

DIE BEKENNTNISSE DES HOCHSTAPLERS FELIX KRULL:

A PICARESQUE PARODY

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A PICAESQUE PARODY

by

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PREFACE

I wish to dedicate this thesis for the Master of Arts degree to Dr. Wolfgang Michael and Dr. Lee B. Jennings, whose patient guidance as teachers as well as in the capacity of thesis advisers has been of great assistance to me.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following paper, I attempt to show that in his novel Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull, Thomas Mann sought to combine the picaresque genre with the stylistic element of parody. This novel is the only one among the many written by Mann which can be considered as truly picaresque, although Joseph, the central figure in the Joseph tetralogy, exhibits certain picaresque qualities.¹ In a short essay entitled Rückkehr, Mann says of Krull: "Im Übrigen gehört es zum Typ und zur Tradition des Pikaresken, des Abenteuer-Romans, dessen deutsches Urbild der Simplicius Simplicissimus ist."² Thus it is a modern representative of a literary genre which includes such masterpieces of world literature as Lazarillo de Tormes and LeSage's Gil Blas. Undoubtedly it is one of the best examples of the genre to come out of this century.

Mann used parody as a means of literary expression throughout his career. In the last four decades, he referred to parody time and again both in his essays as well as in his fictional works. His remarks on this subject form an invaluable commentary on his narrative technique and on his position in German literature today. Mann's conception of parody is expressed very succinctly in his short foreword to Jonas' bibliography of Mann's works and the critical literature written on them. He writes:

¹Mann called the tetralogy "ein göttlicher Schelmenroman" in a letter to Kerenyi; Karl Kerenyi, Romandichtung und Mythologie (Zürich, 1945), p. 83.

²Thomas Mann, "Rückkehr," Gesammelte Werke (Oldenburg, 1960), XI, 530.

"Ich habe mein Leben in Bewunderung des Grossen und Meisterhaften hingebracht-- meine ganze Essayistik, neben dem Werk, besteht ja aus lauter Bewunderung; und dieses Werk selbst ist im Angesicht der Grösse, unter ihrem Auge und in stetem Aufblick zu ihr getan,--einem Aufblick, der auch Einblick war, und dem zuweilen eine waghalsige Zutraulichkeit eignete. So kommt es, dass in meine Lebensarbeit etwas von intimer Erinnerung ans Grosse, von augenzwinkender Allusion auf die Grösse eingegangen ist, was den oder jenen dazu verleiten mag, sie selbst dem Grossen und 'Eigentlichen' im Bereich menschlicher Schöpfung anzureihen und zu bewundern, was besten Falles ein Abglanz und selbst nur Bewunderung ist. Das muss ihnen verwiesen sein."³

I shall devote the first part of this paper to a brief examination of the picaresque as a genre; then the relationship of Felix Krull to this genre will be shown. The final part of the thesis will deal with Mann's use of parody in this novel.

³Thomas Mann, "Ein Wort hierzu," Klaus W. Jonas, Fifty Years of Thomas Mann Studies. A Bibliography of Criticism (Minneapolis, 1954), XV.

CHAPTER I
THE PICARESQUE AS A GENRE

"Denn die Heiterkeit, Freund,
und der verschlagene Scherz sind das
Beste, was Gott uns gab . . ."

Thomas Mann - Josephroman

F. W. Chandler, in his authoritative work Literature of Roguery⁴ tracing the origin of picaresque literature, says that it is the subject rather than the form of a work that is the determining factor as to whether it is picaresque. Picaresque literature presents to us low life instead of the heroic, and manners rather than conscience and emotion. Since descriptive narrative is the preferred form for this genre, the novel is the primary vehicle of the picaresque. However, it is possible to attribute several types of literary creation to the genre, such as Till Eulenspiegel, the ballades of François Villon, or John Gay's Beggar's Opera. And the novels themselves are indicative of the great variety of picaresque types. A few examples are such works of varied character as Guzman de Alfarache, Defoe's Moll Flanders, LeSage's Gil Blas, or the German classic, Simplicius Simplicissimus.

What are the characteristics of the true picaro?⁵ First of all, one must distinguish between roguery and villainy. While the villain is a

⁴Frank Wadleigh Chandler, Literature of Roguery (New York, 1907).

⁵The etymological origin of this word has not been satisfactorily determined, although there are several current theories. Among these are

creature of malice--if not a pathological type--whose warped personality can and often does lead to extremes, the rogue is a relatively harmless fellow. He regards rascality with humor--or explains it as a result of human environment. Compared to the villain, he is a lovable character who never does anyone any real harm and who gains our sympathy rather than our condemnation. In order to make the difference between the two types clearer, one need only think of two characters of Shakespeare that personify respectively the rogue and the villain: namely Falstaff and Iago.

Criminologists have distinguished five separate types of criminals. These are: 1) the insane person 2) the instinctive criminal 3) the impassioned person 4) the occasional offender 5) the habitual offender.⁶ Of these five types, only two are of literary importance, i.e., the second and the third. The person who is driven to commit a crime in a frenzy of jealousy has always been a literary favorite, for he often is of noble character, in spite of his deed. Thus his action in a moment of passion invariably leads to sincere remorse and the reader may identify

the following: 1) the word is of Arabian origin, being based upon two Arabian words which are "baycara" or "medieval wandering scholar," and "bikarno" or "early riser." 2) The similarity to the Latin "pica" or "lance" has been pointed out with the thought in mind that the unfortunate picaro was subject in effect to the same treatment as the Roman slaves who were bound to a lance and sold at the public market. 3) Another Latin word, "picus," was suggested, meaning "woodpecker," or someone that lives from scraps and leftovers. 4) A relationship between the French "beghard" or "begard," "beggar," is possible, as well as "picard," (coming from Picardie). See Werner Beck, Die Anfänge des deutschen Schelmenromans (Zürich, 1957), p. 8.

⁶Chandler, p. 2.

himself with the unfortunate, who has proved his basic goodness but has momentarily gone astray.

The instinctive or congenital criminal, although more difficult to recognize in life because of his complexity, has long been accepted in literature as a simple and useful stock character. Modern psychology has labeled him the psychopathic personality; formerly he was thought of as the "born villain," predestined to the pursuit of evil. He is so fashioned that he alienates our sympathy and can live only to be hated. His downfall is welcomed by the reader, who is repulsed by the crassness of his character.

The rogue can be placed in neither the first nor the second of these categories. Nor does he remotely suggest the insane delinquent. Thus we can suppose that he must be considered as either the occasional or the habitual criminal. The occasional offender's career depends wholly upon circumstances. If these are favorable, he will lead a normal life. Under stress, he yields to temptation and reverts to a life of crime--not to great and revolting crimes, but to petty offenses. If the stress is removed, or if he should gather the strength to oppose it, he returns to a career of virtue. But if he falls into a pattern of indifference to the laws of society and if the circumstances favor a continuance of delinquency, the occasional criminal becomes the habitual offender.

The literature of roguery, born of the later Renaissance, deals essentially with the occasional criminal. It depicts this type as being lured farther and farther into the mazes of habitual crime or else turning back to a more respectable way of life. An example of the latter is LeSage's Gil Blas who, through devious and often dishonest means, achieves

a certain stature within the realm of the respectable and lives thereafter as honest as can be. This is also the case with the first picaresque of literature, *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

The typical crime of the villain is murder, while the picaresque is usually a petty thief. The latter aspires to win by wit and dexterity what others have won by labor. His methods are diverse, according to the imagination of the author. Thus he may be not only a thief but perhaps a cardsharp or a forger of checks, a smuggler or a quack of some sort, or he may be an opportunist who sets his sights on an advantageous matrimonial match.

As has been mentioned above, the novel has proved to be the most suitable form for picaresque fiction. The picaresque novel unfolds before us as a comic biography (or occasionally autobiography) of an "anti-hero"⁷ who makes his way in the world in the service of innumerable masters who, for the most part, treat him miserably. The picaresque takes delight in satirizing the personal faults of the people with whom he comes in contact, as well as their trades and professions. Thus the picaresque novel possesses two poles of interest: 1) the rogue and his tricks and 2) the manners he ridicules. While the antics of the picaresque and his quick-wittedness entertain the reader and win his sympathy, the deeper meaning of the picaresque literature as a whole must not be overlooked. For it was actually intended as a criticism of the mores and manners of a society which was thoroughly decadent. This literature emerges then as social satire and can be on occasion quite bitter.

⁷The term was coined by Chandler in his aforementioned work.

Although the origin of the picaresque novel is to be found in Spain of the sixteenth century, traces of this type of literature may be found already in Greek and Latin prose. There are many examples of literature of the Middle Ages which contain picaresque aspects. For instance the charming tales of the French animal epic Le Roman de Renart of the late thirteenth century transformed the rogue into a sly and merry beast. The picaresque novel as such, however, must be attributed to Spanish authors of the latter part of the Golden Century, who often remained anonymous because of the social criticism in their works.

The earliest example of the picaresque genre is La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) of which the authorship has not been established. The spirit of this novel represents a type of literary reaction, as the hero gave way to the anti-hero and social conditions were depicted in a realistic manner. The fiction itself can be considered as a reaction against the artificial and highly idealized knightly romance, or the Amadis-novel, which had reached its zenith in sixteenth century Spain. Like the knights of that unrealistic, courtly world, the pizaro is also a traveler who is looking for adventure. But his world is the everyday world of the little man--which meant the poor man especially in that era--who lives from hand to mouth.

The development of the Spanish picaresque novel concurs with an epoch in the history of Spain in which the inner stability and the ruling social order were approaching collapse. The world of the pizaro, that of a doomed empire, is devoid of all security. The pizaro, schooled by hardship and a rugged individualist, is concerned with the complete unmasking of this world of appearances and illusion, which is

outwardly brilliant but rotten in its interior. Because his appraisal of the times and conditions is sober and realistic, he emerges as victor in the struggle for existence. But it is necessary for him to be something of a rogue, in order for him to assert himself at all in this world.

Because the picaresque novel is characteristic of the decline of an epoch in the history of Spain, one can consider it as an expression of farewell. It seems to give that which is doomed to destruction an unsympathetic push toward the abyss. At the same time, it is the manifestation of a new and feverous intellectual current, for it can also be considered a product of the Renaissance. In this colorful and productive epoch, there is a return to the instinctive, and vital and primitive elements dominate life. This spirit is to be found in the artistic expression of the people. Those faultless knights of the late Middle Ages make way for the lusty and earthy heroes of Rabelais, the bungling Don Quixote, and a host of picares, all the products of a new realism which is a result of the rise of a more worldly philosophy and of changing human values. The critical realism which first became a foundation of occidental intellectual life in the sixteenth century is a source of the prose novel. This realism found in the picaresque novel a particularly appropriate means of expression and is also a basis for the objectivity of the picaresque in his observations of the world around him.

