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Told by a myth: Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull*

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes an approach to the novel *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* by Thomas Mann from the point of view of the imaginal psychology of James Hillman. From this perspective the novel seems to illustrate the most innovative thesis of that psychology, which is especially relevant for having been written prior to the formulation of Hillman's theories. The unplanned correspondence between both ways of thinking furnishes a valuable argument that supports the new conception of human psyche introduced by Carl Gustav Jung and developed in this way by James Hillman,

KEYWORDS: Literature and psychology; James Hillman; Imaginal Psychology; Carl Gustav Jung; 20th century's Narrative

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RESUMEN: *Narrado por un mito: Felix Krull, de Thomas Mann*.- El presente artículo propone una lectura de la novela de Thomas Mann desde la óptica de la psicología imaginal de James Hillman. En esta perspectiva la novela parece ofrecer una ilustración de las tesis más innovadoras de dicha psicología, lo que resulta especialmente relevante por haber sido escrita con antelación a la formulación de las teorías del pensador estadounidense. La impremeditada correspondencia entre ambos pensamientos suministra un argumento digno de tenerse en cuenta a favor de la innovadora concepción de la psique humana inaugurada por Carl Gustav Jung y desarrollada en esta línea por James Hillman.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Literatura y psicología; James Hillman; Psicología imaginal; Carl Gustav Jung; Narrativa siglo XX

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> Psychological living implies living in a fantasy, a story, being told by a myth (Hillman, 1997: 143)

THOMAS MANN BETWEEN CARL GUSTAV JUNG AND JAMES HILLMAN

Many years ago I discovered purely by chance –if we can speak of "chance" in the context of Jungian thought[1] – the exceptional value a work of art, more specifically a literary work, can have in discussions about the veracity, or at least the verisimilitude, of a psychological theory like that formulated by Carl Gustav Jung. To be more precise, I should qualify the words "veracity" and "verisimilitude" as "historical" and "cultural"; nothing is further from my intentions, and indeed those of Jung, than to sustain a *philosophia perennis ac universalis.* I shall explain briefly how this discovery occurred and how I intend

to make it a methodological point of departure for this new study.

The surprise to which I refer was the recognition of the unending psychological event referred to by Jung as the "process of individuation" in some of the major novels by Austrian writer Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932) (Montiel, 1998, 2012). The most exciting aspect of the discovery lay in the fact that the literary description of the process and the most significant archetypal figures appearing in it (the shadow, the *anima*, the *senex*, etc.) preceded their appearance in Jung's texts by several years, so the writer could not possibly have created them based on previous knowledge of Jungian theories. Jung himself recognised in his work the psychological interest of Meyrink's novels from what he termed the "visionary" view of artistic creation (Jung, 1960–1983, 15: § 139, § 142; 12: § 53, § 103, § 341 n. 22; 7: § 103, § 153, § 520; 9/1: § 405 n. 22; 14/3: § 592 n.3, § 650 n. 70; 6: § 205, § 426 n. 163, § 630), pointing out that Meyrink could not have learnt from him what coincided with his own thought (Jung, 1960–1983, 7: § 153).

Something similar happened to me recently. In my role as medical historian, with a special interest in the history of psychology and mental illness, and having devoted many years to studying the work of Jung, I have been drawn to different developments of his ideas and have found James Hillman's archetypal psychology of particular interest.[2] And once again I have encountered the fascinating case of an artist who is able, based only on his own sensitivity, to "illustrate" a theory with his work, a theory that is formulated decades later, leading us to talk of a work that is "prospective" if not "prophetic".

There is no reason for us to fear this word, especially as I have placed it between inverted commas (the tool of irony) with a view to stripping it of all grandiloquence and also because all those who are familiar with Jung's work know that, for him, the most authentic creations of the human spirit in an age breathe the same air, each expressing it in its own language, so that the artist, just like the psychologist, perceives what is in the air and brings it forth with his or her own means, sometimes earlier than the latter. Psychology and poetry, to play on the title of a work by Jung, are two manifestations, among others, of the individual and collective psyche, and it is logical that they should complement each other when they are genuine; or we could say that their similarity leads us to think they may be genuine and may reveal truths about a moment in history.

The new discovery to which I refer is based on a late work by Thomas Mann, his last, unfinished novel *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (*Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*). Although I have described it as "late", this is not altogether accurate. Mann had the original idea in 1906 and worked on the novel from 1910 to 1913 but only decided to finish it towards the end of his life, after 1951. However, he soon realized that the dimensions this work was taking made it difficult to complete his plan, so he decided to publish what he had already written before his death (Kern, 2006: 20). From the perspective I shall be adopting in this analysis, many of the really decisive elements were already present at an early stage, in *Buch der Kindheit (The Book of Childhood)*, published in 1922–1923.[3] Considering that the rest of the work was published in 1954 and that Mann died in 1955, nine years before Hillman's first work, *Suicide and the Soul*, was published, I think it is justifiable to apply to *Krull* the methodology I previously applied to Meyrink's novels, in support of the same hypothesis. What I hope to do is to show the similarity between the poetic thought of Thomas Mann and the psychology of James Hillman from a viewpoint which in no way presupposes a dependence by the artist on the thinker, and which allows us to present the creative work as involuntarily (and more importantly for this very reason) supporting psychological theory.[4]

With the above comments I would not wish to claim that Thomas Mann was absolutely original or, in the most extreme sense of the word, a genius. The fact that Hillman is indebted to Jung allows us to identify the work of the latter as a common source, which makes the approach I propose more realistic, since the influence of Jung's work on that of Mann has been satisfactorily demonstrated (Dierks, 2000). Paul Bishop has carried out a detailed analysis of Jung's influence in the four-part novel *Joseph und seine Brüder* (*Joseph and his Brothers*) and it should not be forgotten that part of the work on *Krull* coincided with the writing of this novel.[5]

