy" by saying that the Germans will never

(16) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 560
accept what he believed to be the democratic faith, namely that the state was the ultimate aim and meaning of human existence and that it was man's duty to be merged in the state and that politics make men more human. (17) In the light of subsequent events it is tragic that Thomas Mann was so completely misinformed about the real purpose and meaning of "democracy". Yet it must be remembered that it is a term which, in the past as in the present, was and is being used and abused by parties of vastly differing political complexions. If an impartial observer were to frame a definition of "democracy", merely by looking for a common denominator among all the parties which called or call themselves "democratic", his task would indeed be a difficult one. Even in "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" Thomas Mann observed that when two people speak about "democracy", it was very probable that they meant two very different things. (18) It is regrettable that he did not carry this observation to its logical conclusion then and that he did not ask himself even then whether his definition of Democracy as being the rule of mediocrity, for mediocrity and by mediocrity, whose main function it was to

(17) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 116
(18) Ibid. P. 262
permeate the life and thought of every citizen with political doctrines, was the only, or even a true conception of the term.

Thomas Mann's scepticism towards the ideals proclaimed by the advocates of Democracy (he used French or English phrases to show how un-German this movement was) (19) found support in Goethe's attitude a century earlier. Thus Thomas Mann quoted from the "Italienische Reise" where Goethe had stated that "freedom and equality can be enjoyed only in the frenzy of a madman". (20) Goethe certainly did not believe in Equality, for any policy designed to aim at such an utopian ideal would necessarily tend to exalt the mediocre rather than the great and the daemonic. As for Freedom, he, Goethe, had all the freedom that he wanted and he felt most unsympathetic towards those who were constantly clamouring for it. He would have heartily agreed with Grillparzer's lines of exasperation:

"Herr Gott, lass dich herbei
Und mach' die Deutschen frei,
Damit doch das Geschrei
Danach zu Ende sei."

These lines were actually quoted by Thomas Mann in "Rede und Antwort" (21); they are typical for the age

(19) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 560
(20) Ibid. P. 577
(21) Rede und Antwort, P. 241
of the "Bürger", of which Goethe had been the greatest representative and which Thomas Mann is probably the last stalwart apologist.

The author of the "Betrachtungen" realized that he was fighting a losing battle. Later he once referred to this work as "a retreat in great style, the latest and last running-fight of the German-Romantic 'Bürger'". (22) He had no illusions about the hopeless stand which he was making. In "Rede und Antwort", a volume consisting, in the main, of non-political essays, published four years after the "Betrachtungen", he expressed his realistic view of what the future would have in store for his country. He wrote that it was difficult to believe that the symbol of "Weimar" would have any meaning in the future. The future will not belong any more to education, culture, inwardness, the "beautiful soul". (23) Every one of these words ("Bildung, Kultur, Innerlichkeit, die schöne Seele") embodies the essence of Goethe.

Two mottoes are to be found at the beginning of the "Betrachtungen"; the first is from Molière: "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?", and the image of Thomas Mann as a galley slave - the galley

(22) Forderung des Tages, P. 186
(23) Rede und Antwort, P. 365
being the arena of politics - is a striking one. The second motto comes from Goethe's "Tasso" and it says: "Vergleiche dich! Erkenne was du bist." Throughout the work - probably the one among all his works which he found the most difficult to write and certainly the one which has most frequently been misunderstood - he followed this precept and, as has been seen, he liked to compare his sentiments with those of Goethe, above all, because he was conscious of the existence of a close affinity between them. After the "Betrachtungen" were published, he continued and deepened his study of Goethe so that he might learn to know himself better.

It was this knowledge of his spiritual ancestry which enabled him the better to adapt himself to the changes which were occurring around him. Thus he wrote in "Pariser Rechenschaft", an account of his visit to Paris in 1926 as an unofficial "representative" of the Weimar Republic, that to know and understand the historical phase which the "Bürger" had then reached implied already a "stepping-aside" from that way of life, a vision of a new age. One underestimates the "knowledge of oneself" ("Selbsterkenntnis") if one regards it as being "passive, quietistic and pietistic". No one, Thomas Mann continued, having
in mind the quotation from "Tasso", remains entirely what he is when he learns to know himself. (24)

Thomas Mann, realizing that the traditions which he had inherited were no longer in harmony with the world around him, a fact which gained importance only when he left the "ivory tower" for the "galley", decided that, while preserving the best of these traditions, he must try to reconcile them with new ideas. Again it was Goethe's attitude towards the coming and victorious Democracy which was for him "of the greatest personal and practical interest". (25) Goethe, old though he was, had tried to understand the dawn of the new age and it was especially in the "Wanderjahre" that Mann found an example of Goethe's astonishing comprehension and prophetic vision of the new epoch. Similarly, Thomas Mann, a younger man, faced reality and supported the Weimar Republic, the idea of which had once been so alien to his mind. But as Goethe had left behind him, in his work at least, his period of intense individuality, the period of "Werther" and of "Faust" Part One, and had in his last works, the "Wanderjahre" and "Faust" Part Two, emphasized the importance of the individual

(24) Pariser Rechenschaft, P. 112
(25) Das Problem der Freiheit, P. 10
merging in society and working for the common weal, so Thomas Mann, too, recognized the need for concerning himself not only with the individual but also with his environment, with society. He saw that by himself the individual was not a complete entity, that human beings could not live in a vacuum, and that, since man had to live in society, it was important that the relationship between them should be as harmonious and fruitful as possible.

Thomas Mann supported the Weimar Republic because he hoped that it might succeed in grafting the doctrines of Democracy on to the old German stock of individualism and liberalism. He had learned that Democracy re-affirmed the rights and liberties of the individual at the very time when their existence was threatened by authoritarian parties. It has been said that if the Republic had not been there, "Thomas Mann would have invented it for himself". (26) Thus it can be claimed that, in spite of all the derogatory things which Thomas Mann had said about democracy - arising, as we have seen, out of a misinterpretation of the term - he was, at heart, always a democrat as Goethe had been a democrat, if by "democracy" we mean a society in which the freedom of the individual is respected.

(26) Atkins: German Literature through Nazi eyes, P. 75
It must be remembered that both Goethe and Thomas Mann (the latter until the outbreak of the First World War) knew only that freedom, and not its negation. Thomas Mann was to learn by bitter experience that the freedom of the individual was not something to be taken for granted. He witnessed forces which were hostile to those fundamental human rights which had become accepted as the heritage of a free people, and he perceived the need to defend them. The Weimar Republic was never secure, and in 1933 it had to give way to the National Socialist régime. It was because Thomas Mann clearly saw that National Socialism was the enemy of the humanism for which Goethe had stood, that he became opposed to it from the very beginning.

It would be quite erroneous to believe that Thomas Mann's opposition against National Socialism began only in 1933 when that party seized power. He was one of those few Germans who clearly recognized the implications of fascism from the very beginning, and in his essays and lectures, he — the once "non-political" man — did his best to warn his countrymen of the dangers of this new force which he believed to be thoroughly evil. Thus in his study on "Goethe and Tolstoy", which has the significant sub-heading
of "Fragments concerning the problem of humanity" and which was published in 1922, he stressed the fact that the National Socialists were violently opposed to the humanism of Germany's classical literature. (27) In the following sentence he called their ideology "romantic barbarity". This juxtaposition of the terms "classical" and "romantic" is highly significant. For Thomas Mann, before he experienced the humanism of the classical period, which was to have a dominating influence on his life and work, had been an enthusiastic admirer of Romanticism. But he realized the dangers of an excess of Romanticism and he saw the need for overcoming it. This "self-conquest" ("Selbstüberwindung") was a most difficult task, and in the course of a lecture which Mann gave on Nietzsche in 1924, he said that he realized how difficult it was for a German, in spite of the example of Nietzsche and of Goethe himself, to look upon the romantic as something which was "hostile to life or diseased". (28) Goethe had succeeded in blending and harmonizing the romantic and the rational in his person; Wagner had failed to do so. Both Goethe and Wagner stand for Germany. They are the greatest