The picaresque genre was so popular in Spain that by the end of the seventeenth century it had been exploited to the point of exhaustion. In Francisco de Santos' Periquillo, el de las Gallineras (1668)

Periquillo begins his career as a full-fledged rogue, but dies, alas, as a meditative old philosopher. It is safe to say that the Spanish picaresque novel died with him.

The picaresque was not restricted to the Iberian Peninsula for long, for it soon found fertile ground in France. Already in 1596, the first representative of the picaresque novel appeared in France in autobiographical form, entitled La Vie Genereuse des Marcelots, Gueux, et Boesmiens. Many imitations of this work followed, of which at least one was in Latin, following the tremendous impetus of the humanism which reigned in France in the sixteenth century. Countless translations of Spanish picaresque literature were to be had in France in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and thus one may conclude that the Spanish picaro exerted more than a little influence on the French authors who wrote in this vein.

The French picaresque literature of this period exhibits satirical as well as burlesque elements. But it was not until LeSage used the components in combination with adventurous realism that a French picaresque novel of great literary value was created. The result was the classic French novel Gil Blas. It is largely due to the contribution of LeSage that the picaresque novel was transformed from its modest beginnings into a relatively modern literary form. LeSage achieved a perfection with this novel which has hardly been surpassed within the genre. The novel remains in many aspects very close to its Spanish forbears, except that Gil Blas is of the bourgeoisie, whereas the usual picaro belongs to the lower social strata. LeSage heightened the elements of adventure and intrigue in his work and wove into it a particularly fine thread of satire.

In spite of the fact that LeSage avoided moralizing, the novel is pervaded by a sense of the ethical, without ever becoming didactic. LeSage was able to employ the best characteristics of the Spanish picaresque novel while avoiding its weaknesses. His treatment of the material is extremely original and there is very little evidence of plagiarism in Gil Blas.

When considering German picaresque literature, it is necessary to go back into the Middle Ages to the works of Der Stricker, an Austrian who wrote many comic tales about a roguish English cleric whose favorite pastime was playing pranks on his fellow men. Pfaffe Amis (circa 1230) became the model for many collections of 'Schwänke', of which Till Eulenspiegel (1515) is the best known. This awkward farm boy who pretends to be hopelessly stupid is so clever that he is able to outwit everyone he encounters. In addition to Pfaffe Amis, Wernher der Gartensere's Meier Helmbrecht (1240) and Wittenweiler's Ring (circa 1400) can be regarded as containing certain picaresque traits.

Not until the seventeenth century is it possible to detect a definite influence of the Spanish picaresque novel in Germany. Very free French and German translations of Spanish works began to crop up in Germany in the early part of the century. (Never before and seldom since was there such a strong literary tie between Germany and Spain as in the seventeenth century. After this the connection was negligible, although Lessing studied the classical Spanish theater of the sixteenth century and commented upon it in the Hamburgische Dramaturgie. The romanticists are responsible for many translations of Spanish works but there is little evidence of a very pronounced influence of Spanish

literature on German literature in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries.) The Spanish picaresque novels of the sixteenth century exercised considerable influence upon the German Schwank- and Volksbücher of the seventeenth century which in turn degenerated into the Landstörtzer novels.

Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus, probably the most important German picaresque novel before the twentieth century, introduces an emotional and psychological development of the hero into the genre which anticipates the Bildungsroman of the following centuries. This novel, like the picaresque novels of Spain, was also written in a period of unrest and revolution. The Thirty Years' War brought about a disintegration of the established social structure, and the rapidly changing values created conditions similar to those in the Spain of the time when picaresque literature flourished in that country.

Grimmelshausen presents his naive rogue as a fool, soldier, quack, and thief. He makes his way across Germany, has some enlightening experiences with women in Paris, then returns to his native land. Gradually the novel leaves the realm of reality, when Simplicius descends into the depths of the Mummelsee where he is initiated into its subterranean mysteries. After a series of further adventures, he ultimately renounces the worldly life and retreats into the forest where he presumably spends the rest of his days as a hermit, tired of the temporal existence and his former turbulent life. Because he undergoes this complete change of character, Grimmelshausen's hero forfeits something of the real picaresque, for the true picaro is not generally subjected to such a radical change of heart. Moreover, the

novel exceeds the limits of the picaresque in more than this respect, since actually the unifying idea of the work is the development of a man who turns from a life of pleasure to the renunciation of all that he has experienced.

Grimmelshausen's Simplizianische Schriften also belong to the picaresque genre. While the Simplizianische Schriften are of lesser literary importance than Simplicissimus, they preserve a certain freshness and exhibit the use of an excellent epic style, while giving an accurate description of the times. The cultural and historical content of his novels is invaluable.

The picaresque novel was frequently imitated by other seventeenth century authors. One of the most charming of these works is Christian Reuter's Schelmuffsky's wahrhaftige, kurieuse und sehr gefährliche Reisebeschreibung zu Wasser und zu Lande (1696). Reuter combined the adventurous with "studentischer Frische und Derbheit persönlicher Satire."⁸ German literature of the eighteenth century produced no picaresque novel of major importance as a successor to Simplicissimus. The publication of Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795/96) marks the beginning of the ascent of the German Bildungsroman, which thereafter came to be particularly characteristic of German literature. The romanticists, who are not associated with the sort of earthy realism characteristic of the picaresque novel, contributed nothing of great importance to the genre, although certainly Eichendorff's

⁸Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stammer, "Abenteuerroman," Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte (Berlin, 1958), 2nd ed., I, 2.

Taugenichts approaches the picaresque more than any other romantic figure. However, he is no true rogue and was certainly not conceived as such.

German literature had to wait until the twentieth century before an important novel in the picaresque vein was to be written. There would seem to be a revival of the genre, since at least two important picaros have appeared on the literary scene in the last decade. Before Felix Krull and Oskar Matzerath another representative work within the genre should be mentioned, namely Ernst Penzoldt's Die Fowensbande (1930). This novel relates the history of a tramp family which disturbs the peace and quiet of a small town by using a variety of stratagems and ruses.

Thomas Mann's Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull (1954) is the first German picaresque novel to achieve world renown. Not long after, Günter Grass' Blechtrommel (1959) was published and has received international recognition, although it, in my opinion, falls considerably short of the former work in interest and content. In these sophisticated picaresque novels of our era, the primitive rascal of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is hardly recognizable. The authors created picaresque figures of an extremely difficult and psychologically complex natures, fully representative of our epoch.

Upon examining picaresque literature closely, one may draw certain conclusions regarding the picao and the picaresque novel. The following traits are common to almost all picaros or works of this genre.

If one considers the traditional figures of the occidental epic literature, names such as Odysseus, the Cid, Roland, Siegfried, and

Parzival come to mind. In contrast to these, the picaresque figures appear pitiful and mean, ugly of character, weak, cowardly and worthy of scorn. Actually the picaresque hero is the most negative hero of occidental literature, and perhaps he was conceived as such, in order to shake the reader out of his social lethargy.

At the same time the picaresque hero is one of the most youthful heroes of world literature. His earliest experiences in life as well as his first pranks of childhood and adolescence are faithfully recorded, since he is, throughout the novel, the central figure. As a child, his environment and the relationship between him and his parents play an important role. (It is interesting to note that before Goethe and Rousseau, very little had been written about the adolescent. Earlier authors were not interested in the child as a hero or central character.) While it cannot be asserted that the picaresque novel set a precedent here, the youthfulness of its hero certainly belongs to the modern characteristics of the heroic hero.

The young picaresque hero, generally from a rather questionable family or even an illegitimate child, leaves home at an early age (or he is unceremoniously thrown out). Completely on his own in an indifferent and even hostile world, ill-treated and exploited by the people for whom he must work, the youth soon learns that existence for him amounts to the survival of the fittest. Thus he does not hesitate long in embarking on a career of petty theft and minor delinquencies, a career in which he must live by his wits. The picaresque hero is generally driven into his dishonest ways, and we learn already in the earliest picaresque novels that hunger can move human beings to all kinds of deeds.

As is the case with the Bildungsroman, the picaro's destiny is shaped by his experiences and contacts throughout his life. But while the hero in the Bildungsroman, although also confronted by adversities, becomes a respectable and responsible person by the end of the novel, the picaro remains the same old rogue.

The world which the picaro faces is just as indifferent to him as is the world of the existentialist hero in the modern novel. The picaro, in contrast to the modern hero, is not a philosopher. Nor is he fully a rebel against the society which has, in fact neglected him so badly. He takes his revenge on this society in that he actually lives at its expense. He is not unreceptive to the woes of others for he himself is a victim of the same circumstances. Basically good-hearted, he is sympathetic to the reader in that he has many characteristics of the underdog.

Although the picaro may exhibit certain weaknesses of character, he is really a moderate in his way of life. In order to maintain his precarious situation in the world, he must exercise a certain amount of self-discipline, and neither excesses of the mind nor of the body would enhance that sagacious spirit which best characterises him. The uniqueness of his profession seems to protect him from the worst influences, or at least from those which could transform him into a thoroughly debauched type. Thus there is hardly a picaro among the literature that exhibits any sort of depravity.

One is inclined to think of the picaro as being amoral. This is also not entirely the case, since there is evidence of a definite moral value in an existence which offers him no other recourse.

Due to the experiences which the picaresque has in the course of his life, he regards the rest of mankind with suspicion. His world is a deceptive one and the picaresque places no great trust in it. He is necessarily an empiricist, for his actions and reactions toward others depend upon his previous experiences. The sense of imagination which he possesses in a high degree is a pragmatic rather than idealistic one. Along with this imagination, the picaresque is clever and adroit, and these qualities serve to help him out of many ticklish situations. A great deal of the picaresque's charm lies in his artfulness, and we cannot help but admire his ingenious ideas which keep him always one step ahead of his persecutors. To this imaginative creature, life has a plastic quality and he fashions his own according to his whim of the moment.

In general, the picaresque faces life in a thoroughly positive manner. It is for him a vast and varied panorama, in which there is always something new to discover. Even when he is faced by the most bitter adversities, he rises above them and tends to regard them as positive experiences from which there is something to be learned.

The picaresque is hardly concerned with moral values, for he knows that these are preached more than they are practiced. Moreover, his way of life does not allow him to reflect upon ethical and moral questions to any great extent. Since he has no fixed station within society he is not obliged to pay lip service to conventional morals. The picaresque goes along his way without giving a thought as to whether he is transgressing moral limits. He is never actually plagued by any serious problems and he lives from day to day, more concerned with

keeping body and soul together than with any profound or abstract questions of human existence. The word which seems to best characterise him is light-heartedness. (However, it must be observed that, along with his attitude of unconcern, the picaresque is often irresponsible and possesses actually very little feeling of obligation. But this quality would seem to add to his charm, for like the *Taugenichts*, he awakens in us the feeling that a little less responsibility in life can occasionally be attractive.)

