

DER VULKAN (THE VOLCANO)

Klaus Mann

Analysis by Marina Foschi

Autobiographical Novel

In his novel *Der Vulkan* (1939), Klaus Mann portrays the fractured lives of exiled refugees fleeing the rise of Nazism in Germany after 1933. The recurring image of the volcano evokes Europe’s explosive situation on the eve of World War II. Combining symbolism with realistic narrative, *Der Vulkan* advocates the preservation of hope, and upholds the moral imperative of resistance.

Year of Publication	1939
Publication Place	Amsterdam
Editor	Querido Verlag

GEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Volcano

LITERARY EVENT

Time	1933
Location	Normandy France
Coordinates	49.359570, 0.080304
Base/Complex	Deauville
Volcanic Risk Ref.	Referenced
Typology	Terrestrial
Anthropization Level	Sea Coast

INDIVIDUAL REACTIONS & AFFECTS

Attitudes

Name	Marion Von Kammer
Gender	Female
Native Place	Germany
Nationality	German
Reactions	Anxiety Awareness

COLLECTIVE REACTIONS & AFFECTS

Attitudes

Name	Politicians
Reactions	Underestimation

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LINGUISTIC & STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Keywords	Naturkatastrophe (Natural Disaster) Abgrund (Abyss) Unglück (Misfortune)
Motifs, Topoi, Mythologemes	The Downfall Of Society
Punctuation	Multiple Exl

Der Vulkan (*The Volcano*), a largely autobiographical novel by Klaus Mann, was started in autumn 1937 and completed in spring 1939, just a few weeks before the beginning of the Second World War. Considered one of the most important German exile novels, it deals with the fate of German political emigrants after the Nazis seized power in 1933. Set mainly in Paris, the action moves to several other locations, including Prague, Amsterdam, Switzerland, Budapest, Mallorca and the United States.

The symmetrically structured novel is divided into three parts, each covering a pair of years: 1933–1934, 1936–1937 and 1937–1938, and comprises five chapters. It is framed by a prologue and epilogue in the form of letters exchanged between two German men, Karl and Dieter, who discuss the moral implications of emigration. Dieter's first letter to Karl, dated 20 April 1933 (the day of Hitler's birthday and the year he came to power), explains the necessity of staying in Berlin, where opponents are needed to fight against fascism. In his second letter, dated 1st January 1939 (the first day of the year in which World War II broke out), Dieter writes again, this time from Marseille. He has finally left Nazi Germany, not out of fear of being arrested, but to avoid being sent to fight for it as a soldier.

The two characters, Dieter and Karl, do not play any further role within the novel. Nevertheless, their letters raise important questions about whether it is better to resist from within or to leave the country in order to oppose National Socialism effectively. This debate on the theme of exile versus resistance resonates throughout the novel, especially in scenes that explore the ideological conflicts among the emigrants themselves. These range from placing hope in Catholicism or a communist revolution to expecting a military coup. Other intertwined topics include exile and displacement, anti-fascist resistance and personal and ideological survival. Ultimately, despite sorrow, ideological fragmentation and personal loss, *Der Vulkan* advocates preserving hope and upholding the moral imperative of resistance through art, political engagement or personal integrity.

The novel lacks a unified narrative framework, instead presenting fragmented, emotionally resonant portraits. Rather than following a single protagonist, Mann constructs an episodic narrative that mirrors the fragmentation and chaos of emigration itself (Heim). The novel features a large cast of exiled refugees fleeing the rise of Nazism in Germany, including fugitive communists, resistance fighters, intellectuals, artists, members of the upper class, Jews, and other persecuted minorities. The novel describes their difficulties, downfalls, successes, struggles and defeats, all of which are intertwined to create a complex and nuanced narrative, loosely interwoven through various plot strands against the backdrop of European fascism. The novel also explores taboo topics for the time, such as homosexuality, abortion, drug use and internalised anti-Semitism.