(27) Adel des Geistes, P. 309
(28) Bemühungen, P. 334
names for "the two souls in our breast", as Thomas Mann once said. (29) Another way of looking at this dual aspect of what is called "German" would be to demonstrate the contrast which exists between Luther and Goethe. Luther, as Thomas Mann sees him, was all strength and power, whereas Goethe had succeeded in combining Luther's force with the humanistic serenity of Erasmus. (30) But Thomas Mann insists that there are not two Germanies, a "good" Germany and a "bad" Germany, but that it is one country with a rich and varied heritage which it must learn to harmonize so that it forms a living humanism, and this must be done by every succeeding generation following the example of Goethe. (31)

In the same essay on "Goethe and Tolstoy" Thomas Mann pointed to the Socialist Party as the party of the hour. But he wanted to see a socialism which would not be divorced from the best traditions of Germany's classical age. Socialism, he said, will not have fulfilled its national duty before, to express it bluntly, "Karl Marx has read Friedrich Hölderlin". (32)

Thomas Mann wanted a form of socialism which was based on humanism. In a radio message which he sent

(29) Adel des Geistes, P. 478
(30) Die Neue Rundschau, Oct. 1945, P. 9
(31) Die Neue Rundschau, Oct. 1945, P. 20
(32) Adel des Geistes, P. 310
to Germany during the Second World War from the United States, his new home, he advocated a "social humanism" as an alternative to the so-called "National Socialism" which Mann detested because it brought the term "socialism" into bad repute and because of its excessive nationalism. (33) Here again, Thomas Mann was able to appeal to Goethe's authority. Although Goethe was not a nationalist, Mann suggests that the greatest German poet will also have been the most German. (34) Elsewhere he contrasts Goethe who was "unpatriotic but German to the core" with Schiller, the "international patriot". (35) This remarkable antithesis must be considered as merely one manifestation of the difference between "Nature" and "Spirit". Goethe, being a "child of Nature", was a realist who saw the world as it was. "Mankind" was for him no abstract or idealistic term; it stood for men of flesh and blood. These he loved for it was he who has said that the mere sight of a human face could heal him from melancholy. (36) But, on the other hand, he viewed such abstractions as "humanity" and "patriotism" with deep cynicism. Thus Goethe was able to say that "the burning down of a farm was a real calamity and catastrophe whereas the 'downfall

(33) Deutsche Hörer, P. 111
(34) Adel des Geistes, P. 272
(35) Adel des Geistes, P. 123
(36) Adel des Geistes, P. 130; P. 268
of the fatherland' was nothing but a phrase." (37)
As has been seen, Thomas Mann believes that such a non-political attitude was, at one time at least, characteristic of the cultured German. It is significant that even in "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen", when Thomas Mann felt obliged to defend his own country, he admitted that "his relationship towards 'Humanity', the abstraction, was somewhat doubtful; but that man himself had always claimed his entire interest and that it had been said that his human beings had been observed and presented 'with love'". (38)

Schiller, on the other hand, was an idealist for whom Mankind was an abstract conception which he endowed with dignity and beauty. We have only to remember the first few lines of "Die Künstler":

"Wie schön, o Mensch, mit deinem Palmenzweige
Stehst du an des Jahrhunderts Neige
In edler, stolzer Männlichkeit,
Mit aufgeschloss'nem Sinn, mit Geistesfülle,
Voll milden Ernst's in tatenreicher Stille,
Der reifste Sohn der Zeit..."

to realize to what an extent Schiller was an idealist. Mann believes that this faith in humanity is more characteristic of the French than of the Germans. That is why Mann calls Schiller an "international patriot", whereas Goethe is "unpatriotic but German

(37) Adel des Geistes, P. 122
(38) Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, P. 460
to the core."

The freedom to write objectively and to criticize one's country used to be one of the greatest privileges of the Germans, wrote Thomas Mann in 1938; it was in Germany that the words "Patriotism corrupts history" were spoken, and it was Goethe who had uttered them. (39) Goethe's great mind was above national hatred. He believed that, far from despising the rest of the world, the Germans should have the closest contact with other countries, for Germany has much to give and much to receive in exchange. Mann quotes Goethe's remarks which led up to his famous conception of "world literature" ("Weltliteratur"): "Instead of restricting himself to his own nation, the German must assimilate the world in order to influence it... I therefore like to see what other nations are doing, and I would advise every one to do the same. A national literature does not mean very much now, the time has arrived for world literature, and now every one must help to hasten its coming." (40) Once again, Thomas Mann found himself in complete agreement with Goethe. Although an author's work will bear the stamp of his nationality - and Thomas Mann's works are unmistakably

(39) Mass & Wert, Sept./Oct. 1938, P. 5
(40) Adel des Geistes, P. 138
German - this does not prevent a truly great work from being of world-wide, rather than of limited national significance. "World literature" is not the aggregate total of all the books in the world, it is the highest selection of these works, the deciding factor being the universality of the author's genius. But Mann added a warning, saying that with modern means of production and communication there was a danger, which had not existed in Goethe's time, that a second-rate work might appear on the world market, and that consequently it was important to distinguish between books which merely circulated in a number of countries and works which represented a contribution to the human heritage.

Thomas Mann accepted, too, Goethe's definition of Germany as the mediatory land, but whereas Goethe had been concerned with reconciling the North and the South, the Gothic and the Roman ideal of beauty, the European centre of gravity, both political and cultural, had moved considerably during the intervening century, and it was Thomas Mann's aim to achieve harmony by sympathetic understanding between the East and the West. Thomas Mann believed that, as in Goethe's day, it was Germany's role to be the mediator, to be the meeting-place of all the currents, whether
they be of an intellectual, philosophical and artistic nature, or social and political, which flow into her from the extremities of Europe. But being in the centre she must not indulge in any extreme sentiments herself. She must not try to be original and to dominate the world; she must perceive her analytico-synthetic function, which is to be a receptacle for every new European movement, to analyse and to understand it, and to attempt to harmonize and reconcile it with other movements, so that out of the chaos she may create order and peace without herself increasing the confusion.

The country which was to have been the mediator between conflicting ideologies has itself been divided into two parts. In 1949 when the world celebrated the bi-centenary of Goethe's birth, Thomas Mann visited both the West and the East, both Frankfurt and Weimar. His visit to the latter town has caused some consternation among the people of the western democracies. Yet in an introduction which he wrote expressly for his lecture in Weimar he said that there "must be the recognition that certain acquisitions, hard-earned by mankind and inalienable, that liberty, justice, and the dignity of the individual must not
perish; that they, even though in such an organic context as may be required by the increased social obligations, must be kept sacred and transmitted to the future." (41) The recipient of the Goethe Prizes of both Western and Eastern Germany has not forsaken the humanism of the greatest German who also belongs to all mankind.

(41) Common Cause, Oct. 1949, P. 134
Chapter IV

THOMAS MANN'S GOETHE NOVEL.

The three preceding chapters have been concerned with a study and interpretation of Thomas Mann's essays and lectures on the work and life of Goethe. Even if Thomas Mann had not written the Goethe novel, which is the subject of this chapter, his writings on Goethe would still be of great importance, not only because of the place which they occupy in Mann's work, but also because of their intrinsic value for Mann's reader.

Thomas Mann, as has been noted, is an author for whom literary criticism is an essential part of his work. He himself has said that "the essay as a means of critical supervision of my life seems to have been meant to remain an accessory of my productivity." (1) His studies of Goethe and the repeated reading of his work have helped to give him the necessary stimulus for his own work. Goethe's life, his ability to "make a success of things" (using Professor Barker Fairley's phrase, quoted approvingly by Thomas Mann himself) (2) served as an inspiration for Thomas Mann, and in no

(1) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1930, P. 757
(2) Goethe und die Demokratie, P. 7
sphere more so than in the political dilemma which he was facing.