These two characteristics lead to another conspicuous picaresque quality. It is extremely rare that the picaresque becomes entangled in any sort of serious love affair. His is a much too changeable spirit which does not seem to be susceptible to any sort of deeper and permanent attachment. And he who loves must assume a certain responsibility toward his beloved. The picaresque being a genre which essentially rejects sentimentality, the picaresque novel is more oriented toward action and less toward emotional or psychological currents. In the exciting and occasionally dangerous world of the picaresque there is neither time nor interest for profound emotional feelings.

The picaresque is an outsider who manages to find his way in life in spite of this. As such, he is often condemned by the rest of society. He himself is no hypocrite and admits his weaknesses with disarming candour. A paradox arises in that the moral genuineness (or lack of it) in others is often laid bare by their contact with the picaresque. The latter, who has nothing to hide, often causes others to show their moral inadequacies. This may be construed as a light satire of society which--whether consciously or unconsciously--lets itself be unmasked by a swindler.

As has been already discussed, the subject matter is the decisive factor in determining whether a work is picaresque or not. However, there are definite formal characteristics peculiar to the genre. In the picaresque novel, it is customary for the author to jump from one episode to another without there being evident ties between episodes. We find no exhaustive study of the other figures in the novel and no analysis of the thoughts and ideas of the hero, so that it is rather the action which holds our interest and carries the story. The picaro, as the main character, serves as a unifying factor here and is "on stage" so to speak, during the entire novel. It is almost impossible to write a picaresque novel that is not episodic (although an episodic novel is not necessarily picaresque). Unity is further achieved by the use of the first person throughout. The picaro carries the thread of the narration through the various episodes into which the author places him. Since almost all of the important examples of picaresque literature use this narrative technique, one can conclude that it is an important characteristic of the genre. Another advantage in using the first person is that the distance between the picaro and the reader is reduced and the reader tends to feel himself a witness and even a sort of accomplice to the deeds of the picaro. (The Spanish authors strived for this effect in order to show their readers that they were not entirely innocent regarding the behavior of the rogue, since it was basically the state of society which was responsible for his misdemeanors. There is of course a certain didactic element evident in this attitude.)

The use of the autobiographical form in the novel generally presents the possibility of revealing the personal thoughts and emotions of the protagonists. This is not true of the picaresque novel, for although the rogue bears his thoughts and relates his deeds to us without reserve he is almost always characterized by an extreme coldness of attitude. His confessions are often marked by a sense of pleasure and pride concerning his accomplishments.

The first successful picaresque novels may be classed as humorous fiction but one should keep in mind that they present to the reader an idea of a world in which there were shameful class distinctions and in which the "little man" frequently had to resort to cunning and even dishonesty in order to stay alive.

The picaresque novel is representative of a realistic tradition in literature. The early examples already contributed considerably to the expansion of the novel as a narrative form in that human types, places and activities which had formerly been considered unsuitable for literature, began to serve as fictional material. With the rise of the picaresque genre, the search for reality in literary fiction begins.

CHAPTER II

FELIX KRULL AS A MODERN PICARESQUE NOVEL

In 1911 Thomas Mann wrote the first fragment which was to become part of the novel Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull. In the Lebensabriss, he asserts that he wrote this first part ". . . mit so viel Lust, dass es mich nicht wunderte, als Kenner das Fragment für das Glücklichsste und Beste erklärten was ich gemacht hatte." He continues: "Es mag in gewissem Sinn das Persönlichste sein, denn es gestaltet mein Verhältnis zur Tradition, das zugleich liebevoll und auflösend ist und meine schriftstellerische 'Sendung' bestimmt."⁹ In spite of his enthusiasm for Krull he interrupted work on it in the same year in order to write Der Tod in Venedig. He explains this action in the following passage: "Den krullischen Memoirenton, ein heikelstes Balancekunststück, lange festzuhalten, war freilich schwer, und der Wunsch, davon auszuruhen, leistete wohl der Konzeption Vorschub, durch die im Frühjahr 1911 die Fortsetzung unterbrochen wurde."¹⁰ Forty years passed in which most of Mann's great works were written before he expanded the fragment into the first volume of memoirs.¹¹

⁹Mann, "Lebensabriss," Gesammelte Werke, XI, 122.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 123.

¹¹The first fragment is entitled: Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Bruchstück aus einem Roman (Das fünfundzwanzigste Jahr: Almanach des S. Fischer Verlages, Berlin, 1911, pp. 273-83), and consists exclusively of the Müller-Rosé episode (Ausgewählte Erzählungen, Stockholm,

What is particularly astonishing to the reader is that the continuation does not betray any change in the style and that the completed work shows a freshness and elan of which one would not generally think an octogenarian capable. However, Mann's mastery is evident in the effortless control of the material and the form and it is obvious that he had at his disposal a gift of expression which assured him control of whatever he chose to work with. Mann never failed to find the right words for the most subtle nuances of emotional or intellectual occurrences, and his art represents perfection in the rendering in words of sensitive impressions.

Considering his other novels, Felix Krull seems to be a sort of literary holiday. He does not reveal why the picaresque appealed to him in the last years of his life and there is no confirmation in his writing that he was especially interested in this genre. However, since Krull is a parody of the traditional Bildungsroman, the picaresque is an excellent choice as the antithesis to the hero of that genre. While Mann refers in Die Entstehung des Dr. Faustus to the most important German picaresque novel of the past, Grimmelshausen's Simplicius

1948, pp. 343-54). The fragment from 1923 (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart), entitled Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Buch der Kindheit, consists of the "erstes Buch" of the versions from 1937 and 1954 and ends with the death of Felix' father. The fragment from 1937 (Ausgewählte Erzählungen) ends with the induction scene (fifth chapter, second book). At the end of the fourth chapter in the fragment from 1937 there are a few alterations. These are however relatively minor and of no consequence in relation to the whole work.

Simplicissimus,¹² it is primarily because this novel served Mann in his thorough study of German literature and language of the Baroque and the Middle Ages. If one wishes to establish the fact that there was a definite influence of Grimmelshausen's novel upon Krull, it is of course possible to find similarities. Both of the main characters are temporarily elevated to the nobility. Both of them, to their great satisfaction, are granted audiences with kings. They are both seduced by passionate Frenchwomen, and both of them delve into the enigmas of cosmic secrets when Simplicissimus travels to the core of the earth and when Felix is initiated into the mysteries of evolution by Dr. Kuckuck. However, it is always rather risky to claim a direct influence, particularly in the case of an author of Mann's stature.

Aside from this German classic, Mann speaks of his thorough acquaintance with Sterne's Tristram Shandy,¹³ but more in connection with the Joseph tetralogy, upon which it seems to have exercised considerably more influence than upon Krull.

We know from a passage in the Lebensabriss that Mann was inspired by a specific book of his own time. This work, along with its author, were recently treated at length in an article by Eva Schiffer.¹⁴

¹²Mann, "Die Entstehung des Dr. Faustus," Gesammelte Werke, XI, 196.

¹³Mann, "Joseph und Seine Brüder: ein Vortrag," Gesammelte Werke, XI, 664.

¹⁴Eva Schiffer, "Manolescu's Memoirs" The Beginnings of Felix Krull?" Monatshefte, LII (1960), 283-292.

Mann writes: "Nach der Zurücklegung von Königliche Hoheit hatte ich die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull zu schreiben begonnen--ein sonderbarer Entwurf, auf den, wie viele erraten haben, die Lektüre der Memoiren Manolescu's mich gebracht hatte."¹⁵

The history of the Rumanian swindler is interesting not only from the standpoint that it served Mann as a source for Felix Krull, but also because it bears out his thesis that the world loves to be deceived by a clever fraud.

Georges Manolescu was born in Bucharest in 1871 as the son of a poor but honest family. Already as a young man he led a turbulent life. Before he was twenty, he stowed away on a ship to Istanbul, from where he set out for Athens, with the intention of ultimately reaching Paris. In the Greek capital he ran out of money and had to turn to the Rumanian consulate for aid. His petition was denied and he attempted suicide. During a charity visit at the hospital in which he lay seriously wounded, the queen of Greece saw him and became interested in his case. After his release, she made it possible for him to return to Bucharest. A few months after this, Manolescu set out for Paris again where he was to study law with the financial aid of his parents. But apparently he was not cut out for an honest career in life and he soon began to steal, hoping all the while to find someone foolish enough to marry him who also had money and could support him. After thirty-seven thefts he was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison. After his release, he tried his luck at the casinos, winning for that time an

¹⁵Mann, Lebensabris, p. 122.

astronomical sum and posing thereafter as the prince of Padua or the duke of Otranto. A short sojourn in Honolulu and Japan almost cost him his life, as his lovesick native mistress tried to poison him! Once more in Europe, he spent several months in prisons due to further offenses against the law. In 1901, Manolescu was admitted to a mental institution after convincing the authorities by his behavior that he was mad, in order to avoid a ten year prison sentence. He was not there for long before he escaped and fled to Vienna and from there on to Bucharest. Back in his native city, he wrote occasional articles for a newspaper. Following the advice of a lawyer friend, he decided to write his memoirs and publish them in order to improve his situation. They appeared in 1905 under the title Ein Fürst der Diebe: Memoiren. The version which Mann read was a German translation from the original French, edited by Paul Langenscheidt. Because the editor wished to spare certain people painful memories, he simply omitted many passages in the book--probably the only interesting ones, inasmuch as the result is a thoroughly boring work. Not satisfied with what he had, Langenscheidt followed Manolescu to America (where he had emigrated and was working as a manual laborer) and asked him to write an analytical sequel to the first book, which was to clarify the motives for his deeds. This book was even worse than the first, for Langenscheidt was not able to leave out all of the repetitions without discarding the whole project.

Concerning Manolescu's life after this, suffice it to say that he finally realised one of his dreams: he actually married a young countess who remained true to him during his lifetime, although he made

no effort to change his ways. The rest of his life is of no further significance for us. More important is the comparison between Manolescu's Memoiren and Mann's Krull. The former did undoubtedly provide a few superficial elements of the plot of Krull and some of Krull's traits. Both men travel a great deal, both of them are irresistible to women, both are very sure of themselves and quite conceited. They are in fact vain creatures and do not attempt to conceal their self-esteem. (Krull mentions time and again that he is "aus feinerem Holz geschnitten."¹⁶ Both Krull and that other picaro of the 20th century, Oskar Matzerath, are great braggarts.) Like Krull, Manolescu is proud of his fraudulent technique, but he is purely out for gain, whereas Mann's imaginative rogue enjoys the game at which he plays immensely. Manolescu's repeated simulation of madness (for he used this pretense many times in order to flee from justice) reminds us of the military induction scene. But his memoirs, written in an unbelievably primitive fashion, are without any sort of literary value. The tone is sentimental and banal, and the mood fluctuates between unconcealed vanity on the one hand and self-pity on the other. There is not a trace of the fine and ironic humor which permeates Krull. Only a few passages reveal an unconscious humor, which is however crude and hardly endearing and bears no similarity at all to Mann's sophisticated and subtle wit. For instance, Manolescu encounters an aging dowager at Monte Carlo, who tries to attach herself to him. He writes of this incident: "Sie hatte

¹⁶Thomas Mann, Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull (Hamburg, 1963) pp. 12, 36.

zweifellos bereits die Schlacht bei den Thermopylen als Zeitgenossin miterlebt oder konnte zum mindesten meine Stammutter sein; denn sie hatte anscheinend schon einige hundert Jahre hinter sich und trug sicherlich genau so viel eigenes Haar auf ihrem Schädel, als man auf einer Melone findet. . ."17 and so on ad nauseam. (Thereafter he "borrowed" 80,000 francs from her.)