The archetypal model on which the figure of Felix Krull is based is that of the *göttliche Schelm*, the *Trickster*, which, in the frame of Junguian psychology, Paul Radin and Karl Kerényi, Mann's son-in-law, started to define in those same years. However, it is no less clear that the work specifically devoted to this figure, referred to in the preceding note, cannot be considered to lie behind the creation of the figure of Felix Krull purely for chronological reasons.[6] We could speak here of the natural development, on the one hand of an idea of the psychologist which matured over years, particularly in the context of his work with religious researcher Karl Kerényi, Mann's son-in-law, and, on the other, of the stylisation of the figure of Hermes,[7] which had captivated Thomas Mann from the earliest stages in his literary work. We have only to recall the mention of the "liebliche Psychagog" –the lovely psychagoge- (Mann, 1978: 68), the charming leader of souls, in the closing lines of *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1912). However, in the course of the narrative I believe I have detected other developments which, in this case, seem to foreshadow some of those we find in

Hillman's work, giving it a distinctive character. I refer specifically to the aspects which serve Hillman to rehabilitate the central role of the figures, or the images, of Greek mythology in his proposal for a polytheistic psychology[8] in which the ego has distinctly less weight than it had in Freud's psychology and, to some extent, even less than in Jung's. This is the approach to the novel I propose in this analysis. I believe, moreover, that my proposal is faithful to the American psychologist's thinking. In one of his works he upheld the need to "tell two types of story about the nature of things" to understand them fully and not from a single viewpoint. These two narratives would use "the language of the psyche" and "the discourse of the soul", respectively. The distinction is comparable to that between *logos* and *mythos* or the distinction the Romantics made between the "diurnal" and "nocturnal" sides of the soul (Hillman, 1998: 119–120). In another major text he upheld the need to study the soul through alternative routes to psychopathology, one such route being the arts (Hillman, 1997: 107).

FELIX KRULL, A TWENTIETH CENTURY HERMES

The first pages of the narrative seem intended to offer the reader some references, some keys to reading, which refer to a mythical domain, the Hellenic, and, more precisely, the Dionysian. From his Latin name the main character in the fictitious autobiography would seem to be destined for happiness, but this name only takes us a short distance from the Greek world, probably only in deference to readers. We are soon to learn that he is surrounded by subtle Greek presences: his sister's name is Olympia (Mann, 2012: 21) and when she decides to go on the stage her manager is an entrepreneur called Meerschaum (sea foam) (Mann, 2012: 82). Was Mann trying to remind us of the foam on the sea from which Venus emerged? I suspect this to be the case, although the writer, as is his wont, presents a clumsily bourgeois Venus, seen through the lenses of irony. Her father is portrayed with the features of Silenus,[9] and it is doubtless not by chance that she has an ancestor (her grandmother) who is French, which may be seen as another nod to the presence of the south, the Mediterranean, in Felix's world.[10] He makes wine, sparkling wine in this case, and the cellar is the first family scenario that Felix describes for the reader, if we except the Rhineland countryside in which his home stands, whose main, almost exclusive, feature is the vineyards. And in this description the Dionysian pulse beats. Felix remembers how in his mind he addressed the rows of bottles he gazed at:

> There you lie in this subterranean twilight and within you there is clearing and mellowing that bubbling golden sap which shall make so many pairs of eyes to sparkle and so many hearts to throb with heightened zest. (...) One day you will mount up to the light (...) and kindle intoxication and levity and desire in the hearts of men (Mann, 2012: 11–12).

Lines infused with Dionysian aroma, especially in their references to intoxication (*Rausch*) and desire (*Lust*). Silenus is the *daimon* of the forest who cared for the newly born Dionysius, who gave humanity the drink that, through intoxication, facilitated *enthousiasmos*, possession by a god (Otto, 1965: 145–149). However, Olympia, Felix's sister, is not precisely divine and neither is the sparkling wine made by his father, Engelbert Krull, at least as far as its quality is concerned. It is Dionysian only to the extent that it produces the unconscious bliss that verges on drunkenness, when it is not indistinguishable from it, followed in the latter case by a severe hangover, as Felix's godfather constantly reminds Engelbert Krull. Here, once again, we have an indication of the writer's opinion: "The firm of Engelbert Krull" –Mann writes – "laid great stress upon the exterior of their wares" (Mann, 2012: 12), which featured a flaring label concocted by Felix's godfather Schimmelpreester. Trying to defend himself against the latter's criticism, Engelbert Krull replies: "I have to make the public believe it is getting something for its money" (Mann, 2012: 13).

Deception or, if preferred, illusion (this is how the wine-maker presents it). This clearly helps to explain the subsequent behaviour of the *Hochstapler* Felix Krull, as he has grown up exposed to such conduct, which is undoubtedly part of Mann's purpose. However, regardless of this purpose, the fact is that these few lines conceal a great deal of information. The wine made by this Silenus is sparkling. How can we forget the German saying that *Träume sind Schäume*, i.e. dreams are foam? This saying also opens the door to the story *Der Magnetiseur* by E.T.A. Hoffmann, a writer much admired by Mann. Dreams, fantasy, deception, foam: gifts of Dionysius; a form of *enthousiasmós*, albeit of low quality. And an element of faith is implicit in it: "I make the public believe it is getting something for its money". We should not forget that the touchstone of faith is not demonstrable truth but what can barely be believed: *credo quia absurdum est.* Engelbert Krull's underground temple is a shrine to Dionysius.

But a new element has appeared. I have referred to an "underground" temple and I have done so because Felix Krull describes it in these terms. However, Dionysius was worshipped above ground. Under the earth only one god rules: Hades, so that, according to Mann, Dionysius' gift is, at least in this case, a gift from Hades. And Hades is the lord of the underworld, the place where, according to Hillman (1979: 27–32), dreams belong, those dreams that are foam ... I shall return to this point. For the moment we shall focus our attention on the Krull family.