But it is not only Thomas Mann who has benefited from his preoccupation with Goethe. He has undoubtedly encouraged many of his readers to renew their interest in him and to approach the master with a fresh view, and this is a notable achievement. It has been "fashionable" during the first half of the twentieth century to read the works of Thomas Mann and to discuss them. But many of those who take an interest in modern literature tend to neglect the "classics". Goethe is, of course, still being talked about and his anniversaries are being ceremoniously observed, but, by virtue of having been elevated to the exalted rank of a "classic", he is no longer read with the enthusiasm with which modern works are greeted, and his life and work have consequently not the same urgent meaning and message for our time which they would have if he were a new "discovery". Thomas Mann, however, redisCOVERS GoeTHE, not only for himself, but also for his reader. His fresh approach to Goethe's work invites imitation; his pondering over Goethe's personality encourages the reader to look again at this great phenomenon; his interest in Goethe's views on the question of Germany shows that Goethe may
enable us to see our times and its problems in a
truer perspective.

But Thomas Mann was not satisfied with a series
of literary or psychological or political Goethe
studies; the artist in him had to evoke from among
all these writings a living person. We may compare
the relationship between Thomas Mann's non-fictional
writings on Goethe and "Lotte in Weimar" to that
between Schiller's "History of the Thirty Years' War"
and "Wallenstein". When Schiller wrote the "History"
he was preparing himself, although probably he himself
was not aware of it at the time, for the greatest
drama he ever wrote. In the earlier study Schiller
wrote a history of one of the great historical figures.
But, in the tragedy, written some five years later,
he created, out of the same material, a literary
masterpiece. Any competent historian, who also commands
over a literary style, can write a history of the
Thirty Years' War; but only a real artist can create
a work like "Wallenstein".

Similarly Thomas Mann did not and could not
remain content with writing a number of studies of
Goethe, no matter how penetratingly individual they
are; he had to create an artist's portrait of the
man. In "Lotte in Weimar" many passages, put into
the mouths of those nearest to Goethe, and even some parts of the seventh chapter, in which we witness, as it were, Goethe's early morning meditations, are almost identical with passages in the various essays and lectures. Yet "Lotte in Weimar" is the work not only of a critic and scholar, but of an artist as well. This chapter will attempt to show that this book represents not only a summary of the most significant parts of Mann's writings on Goethe, but that as a novel it ranks high among Thomas Mann's creative work.

We know that more than a quarter of a century before the composition of "Lotte in Weimar" Thomas Mann had toyed with the idea of "dramatizing", of writing a story around an incident in Goethe's later life. In an article entitled "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des 'Tods in Venedig'" (3), Eloesser suggests that at the time of the composition of this work Mann felt that he had to portray a passion so strong that in its excess it would shatter all those standards of respectability that had been established and sustained throughout a life-time, only to be utterly destroyed in this last fatal crisis. Eloesser adds that Mann might have chosen for his story the tragi-

(3) Die Neue Rundschau, June 1925, P. 614
comic scene when a man of seventy-four, filled with the ambition of rejuvenation, runs a race with a young girl and collapses in the process. This theory is confirmed by this note in Brennan's work, for the information of which the author acknowledges his debt to Thomas Mann's wife (4): "At the time of the composition of 'Death in Venice', Mann had wanted to do a story about Goethe, using as his theme the poet's love in his old age for the youthful Ulrike Levetzow. But Mann decided against a Goethe story, and his half-formed plan finally crystallized in the tale of an anonymous artist's love for a young boy. 28 years later, Mann finally completed his Goethe story, 'The Beloved Returns', which does not, however, involve the aged writer's attraction to the maiden."

Writing in 1913 Mann preferred the fictitious Gustav von Aschenbach to the real Wolfgang von Goethe as the symbol of the genius who, in spite of and, indeed, because of his greatness carries in him that germ of decadence which will inevitably, no matter at how late a stage in life, destroy him. Aschenbach is the perfect example of the decay and decadence which is the artist's lot, as Mann saw it, but then

(4) Brennan: Thomas Mann's World, P. 47
Aschenbach has been created, so to speak, in Mann's laboratory. Goethe, on the other hand, is a historical fact, and signs of decadence were not at all as obvious in his life as in that of Mann's own artists, or indeed as even in the lives of some other real writers, such as Schiller and Dostoevsky. Yet although Goethe, to the casual observer, might incorporate the very picture of health and harmony, it has been seen in the second chapter that Mann found under this magnificent surface elements of disease and of internal strife which are for him inseparable from the artist's existence.

Goethe is one of a long series of artists depicted by Thomas Mann; when he came to draw his Goethe portrait in "Lotte in Weimar" Mann had become a much mellower writer than had been the author of "Der Tod in Venedig". There is no death in Weimar, nor is there any fatal aberration on the part of the hero. What we are shown is a great man who has not escaped the inevitable effects of growing old; a great man, who being human, is prone to human frailties which stand out all the more in his personality because they form such a contrast to his greatness; a great artist who, for the sake of his art, has had to suffer and make others suffer.

The task which Thomas Mann set himself when (3) Voigandt: Thomas Mann's Novel "Der Zanderr".
writing "Lotte in Weimar" was a far more difficult one than any which had previously confronted him. For this time it was not a question of creating a fictitious hero whose life could be moulded as the author wished; in this novel there could be no imaginary characters, and its hero was to be a man, every detail of whose life has been fully documented by countless biographers.

It is true that when Thomas Mann wrote his Goethe novel he had already completed three volumes of his Joseph tetralogy, his only other work where the hero's name is not invented by the author (and the names of all of Mann's characters are, to quote Weigand, "an integral part of his portrait, and not a mere label"). But Joseph's life is contained in a few chapters of Genesis, and Thomas Mann was at liberty to expand the biblical narrative into a vast novel. Goethe's life, on the other hand, is too well-known and did not allow any scope for fictitious treatment.

Thomas Mann, however, turns this tremendous difficulty of writing a novel in which almost nothing can be invented to his own advantage. His Goethe novel is not a biography. Indeed, he takes it for

(5) Weigand: Thomas Mann's Novel "Der Zauberberg", P. 11
granted that the reader is familiar with the main facts of Goethe's life, and for a full appreciation of the novel the reader must be thoroughly steeped in Goethe's work. If, by chance, a non-German who had not heard of Goethe, were to read a copy of "The Beloved Returns" - and this title of the American edition might well attract such a reader - it would seem to him to be an entirely meaningless work.

Thomas Mann's story, which covers barely more than one single day in Goethe's life, gains its full significance only when viewed against the whole of Goethe's life and work. It was a masterly stroke of artistic irony not to have attempted to write a novel on one of the many notable events in Goethe's life, but to make the centre of his Goethe novel an incident which in Goethe's diary has been laconically recorded as merely another luncheon invitation.

Thomas Mann has always been a novelist for whom the portrait and study of a character is of much greater importance than the narrative of the outward events of his life. There was no need for Thomas Mann to dramatize Goethe's life for the very name of his hero denotes enough human drama to satisfy any reader. Goethe's life is a historical fact and, as such, belongs to the past. In order to make Goethe come to
life for us in the present Thomas Mann did not need to tell again the story of his life, but his task was to recreate the atmosphere of his environment and to evoke the human being behind the historical and almost legendary personage.

"Thus I give the reader the unhoped for opportunity to see with his own eyes Joseph, the son of Jacob, sitting at the well in the moonlight and to compare his bodily presence, attractive as it is even if humanly imperfect, with the idealistic fame which the millenniums have woven around his figure." (6) These words, written by Thomas Mann, apply also to his portrait of Goethe. In his case, too, it was Mann's aim to bring to life again a poet and a man who during the century had become a myth.

It may at first seem surprising that in "Lotte in Weimar" Goethe himself does not appear until well on in the second half of the work. Mann delays the entry of Goethe in the same way as in "Joseph und seine Brüder" Joseph himself is not introduced until the second volume of the tetralogy. The reason is that in the case of both Joseph and Goethe Mann has to prepare us for their appearance by evoking the atmosphere of their environment. In "Lotte in Weimar"

(6) Adel des Geistes, P. 623
Goethe is first shown to us as seen through the eyes of some of his more intimate contemporaries, and only then we are ready to behold him with our own eyes.