Mann did not conceive his rogue as a mean or base sort of person at all, but rather he refined and ennobled him. It is absolutely not Krull's intention to hurt the people with whom he comes in contact; indeed for the most part, as will be shown later, he brings happiness into their lives. It is not his intention to do so, just as deviations from the accepted norm of conduct are never done with malice aforethought. He never acts in a villainous or dangerous manner, whereas Manolescu almost killed one of his guards. The greatest difference is primarily that the latter is a hardened criminal, whereas Krull is a cultivated picaro.

Krull, like most of Mann's protagonists, is a complicated and rather enigmatic character. It is highly unlikely that Mann used Manolescu as a model for him, any more than he used Grimmelshausen's novel as a model for the whole work. Nor is Krull meant as a parody of the Rumanian swindler's memoirs, for Mann's parody in this novel is aimed at much loftier targets, as will be pointed out later.

In reply to an inquiry by the author of the aforementioned article regarding the importance of the relationship between Manolescu's

¹⁷Schiffer, "Manolescu's Memoirs: the Beginnings of Felix Krull?," p. 289.

Memoiren and Krull, Mann wrote: "Das Buch, aus dem mir tatsächlich vor mehr als vierzig Jahren die erste Anregung zum Felix Krull kam, ist schon in München liegen geblieben, und ich habe es nie wieder gesehen."¹⁸

Manolescu's memoirs must have given Mann some insight into the world and ways of a real swindler. But Mann did not create a base type like Manolescu, but rather he conceived Krull as a rogue in the style of the true picaresque--with a unique twist in that Krull is the first picaresque in literature who is at the same time an artist. Mann speaks of Krull in two separate letters from the year 1947 as a modern picaresque novel. In the first of these, dated October 10th and addressed to Agnes E. Meyer, he writes of his intention to resume work on Krull: "In belebteren Stunden bewege ich allerlei Arbeitspläne: . . .den Ausbau des Felix Krull-Fragments zu einem modernen, in der Equipagenzeit spielenden Schelmen-Roman."¹⁹ And in a letter dated November 25th to Herman Kesse he asks: ". . .(was würden Sie sagen, wenn ich das Felix Krull-Fragment zu einem richtigen Schelmenroman ausbaute, zur Unterhaltung auf meine alten Tage?). . ."²⁰

In examining Krull in order to establish why it can be considered representative of the picaresque genre and what Mann has added which makes the novel unique within this genre, one should first consider the period in which it was conceived.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁹ Thomas Mann: Briefe 1937-1947, ed. by Erica Mann (Kampten, 1963), p. 557.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 570.

The first fragment was written in 1911, ten years after Mann's Buddenbrooks had been published. Mann was deeply concerned at this time with the fall of a German patrician family, as is expressed in this first novel. The Buddenbrooks family is essentially representative of the decadence inherent within the German Bürgertum around the turn of the century. This decadence is to be found in Krull's family as well-- in fact, in everyone with whom the boy comes in contact. In connection with this rather pessimistic view of the reigning social class in Germany at that time, one must remember that the fragment was written just three years before the first world war began. The period of years preceding this world-shaking event was already marked by political and economic instability. This would tend to remind one of the history of Spain at the time that the picaresque idiom found such fertile ground in that country. In an article regarding the picaresque in the works of Thomas Mann, Oskar Seidlin remarks: "Möglich aber ist, dass eine historische und geistige Situation, die der Geburt des Pikaro Vorschub leistete, in einem anderen Lande, in einer anderen Epoche sich in ihren Grundzügen so wiederholte, dass ein neuer Pikaro ans Licht treten konnte."²¹

Like Gil Blas, Krull's family is one of means. Thus he is born into a middle-class situation in which he might have all the possibilities of developing into a respectable citizen. But upon closer scrutiny, we learn that the Krull family is not all that it should be. Felix' father, a likeable sort even though he is not endowed with a great deal

²¹Oskar Seidlin, "Pikareske Züge in Werke Thomas Manns," Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift, V (1955), 23.

of integrity, is the producer of an inferior champagne, the quality of which is belied by the beautiful label. Krull's business goes steadily downhill, and when he sees himself faced with financial disaster, he can no longer live up to the little tune which the door chimes play--namely "Freut Euch des Lebens." So he chooses the easy way out by ending it all.

Frau Krull appears as a rather mundane figure, and a description of her and Felix' older sister, Olympia, at one of the less than sedate parties thrown by the Krulls indicate her and Olympia's behavior. "Die Frauen, in ausgeschnittenen Kleidern, beugten sich lachend über die Stuhllehnen, um Einblick in ihren Busen zu gewähren und so die Herrenwelt für sich zu gewinnen. . ." ²² After the premature death of her husband, the unfortunate woman is forced to open a small boarding-house in Frankfurt. The author implies that it is not only her good cooking which attracts guests. Felix' sister proceeds on to Cologne, where she intends to try her luck at the theater, a profession which is already associated with a certain disreputableness.

Krull's godfather arouses suspicion by his unusual name. Before retreating to the small town where the Krulls live, he had rubbed elbows with the social elite in Cologne, enjoying the respect of the society in which he moved. But due to circumstances which are never explained, he has to leave this brilliant milieu and satisfy himself with a more provincial life. A sometime artist, it pleases him to adopt the title of professor, although the academic prerequisites are

²² Mann, Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull, p. 17.

certainly lacking. And it is Felix' godfather who promotes his bent for the make-believe, when he has the boy stand as model for his painting. Felix, the "Kostümkopf," as Schimmelpreester likes to call him, not only looks the parts admirably, but even appears to reflect the type peculiar to a certain country in a certain century. Felix remarks of these idyllic hours passed as the artist's model: "Ach, das waren herrliche Stunden! Wenn ich aber nach beendeter Kurzweil meine schale und nichtige Alltagskleidung wieder angelegt hatte, so befiel mich wohl eine unberwingliche Trauer und Sehnsucht, ein Gefühl unendlicher und unbeschreiblicher Langerweile, das mich den Rest des Abends mit dem Gemüt in tiefer und wortloser Niedergeschlagenheit hinbringen liess."²³ This is an indication of the pleasure which Felix is to derive throughout his life from the assumption of roles which he continues to play so well.

It is obvious, then, that Felix' homelife, although not marked by the misery experienced by the average picaro, could only contribute toward his later career of leisurely fraud.

After the death of his father, Felix is forced to make his way in the world. Schimmelpreester, still a man of some connections, provides him with a job in an elegant hotel in Paris, much to Felix' delight. There is an aimless interim spent in Frankfurt, where he is however thoroughly schooled in the art of love by the prostitute Rozsa, which is to stand him in good stead later in his career. In this respect we see the similarity between Krull and Manolescu. Mann

²³Ibid., p. 23.

endows his picaresque with irresistible sex appeal, and Rozsa comments upon the relatively inexperienced Felix as being "zum Liebesdienst geschaffen."²⁴ After this edifying encounter and a bit of draft-dodging, Krull sets out for Paris.

The picaresque wanders from master to master, staying with one only as long as he can bear the generally miserable treatment received at his hands. Krull is not subject to the whims of various masters, for this does not fit the epoch in which he lives, nor is this acceptable to the modern reader who is not accustomed to the class distinctions which prevailed in earlier centuries. But Krull has a series of jobs, which prepare the way for him to a position of assumed nobility. Already in Frankfurt, he waits impatiently at the theater exits for the crowd to emerge so that he may request the names of the prominent and call up their waiting carriages. Once in Paris, he assumes his duties as liftboy at the Hotel Saint James and Albany. It is not long before his superior qualities are noticed and he is promoted to waiter. His menial duties are soon to be left behind when the spoiled playboy son of Luxembourgish nobility offers him his identity--and his letter of credit. Krull then arrives in that world, "zu der die Natur (mich) drängte"²⁵ with relative ease. Unlike the true picaresque, Krull, a veritable "Sonntagskind," has relatively little difficulty in rising from his humble station into the realm of the upper ten thousand.

²⁴Ibid., p. 109.

²⁵Ibid., p. 78.

As is true of the picaro, Krull remains free of any close associations or binding relationships with other people. Actually, he has no real friends whatever. He confesses: "Eine innere Stimme hatte mir früh verkündigt, dass Anschluss, Freundschaft und wärmende Gemeinschaft mein Teil nicht seien, sondern dass ich allein, auf mich selbst gestellt und streng verschlossen meinen besonderen Weg zu machen unnachsichtig gehalten sei."²⁶ He preserves this aloofness throughout his life and even at the end of his career we think of him as being in some sort of isolated retreat (perhaps in prison). Krull must seek this lonely independence which protects him from the obligations and responsibility of the normal individual and insures the complete freedom which is essential to his way of life.

Krull differs from the other people whom he encounters in various respects. He moves among them as a chosen being who tolerates them but always maintains a certain intellectual distance from them. He possesses a special magnetism, which, "ob ich wollte oder nicht, ausging von meinem Sein auf jedes nicht völlig stumpfe Mitwesen."²⁷ That which isolates him specifically from the rest of the world is his ability to resist the overwhelming reality of life. With his boundless fantasy, he confronts life and transcends the banality of daily existence with the aid of his splendid gift, which allows him an elegant and leisurely existence.

²⁶Ibid., p. 102.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 195-96.

His closest contact with others (and this is more a physical than an emotional one) consists in the love affairs in which he is ensnared time and again. These are, however, always superficial and transitory. The "Klüfte der Fremdheit"²⁸ which separate him from others deny him any truly profound sentiment in this realm. Because of charm of person and personality, he "falls" into the affairs without much conscious effort on his part. Like Don Juan, he exudes a fatal attraction, but that is as far as the similarity goes. The Spanish sensualist experiences a mixture of pleasure and disgust in his conquests. His excessive eroticism drives him from one seduction to the next. And ultimately his enormous pride and unrestrained arrogance are his ruin. Don Juan belongs in the realm of the demonic, while Krull was conceived as a relatively harmless and attractive rogue.