We are dealing with a Dionysian family, as we have said, and this is true in a number of ways, not only because of the production of their *Loreley extra cuvée* of dubious quality but also because of the barely concealed lust of the protagonist's mother and sister (Mann, 2012: 13), and the fondness of all the members of the family for festive gatherings, described by the protagonist as coarse bourgeois orgies, these being responsible to a considerable extent for the bad reputation of the Krull family in the eyes of society (Mann, 2012: 21, 24). At this point I should mention that although Felix highlights the underhand, by no means sacred, nature of these goings on, he does not do this with disdain, but with a certain sympathy, as if he wanted us to appreciate that, as they are clearly limited, he approves of them more than his self-righteous neighbours judge such gatherings. They are no less bourgeois and perhaps even more so, as they lack the Bohemian element in the Krull family; it is as if since childhood the concept of respectability had no real value for him. His family is not respectable, but it is fun. They do not seek the approval of others but their own pleasure. If I may simplify, they prefer the id to the super-ego and in this way they not only oppose bourgeois order but also Freudian order, embodied in the well-known expression: "wo Es war soll Ich werden" (where id was, there ego shall be).

I think that at this point it would be interesting to make a first incursion into Hillman's thought. Different forms of psychoanalysis (in this case, I include analytical psychology, as Hillman does) seem to have been guided by this principle, until we come to Hillman's work. One of the most original points in his doctrine lies in leaving the subconscious alone and not trying to drag it, at any price, from the realm of darkness into the light. His work on sleep begins with the highly appropriate metaphor of the one-way bridge built by Freud between the world of day and the world of night and dreams; a bridge leading "from the unconscious to the city of the ego"; and he argues for the building of a new "two-way" bridge which would allow us to travel inward, to the underworld, to learn about the dream in itself, without any desire to make a utilitarian "interpretation", and make it part of the "diurnal" psyche (Hillman, 1979: 1–6). In his opinion this would be the only bridge, the only route by which we could restore the dream's dignity and its authentic psychological efficacy.

Felix Krull does not interpret and generally he does not make value judgements. He takes pleasure. We could say he experiences, fulfilling the wish expressed by Settembrini to Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*: *placet experiri*. In his life as a trickster, which will take him round the world, he will learn a great deal, though his learning will not be guided by utility but by mere curiosity. In this learning there is never a "What for?" Felix Krull's bridges will never be one-way. To verify this, let us see what Felix tells us about himself, his voice being provided by the puppeteer Mann, who is the one pulling the strings in the final analysis. In a paragraph which cannot fail to remind us of *Psychologische Typen*, the work in which Jung defines the two opposed and complementary psychological reactions to reality, the introverted and extroverted types, the protagonist wonders about the advantages and disadvantages of "seeing in the world and in human beings something great, glorious and important", which seems *a priori* to be closer to his own attitude and which would coincide with Jung's extroverted type, to the extent that it may lead us to "underestimate ourselves", as he recognises a few lines later.[11] After considering it seriously, he decides that, in any case, it corresponds to his way of confronting reality.

> It has always lain in my nature ... to consider the world as an infinitely tempting phenomenon, capable of affording such priceless satisfactions that no effort on my part could seem disproportionate to the rewards I might reap (Mann, 2012: 20).

This attitude contrasts sharply with that of his godfather:

> Nature ... is full of corruption and mould, and I have been called to be her priest. For that reason I am called Schimmelpreester.[12] Now, only God knows why I am also called Felix (Mann, 2012: 28).

A predisposition to joyful openness to others, to the unknown, is indispensable for Felix Krull to pursue the existence his author has envisaged for him: an existence marked by a cheerful rejection of his social identity and perhaps more than the merely social aspect. As any reader of the novels can see, the destiny reserved to young Felix unfolds through successive changes in his personality. At first they are superficial, from Felix to Armand in the luxury hotel in Paris, where he begins to work on the lowest rung of the social ladder, and then radical, when he adopts the personality of the Marquess Louis de Venosta, an impersonation to which he is amenable much more from an adventurous spirit of play than for economic or utilitarian motives.

In the book's first pages Mann clearly indicates the "divine" condition of his trickster. He himself recognises that

> I have always believed that I was ... a favoured child of the gods; and I may say that, on the whole, events do not show me to have been mistaken in this lively conviction (Mann, 2012: 15).[13]

Moreover, his godfather asks him at least once to be a model for the figure of a Greek god. There is little doubt, knowing Mann, that the god is Hermes, who will be mentioned specifically later, both in the

context of the relationship with Madame Houpflé, alias Diane Philibert, and in the agreement to supplant the Marquess of Venosta and his first conversation with Professor Kuckuck.

Trickster, *göttliche Schelm*, Hermes, the god of thieves, of fraudsters and charlatans, but also the psychagogue, the leader of souls, who sends dreams (Hillman, 1979: 89), the traveller between the higher and lower worlds, the messenger of the gods and, above all, the only one who "can tell the real truth, the whole truth about the soul" (Hillman, 1997: 160). The many-sided figure of Felix Krull shows a different aspect of the same reality in each of his facets. It is a reality which is above all images or symbols, those of literature and its remote precedent the mythical tale, and doubtless even further back: the image without words on which the myth itself is based. And this is where the similarities to Hillman's thought become evident.

Let us go to the beginning; I mean the material, physical beginning of the character's earthly existence: his birth. "If report tells true", he says, "the birth was slow and difficult" (difficult for his mother, of course). He adds that the difficulties that made the use of "artificial means" (probably forceps) by the family doctor necessary were due exclusively to his inactivity:

> I –if I may use the first person to refer to that far-away and foreign little being– was extremely inactive ... showing no zeal to enter a world which I was yet to love with such an ardent love (Mann, 2012: 14).