"Nicht er ist's, der auf dieser Bühne heut Erscheinen wird. Doch in den kühnen Scharen, Die sein Befehl gewaltig lenkt, sein Geist Beseelt, wird euch sein Schattenbild begegnen, Bis ihn die scheue Muse selbst vor euch Zu stellen wagt in lebender Gestalt."

These lines might well serve as a prologue to the first six chapters of "Lotte in Weimar".

Yet even in those first chapters the figure of Goethe is omnipresent as Wallenstein is omnipresent in the whole of the trilogy, although the latter does not appear in person until the second act of "Die Piccolomini".

"Sein Lager nur erklärt sein Verbrechen", says Schiller of Wallenstein. It is only when we have seen Wallenstein's camp and the tremendous power which he wielded over his men that we can understand his crime which is but one aspect, one extreme cause and consequence of his greatness. Goethe, too, can be understood only if we realize his overpowering influence over those with whom he came into close contact. His unique position in the world of Weimar, a world which extended far beyond the limits of that city, forms an essential part of any account of his greatness and also of the less wholesome aspects of his
Weimar is a microcosm which centres around the figure of Goethe. It is as if we had ascended another "Magic Mountain"; but there is the difference that the atmosphere in "Der Zauberberg" was saturated with disease whereas in Weimar it is the phenomenon of Goethe's genius which pervades the entire scene.

The first person to be introduced in the novel is Mager, the head waiter at the inn "Zum Elefanten". He serves as a good example of an ordinary Weimar citizen who has quite naturally imbied the rarified atmosphere of the city. This man has, as Lotte rightly observes, a most unusual and high-flown way of expressing himself which he could have acquired nowhere else but in Weimar. There are few facts concerning Goethe's life and work which this man does not know; he shows no interest in anything which does not concern the master.

It is he who meets the arrival of the stage-coach in front of the inn on the morning of September 22nd 1816. Three passengers alight: they were obviously mother, daughter and maid. Their appearance did not in any way seem peculiar (we are reminded of the very "ordinary" looking Hans Castorp). The only striking feature about the mother was a trembling
and nodding of the head. This tendency, characteristic as it is of the approach of old age, will be referred to repeatedly and all those who meet Lotte will be aware of it. Almost all of Mann's characters have some distinguishing habit which accompanies them whatever they do. (To mention only two examples from "Buddenbrooks" we remember Christian rubbing his left side and Tony referring to herself always as a "goose"). Lotte not only nods her head on every occasion, but, by way of ironic contrast, another "leit-motiv" helps to characterize her: it is the term "schoolgirl" which she likes to use when thinking of herself, and even Goethe uses it. Mann repeatedly calls her a "sixty-three year old schoolgirl".

Using phrases, somewhat reminiscent of the first scene between Minna, Franziska and the innkeeper in "Minna von Barnhelm", Mager requests the ladies to fill in the necessary forms for the police. Lotte is thus forced to reveal her identity, and Mager is not the man to pass on the form to the authorities without looking at it himself, nor does he attempt to check his curiosity and after some stammering, due to his temporary confusion, he asks the lady whether she is THE Lotte, the former... But here he is cut short by Lotte who insists that she is not the
former but that she is very much present in the flesh. It is this insistence on the fact that she is still alive and that her past is alive with her and not buried which has prompted her to visit Weimar and to prove to Goethe and to herself that there is nothing "former" about her.

Mager is so thrilled by being in the presence of Goethe's Lotte that it takes some time before this loquacious man leaves the mother and her daughter alone in their room. Yet Lotte is certainly not displeased by his enthusiasm. In reply to his eloquent admiration for "Werther" she points out to him, as she says she has done for the past forty-four years, that the Lotte of the novel and she herself are not identical persons. To "prove" this assertion—which is, as she had secretly hoped, duly repudiated by Mager—she reminds the waiter that she has blue eyes, whereas, as everybody knows, Werther's Lotte has black eyes. In spite of Mager's reassurance that the difference in the colour of the eyes was only poetic licence, this is a problem which has occupied and upset Lotte all her life since the episode at Wetzlar and the subsequent publication of "Werther". She will speak about it again to Dr. Riemer, Goethe's secretary, and to Goethe himself.
Lotte's daughter does not at all approve of her mother's visit to Weimar for she realizes that her desire to see again after many years her married sister and her family who live in that city serves merely as a pretext for reliving a past which, in the eyes of the younger Lotte, had best be forgotten. It is interesting to note that, as Blume has pointed out, the name of the daughter who accompanied Lotte to Weimar was not Lotte, but Clara. (7) Blume offers a very plausible explanation for the substitution of the mother's name for her real Christian name. The identity of their names is to be a counterpart to that of the name August which both Goethe and his son share. In both cases the next generation has inherited some of the parent's qualities which, however, are accentuated at the expense of other complementary qualities which the children have not inherited. August has the passionateness of his father without the latter's genius, and Lotte has her mother's domesticity without, however, possessing her charm.

The young Lotte accuses her mother of having revealed her "crown of glory" to the waiter. But Lotte retorts that what her daughter calls her "crown

"of glory" is in truth more like a cross. Her fame and her fate as the heroine of the most widely read work of the greatest poet have not been easy to bear. Yet in spite of the complications of leading a double-life, as it were, she has made a success of her real life. She reminds Lottchen that she is not only the heroine of "Werther", but that she had also been a good wife to Lottchen's dear father and had borne him eleven children of whom nine have survived. Having brought up these children Lotte feels justified in lingering over the remembrance of things past, over the speculation of what might have been.

Lottchen leaves her mother in order to go to her aunt's house to announce their arrival in Weimar. Her mother is going to rest in the meantime, but before doing so she writes a carefully prepared note to Goethe, informing him of her arrival.

The second chapter opens with Lotte in a state between slumber and being awake. She thinks back of the past, of the storm of kisses which his hot lips had printed on her stammering resisting ones, only to realize with a jerk that she, too, had been mistaking herself for Werther's Lotte, that for one moment the latter's life - the life of the girl which has inspired thousands of readers - had become more real to her
than the events of her own life. She, the real Lotte, had never experienced a "storm of kisses": Goethe had given her only one kiss, and that one kiss she had duly reported to her fiancé.

Lotte remembers the ribbon from her dress which she had sent to Goethe, on Kestner's advice, as a compensation for other pleasures that she could not grant him. Lotte blushes and the heart of this "sixty-three year old schoolgirl" beats more quickly as she thinks of the white dress which her daughter had criticized only a short time previously, the very dress described in "Werther" which she had brought with her to Weimar, complete with the identical pale red ribbons, but with one of these ribbons missing in exactly the same place as where she had removed the ribbon from the original dress in order to send it to Goethe.

She remembers the early conflict when she had to choose between the mediocre Kestner who would love her always and the genius Goethe who, being a genius, could not be relied upon to act like an ordinary human being. The blue-eyed Lotte chose Hans Christian Kestner (as in "Tonio Kröger" the blue-eyed Inge Holm chooses Hans Hansen, the "ordinary" boy rather than Tonio Kröger, his extraordinary artistic comrade). She made this
choice "not entirely because love and loyalty were stronger than temptation, but also because deep within her she feared the mystery of the other's nature". (8) This instinctive fear which the genius inspires in his fellow-men is one of the causes of his isolation. Goethe, in spite of his renown, in spite of being worshipped by men and women who are willing to sacrifice themselves for his sake, is nevertheless portrayed by Thomas Mann as an isolated being. Greatness necessarily involves isolation; it makes no difference whether the great man is a prophet as in Alfred de Vigny's "Moïse", or a prince as in Mann's early work "Königliche Hoheit", or a poet as Goethe whom Mann might also have called "Royal Highness".