Krull tends to regard women as a trap, for if he were bound to one, he would have to give up his vagabond way of life. Although he is extremely attractive to the opposite sex, he is at the same time quite capable of restraint. He remarks in this connection: "Allein man thäte mir unrecht, indem man schlösse, dass ich auf Grund dieser besonderen natürlichen Mitgift zum Missethater und Weiberhelden geworden sei. Dieses war mir verwehrt, aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil mein schwieriges und gefährliches Leben Anforderungen an meine Spannkraft stellte, denen sie unmöglich hätte genügen können, wenn

²⁸Ibid., p. 80.

ich mich auf so durchgreifende Art hätte ausgeben wollen."²⁹ Krull, then, sees fit to exercise self-discipline. He too must maintain moderation in his life, just like the picaresque who depends upon his sharp-wittedness. He is also too much an epicurean on the one hand and a gentleman on the other to refuse a lady, but he encounters all of them with the same objectivity and pedagogic superiority which are so much a part of his character.

Krull can best be designated as the sort of person who lives by his wits. Intelligent without being intellectual, his penetrating comprehension of situations aids him in making the most of them. Since this is his manner of life, it can be inferred that he lacks certain elements of character. As is the case with the picaresque, Krull has little emotional depth or moral integrity. He is not plagued in the least by pangs of conscience when he relieves first the elevator boy and then the waiter at the hotel of their posts. Thus he is somewhat machiavellian in his attitude, for, to him, the end justifies the means. While he does not present a real menace to the society in which he lives, he does live at its expense. His highly developed practical intelligence is a substitute for complete emotional development, and he lives in a sense in his own world, which he has actually created for himself with the help of his unlimited imagination. It would be wrong to say that he has no feelings, but there is justification in saying that he never gives in to them. All his thoughts or experiences are related with a certain detachment, giving the impression of complete objectivity.

²⁹Ibid., p. 49.

Compared with the usual respectable and sincere human being, Krull is rather irresponsible and superficial. We tend to see him as going through life wearing a pair of kid gloves and carrying an ivory cane, too fine to earn his own living. He prefers to lead the easy life of a swindler instead of developing the talents which, he assures us time and again, have been bestowed upon him. He lives from day to day, not in the least concerned with profound problems of any sort.³⁰

But curiously enough, it is to a certain extent just this irresponsibility and the colossal self-assurance which help to make Krull an attractive hero to the reader. Most persons, at some time or other, wish themselves free of the responsibility which weighs upon them, and either consciously or unconsciously we enjoy identifying ourselves with this debonair rogue. In Krull, they will recognize certain of their own traits which they, as reliable members of a community, are obliged to conceal. They are relieved to find in this novel (unlike most important novels) a world free of scruples and responsibility, of consuming passions and deep unhappiness, of fateful events and the relentlessness of destiny. We are gladly lured into Krull's carefree life, which, in spite of its irregularities, is as attractive as that of the *Taugenichts*. For the imaginative reader, Krull's *demi-monde* exercises a certain charm. It is a colorful and exciting world in

³⁰It is interesting to note that Krull is the only really carefree figure that Mann created. One need only compare him with characters like Thomas Buddenbrook or Gustav Aschenbach, despairing men who are overwhelmed by the world around them and who find peace only in death. But Krull saunters through life, ignoring the reality with which they are forced to cope and creating his own world of illusion.

which one must take risks and above all, in which one must live by his wits. And who does not like to imagine that he is a little bit cleverer than the next person?

Since the picaresque is a type who deviates from the accepted norm, it is up to the author to create a central character who gains our sympathy. Earlier novelists of the picaresque have done this by creating miserable creatures who are at the mercy of their fellow men and are subjected by these to abominable treatment. Since Mann did not choose to present his picaresque as a ragged and hungry urchin, as the underdog, he sought another method. Therefore, Krull is endowed with a thoroughly attractive personality and an abundance of charm to which not only women are susceptible. His winning ways are not lost upon even the most hardened of souls, such as a customs official, a train conductor, or (of all people) a chief of police.

Mann uses a second technique commonly found in picaresque literature. All of the people whom the picaresque encounters in his escapades are of relatively little importance and serve as foils to the main character. If they should play a more important role within the framework of the whole, they are endowed with unpleasant qualities so that the picaresque appears quite the lesser of two evils. (This is particularly true in the older picaresque literature, where the masters are invariably misers, gluttons, or otherwise made to appear quite loathsome.) Mann has made Felix the central figure among other protagonists who are not necessarily worse than he, but who nevertheless take on no depth or breadth of character throughout the novel. (This applies least to Dr. Kuckuck, but the Kuckuck episode is also the least picaresque episode in the book.)

Mann does not want his readers to think of Krull in the sense of a true criminal. He has presented this swindler to us in such an attractive manner that one does not even take his deviations from the straight and narrow path very seriously. In the course of the story, one has the feeling that Mann is careful not to attach to Krull the odium of fraud or dishonesty. Concerning Krull's feigned seizures, contrived to save him from the boredom of the schoolroom, Mann writes: "Nur der Betrug hat Aussicht auf Erfolg und lebensvolle Wirkung unter den Menschen, der den Namen des Betrugs nicht durchaus verdient, sondern nichts ist als die Ausstattung einer lebendigen, aber nicht völlig ins Reich des Wirklichen eingetretenen Wahrheit mit denjenigen materiellen Merkmalen, deren sie bedarf, um von der Welt erkannt und gewürdigt zu werden."³¹ Later he contends of the jewel theft in the train: "Das war mehr ein Geschehen als ein Tun."³²

Mann skillfully avoids arousing any feeling of sympathy the reader might have for Felix' victims. When the boy helps himself to candy at the local confectionery, the owner who has been relieved of his wares remains unknown to us. And Mme. Houplé is more than delighted when she learns that Felix has taken her jewelry from her luggage. She even begs him to help himself to whatever happens to be lying around in her hotel suite! Prof. Kuckuck, whose name already arouses certain suspicions, proves to be immensely erudite and perfectly at home within the realm of the intellect, but an utter simpleton regarding matters of

³¹Mann, Felix Krull, p. 34.

³²Ibid., p. 117.

the heart. It is he who brings the alleged Marquis de Venosta into his home, thereby exposing his wife and daughter to the charms of Krull. Kuckuck, no longer young and immersed in his world of fossils, seems hardly aware of the latent passion within his handsome wife (who does not need the encouragement that her puritanical daughter requires before submitting to Krull's charms). It is understandable that Krull sees in Zouzou a difficult conquest, but it was hardly his intention to make a cuckold of Prof. Kuckuck! Thus we see that at least the women whom Krull encounters are not likely to harbor the feeling of having been betrayed by him, but are rather fulfilled in a sense by the encounter.

Along this line it should be noted that the swindler is the only criminal type who must gain the confidence of his victims. Krull does this without even having to work at it. In fact, if it were necessary for him to solicit their trust, he would be forced to discard his aristocratic reserve. But curiously, each person whom Krull meets seems to need a confidant. And each one, while being betrayed, is simultaneously satisfied. Thus Mann has created a picaresque figure that not only takes but also gives. His victims, while being deceived, are also served. Just like Müller-Rosé on stage, Krull brings to people their own peculiar happiness.

Mann has in many respects followed the pattern presented by the genre in fashioning his picaro.³³ But we also discover elements in

³³Although Felix Krull contains many elements which are typically picaresque, it does lack the realistic coarseness and sharp satire which are typical of this genre. The former element would have been out of

Krull which may be considered as innovations within the literature of roguery and which place upon this particular work Mann's very individual stamp. For instance, Mann has chosen to employ parody as an integral part of the work. And among the things which he chooses to parody is the artist, whom he identifies with the criminal in this novel. (This aspect will be treated at length below.) Mann has deviated from the usual picaresque formula in regard to Krull's attitude toward life. Far from being the harried and exploited starveling, Krull is self-satisfied, self-assured and well-fed. If we consider Felix' main goal in life, it is not, as is the case with his picaresque predecessors, merely filling his empty stomach. His greatest concern is the negation of reality in favor of a world of illusion which he himself creates. This then introduces a completely new and modern twist into the genre. Here, so to speak, lies Krull's "mission."

Mann conceived Krull as an individual who seeks to overcome the frustrating uniformity and conformity of everyday life. Krull is able to do this with so much success that he appears to us as a kind of "Lebenskünstler." Like the picaro, he wishes to better his lot in life, but he goes about this in his own unique way. He strives for "den totalen Sieg der schöpferischen Imagination über die schwerfällige und

keeping with the cosmopolitan sophistication of the hero and is not characteristic of Mann's style in general. Mann chose fine parody rather than sharp satire, which can easily degenerate into bitter criticism. Mann, though acutely aware of the shortcomings and injustice in the world around him, chose in this work not to voice his concern in a violent or bitter manner. He saw everything through the veil of irony and considered the gift of nuance of thought and expression as the vehicle for his style rather than bitter polemic.

und stumpfe Materie."³⁴ All of his deeds attest to the victory of the intellect over the dull stupidity of naked reality. It is not only with the intent of staying out of school that he produces so successfully the symptoms of intestinal "flu" but also to illustrate the power of a superior intellect over the automatism of the body. Triumphantly, Felix remarks: "Und nun hatte ich sie (the symptoms of the illness) zu so voller Wirkung geführt, als sie nur immer hätten ausüben können, wenn sie ohne mein Zutun hervorgetreten wären. Ich hatte die Natur verbessert, einen Traum verwirklicht,--und verje aus dem Nichts, aus der blossen inneren Kenntnis und Anschauung der Dinge, kurz: aus der Phantasie, unter kühner Einsetzung seiner Person eine zwingende, wirksame Wirklichkeit zu schaffen vermochte, der kennt die wundersame und träumerische Zufriedenheit, mit der ich damals von meiner Schöpfung ausruhte."³⁵ Here, as with all of Felix' undertakings, we see evidence of that "Freude am Spiel." He enjoys his artistic accomplishments far more than the material gains obtained. This sheer joy is evident throughout the novel. It seems to be characteristic for the German picaresque novel of this century, as mentioned above, for Oskar Matzerath is equally delighted with his chicanery.

Already as a child, the difference between the world of dreams or illusion and that of reality seems to Felix to be negligible. Regarding the theft of the bonbons from the delicatessen, Krull asserts that

³⁴Seidlitz, Pikareske Züge, p. 26.

³⁵Mann, Felix Krull, p. 38.