In this description Felix Krull shows at an early stage the remarkable detachment from self that is to mark his whole life. It does not matter that what he says may be shared by all from an objective viewpoint, as hardly anyone reflects on the relevance of spontaneously saying: "I was born in such and such a place on such and such a date ...". From the first moment the self is a problem for Felix Krull and more than this the result of an erroneous idea about what human life is. It is not difficult to see here the mark of "everything flows" in the words of Heraclitus, undoubtedly the pre-Socratic philosopher most admired by Hillman and also by Nietzsche.[14] He and Schopenhauer were the philosophers most respected by Thomas Mann. For all these authors the self is a prejudice, so it is not surprising how cautiously Felix uses the word beyond its purely syntactic meaning. But beyond the objection to the suitability of the term, in the description of his birth or rather in the interpretation of the reluctance of the newly born child, we find other clues:

> reflection inclines me to associate this reluctance to exchange the darkness of the womb for the light of day with the extraordinary gift and passion for sleep which has been mine all my life (Mann, 2012: 14).

Even though the world subsequently turns out to delight him, that moment of transition from darkness and unconsciousness to light and consciousness is painful and unpleasant. Uterine unconsciousness, similar to the underworld in a way, must have had something for him, something unknown and unknowable, related to his inclination to return serenely to unconsciousness through sleep. And when I speak unqualifiedly of unconsciousness and associate it with intra-uterine life, it is because Mann himself, as Krull, does so.

> I have always fallen asleep with the greatest ease and enjoyment, lost myself in far and dreamless forgetfulness, and waked after ten or twelve or even fourteen hours' oblivion more refreshed and gratified than even by all the satisfactions and successes of my waking hours (Mann, 2012: 14–15).

It seems that Felix Krull can dispense without any regret with his diurnal conscious self, unlike most people, according to Hillman.[15] Even in his diurnal world he begins to experience the self as an undesirable burden from an early stage. When he poses in fancy dress for his godfather and notices that any costume suits him naturally, there being no need for it to be changed or for him to adapt to it, he recognises that he feels sad and depressed when the session ends and he has to put his own clothes back on (Mann, 2012: 31). He even comes to envy women when, on the occasion of his sister's engagement and forthcoming marriage, he realises that they can change their surname at least once (Mann, 2012: 65). But this change, a socially legitimised exception, lacks the ingredient that would make the transformation desirable in Felix's eyes: it does not infringe the rules. The woman who takes her husband's surname does not leave the sphere of social legitimacy; on the contrary, it confirms her membership of society, as it is established practice. What pleases the trickster, or Hermes, is the infringement of the rule, which may be playful or sacred, or playfully sacred. The change is not attractive except to the extent that it implies deceit; in this case a step from formality to play. Felix Krull needs a metaphysics of deceit and, as we shall soon discover, he has one. Deceit is necessary for life, he maintains; so much so that God himself has grafted it into him; this is what he thinks when he tries to understand how the audience attending the performance by the actor Müller-Rosé allow themselves to be deceived by his seductive, youthful appearance, achieved by the use of make up and prostheses, when he is really aged and not attractive at all. They not only allow themselves to be deceived, they seek deception, give themselves up to it, and pay for the privilege:

> Evidently this shows a general need which God himself has made part of man's nature, a need which

> can be satisfied through the faculties of Müller-Rosé (Mann, 2012: 40–41).

This approach is still too Christian, too monotheistic, in the sense this word acquires in Hillman's work; but the essential fact is that in these lines a collective "generalised" need emerges, in the form of deceit, a *trompe l'oeil*, appearance, metamorphosis and it is, moreover, linked to the idea of God. It is a god that has created this need or we could say that the need, which is collective and imperious, cannot fail to be perceived as something divine. From here to identifying it with a god who is different from the single god of Christianity is but one step, which is already taken in the novel to some extent, since the god of deceit and appearance is no other than Hermes, the one that Felix Krull wants to embody, without realising it. In the philosophy of James Hillman's psychology the gods are, let us not forget, the images through which the western psyche was once manifested (in Greece) and those that have survived among us in some sense, periodically reconquered: by Renaissance neo-Platonism, by Romanticism, and more recently by him ... and by some artists.

That we are talking, that Mann is talking, about this type of deceit, the sacred game, not a malicious trick for a selfish, earthly end, but very much the opposite, in the service of life and the well-being of the soul, is clearly formulated by Felix himself, a few pages later:

> It is a favourite theory of mine that every deception which has not a higher truth at its root but is simply a barefaced lie is by the very fact so gross and palpable that nobody can fail to see through it. Only one kind of lie has a chance of being effective: that which is quite undeserving of the name of deceit, being but *the product of a lively imagination which has not yet entered wholly into the realm of the actual and acquired those tangible signs by which alone it can be estimated at its proper worth* (my italics, Mann, 2012: 44).

I do not believe it is possible to be more explicit, as I also believe that the lines in italics faithfully reflect the thought that Hillman will define in the course of his work, until he comes to what, in his opinion, is "the myth of analysis",[16] i.e. until he regards as concluded his research into the hypothesis that mythology is psychology and that in a complementary sense the psyche studied by that psychology is manifested as a plurality of numinous images, highly active and with great power to shape events, which for westerners continue to have the features of the members of the Greek pantheon.