Lotte's meditations are interrupted by the entry of Mager who introduces a fellow patron of the inn, Miss Cuzzle, an English lady. Although Lotte feels that she should not delay her visit to her sister's house any longer, she cannot prevent the waiter from allowing Miss Cuzzle into her room. Once inside the room Miss Cuzzle is not easily to be dismissed, and this talkative lady addresses Lotte both in English and in German, mixing up these two languages in the same way as in "Der Zauberberg" Mme. Chauchat speaks a mixture of French and German. She informs Lotte (8) Lotte in Weimar, P. 36
that it is her hobby to draw sketches of celebrities and to obtain their signatures. We furthermore learn that this determined young lady is Irish. In her sketchbook she has many interesting portraits, including one of Napoleon on the "Bellorophon". This is the first, but not the last time that Napoleon is mentioned in the novel; we are constantly reminded that he and Goethe were contemporaries; more than that, they were also kindred spirits who recognized and admired each other's greatness.

By introducing Miss Cuzlle into the novel Mann has cleverly contrived to build up a background of historical events which were taking place outside Weimar at the time. This lady, who has seen so much of the world, has come to Weimar attracted by the fame of the city. She regrets, however, having come rather late for she could no longer include Wieland or Herder or Schiller in her sketch-book. But far from wasting her time, she had already drawn portraits of Schiller's widow and of a number of other people, and now this unhoped-for opportunity would, she trusted, open her the gate to Goethe himself, and he in turn, she naively continues, would introduce her to another Charlotte, Faru von Stein. Yet Miss Cuzlle made a mistake when she thought that Lotte could act as an intermediary
between her and Goethe, for Lotte, the beloved one of forty-four years ago, did not receive a very hearty welcome herself.

No sooner has Miss Cuzzle left Lotte than Dr. Riemer, Goethe's private secretary, enters. He addresses Lotte in the most respectful and bookish phrases and leads her to the window to see the crowd of people which has assembled in the square outside in order to catch a glimpse of her.

From Riemer's lengthy discourses in this third chapter we learn a great many details concerning Goethe's life, for Riemer had been living in Goethe's house for several years and had thus had ample opportunity for studying the Master. It is true that two years previously he had moved out of the house, but only in order to marry, at Goethe's express wish, the companion of Goethe's late wife.—Dr. Riemer had been nominally engaged as a tutor in classics to Goethe's son August, but this—according to Riemer—was only a pretext in order to obtain his services, of which he himself has no mean opinion. Goethe, we hear, was never very much concerned about his son's classical education, for he himself had never enjoyed a very thorough schooling. Lotte agrees, for in Wetzlar Goethe had never taken his studies very seriously and
had therefore had plenty of time at his disposal for being sociable.

Many of Riemer's observations have already been quoted because they represent Thomas Mann's own views which he has expressed in his essays and lectures on Goethe. Thus, for example, Riemer, in spite of the pride which he takes in his intimate relation with Goethe, often feels the same uneasiness in his presence as has been the experience of many men who knew Goethe only from much more cursory meetings. Riemer, too, comments on Goethe's "harsh tolerance". (9)

As Lotte listens to her visitor she realizes that he has come to her merely in order to be able to talk about the master and thus "to reach nearer the heart of a long-standing riddle which dominated his whole life". Lotte and he are indeed "partners in a common destiny": their lives have become irrevocably linked with Goethe's existence, and they both try to fathom the mysterious force to which they have yielded their independence.

For Riemer, who breathes Goethe's heroic atmosphere, is not a self-sufficient human being. He himself realizes that he has no choice but to remain with Goethe and to serve him as a "purveyor of knowledge", as a "living lexicon". He has lost his independence

(9) Lotte in Weimar, P. 55
to such an extent that he even married the woman whom Goethe had chosen for him. It is Goethe's wonderful, but at the same time mysterious personality which makes men become mere puppets in his hand.

Yet, powerless as he is in the face of this mighty force, Riemer attempts to rebel against his master's greatness. He has discovered that the great man is also human and that his mind does not always soar to the lofty heights of Olympus. We hear Thomas Mann himself when Riemer exclaims that "there is something idle and inadequate in always saying of the great: 'Great, great!'" (10) It is not only Dr. Riemer who finds that "it is so satisfying and consoling, that it makes one feel so glad to have a great man show his human side, to come now and then on his little feints and self-deceptions and perceive the husbandry in an intellectual establishment so incomparably greater than our own"; it is also Thomas Mann who delights in discovering these very human traits in Goethe, a discovery which enables him to look upon himself as belonging "in some way to Goethe's family".

But even if Goethe's genius was not as spontaneous and improvising as is generally taken for granted,

(10) Lotte in Weimar, P. 84
Riemer fully recognizes the greatness of his artistic achievement. Riemer's remarks on Goethe's prose style, for example, are almost identical with Thomas Mann's earlier appreciation in "Goethe als Repräsentant des bürgerlichen Zeitalters". (11)

Riemer, however, cannot speak for a long time of Goethe as an artist whose methods and work can be studied objectively; sooner or later he has to return again to the subject of the mystery surrounding Goethe's presence. "If God is All", he says, "then He is also the Devil; and one cannot approach to the godlike without at the same time approaching to the diabolic." It is this daemonic element in Goethe which accounts for the feeling of uneasiness which is felt by those near to him. But it also explains why Goethe is not a happy nature. For the blessings "of the deep that lieth under" combine with the blessings "from above": negation combines with enthusiasm, and nihilism with love. This union of the All and the Nothing produces genius, but it does not give happiness, for there can be no happiness without love and enthusiasm.

Genius, this uneasy and precariously balanced combination of the extremes of two worlds, is destined

(11) Lotte in Weimar, P. 85; cf. Adel des Geistes, P.121
to live in isolation, it cannot permanently dwell among lesser mortals. This is the answer to Lotte's long-standing riddle. Goethe's love for the betrothed of his friend, which is compared by Lotte to laying a cuckoo-egg in a nest already made, is merely one aspect of his isolation. Riemer reminds Lotte that when Goethe's mother died, the little mother from whom he got "the joyous nature and love of spinning tales", she had not seen her son for eleven years. On his many journeys he could so easily have gone to Frankfurt, but he deliberately held aloof from his family whom he yet loved so well.

The genius cannot dwell with those who have given him so much. Men and women have to sacrifice themselves for his sake, and they do so gladly. Riemer is one of Goethe's victims and, in spite of his spirit of rebellion, he cannot leave the master. Lotte, also, is a victim but one who rejoices in her mission and who is intent on jealously guarding her unique position in Goethe's life. (Riemer, like Mager before him, has to reassure Lotte that in spite of the difference in the colour of the eyes she is the model of Werther's Lotte) She has come to Weimar at the eleventh hour, as she says, like the prophet who went to the mountain when the mountain would not come to him. Riemer is
the first person to prepare her for the approach of
the Magic Mountain.

Before Dr. Riemer takes leave from Lotte, yet
another caller is announced, Demoiselle Schopenhauer,
sister of the man who was to become one of Germany's
greatest philosophers. The interview with this lady,
which is related in the fourth chapter, brings Lotte
one step nearer to an understanding of the man whom
she has not seen for forty-four years. Demoiselle
Schopenhauer has known Goethe since her childhood
because he used to attend her mother's parties.
Goethe's behaviour at these parties would range from
the facetious to the peevish. At all times the other
guests would have to subordinate their wishes to his
whims; they would have to laugh or be silent according
to his orders. He could be cruel to men like Wieland
by teasing them mercilessly, and women interested in
the arts he would call "sentimental nanny-goats".

Adele Schopenhauer and her friends in the Muses'
Circle, whose greetings she conveys to Lotte, belong
to the new generation, a generation which still
admires Goethe but which also takes a keen interest
in the new literary movement, Romanticism. The latter
represents a new stage in the cycle of literature and
its appeal to the young people is more immediate
than that of the old Goethe whose own "Storm and Stress" period had inspired the youth of his time more than four decades previously. Lotte does not approve of the irreverence which the youth shows towards Goethe for it reminds her of the passage of time which she is constantly trying to ignore. Goethe himself frowns upon those who admire the new generation of writers because "they transgress against the first commandment which says: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me'." Demoiselle Schopenhauer repeatedly refers to Goethe as a "tyrant", whether it be in the social or the intellectual sphere, and the story which she relates to Lotte in the fifth chapter shows that Goethe was a tyrant even towards his own son.