"nicht ihre Vorzüglichkeit (of the candy) war es eigentlich, was mich berauschte, sondern der Umstand, dass sie mir als Traumgüter erschienen, die ich in die Wirklichkeit hatte hinüberretten können."³⁶ Or perhaps one should say that his dreams are realized. In his daydreams, he sees himself as an eighteen year old prince.³⁷ Years later he becomes, thanks to his natural bearing and charm, a marquis and is delighted, as he assures us with the following words: "Wie doch das erfinderische Leben die Träume unserer Kindheit zu verwirklichen--sie gleichsam aus Nebelzustand in den der Festigkeit zu überführen weiss!"³⁸ One perceives in this that reality is an elusive and abstract concept, for Krull accepts a very real task--i.e. the assumption of a role of another person. At the same time he is creating the illusion of being this person, thus in a sense negating reality which is after all his intention. Krull's calling in life demands that he create illusion--illusion of which he then becomes an integral part. He regards this as a game, in so far as he derives pleasure from it, but he takes it at the same time very seriously.

In his desire to create his own world of illusion, Krull seeks to annul his own identity and assume that of others. From his earliest

³⁶Ibid., p. 45.

³⁷The motif of Krull's dreaming already as a child of becoming a prince or an emperor is found also in Simplicissimus. At the beginning of this work, we find the following lines: "Es herrsche. . .unter geringen Leuten eine Suche. . ., gleich rittermässige Herren und adelige Personen von uraltem Geschlecht sein zu wollen." (In Hans Jakob Chr. von Grimmelshausen's Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus [Berlin, 1959], p. 11.)

³⁸Mann, Felix Krull, p. 237.

childhood, he receives encouragement from his godfather Schimmelpreester, who promotes this by showing him that every role that he chooses to assume, as a true "Kostümkopf," will be better and more advantageous than his true existence. And Felix abides by this throughout his life, finding roles for himself which serve to elevate his status in society. Schimmelpreester nourishes Felix' bent toward daydreaming and make-believe and prepares him for his life of falsehood and illusion in which he will live in his self-created world of appearance and unreality.

Thus, duality of existence is indeed Krull's central experience. He leads a double existence at first in his childhood dreams and then in his later life. He has an artistic personality, never satisfied with his own individuality and always striving to change his identity.

Along with his love of illusion and the unlimited imagination with which Krull was blessed, he possesses a sure sense of instinct and infallible taste. These attributes act as a control over that fantasy and allow him to develop his potential to the highest possible degree. He is well aware of this potential and it creates in him a feeling of responsibility. Thus he takes himself and his somewhat questionable calling quite seriously. His bold exchange of identity with the Marquis de Venosta is arranged on the basis of a contract, whereby Krull exchanges his own bank account for the Marquis' letter of credit. At the end of this transaction, Krull declares in all seriousness: "Ich bin gar nicht gewohnt, das Leben als einen Spass aufzufassen. . .Leichtlebigkeit ist nicht meine Sache, gerade im Spass nicht; denn es gibt Spässe, die sehr ernst genommen werden wollen, oder

es ist nichts damit. Ein guter Spass kommt nur zustande, wenn man all seinen Ernst daran setzt."³⁹

Anything which smacks too much of reality and conformity or which might destroy his life of illusion is politely, if quickly, rejected by Krull. Thus the temptation of wealth and security in the form of Eleanor Twentymen or Lord Kilmarnock is easily skirted, and Krull remarks in this regard: "Die Hauptsache war, dass ein Instinkt, seiner selbst sehr sicher, Partei nahm in mir gegen eine mir präsentierte und obendrein schlackenhafte Wirklichkeit--zugunsten des freien Traumes und Spieles, selbstgeschaffen und von eigenen Gnaden, will sagen: von Gnaden der Phantasie. Wenn ich als Knabe erwacht war mit dem Beschluss, ein achtzehnjähriger Prinz namens Karl zu sein und an dieser reinen und reizenden Erdichtung, solange ich wollte, in Freiheit festgehalten hatte--das war das Rechte gewesen . . ."⁴⁰ This freedom which is inherent in illusion and lost in reality is what Krull clings to throughout the novel. And this is his responsibility which demands from him that self-discipline which he exercises upon himself.

Krull enjoys thoroughly the free and easy transition from reality to illusion which is the core of his existence. He savors the role of the elevator boy with the checkbook, observing: "Auch als Inhaber eines Scheckbuches. . .blieb ich Liftboy. . .und es entbehrte nicht des Reizes, diese Figur auf einem geheimen pekuniären Hintergrund

³⁹Ibid., p. 232.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 208.

abzugeben, durch den meine kleidsame Livree in der Tat zu einem Kostüm gestempelt wurde. . . Mein heimlicher Reichtum . . . machte diese Tracht, nebst dem Dienst, den ich darin versah, zu einer Vorspiegelung, einer blossen Bewährung meines 'Kostümkopfes,' ja, wenn ich mich später mit verblendendem Erfolge für mehr ausgab, als ich war, so gab ich mich vorläufig für weniger aus, und es ist noch die Frage, welchem Truge ich mehr innere Erheiterung, mehr Freude am Verzaubert-Märchenhaften abgewann."⁴¹ This is further proof of that pure delight in the game which Felix values so highly.

The only serious threat to Krull's freedom in illusion appears in the form of the military. Aware of this, Krull schools himself in preparation for his induction examination, making himself thoroughly familiar with the manifestations of epileptic seizures. When the time comes, he plays his last trump. With a combination of over-zealous patriotism and a well-simulated--if grotesque--spasm, he convinces the doctor that he is unfit for service. It seems to me that this scene is one of the few passages in the novel which is truly satirical. It is a classic portrayal of the worst element to be found among the military. The examining commission represents the ultimate in smug stupidity, in bureaucratic pedantry and arrogant superiority, and can easily be completely hoodwinked by Krull.

Before treating the aspects of parody in the novel, it is necessary to mention how Mann has incorporated mythology into the picaresque.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 175.

He has endowed Krull with several characteristics attributed to the Greek divinity Hermes. One might actually assume that this god is the patron saint of all picares, since he is well-known as the god of thieves and according to legend a masterful thief himself. Felix Krull is not the first work in which Hermes is associated with the central figure. This divinity plays an important role in the Joseph tetralogy, where he is incorporated in the main protagonist Joseph--the epitome of cleverness and intelligence and the embodiment of physical charm. Joseph acts as the servant of Hermes, and the god, closely connected with the main character, proves to be a positive force. In Felix Krull, he also represents a positive force. Mann uses the figure of Hermes as a leitmotiv, identified throughout with Krull. It is first M^{rs}. Houpfle who calls Krull's attention to his close kinship with Hermes. She sees in him "eine Verkörperung des Hermes, des gewandten Gottes der Diebe und Schelme."⁴² Thus he becomes acquainted with his mythical archetype. Krull seems to be pleased with this identification with the divinity and refers to it thereafter in conversations with the Marquis de Venosta as well as with Prof. Kuckuck. It is not only as a thief that Krull is related to Hermes. The god is also connected with luck, journeys, priapism, eloquence of expression, and with art. These things, all a part of Krull, are under the god's supervision. Hermes is then a kind of pagan patron saint to him.

The reader is quick to recognize Felix Krull as a work belonging to the picaresque genre. Parody, the other major stylistic ingredient

⁴²Mann, "Einführung in ein Kapitel der Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull," Gesammelte Werke, XI, 705.

of the novel, is perhaps somewhat less evident, particularly if one is not familiar with the rest of Mann's writing. This then is the tone which Mann was not able to maintain, according to his own testimony in the previously cited passage from the Lebensabris. The task of writing a successful parody demands of the author a combination of qualities which are seldom found united in one person. These are substance, profundity, a high degree of virtuosity, and of course humor.

Mann's most revealing discussions of the nature and function of parody are to be found in Dr. Faustus. When Adrian Leverkühn struggles to find a new form of artistic expression which will replace the outworn and banal traditional methods, the devil supplies him with the name for the form of art which plays with outmoded forms: "Die Parodie. Sie könnte lustig sein, wenn sie nicht gar so trübselig wäre in ihrem aristokratischen Nihilismus."⁴³ Leverkühn is obsessed by two inter-related drives: one is the urge to parody the tradition of which he is an heir; the other is his ambition to break old patterns and create new forms of expression. These tendencies arise from his awareness of the weight of the past, along with his inability to take seriously the themes and conventions which have been handed down to him. Thus, like the author who created him, Leverkühn employs parody.

The dialog between Leverkühn and the devil is supposed to have taken place in 1911, a year which marks a turning point in Mann's creative life. It was at this time that the expressionistic movement

⁴³Mann, "Dr. Faustus," Gesammelte Werke, VI, 322.

in literature was coming to the fore. Thomas Mann essentially rejected this movement, although he recognized the significance of certain representatives of expressionism. In 1911, Mann began to work on Krull, the first of his many novels which exhibit those very features which he has described in Dr. Faustus as parodistic. Thus he refused to abandon the intellectual control in favor of an irrationalism which he felt inherent in expressionism. He chose to remain loyal to his humanistic ideal of a synthesis of reason and instinct, which was expressed in parody.

Mann believed that the conventional novel, like the European society which created it, was dead or dying unless the artist was capable of superhuman feats; there remained as a stylistic device for him only parody, admittedly the expression of a certain "aristocratic nihilism." In the progress of his literary career, the parodistic took on more and more meaning for him.

On the traditional types within the sphere of German literature, it is the Bildungsroman which became Mann's particular target in Felix Krull. As early as 1920, Mann was intrigued by the idea of a parody of this genre. In his Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen he wrote: "Zuletzt, was wäre 'intellektueller' als die Parodie? Man hat teil an der intellektualistischen Zersetzung des Deutschtums, wenn man vor dem Krieg auf dem Punkte stand, den deutschen Bildungs- und Entwicklungsroman, die grosse deutsche Autobiographie als Memoiren eines Hochstaplers zu parodieren. . ."⁴⁴ The Bildungsroman which he

⁴⁴ Mann, "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen," Gesammelte Werke, XII, 101.

undoubtedly had foremost in mind was Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. As for the "grosse deutsche Autobiographie als Memoiren," he was referring to Dichtung und Wahrheit. Mann, whose ideas often were subject to a long period of dormancy before appearing in the form of literary expression, wrote again in 1930 in the Lebensabriss with reference to Manolescu's memoirs: ". . . ein phantastischer geistiger Reiz ging aus von der parodistischen Idee, ein Element geliebter Überlieferung, das Goethisch-Selbstbildnerisch-Autobiographische, Aristokratische-Bekennerische, ins Kriminelle zu Übertragen."⁴⁵

Although a parody of works of Goethe even by an author as fine as Mann may seem ill-advised, it should be pointed out that he parodied with love. He was genuinely attached to the older forms in that they appealed to his sense of discipline. Two passages in his works will help to clarify his attitude toward his undertaking. Again in the Lebensabriss, he writes: "Es mag in gewissem Sinn das Persönlichste sein, denn es gestaltet mein Verhältnis zur Tradition, das zugleich liebevoll und auflösend ist und meine schriftstellerische 'Sendung' bestimmt."⁴⁶ Or in Rede und Antwort, referring here to his occasional use of hexameter in the idyll, Gesang vom Kindehen: "Kurz der Mangel an eigentlicher Naivität kussert sich als Hang zum Parodischen,--und so wäre aus diesem kleinen dichterischen Vorkommnis denn wenigstens das Gesetz oder die Bestimmung abzuziehen, dass Liebe zu einem Kunstgeist,

⁴⁵Mann, Lebensabriss, p. 122.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 122-23.

an dessen Möglichkeit man nicht mehr glaubt, die Parodie zeitigt."⁴⁷

However, the two works of Goethe are not the only object of Mann's parody, for Mann's other target is the artist. This is not surprising when one considers the central position of this problem in his works. Felix Krull too is in essence the story of an artist. Mann writes: "Es handelte sich natürlich um eine neue Wendung des Kunst- und Künstlermotivs, um die Psychologie der unwirklich-illusionären Existenzform."⁴⁸ In this novel, the author endorses the premise that there is a thin borderline between the highly gifted individual and the criminal. It is the lack of reality of the artistic existence, a recurrent theme with Mann, that is realised and simultaneously parodied here.