Remaining in the theoretical domain, let us now turn to other statements by Felix Krull which coincide with some of the main points in Hillman's theory. Let us begin with its relationship to the importance of images. It is highly interesting that this topic arises in the religious domain and that Thomas Mann, whose background was Lutheran, should state that his preferences in this field were on the side of Catholicism. All that Protestantism rightly censures from a purely moral point of view (pomp, the display of power through beauty and ornament) is viewed favourably by Felix Krull, who, as we have said, is the only *Westdeutsche* in Mann's pantheon and could thus have been brought up as a Catholic, though we should not be misled by this single explanation, as we shall soon see. The Catholic religion, says Felix,

> ... takes us to what is beyond the known world, works in it, takes it into account as far as possible and like no other faith explores and examines in depth its mysteries and secrets (...) and would whoever is ordained to administer the supreme mystery of this church, the mystery of body and blood, not be able, thanks to his heightened sensitivity, to distinguish the eminent from the insignificant in human affairs? (Mann, 2012: 76).

The mystery, the mysteries. And more specifically the *opus transmutatoria* of transubstantiation, which Jung linked to alchemy, while he linked both alchemy and religion to psychology (Jung, 1960–1983, 11: § 344–375). The Catholic Church admits and even encourages the worshipping of images, or more precisely, the worshipping of God through the images of the Virgin and the saints, as mediators, while reformed Christianity rejects them. It is hardly necessary to recall that Hillman called his psychology a "imaginal psychology" but it may be useful to remember that the main objection raised, from both within and without Catholicism, to the cult of images is based on the risk of taking them, or rather those they represent, as "lesser gods", the risk of a return to polytheism. It can hardly surprise us (this is what I meant by saying that there was more than one reason for the author making him a Catholic) that Krull considers the priest he refers to in the fragment mentioned to be "something of a pagan".

But this is precisely what is most interesting from the viewpoint of this article; again it is not *Westdeutsche* or Catholic values that seem to have motivated Thomas Mann's choice but the south (emphasised, as we have seen, by Felix's French ancestry) and its relationship with that paganism which is not Germanic but Mediterranean. It takes us through Christian Rome to polytheistic Greece, a Greece that does not coincide with the country's physical geography but represents a spiritual geography (Hillman, 2000: 5), through which Hermes, the traveller, thief, friend of the seductive word and of beautiful images, passes. In his description of the psychological virtues of the Catholic priest Felix Krull, or Thomas Mann, stresses something extraordinarily significant, the bodily senses:

> An ear accustomed to elevated music, harmonies that make him envisage celestial choirs (...) An eye familiarised with the most marvellous pomp of form and colour, representing the magnificence of the heavenly abode (...) A sense of smell used to detecting the odour of incense in places of worship, an organ that at other times must even have perceived the adorable odour of sanctity ... (Mann, 2012: 76).

I find his mention of the much neglected sense of smell especially important. According to Hillman, it is of primary importance in the psychological underworld, in the territory of Hades, inhabited only by souls that are like smoke (Hillman, 1979: 185–188). What could the extraordinary aroma that was attributed to the dead body of saints (as opposed to the smell of putrefaction that accompanies other mortals on their departure from this life) represent for the imaginary Christian, other than a pure and perfect soul-vapour? From a mere anecdote Felix Krull has charged through the territory of religion to peer, albeit for a moment, into the psychological terrain belonging to the soul.

But this is not the end of his defence of the sensory, so important for the purpose of this study. When he reflects in his writing the impressions he gathered during one of his early occupations (ordering carriages for wealthy burgers and aristocrats who went to theatres and restaurants at night and holding the door open for them while they took their seats) he lingers over the ambiguous look some ladies often gave him, and some gentlemen, a memory which prompts this subtle commentary:

> What a wonderful thing the human eye is, rightly considered, that precious jewel among all the organs, when it fixes its moist gleam on another human being! (...) That small lump of clay set in a (…) hollow of bone and destined one day to become inanimate remains in the grave, to dissolve into watery residue, but is able, while it is driven by the force of life, to build the most beautiful ethereal bridges across the abyss that separates one human being from another (Mann, 2012: 100).

The eye; sight; intimate, radical communication through the image. It may sometimes be deceitful too, but this in no way affects the foregoing. The image (what else do the beneficiaries of Felix's humble activity perceive?) as a message of that depth, that intimacy separated from that of the observer by an "abyss". The magic of the look and the image, the psychological discharge that, in the essential model of love, is symbolised by Cupid's dart. We are still clearly in the territory of the soul and, a little further on, we again find support for looks and gestures rather than words:

> Only in two facets of human contact, where words are not involved, or where words are no longer important, that is to say, in the look and the embrace, is true happiness found, for only there do we have unconditional freedom, intimacy and a total lack of human respect. Everything in human dealings and contact falling between these two points is feeble and insipid; it is determined, conditional and limited by social usage and convention. Words rule there, a cold, opaque medium which, more than any other, engenders the submissive, mediocre morality which is so essentially alien to the warm, silent sphere of nature ... (Mann, 2012: 100).

The word, mother of morality, is as "essentially alien" to nature as the superego is to the id. The soul does not allow itself to be reduced to morality, social conventions, the dictate of words.[17] The *Psykhe* is manifested in images and sensations, through senses whose perceptions cannot be adequately expressed in words and, like all sensations, they are devoid of morality. Elsewhere he will say that "the word is the enemy of what is mysterious, and a terrible representative of what is ordinary and common" (Mann, 2012: 132). The testimony of Felix Krull, of Thomas Mann, is all the more important in that he recognises, a few lines later, that it is paradoxical that the person saying this is precisely someone who is writing, and, in the case of the real author, someone who has made the use of words the main task of his life. The sensation the seasoned reader of Thomas Mann has, when reading this paragraph, is that at the end of his life the writer has made a discovery, or has perhaps stated something he had already discovered but kept secret. It gives the impression that this Hermes, Felix Krull, has brought his soul to light.