This story concerns one of the members of the Muses' Circle, a girl called Ottilie von Pogwisch. Ottilie had fallen in love with Goethe's son, August. But the national rising which led to the War of Liberation and the battle of Leipzig had been responsible for an estrangement between the two young people. Ottilie, with her enthusiasm for the new, was a glowing patriot, whereas August, being Goethe's son, had nothing but contempt for the "mob" which would try to shake off the chains of the tyrant.
The position was aggravated by the fact that one day during the fighting Ottilie and Adele found a seriously wounded Prussian officer. As the French were in control of Weimar, it was a dangerous undertaking to help to nurse this young man. But the two girls revelled in the task, for this handsome soldier incarnated for them the ideal warrior against tyranny. August was very jealous and contemptuous of this idealistic attachment. He himself felt that he had to join the volunteer corps as all young men in society were doing, but this intention was frustrated by his father who in his selfish way saw to it that his son should not leave Weimar. This made August's position almost unbearable, for the whole town, feeling full of patriotism, despised him for his cowardly behaviour, for which only the illustrious father was to be blamed. Everybody turned against the young man, everybody except Ottilie who, in spite of her patriotic fervour, believed that she had to defend her estranged lover, all the more as she felt a sense of guilt because of the interest which she was taking in the recuperating Prussian soldier. More important, however, than her own feelings or those of August, was the fact that the aged Goethe wanted his son to marry this "little person", as he called her, and wanted both of them
to live in his house. The father's wish was sacred, and consequently August was going to marry Ottilie not because he loved her but because his father desired him to do so.

Demoiselle Schopenhauer beseeches Lotte to use her influence in order to prevent this marriage, which would be based not on love, but on a father's wish on the one hand, and a bad conscience on the other. August has only one function in life, and that is to be his father's son. He is allowed even less independence than Riemer. Like the secretary he has to marry a girl chosen by Goethe. Goethe ruins his son's life; he does not allow him to join the volunteer corps, and yet he does nothing to stop his offspring's debauchery of which Demoiselle Schopenhauer gives many examples. This debauchery is the result of genius which has degenerated. To quote Adele's words: "Certain traits of the famous father seem to me faint foreshadowings of characteristics so unhappily and destructively developed in the son. It is not easy to recognize them as the same, and reverence and loyalty would shrink from the task. In the father's case they are held in an equilibrium so happy and so creative that the world has joy of them. But in the son they reveal themselves as
coarsened and sensualized, and all their moral offensiveness stands out." (12) This observation is characteristic of Thomas Mann's view of the dangerous position of the artist. The artist and the criminal belong to the same family (in "Doktor Faustus" we read that "the artist is the brother of the criminal and the madman" (13), and we remember his essay written in 1938 and entitled "A Brother" in which he looks upon the hated dictator as an artist-phenomenon (14), and we think of one of his earliest works, "Tonio Kröger" where the hero is mistaken by the police for a criminal, an incident based on Mann's own life.) The all-important difference between the artist and the criminal is to be found in the former's will-power and renunciation which enables him to overcome temptation. The portrait of August shows us what his father might have been if he had not constantly striven to find a harmonious mean in his life.

In the sixth chapter August appears in person. As Lotte beholds him, her thoughts suddenly become confused and it seems to her as if she saw not the son, but the father, four years older now than when she had last

(12) Lotte in Weimar, P. 213
(13) Doktor Faustus, P. 366
seen him. It is only gradually that she realizes who is standing in front of her and that forty-four, and not four years have passed since the meeting which has dominated her whole subsequent life. Lotte's meditations on the passage of time are characteristic of Mann's later work, beginning with "Der Zauberberg" and culminating in "Joseph und seine Brüder" which are all concerned with the phenomenon of time or timelessness.

August dwells at great length on his father's state of health which, contrary to common belief, has often given cause for anxiety. It is true that Goethe kept aloof from all scenes of death (we are reminded that he kept his bed when Schiller and when his wife were dying). Nevertheless he himself had made a close acquaintance of death at the time of "Werther". But remembering to whom he is speaking, August modifies this assertion as best he can. Yet the subject of death has a morbid fascination for this moribund character. August instinctively knows that he is going to die before his father, for the latter "will not hear of dying, he ignores the idea, simply passes it by." August, on the other hand, realizes that he is "but a by-glow of his father's nature". It is he who has to attend funerals on his behalf.
August tells Lotte of his father's recent visits to the house of Privy Councillor Willemer, a widower with two young daughters, who, acting on Goethe's advice, had just married his foster-daughter Marianne in whom Goethe took a more than paternal interest.

We learn that after five weeks spent with the newly-wedded couple Goethe went to Karlsruhe where he had expected to meet Frau von Türkheim - the former Lili Schönemann. Once again Lotte pricks up her ears at the name of yet another rival, although in Lili's case the adjective "former" can be appropriately used for Lili is suffering from consumption, and consequently the meeting between her and Goethe did not take place. Lotte can afford to exclaim a generous "Poor Lili", adding that "not very much came of that episode: a few lyrics, but no great world-stirring work." She also pities another former rival, Friederike Brion, who had died of consumption three years previously. She, Lotte, on the other hand, had the strength to face the facts of reality and to marry her Hans Christian, her "good man", as she calls him, and to bear him eleven children and thus live a happy and honourable life.

Being in the presence of the woman whom his father had loved forty-four years ago and having
mentioned several of the other women who have shared Goethe's love, August sees a pattern in his father's life according to which all his loves are but a repetition of his first experience. It is not only love, but also renunciation, which becomes an "idée fixe" in Goethe's life. (15) Lotte finds it painful to realize that for the sake of Goethe's genius she had to sacrifice her identity. She has joined, as Riemer had said, "an immortal dance" (16), but a dance where the dancers lose their individuality, where, to use the symbol repeatedly referred to, they no longer keep the colour of their eyes, where they become an idea, a perpetually repeated memory.

August tells Lotte many facts about his father's life, facts which Thomas Mann had already noted in his lectures and essays on Goethe. Thus, for example, August's revelation concerning his father's secret archive had been the starting point of Mann's Princeton Lecture on "Faust".

In this chapter August appears as the unattractive, not to say repulsive youth for which previous chapters had prepared us. Yet one cannot help sympathizing with him; one remembers Demoiselle Schopenhauer's words: "August was son -- that was the distinguishing

(15) Lotte in Weimar, P. 250
(16) Lotte in Weimar, P. 122
characteristic of his life." (17) He is a parasite because his father, the selfish genius, wants him to be a parasite. We have already heard how Goethe saw to it that his son should not serve with the Volunteers; in this chapter we learn that he was forced to break off his friendship with the only real friend August probably ever had, Achim von Arnim, because Johann Heinrich Voss, his father's friend, asserted that neither he nor Goethe could approve of a continuation of this friendship, considering von Arnim's patriotic and romantic sentiments.

August had come to Lotte to deliver his father's luncheon invitation, which included also her sister and brother-in-law, for the following Friday, three days hence.

The language of not only this but also the earlier chapters is steeped in Goethe's diction, masterly reproduced by Thomas Mann. Adele Schopenhauer had remarked to Lotte when the latter had complimented her on her talented way of expressing herself, that it is perhaps not so wonderful when one speaks French after ten years in Paris. Similarly it is not surprising that the people of Weimar should speak the language of Goethe. Thomas Mann's extremely successful in

(17) Lotte in Weimar, P. 212
creating the Weimar atmosphere by the use of this Goethean style. When Lotte, in the course of her conversation with August, says that "it is usually the part of the woman to admire and nothing else, and wonder at all the things such a man can think of" ("Im ganzen ist es der Frauen Teil, sich bloss zu verwundern, was so ein Mann nicht alles, alles, denken kann") (18), she herself is probably not conscious of the fact that she is quoting from Gretchen's speech, so naturally do Goethe's words come to her mind.

When Lotte had sent her daughter and maid to her sister's house to announce her arrival, she had done so in order to be able to rest quietly before going there herself. But she had hardly finished her rest when she received the four visitors following each other closely - Miss Cuzzle, Dr. Riemer, Demoiselle Schopenhauer and Goethe's son - all of whom stayed with her for a considerable time. No wonder that she feels exhausted at the end of it, and so Thomas Mann leaves her for the next chapter, and the stage having been carefully set for his entry, we meet the real hero of the novel in this seventh chapter.