As early as 1903, the year in which he wrote Tonio Kröger, Mann was fascinated with the idea of the union of artistic creation and moral decadence. In this Novelle, Kröger tells his friend Lisaweta of the banker who, having committed a rather serious offense, is confined in prison for several years, where he becomes a novelist. From this, Kröger concludes: "man könnte daraus, mit einiger Keckheit, folgern, dass es nötig sei, in irgendeiner Art von Strafanstalt zu Hause zu sein, um zum Dichter zu werden."⁴⁹ Later, when Kröger is

⁴⁷Mann, Rede und Antwort (Berlin, 1922), p. 359.

⁴⁸Mann, Lebensbriese, p. 122.

⁴⁹Mann, "Tonio Kröger," Gesammelte Werke, VIII, 298.

held up in his own hometown while the authorities check his identity, he is strangely loath to tell them that he is the son of an old and respected family of that city. Instead of assuring them that he is no "Hochstapler von unbestimmter Zuständigkeit" or "Zigeuner im grünen Wagen," he muses: "Und waren diese Männer der bürgerlichen Ordnung nicht im Grunde ein wenig im Recht? Gewissermassen war [er] ganz einverstanden mit ihnen. . ."50

What sort of artist is Krull? Mann writes: "Krull ist eine Art von Künstlermensch, ein Träumer, Phantast und bürgerlicher Nichtsnutz, der das Illusionäre von Welt und Leben tief empfindet und von Anfang an darauf aus ist, sich selbst zur Illusion, zu einem Lebensreiz zu machen."⁵¹ Krull's minor thefts and his various chicaneries are aesthetic experiences for him, like the performances of a good actor. His escapades, motivated by the sheer joy of expressing his talent skillfully, attest to the fact that he is an artist for art's sake.

If Krull, due to his artistic calling, does not conform to the "solid citizen" type decreed by society, one must remember that every artistic nature exhibits certain eccentricities. At the beginning of the book, Schimmelpreester complains about the people who worship an artist for his genius but are not prepared to accept his peculiarities. He remarks: "Sie wollen wohl das Talent, welches doch an und für sich eine Sonderbarkeit ist. Aber die Sonderbarkeiten, die sonst noch damit verbunden--und vielleicht notwendig damit verbunden--sind, die wollen

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 317.

⁵¹Mann is quoted by Wilhelm Grenzmann in his book Dichtung und Glaube (Frankfurt, 1960), p. 66.

sie durchaus nicht und verweigern ihnen jedes Verständnis."⁵² These words are related to his story about Phidias, a Greek sculptor who was also addicted to thievery and who, in spite of his evident talents, perished in prison for his deeds.

Krull is the artistic nature, the "Proteusnatur. . . , die sich in alle Formen verwandeln, mit allen Spielen, die entgegengesetzten Ansichten auffassen und gelten lassen konnte."⁵³ Or one is reminded of Gide's author-figure Edouard in Les Faumonnayeurs (who represents Gide himself) when another character in the novel says of him: "Il n'est jamais longtemps le même. . . son être se défait et se refait sans cesse. On croit le saisir. . . c'est protégé."⁵⁴ Edouard himself says: "je ne vis que par autrui. . . et ne me sens jamais vivre plus intensément que quand je m'échappe à moi-même pour devenir n'importe qui."⁵⁵ Krull, too, constantly seeks to change his identity. He is the artist-criminal whose genius consists in being able to assume any role required of him and play it in a thoroughly convincing manner.

One of the earliest roles which Krull is called upon to assume is that of the child prodigy before the guests at an elegant spa. In this charming episode Felix, at the instigation of his father, plays his toy violin so convincingly before his delighted audience that he is

⁵²Mann, Felix Krull, p. 49.

⁵³Schiller on Goethe in Mann's "Goethe als Repräsentant des bürgerlichen Zeitalters," Gesammelte Werke, IX, 318.

⁵⁴André Gide, Les Faumonnayeurs (Paris, 1925), p. 252.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 89-90.

rewarded with enthusiastic approval and applause. The incident reminds us of Mann's short story Das Wunderkind, in which Bibi, a real prodigy completely aware of his effect upon the public, scorns his listeners at heart because they are much more impressed by the charm of his youth and appearance than by his art, which probably few of them really appreciate. Bibi knows that it is just as important to play his role well as it is to play the piano well. Felix, who plays his role admirably, has fantastic success without producing a tone. In the Novelle the public seems to believe "ein bisschen Lüge. . . gehört zur Schönheit."⁵⁶ For the first time, Felix learns that people want to be deceived. And he never forgets this.

He finds further proof of this in his first visit to the theater. Enraptured by the artistry of the actor Müller-Rosé, Felix is thrilled at the prospect of making his acquaintance. The idol of thousands turns out to be a thoroughly ordinary example of humanity, even a rather unappetizing one. Felix concludes that the pleasure and enthusiasm which the onlookers experience is due to their ability to believe in the illusion before them and their willingness to be deceived. The disparity between art and the artist becomes apparent to Felix in this encounter with Müller-Rosé. For Felix, the encounter exemplifies the disparity between sordid reality (Müller-Rosé) and illusion (his own art). After meeting him, Felix draws the optimistic moral that the most crass reality can be transmuted into beautiful appearance.

⁵⁶Mann, "Das Wunderkind," Gesammelte Werke, VIII, 340.

Once aware of the fact that the illusion he creates is what people seek, Krull plays his various roles with seriousness and aims at perfection. Like his father with his bad champagne, Krull lives up to the former's remark: "Ich gebe dem Publikum, woran es glaubt."⁵⁷

Mann's conception of the artist as being on the borderline of crime is substantiated by many cases in which highly gifted individuals have exhibited criminal tendencies. If we ask ourselves what the origin of his conception of the artist as actor is, the answer may be found in the writings of Nietzsche.

As is known from Mann's own work, one of the most important intellectual influences on the young author was Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche, along with Schopenhauer and Wagner, represented for him "ein Dreigestirn ewig verbundener Geister."⁵⁸ Mann himself says that it is impossible to separate what he learned from each of them, but certain concepts in his writing may be related to one or the other. For the work under discussion, Nietzsche's conception of the artist is of primary interest. Mann rejected much of Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly the extreme doctrines of the immoralist creed, the superman cult, and the ruthless doctrines of power. But certain parallels can be discovered in Mann's attitude toward the artist. In his early work Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, had conceived of the artist as the great man, as hero and genius. For Nietzsche, Wagner embodied the consummate artist, who has no peers. But although Nietzsche could

⁵⁷Mann, Felix Krull, p. 8.

⁵⁸Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, p. 72.

never reject Wagner and the spell of his music completely, he became aware of the decadence inherent in Wagner's work, and this is one of the aspects which Nietzsche criticized in his later writings.

In Tonio Kröger, the hero's analysis of the artist includes a reference to Tristan und Isolde, of which Nietzsche wrote that nothing among the arts showed such a "gefährliche Faszination" or possessed "eine gleich schauerliche und süsse Unendlichkeit."⁵⁹ Kröger remarks: "Nehmen Sie das wunderbarste Gebilde des typischsten und darum mächtigsten Künstlers, nehmen Sie ein so morbides und tief zweideutiges Werk wie Tristan und Isolde und beobachten Sie die Wirkung, die dieses Werk auf einen jungen, gesunden, stark normal empfindenden Menschen ausübt."⁶⁰ Mann's use of the word "Wirkung" in this passage is interesting. The artist is concerned with the effect he makes upon his audience, not in presenting the truth. "In Wahrheit will er die für seine Kunst wirkungsvollsten Voraussetzungen nicht aufgeben. . ."⁶¹

In another passage, Kröger speaks of the parallel between the artist and the actor. "Ich kannte einen Schauspieler von Genie, der als Mensch mit einer krankhaften Befangenheit und Haltlosigkeit zu kämpfen hatte. Sein überreiztes Ichgefühl zusammen mit dem Mangel an Rolle, an darstellerischer Aufgabe, bewirkten das bei diesem vollkommenen Künstler und verarmten Menschen. . . Einen Künstler, einen

⁵⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," in his Werke, 19 volumes (Leipzig, 1917), XV, 39.

⁶⁰Mann, Tonio Kröger, p. 299.

⁶¹Nietzsche, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, II, part 1, 158.

wirklichen, nicht einen, dessen bürgerlichen Beruf die Kunst ist, sondern einen vorbestimmten und verdamnten, ersehen Sie mit geringem Scharfblick aus einer Menschenmasse. Das Gefühl der Separation und Unzugehörigkeit, des Erkennt- und Beobachtetseins, etwas zugleich Königliches und Verlegenes ist in seinem Gesicht."⁶²

It is at the basis of Nietzsche's repudiation of the artist that he sees him as an actor and pretender. For Nietzsche, the artist is not a man of deep and honest feelings, but like an actor he aims at a pretense of emotions that will be effective on the audience. An aphorism in the fifth book of Die fröhliche Wissenschaft entitled "Das Problem des Schauspielers" most clearly shows the connection between Mann and Nietzsche: "Das Problem des Schauspielers hat mich am längsten beunruhigt; ich war im Ungewissen darüber. . . ob man nicht erst von da aus dem gefährlichen Begriff 'Künstler' beikommen wird. Die Falschheit mit gutem Gewissen; die Lust an der Verstellung als Macht herausbrechend. . . das innere Verlangen in eine Rolle und Maske, in einen Schein hinein; ein Überschuss an Anpassungs-Fähigkeiten aller Art: alles das ist vielleicht nicht nur der Schauspieler an sich? . . ." ⁶³

The artist escapes from life--yet he seeks the illusion of superiority and control over life itself. This is in effect Krull's purpose.

Considering Mann's familiarity with Nietzsche and the fact that the latter did exercise marked influence upon Mann in certain areas, it seems safe to assume that the concept of the artist as actor may be derived from this source.