THE BODY, SLEEP AND THE UNDERWORLD OF THE SOUL

Let us look back for a moment to the beginning of Thomas Mann's literary career. According to scholars, what characterises his early work is the conflict between the artist and the bourgeois, the ethical question about the dignity of an occupation, literature, considered Bohemian according to the dominantly bourgeois attitudes among which Mann himself grew up. And it is precisely at this time that he began to write the novel (Seidlin, 1975: 81). But it is no less true that his Felix Krull's *Buch der Kindheit*, published in 1922, appeared only two years before *Der Zauberberg*, where the conflict has been left behind, although without reaching the level of self-affirmation of *Joseph und seine Brüder*. It might be thought, although it is not my intention to examine this possibility, that Thomas Mann had resolved the conflict quite early on, although in society he only ventured to present a cerebral solution. I think there is a declaration by Felix in the early pages of the story that we can interpret in this sense. He mentions that, when he reached an age at which adults

could be less concerned with him, he did not miss them, since it allowed him to indulge freely in his lonely fantasies (Mann, 2012: 10), i.e. the free play of his psyche. As Hillman maintains, "psychological living implies living in a fantasy, a story, being told by a myth" (Hillman, 1997: 143).

Indeed, the whole novel is an affirmation of the importance for life of developing the life of the soul. From an early stage Mann makes a point of affirming the supremacy of the spiritual over what is purely material. The two clearest examples of this are the provocation of somatic symptoms by the application of the will and some exercises based on the conviction (perhaps Kantian)[18] that the *Gemüt* (the soul) can exercise power (*Macht*) over the body by mere intent (*durch den blossen Vorsatz*). This capacity is manifested on two occasions: the first when he describes the success of his efforts to convince his family, and subsequently the doctor, that he is really ill and cannot go to school, and the second when he simulates an epileptic fit to avoid military service. It is interesting to consider some lines from the first of these situations:

> Medical science maintains that fever is necessarily the result of an infection of the blood caused by one agent or another and that fever cannot exist if no physical cause can be identified. That is absurd (...) When Inspector Düsing examined me I was highly excited; I had concentrated my whole being upon an act of the will; I was drunk with the intensity of my performance (...) All this so heightened and enhanced my organic processes that the doctor could actually read the result off the thermometer (Mann, 2012: 52).

For his purposes the young Krull has made a "European" incursion into the world of shamanic or yoga initiation. He has acted like the fakirs whose deeds (catalepsy, prolonged fasting, insensibility to pain, etc.) were brought to the attention of westerners in the travel writings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And we should not forget that Jung turned his attention in this direction in search of documents concerning the capabilities of the human psyche.

However, the treatment of sex in the novel is even more interesting. Human sexuality –that domain in which the corporal and the psychological act together, often in conflict; that battlefield on which what is natural contends with the coalition formed by social and moral pressure; that scenario for the marriage of body and soul. Felix Krull's initiation in the affairs of love (taking the word in its most ambiguous and complex sense, as proposed by Mann) is probably one of the themes which most closely reflect the parallel with Hillman's thought which I hope to demonstrate. I have used the term "initiation" deliberately, as what Felix experiences with the prostitute Rozsa is not simply learning, as he himself recognises and explains. Even the choice of teacher is not accidental: a prostitute as seen by bourgeois culture is a hierodule on the symbolic level of the narrative, the level on which human being Felix Krull is the setting for the manifestation of a god, Hermes. Mann could have chosen an innocent virgin but he doubtless knew that this was not the way to depict sacred sex; the virgin, and above all the only woman destined for Felix Krull, if she existed, could not appear at the start of his journey but only after his initiation. It must be a priestess of sex who shows him what sex means from the viewpoint of the soul, and just any prostitute would not do for this purpose. Rozsa chooses to love him and Felix accepts because, on his nocturnal excursions, when he studies the fauna of the night, he has already formed a personal idea, by no means bourgeois, about the role of

> ... those members of the female sex who are called women of the town or women of easy virtue and also simply wenches or, in a more elevated tone, priestesses of Venus, nymphs or Phrynes (Mann, 2012: 129).

The reference to the "more elevated tone" could be applied to Krull himself, as it is well known that when polite society refers to the goddess of love or the courtesan who disarms her judges with the beauty of her naked body, it does so merely euphemistically. With Felix this is not the case, since for him it is a "odd relic, full of colour, of more splendid times" (Mann, 2012: 86). Something similar occurs with another of the names given to these women, which is extremely interesting from the viewpoint of this study:

> People use the expression "birds of death" to refer to those small owls which are said to fly at night towards the windows of those who are about to die, calling the fearful soul outside with the cry: "Come with me". Is it not strange that these disreputable women should use the same expression when they are standing under a street light brazenly inviting men to debauchery? (Mann, 2012: 130)

Sex is linked to death and both of these to the soul![19] The prostitute calls her client using the same words as death calling the soul. Sex is like a psychopomp, sharing its mythical role with Hermes himself and is, like him, closely associated with what goes beyond life, the underworld. In Krull's (Mann's) opinion, all prostitutes are "birds of death", even if they do not know it and even if they play their role inexpertly. However, Rozsa is not just any prostitute. Their first conversation takes place in a hired carriage on the way to Rozsa's apartment.

> ... she avoided all formal ceremony; from the start she had that free, highly irresponsible character that is peculiar to dreams, in which our self alternates

> with shadows that do not have a life of their own, with products of itself, and all this in a way that cannot occur in waking life, where each being of flesh and blood is effectively separated from every other (Mann, 2012: 135).