It opens with Goethe waking up from a dream which does not immediately give way to the reality.
of the dawn of a new day, the day of Lotte's arrival in Weimar. Goethe feels how the beautiful vision which the dream had given him disappears back into the depths, and yet for a brief moment it seems to mingle with his real surroundings. This transition from dream to reality is an appropriate opening for a chapter in which the border-line between the conscious and the subconscious is never very clearly defined.

Throughout this remarkable chapter we watch Goethe's mind wandering quite abruptly from the idealistic to the practical, from the profound to the childish, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Thus at one moment he is seen meditating on the philosophical import of "Faust", and at the next he is concerned with the luncheon which has to be prepared.

His first thoughts turn to Schiller, for as he considers his habit of postponing the actual composition of his works which he would have carried about in his mind for a long time, he comes to the conclusion that he does not risk anything by this process of waiting, for nobody else could forestall him even if he had all the material available. "What does subject-matter amount to? Material - world's full of it, lies about in the streets." (19) Thomas Mann shares (19) Lotte in Weimar, P. 286
this belief that the writer need not invent a story; what he does need is a keen perception of what is significant in any occurrence. Goethe had presented Schiller with the material for "Wilhelm Tell" although, at that time, he himself had still intended to treat the same subject.

Goethe remembers the beginning of his friendship with Schiller; how Schiller had written that essay about the speculative and the intuitive mind, asserting that provided both have genius, they can meet halfway; he remembers that "devilish clever letter" with which Schiller had tried to win "Wilhelm Meister" for the "Horen". If Schiller were still alive, he would urge him on to finish "Faust". But mingled with this appreciation of Schiller's services as a friend, of his intellect and endurance, Goethe has also some bitter things to say about this "disagreeable, wily man, a climber". (20)

It is interesting to compare Goethe's meditations on the dead friend with Schiller's thoughts on the living rival, which Thomas Mann has artistically depicted in his early short story "Schwere Stunde". These two works are complementary; they illustrate Mann's favourite belief that in spite of the inevitable (20) Lotte in Weimar, P. 289
antagonism and jealousy between those of nature and those of the spirit, there does exist a strong mutual attraction between them.

One important difference which Thomas Mann makes Goethe perceive between himself and Schiller is the fact that Goethe saw beyond the realm of consciousness whereas Schiller did not know or did not want to know anything about the unconscious.

Throughout this early morning meditation Goethe thinks of a large number of pithy sayings or "aperçus" which he will incorporate somewhere in his work. He is concerned that nothing that his mind produces shall be lost to the world.

He turns to a consideration of the duties which the new day has in store for him. He has to report to the Duke on the "Isis" scandal, "Isis" being a revolutionary journal which created quite a stir in Weimar. "How one forgets down there!", Goethe exclaims, referring to the world of his unconscious which he has to leave in order to face the daily task which is demanded from him. Another unpleasant duty awaiting him is the composition of a birthday poem. People think that he has a "gift for poetry", but he knows that many of his occasional poems are second-rate, that they are but substitutes for the real poetry
which he used to write at the time of "Werther". In any case, poetry is not his only or even main interest in life. His great aim is to write an all-embracing history of nature, for he, being of nature, has been allowed to look behind the scenes, as it were, and to espy some of her secrets. Time and again in this chapter Goethe refers to one or other of the natural sciences in which he takes so great an interest. To quote only one example: in the course of a lengthy meteorological discussion with Carl, his valet, Goethe proudly mentions the fact that it was he who contributed the term "paries" to denote a bank of cloud.

Yet people think that he is wasting his time in "dilettante dabbling". But the people do not know that "a great poet is first of all great and after that a poet". (21) This sentence sums up Thomas Mann's own view of Goethe. Napoleon, to whom Goethe's thoughts inevitably turn, had said behind Goethe's back, but loud enough for him to hear: "That is a man". Not "That is a poet".

Goethe is shown to be intolerant of all criticism concerning his work, whether it be in the sphere of literature (the Romantics), of science (among others

(21) Lotte in Weimar, P. 292
Professor Pfaff incurs Goethe's wrath because he has ventured to attack his contributions to the science of optics, or in the sphere of politics (the liberals whom he would suppress at all costs).

When Goethe thinks of his recent visit to the Willemers, he subconsciously equates this episode with the much earlier one at Wetzlar. "The moon was full, the night grew late. Albert slumbered, Willem slumbered, his hands, good man, folded across his stomach, and was made a mock." (22) That Goethe should confuse Albert and Willem, who had both played such similar roles in the two love episodes, is a good example of Mann's theory, which he elaborated even more fully in "Joseph und seine Brüder", that life is but eternal repetition. Goethe himself believes that "man can experience recurrence", and for him Albert and Willem, Lotte and Marianne are like "a recurrent feast ... celebration and imitation of the original, solemn performance, timeless memorial rite". (23)

These meditations are frequently interrupted by the attention he gives to more tangible problems. Thus he asks his valet detailed questions concerning domestic arrangements. Goethe likes to live well and

(22) Lotte in Weimar, P. 300
(23) Lotte in Weimar, P. 318
comfortably, and in this respect he is a typical "Bürger". Even such a prosaic object as a sponge can give Goethe food for thought; he wonders whether it originally came from the Aegean, Galathea's sea, one of the many remarks which show that "Faust" is constantly in his mind.

After his valet has left him, Goethe ponders over the phenomenon of genius. He is egocentric enough to realize that he is a genius. "But shall he not be egocentric who knows himself to be the goal, the fulfilment, the consummation, the apotheosis, last and highest result of nature's uttermost extreme of care and pains?" (24) Goethe considers "what mixture of power and delicacy, strength and weakness, coarseness and frailty, madness and common sense, the impossible and triumph over it - what all must not have mingled by happy chance, as the centuries ran, to produce the phenomenon, the genius, in the end." It requires a tremendous effort to keep this precarious balance of opposites. "My ego", Goethe meditates, " - a balancing trick, only just achieved; a lucky stroke, just lucky enough; a sword-dance poised between difficulty and love of facility; a just barely possible that achieves genius - who knows,

(24) Lotte in Weimar, P. 325
perhaps genius is always just barely possible! They value the work, when it costs enough, the life nobody values. Try doing it yourselves, see if you don't break your necks!"

The passages quoted above epitomize Thomas Mann's views on the nature of genius. Some of them are to be found elsewhere in his work, for example in his recent lecture on "Goethe und die Demokratie". (25)

Thomas Mann, as has been seen, is one of those who do value, above all, Goethe's life. The dangers to which genius is exposed have almost become an obsession with Mann. If therefore a genius can overcome these dangers and "make a success of things" this achievement is, in Thomas Mann's view, more notable and praiseworthy than any work which he produces.

Goethe realizes that his existence is closely linked with insanity, death and sacrifice. His father died an imbecile, and so did his uncle. He had had brothers and sisters, but only one sister survived childhood, and she died in childbed. His own son is but a "by-blow, an after-clap". Knowing this, Goethe strives all the time to preserve his physical and mental equilibrium. He loathes insanity and excess, and insists on measure and moderation. The Germans

(25) Goethe und die Demokratie, P. 7
should follow his example and not "abandon themselves credulously to every fanatic scoundrel who speaks to their baser qualities, confirms them in their vices, teaches them nationality means barbarism and isolation". (26)

There are several other passages in this monologue which are concerned with the problem of the Germans. To quote one example: "So should the Germans be, I am their image and pattern. World-receiving, world-giving, hearts wide open to admire and be fructified. Great in understanding and in love, mediating spirits - for mediation is of the spirit too - so should Germans be, and such their destiny. Not this pig-headed craving to be a unique nation, this national narcissism that wants to make its own stupidity a pattern and power over the rest of the world! Unhappy folk! They will end in a smash. Do not understand themselves..." (27)

It is not difficult to see that remarks like the preceding ones are based not only on what Goethe has actually said in the course of his conversations with Riemer and others, but that they express also Thomas Mann's own views on the German problem. Even if "Lotte in Weimar", like "Joseph und seine Brüder", seems, at first, far removed from the contemporary scene, Thomas

(26) Lotte in Weimar, P. 328
(27) Lotte in Weimar, P. 337
Mann has, in fact, expressed in both these works an urgent message for the Germans and the world. In a letter written to Germany in 1938 Mann wrote: "I will conjure up the figure of Goethe out of the realm of the Mothers as a help for myself and for you." (28) Far from attempting to ignore contemporary events, Thomas Mann wished to find strength for himself and his countrymen in the personality of Goethe. Although "Lotte in Weimar", as all of Mann's works, was suppressed by the National Socialists, some of the passages quoted above found their way into Germany in leaflet form. These leaflets, containing parts of the monologue of the seventh chapter of "Lotte in Weimar", were entitled "Extracts from Goethe's conversations with Riemer" in order to avoid suspicion of the identity of the real author.