⁶²Mann, Tonio Kröger, p. 287.

⁶³Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, V, part 1, 311.

Remembering that we are dealing with a picaresque novel, one may assume that it was Mann's intention to depict the picaresque as artist, or the artist as picaresque. In his modern treatment of an old genre, Mann has made of the picaresque a symbol of the artist. He depicts Krull as a person who lives on the edge of society (as is often the case with artists--but also with criminals). However there is nothing of the sentimentality of the romanticists, whose artists sometimes regret they cannot adapt themselves to society. (Even in Tonio Kröger, the hero seems quite perturbed that he is an outsider.) This is not the case with Krull. On the contrary, he seems to be proud of the fact that he lives rather isolated from the rest of humanity. Actually his isolation is intentional and represents that of the picaresque-artist. Of all the artist figures that Mann created, Krull is the one who seems to yearn the least for normal life.

Mann may have chosen the picaresque in order to stress the schism between the artist and the average man. In this case, the pranks of the rogue may be considered as comic symbols for the eccentricities of the artist. This would lend an ironic twist to the artist novel.

There is a certain connection between Krull's questionable conduct and the legitimate activity of the true artist. Like the swindler, the artist must awaken confidence in his public. It must believe in him, even when he deceives it. Mann puts these words in Krull's mouth after the Müller-Rosé episode: "Welche Einmütigkeit in dem guten Willen, sich verführen zu lassen! Hier herrscht augenscheinlich ein allgemeines, von Gott selbst der Menschennatur eingepflanztes Bedürfnis, dem die

Fähigkeiten des Miller-Rose entgegentzukommen geschaffen sind."⁶⁴

The picaro as well as the artist fulfill this need, and the deceived yield gladly. The artist (as well as the swindler) needs his public-- what takes place between them constitutes mutual fulfillment. In this respect an analogy between the picaro-victim pair and the artist-public pair may be seen.

Before leaving the topic of Mann's parody of the artist, it should be mentioned that, in poking fun at his own profession, he was parodying himself. It is common knowledge that many great works of fiction may reveal autobiographical material. Mann's works are no exception to this, and it is interesting to note certain parallels in Krull to the author's own life. Mann too was an indifferent student. His father died when he was fifteen and the family business, in which he had had no great interest in his last years, was liquidated. Both Mann and Krull left their native cities to try their luck elsewhere. Mann disliked the idea of the military and quickly escaped service. While these autobiographical elements in Krull may be of minor significance, the way Mann employed them in combination with the parody of the figure of the artist (i.e., himself) is indicative of the ingenuity with which he used his material.

Let us now examine the way in which Mann has parodied the two works of Goethe. One of the first things that strikes us while reading Krull is the tone in which Krull relates his memoirs. In this novel, Mann bestowed upon his chief protagonist an intellectual attitude which is

⁶⁴Mann, Felix Krull, p. 31.

reminiscent of Goethe in Dichtung und Wahrheit. The elegance and the high-flown manner of the memoirs hardly suggest the speech of a common criminal, and the discrepancy between the noble style and attitude of Krull and his profession lends a great deal of subtle humor to the work. The unctuous dignity of the style is actually at variance with the matter of the tale. Herein lies the parody of Goethe's work, essentially a parody of Goethe's own autobiographical style. The resemblance is not confined only to elements of expression, but there is evidence of similarity in the syntactical construction as well. The following passages from the two works may serve as examples of this similarity.

Am 28. August 1749, mittags mit dem Glockenschlage zwölf, kam ich in Frankfurt am Main auf die Welt. . . durch Ungeschicklichkeit der Hebamme kam ich für tot auf die Welt, und nur durch vielfache Bemühungen brachte man es dahin, dass ich das Licht erblickte.⁶⁵

Dies war das Heim, worin ich an. . . einem Sonntage. . . geboren wurde. . . Meine Geburt ging, wenn ich recht unterrichtet bin, nur sehr langsam und nicht ohne künstliche Nachhilfe unseres damaligen Hausarztes, Doktor Mecum, vonstatten, und zwar hauptsächlich deshalb, weil ich mich. . . ausserordentlich untätig und teilnahmslos dabei verhielt. . ."⁶⁶

Mann puts many of Goethe's favorite ideas and images into Krull's mouth, such as the paradoxical notion of innate merit, or the idea that some men deserve praise for virtues with which they were born. Because

⁶⁵Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Dichtung und Wahrheit," in his Werke (Weimar, 1889), I, vol. XXVI, 11.

⁶⁶Mann, Felix Krull, p. 9.

Krull considers himself "aus feinerem Holz geschnitzt"⁶⁷ than his contemporaries, Felix believes that it is fundamentally right that he is praised for his inherited superiorities. He constantly adopts the stately tone of Goethe's moral generalizations, and Krull likes to present himself as a highly ethical fellow as well as a philosopher. In writing his memoirs, Krull looks back on his career of fraud and deceit with the same detached and loving appreciation with which Goethe writes of his own life.

Krull is also a parody of the traditional hero of the Bildungsroman, that stalwart figure who, though encountering adversities and disappointments along life's paths, is steeled by them and, ultimately shouldering his responsibilities, makes a worthy contribution to the society in which he lives. His experiences and the education which life itself bestows upon him lead to self-realization. The parody in Krull lies in Mann's emphasis upon moral achievement and self-discipline which Felix is so aware of throughout. While Goethe regarded education as a means by which one is able to realize the possibilities within him to the fullest extent and develop his personality, Krull's "education" takes him in quite another direction. Krull asserts in all seriousness: "Das Leben nämlich ist zwar keineswegs das Höchste der Güter, an welches wir uns seiner Nützlichkeit wegen zu klammern hätten; sondern es ist als eine uns gestellte und, wie mir scheinen will, gewissermassen selbst gewählte schwere und

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 12.

strenge Aufgabe zu betrachten, welche mit Standhaftigkeit und Treue durchzuhalten uns unbedingt obliegt, und der vor der Zeit zu entlaufen zweifellos eine liederliche Aufführung bedeutet."⁶⁸ These words in the mouth of the swindler, confirming his idealistic attitude toward life and its obligations, take on an ironic twist and may be regarded as a parody of the didactic element which is often found in the Bildungsroman.

The experiences of Krull's boyhood, education (or lack of it), journeys, the influence of the people around him during his childhood, and later the encounters with a series of women--all these shape his character, just as Wilhelm Meister is formed by the events in his life. Wilhelm begins his education as an actor. When he joins the theatrical troupe of Mrs. de Retti, he has left the reality of the middle-class bourgeoisie of his origin and entered a world of illusion devoid of order and direction. In this unreal and illusory world, Wilhelm finds himself and learns the necessity of differentiating between illusion and reality. Sobered and more mature after the deaths of so many who were dear to him, influenced by the *Turmgesellschaft*, his love for Nathalie and his son Felix, he turns his back on this realm, renouncing his theatrical mission to take his place in the practical world and face the responsibilities of a less glamorous but more solid existence. Krull, also the son of a middle-class family, flees into this world of unreality too, from whence he never returns. He strives to avoid every tie to bourgeois reality. It is as if he possessed no

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

constancy of character whatever, changing his self every time he changes his name. Rather than embrace the reality inherent in order and stability, his goal is the master of the ambiguous and the illusional.

One of the chief targets in Mann's parody of Wilhelm Meister is the role of the woman. Undoubtedly the role assigned to the eternal feminine is the most vulnerable aspect in Goethe's idea of education. In Krull, the women in his life obviously play quite an important role; but their purpose is entirely different from that in Wilhelm Meister's life. In Goethe's work, they are a means to an ideal end, i.e., they insure the ennoblement and development of Wilhelm's character. The women in Krull's life serve only one purpose. All of them school Felix in the art of love, and if they contribute anything to his development in life, it is primarily a thorough knowledge of this art. While Wilhelm's contacts with women are more edifying, Felix' are more colorful.

In his article, cited above, Oskar Seidlin has also pointed out other aspects in the novel which may be considered as parody.⁶⁹ One of these is the title of the work. Mann chose to label the memoirs of his rogue "Bekenntnisse," which reminds us of two of the most sincere and profound works in the history of literature. These are the Confessions of St. Augustine and Rousseau. We have no idea whether this was Mann's intention, but again his brilliant sense of irony would allow for the possibility. What Mann undoubtedly had in mind was the sixth chapter of Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, i.e., "Die Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele." Mann's parody of this excellent example of an "Erbauungsschrift" is obvious.

⁶⁹Seidlin, Pikareske Züge, p. 31.

Another aspect is the role of Schimmelpreester as Krull's teacher. Felix even calls the man who guides--or perhaps misguides--him in his early years his mentor. Schimmelpreester himself gives us an indication of his calling when he explains the etymology of his name: "Die Natur ist nichts als Fäulnis und Schimmel, und ich bin zu ihrem Priester bestellt, darum heiße ich Schimmelpreester."⁷⁰ Thus we have the "priest" as mentor--a characteristic of the older picaresque literature as well as the didactic novel. Schimmelpreester is however hardly a suitable guide of youth. He bears no resemblance whatever to the ascetic hermit who initiates Simplicius into the ways of life. There is an atmosphere of decadence about him, and so the role as Felix' teacher is a travesty of the earlier conception of the priest as an important guide in the life of the novice.

⁷⁰Mann, Felix Krull, p. 21.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one may ask oneself just how correct Oskar Seidlin may be in his assertion that: "Trotz des Gelächters, auf das sie [picaresque novels] abzielen, sind es im Grunde melancholische, ja pessimistische Bücher. . ." ⁷¹ As has been remarked above, the picaresque novel was originally a product of a decadent era. It is not possible to predict that Krull will be significant for a similar epoch. But maybe Mann was in truth pointing out something that is peculiar to western civilization today: i.e., the willingness of human beings to endorse and embrace so much which is sham, superficial and devoid of meaning; and perhaps Krull is a symbol for this. If one is to attribute a deeper meaning to the novel, then this may be what the author had in mind. It seems, however, likelier to this reader that Mann really did consider Krull a task with which he could amuse himself in his advanced years, as the cited passage in the letter to Hesse seems to confirm.

Felix Krull is the last link in the chain of Mann's literary production. If we consider his development as an author, we find his early work written in the shadow of pessimism. The creative process seems to culminate in tragedy with Dr. Faustus. Finally all of this is dispersed with the appearance of the first volume of Felix Krull. With the completion of this first part of the novel, his work achieved

⁷¹Seidlin, Pikareske Züge, p. 37.

a rare unity seldom attained. This unity is a result of Mann's treatment of certain ideas with which he was concerned throughout his life. Instead of his trying to solve the complex and profound problems which confronted him, he found that they grew in complexity and profundity the more he occupied himself with them. In Krull many of these problems are apparent. But Mann, in using the picaresque combined with parody, has made light of them, to his own amusement as well as ours.

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