These lines are, in my view, crucial to defend the hypothesis I am putting forward. The conversation with the prostitute is compared to a dream-like experience, and the features Mann attributes to this kind of experience could have been taken from Hillman's work: in them "our self alternates with shadows which have no effective life of their own"; if we interpret "effective life of their own" from the viewpoint of the self, this is true. They have a life of their own, of course, but that life is beyond the boundaries of the self, of the diurnal. The description of souls as shadows, even as shadows devoid of "life", as the Greeks imagined them in Hades, is one of the references most extensively used and analysed by Hillman.[20] And what Mann subsequently adds, namely that those shadows are "products of themselves", confirms his conviction that the foregoing assertion regarding the souls of sleep must be qualified, that the statement that they "have no life of their own" does not refer to their emptiness or non-existence but to the fact that they are part of oneself (Hillman would say that one is part of them, or of it, the soul). However, the paragraph I refer to concludes with a statement contradicting the fragment by Heraclitus, so highly thought of by Hillman. "The waking share one common World (*cosmos*), whereas the sleeping turn aside each man into a World of his own" (Hillman, 1979: 133). We should not allow ourselves to be misled by the apparent contradiction, but allow Mann to lead us beyond the superficial and diurnal, to use another expression dear to Hillman. The writer claims that in the everyday world of wakefulness human beings are completely separated, isolated in the solitary fortress of their ego, while when souls speak, in sleep and outside it (we should remember that Rozsa and Felix are talking, not dreaming), we attain true communication. Schiller had already proclaimed this: "deine Zauber bindet wieder/ was die mode strengt geteilt" -your magic powers join again / what fashion strictly did divide- (Schiller, 1992: 248) If it should seem that this reference has little bearing on my subject, I would point out that when Krull begins to describe this first erotic experience and some less important adventures preceding it, he refers to the practice of sex as a "great joy" (*die grosse Freude*) (Mann, 2012: 59).

That Rozsa is a priestess is made clear by her attitude to sex, described as a "strict, almost dark seriousness" (Mann, 2012: 136). The fact that her mission, whether she is aware of it or not, is to contribute to the initiation of her pupil, to his higher sentimental education, is recognised by him: "This is not only a case of refinement *in* love but also of refinement *through* love" (Mann, 2012: 140).

The young bourgeois man who goes to a brothel, perhaps accompanied by a father figure, does so only to learn the amatory arts, while in the case of Felix Krull it is a matter of furthering his education for life in the broadest sense, an education which he calls "refinement". The definitive proof that he is on the right path is given by his first experience, anticipation perhaps, of *coniunctio*: "We were not alone and yet there were fewer than two of us" (Mann, 2012: 135).

Although the verbal expression in this novel has been criticised, Thomas Mann, with his magic gift for words, has hit on a formula which would have earned the full approval of Jung and his followers. With it, or rather with the experience it describes, he rescues the main character from isolation, almost solipsism in the critical writing of some scholars (Lange, 1975: 127). If this had not been achieved, it would have undermined the mythical (psychological) task undertaken by the author, since we cannot forget that "the soul cannot exist without its other part, which is always to be found in a You".[21]

His second significant relationship with a woman takes place in Paris. His partner on this occasion is the wife of a wealthy merchant, a woman who from a distance looks like him. Dissatisfied with her role as a bourgeois wife, she writes novels under a pseudonym and the name she chooses is that of an ancient goddess: Diane. In this adventure Mann decides to be even more transparent, as the woman compares Felix to Hermes explicitly. With a touch of masochism,[22] she tells him to humiliate her by calling her a prostitute (again we have the figure of the hierodule) and stealing her jewels in her presence (210–211). This is a form of confirmation, in the Catholic sense, of his Hermetic condition: it should not be forgotten that Hermes is the god of thieves, one of his first deeds being the theft of Apollo's cattle. Felix himself later declares that the only god in the classical pantheon of whom he knows anything is Hermes,[23] and in this declaration could lie the clue to his ultimate destiny, which we can only gauge from the notes Mann left. It includes at least one period in prison, his unilateral possession by Hermes pointing to the risk of what Jung called "inflation" (Jung, 1960–1983: 7, § 227–231).

FOLLOWING HERMES

But inflation, the risk of which is always present, is probably inevitable when one has chosen the path of actively seeking the *Selbst*, Jung's self, and the price one has to pay (with luck leading to liberation) is death, at best death as an initiation, followed by rebirth.[24] This is what happens to Joseph in the biblical tetralogy: he has to be cast into a well by his brothers and thrown into prison in Egypt before

he can fulfil his destiny (Bishop, 1999: 177). Felix Krull has made his choice and accepts the consequences, "one day I resolved to belong only to myself and give myself over to freedom" (Mann, 2012: 29). However, there is no affirmation of the ego in belonging to himself, since the essence of Felix Krull's sacred game is his change of identity; we could compare him to Proteus as much as to Hermes. His story would seem to exemplify Hillman's description perfectly:

> Personality may be imagined in a new way: that I am an impersonal person, a metaphor enacting multiple personifications, mimetic to images in the heart that are my fate, and that this soul which projects me as archetypal depths that are alien, inhuman and impersonal. My so-called personality is a persona through which soul speaks. It is subject of depersonalization and is not mine, but depends altogether upon the gift of belief in myself, a faith given through anima in my worth as carrier of soul. Not I personify, but the anima personifies me, or soul-makes herself through me, giving my life her sense –her intense daydream is my "me-ness"; and I, a psychic vessel whose existence is a psychic metaphor, an "as-if being", in which every single belief is a literalism except the belief of soul whose faith posits me and makes me possible as a personification of the psyche (Hillman, 1997: 51).