Thomas Mann himself relates a true story which shows how successful he was in expressing Goethe's views in Goethe's language. (29) One of these leaflets had got into the possession of Sir Hartley Shawcross who quoted from it in good faith at the Nurnberg Trials. Subsequently a letter appeared in the "Times Literary Supplement", in which the writer pointed out that the leaflet contained extracts, not from actual

(28) Lion: Thomas Mann, Leben und Werk, P. 156
(29) Zur Entstehung des Doktor Faustus, P. 169
records of Goethe's conversations, but from Thomas Mann's Goethe novel. The British Ambassador asked Mann to comment on the letter. Mann was able to assure him that even if Goethe had not actually spoken the words ascribed to him, they nevertheless represented Goethe's views.

Apart from the valet two persons appear to interrupt Goethe's meditations. The first is John, his private secretary, whom Goethe heartily dislikes. John is an unhealthy person who suffers from a tubercular tendency. Goethe admonishes him to live closer to nature so that he may be cured. "A man belongs out of doors, with the bare ground under his feet so that strength and power can run into him from the soil, like sap, and he can raise his eyes to the birds skied overhead. Civilization and the realm of the spirit are good things, great things, we are the last to dispute it. But without contact with the soil, the Antaean compensation, if I may so call it, they are plain ruin to a man. They put him in a morbid state; he even gets to be proud of being morbid, and clings to his ailment as though it were something honourable and advantageous. For there are advantages, let me tell you, even in illness." (30)

(30) Lotte in Weimar, P. 338
These words Thomas Mann might well address to his many heroes who believe in the nobility of disease.

Closely linked to John's physical ailment are his revolutionary tendencies, which Goethe looks upon as a disease of the mind, for "it is contrary to nature to want to reform the world." (31)

The other person who intrudes upon Goethe's privacy is his son. He brings him Lotte's letter which she had so carefully prepared. By way of reply Goethe shows his son a mineral which he has received. Goethe's detailed description of this hyalite leads to a discussion of organic and inorganic matter.

When Goethe says that "everything, my dear boy, is tiresome and monotonous that has its being in time, instead of having time within itself and making its own time" (32), he is referring not only to the mineral, but also to Lotte. The Lotte of Wetzlar will live as long as "Werther" is read, and is remembered, consciously or subconsciously, by Goethe all his life, as this early morning meditation shows. But the Lotte who has lived for forty-four years after her mission, as far as Goethe was concerned, had ended, is "tiresome and monotonous".

After some discussion of entirely different topics,
such as the progress with the haymaking and preparations for a carnival, Goethe can, at last, no longer avoid giving his son instructions for a reply to Lotte's letter. He will see her, but let it be a formal meeting.

The luncheon party, which is described in the eighth chapter, is indeed a formal meeting. Mann gives us a detailed description of Goethe's house and he succeeds in giving us a vivid impression of the scene. One of the other guests, Professor Meyer, feels that it is his duty to prepare the two novices at this function, Lotte and her daughter, for the master's arrival by advising them not to feel overawed by Goethe's presence but to behave quite naturally. Lotte retorts by reminding him that this is not her first meeting with Goethe. The younger Lotte does not feel at all happy in this company and she cannot forgive her mother for wearing that white "Werther" dress with the pink ribbons of which one is missing. When Goethe finally enters, he ceremoniously bows before his guests and welcomes the two strangers to Weimar in a most dignified, if impersonal manner. Lotte realizes that Goethe has immediately noticed the trembling of her head. She addresses him as Excellency, and he does not stop her. The conversation
turns to commonplace subjects, such as the route by which Lotte and her daughter had travelled and the charge for the fare. Luncheon is announced and Mann gives us a full account of the menu, for meals play an important part in all his novels.

Goethe talks about a large variety of subjects, all of them impersonal, whether it be about some mineralogical discoveries he had made at Eger or about the historical massacre of the Jews in that town. When he speaks, everybody at table listens, and consequently intimate conversation is entirely ruled out. When Goethe makes a joke the whole assembly laughs, but Lotte feels that this laughter is not genuine, that she is in the company of slaves.

Goethe says that the Germans have been compared to the Chinese. But he believes that there is a greater similarity between the French and the Chinese, for the latter have a proverb which says that "the great man is a national misfortune". Again all the guests begin to laugh heartily, but Lotte is not amused, for this laughter might hide something evil which might make one of the guests turn over the table and proclaim that the Chinese were right after all. Goethe himself realized that people felt that he was a burden and that when he is dead they will say "Ugh!" (33)

(33) Lotte in Weimar, P. 368; cf. also Adel des Geistes, P. 178
Great men may be respected, but they are also feared, and when they pass away there is a sigh of relief. But for Lotte, Goethe is still only the lover, and not the great man. That is why she alone can pity him.

After lunch Goethe wants to show Lotte and her relatives, whom he all addresses collectively as "children", the silhouettes which she and her late husband had sent him of their children. He is quite annoyed when it is Lotte who is the first to find them among all the old relics where they are buried. On this symbolical note the chapter ends.

The meeting with Goethe had been a great anti-climax as it inevitably had to be. Lotte had to realize at last that in the real world time had not stood still.

Yet she meets Goethe for one final farewell. In the last chapter of the novel Thomas Mann departs from historical truth, for although Goethe and Lotte did, in fact, meet again on several occasions during her stay in Weimar these meetings always took place in public. The strange meeting inside the carriage which Goethe had put at her disposal to bring her to and from the theatre is, however, purely of Mann's own invention. At first Goethe and Lotte...
point out to each other that the other one has grown old. But then they become serious. Goethe asks Lotte for forgiveness. Lotte is genuinely aghast for she has nothing to forgive. Unlike Friederike, the first one whom Goethe renounced and thus set up the pattern, she has lived a long and useful life. Her only worry is that future generations may doubt that she alone was the model for Werther's Lotte. Goethe reassures her, saying that "life is but change in form, oneness in many, permanence in change". (34) Lotte and the others are all one in his love - and in his guilt.

Lotte tells Goethe that she had not enjoyed the party at his house, for "it smells too much of sacrifice" where he is. These Riemers whom she has met, and Goethe's son and the "little person" whom the latter is going to marry because his father wishes him to do so, they all fly to Goethe "like a moth to the candle". This is an image dear to Goethe who reminds Lotte that if he is the flame to which the moths fly, he is also the candle which gives its body so that the light may shine. Death will be the final flight into the flame. But Goethe parts from Lotte with the same conciliatory words which we find at

(34) Lotte in Weimar, P. 447
the end of "Die Wahlverwandtschaften": "And what a pleasant moment will it be, when we anon awake together."

Goethe's life, the life of the light-giving candle, has served as an inspiration to Thomas Mann. As long as he follows this light he need not fear. To quote the lines from the "West-östlicher Divan" which stand at the beginning of "Lotte in Weimar":

Durch allen Schall und Klang
Der Transoxanen
Erkühnt sich unser Sang
Auf Deine Bahnen!
Uns ist für gar nichts bang,
In dir lebendig;
Dein Leben daure lang,
Dein Reich beständig!"
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