Nor do we know how his story ends, which may be the best thing, since this fact surrounds it with an aura of uncertainty which makes us feel it as profoundly real, despite the fantastic elements in the adventure described to us. A conclusion, of whatever type, would surely give it the air of a medical or psychological prescription, while in this way we cannot help but feel that, when one reaches a certain depth, the self no longer has anything to say, as the mystery belongs to the gods. Tadzio, *der liebliche Psychagog*, showed Gustav von Aschenbach the way in the Venice Lido. Forty-three years later Thomas Mann entered the domain of Hades for ever, guided by the god who had always been beside him.[25]

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NOTES

1. At this point I cannot fail to point out a first coincidence between the thoughts of Jung and those of Thomas Mann, as shown by the novel I shall be studying in this paper, *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull*. I refer to the following line: "what we call destiny and what at bottom is ourselves ..." (Mann, 2012: 142).
2. James Hillman is one of the most creative thinkers in the frame of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology, to the point of proposing a new and original orientation which he called imaginal psychology. Samuels, 1985 and Young-Eisendrath and Dawson, 2008. In Spanish: González de Pablo (2002).
3. A private edition was published in 1922 and in 1923 it was printed for distribution to bookshops (Kern, 2006: 20).
4. It is clear that Hillman had a high opinion of Mann's work, as can be seen in these words from *Re-visioning Psychology*: "Pathologizing processes are a source of imaginative work, and the work provides a container for the pathologizing processes. The two are inextricably interwoven in the work of Sophocles and Euripides, Webster and Shakespeare, Goya and Picasso, Swift and Baudelaire, O'Neill and Strindberg, Mann and Beckett –these but an evident few" (Hillman, 1997: 107).
5. Bishop draws attention to the way in which Mann described as a "strange coincidence" the similarity between the postulates of the book *Der göttliche Schelm*, which Jung co-wrote with Karl Kerényi and Paul Radin, published in German the same year as *Krull* (1954); a "strange coincidence" according to his declaration "I have never read Jung", which research has shown to be untrue (Bishop, 1999: 166).
6. In relation with the possible influence of the said work, it is known that, in 1954, Mann asked Kerényi to send him the galley proofs of *The Trickster*, which was published in 1956, and he celebrated the coincidence between the tenets of that book and those of his *Krull*. In any case, in those days Mann's book was about to be published or already in bookshops (Bishop, 1999: 166). Attention has also been drawn to the influence of picaresque literature, both German (*Simplizissimus* by Grimmelshausen) and Spanish (*Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*). (Seidlin, 1975: 82–83).
7. Hillman points out that Jung always felt uneasy about the figure of Christ, to which he opposed that of Hermes (Hillman, 1979: 89; Jung, 1960–1983: 13, § 299).
8. As a central theme in Hillman's work, this may not require any further comment, but I will mention that it finds its most explicit and radical formulation in Hillman, 1998: 264–266.
9. "My father, his size and obesity notwithstanding, had great personal charm" (Mann, 2012: 9).
10. It has been emphasised that Felix Krull is the only *Westdeutsche*, Catholic and, in a sense, "southern" character in Mann's work (Seidlin, 1975: 84).
11. Later he will discount that risk, affirming that "whoever really loves the world models himself to please it" (Mann, 2012: 80).
12. "Mould-priest" is one of the many symbolic names used by Thomas Mann as indications of character prior to any description, as in the case of the protagonist of *Der Tod in Venedig*, Gustav von Aschenbach (ash-stream).
13. Later, when he describes the theft of chocolates and other sweets on his return from school, he will justify his action on the grounds that he is "a favourite of the powers that be and actually compact of different flesh and blood" (Mann, 2012: 37).
14. Thomas Mann devoted two essays to both German philosophers (*Schopenhauer*, 1938 and *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung*, 1947). Besides, Schopenhauer's philosophy plays a relevant role in *Buddenbrooks* and Nietzsche's too in *Der Zauberberg* and *Doktor Faustus*.
15. "To dream is to enter the House of the Lord of the Dead, where our complexes lie in wait. We do not go gentle into that good night". Before making this statement he has listed the different rituals he knows of, his own and those of his patients, in which people engage before going to bed (Hillman, 1979: 34).
16. They are Psyche and Eros (Hillman, 1998: 55–61).
17. One of the key points in Hillman's doctrine is the need to demoralise the psyche, freeing it from the "moralistic fallacy" (Hillman, 1997: 352). And in this task the role of Hermes is exemplary, since this god "is not bound by the moralistic fallacy" (Hillman, 1997: 163).
18. I refer to the short work of Kant entitled *Von der Macht des Gemüts, durch den blossen Vorsatz seiner krankhaften Gefühle*

Meister zu sein (*On the Power of the Soul to Dominate One's Own Morbid Feelings Through Pure Intent) (1798)*.

19. The relationship between Psyche and Thanatos or Psyche and Hades is a constant factor in Hillman's work (Hillman, 1997:110, 205–208; 1979: 47, 212–213 n. 48).
20. He deals with this theme in great detail, extending his thoughts to the archetype of the Shadow (*der Schatten*) in Hillman, 1979: 51–59.
21. With this quotation from Jung, 1960–1983: 16, § 454, Hillman begins the first part of his work *The Myth of Analysis* (Hillman, 1998: p. 11).
22. Although lack of space prevents me from analysing this component of the relationship in greater detail, I would point out that in Hillman, 1998: 142–148, Hillman rescues masochism from the category of a vile perversion.
23. He will do so in his first conversation with Professor Kuckuck, in the dining car of the train taking them to Lisbon (Mann, 2012: 310). He also mentions it in his conversation with the Marquess of Venosta, when the latter's impersonation by Felix is being planned (Mann, 2012: 271).
24. "Lets us pause here to recall that the idea of rebirth refers to a wholly psychic phenomenon, unequalled in animal nature. Renaissance is a potentiality of the soul, not of nature, an is thus an *opus contra naturam*, a movement from nature into soul. This movement of rebirth from natural existence to psychological existence requires a preceding or a simultaneous dying (…) I believe the God of the Renaissance and of *all psychological renascences* to be Hades, archetypal principle of the deepest aspect of the soul" (Hillman, 1997: 205–206). We find the same idea in Hillman, 1979: 65–66.
25. "An author's fictions are often more significant than his own reality, containing more psychic substance, which last long after their 'creator' has gone. An author creates only by their authority" (Hillman, 1997: 12).

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