One plot strand focuses on Martin Korella, an unsuccessful homosexual writer who becomes a drug addict and embarks on a passionate love affair with the young South American émigré Kikjou in Paris. Exploring the themes of love and addiction, this plot strand reflects the emotional and psychological toll of exile. A second plot strand revolves around Marion Kammer, a central character in the narrative and a close friend of Martin's who is committed to political resistance through performance art. Like many other German intellectuals in exile, she and Martin experience an adventurous escape, the arrival in Paris, encounters, discussions, political commitment to the anti-fascist struggle. Her partner, the French socialist writer Marcel Poirer, realises that his manifestos and pamphlets have almost no impact on the masses. He comes to the conclusion that only action could bring about political change (Grunewald 149) and joins the anti-Franco resistance. His death in the Spanish Civil War marks a pivotal moment in Marion's emotional development and political involvement. Her journey, taking her from anti-fascist cabaret tours across Europe, through personal loss in Spain, to eventual emigration to New York, exemplifies the intersection of art, resistance, and survival. She subsequently marries Benjamin Abel, a Jewish historian forced to leave the university due to a Nazi colleague's envy, after discovering that she is pregnant with the child of the Italian exile Tullio. This marriage reflects the pragmatic choices made in exile and the broader theme of displaced intellectual solidarity. The tragic fate of her sister Tilly von Kammer highlights another theme: the vulnerability of exiled women. After her passport expires, she travels to Budapest for a sham marriage and later dies following a clandestine abortion.

Marion's importance as a character is largely defined by her connection to the volcano that gives the novel its title. The volcano appears three times in the narrative, each of which marks a pivotal moment in Marion's life in exile.

The volcano appears for the first time in Deauville, a small coastal town in Normandy where Marion is vacationing with Marcel, in the fourth chapter of the first part of the novel: "Aus dem Abgrund stiegen Feuerbrände, auch Qualm kam in dicken Schwaden, und Felsbrocken wurden emporgeschleudert. Es war der Krater eines Vulkans." 'Fires were rising from the abyss, smoke was coming out in thick clouds and boulders were being thrown up. It was the crater of a volcano.' (Mann 129; my trans.). The volcano is clearly a hallucination on the part of the character, since there are no real volcanoes in the area. Deauville became a famous seaside resort for Parisian visitors at the beginning of the 20th century. Along with Trouville-sur-Mer, it was officially designated a health resort. The Casino de Deauville was a popular meeting place for socialites, offering gala evenings and lively gaming. Artists and intellectuals often stayed at the luxury hotels Normandy and Royal, built in 1912 and 1913 respectively. These hotels served as hospitals during the Great War, before returning to their former glory at the start of the Roaring Twenties. During this period, the seaside resort reached its peak of success, attracting notable figures such as King Alfonso XIII of Spain, André Citroën, Coco Chanel, and Sacha Guitry ("Les années folles à Deauville"). The Normandy beach area, of

which Deauville is a part, was chosen by the Allies for their landing in World War II due to its geology. Sand dunes were favoured because they provided good water supplies via 'well-point' installations and could support the rapid construction of airfields following the planned landing (Rose et al. 126-129).

Deauville is the location where Marcel, a man with strong ideas and Marxist convictions about revolution and the contribution that intellectuals could make to ending capitalism and fascism, has taken Marion, in order to distract her from her constant preoccupation with her own destiny and that of the other exiles. In Deauville, Marcel admits to his own feelings of anguish, creating an 'abyss' of disquiet for Marion herself:

'J'ai peur – ah, j'ai peur...' Marion erschrak: dies war Marcel's flüsternde Stimme; sie aber hatte genau dasselbe sagen wollen – freilich auf deutsch. / 'Wovor fürchtest du dich?' – Er beantwortete ihre Frage mit einer Stimme, die plötzlich rauh war und etwas keuchte. 'Gefahren – Gefahren überall ... Oh, wir sind schon verloren! ... Welche Schuld haben wir auf uns geladen, daß man uns zu solcher Strafe verdammt?...Ach, Marion – Marion...' Seine Worte vergingen an ihrem Hals. Vielleicht weinte er. / 'Wir werden schon fertig – mit allem!' raunte sie zuversichtlich. Aber auch ihre Augen hatten den entsetzten Blick, als wäre ein Abgrund jäh vor ihnen aufgesprungen. (Mann 129)

'J'ai peur – ah, j'ai peur...' Marion was scared: this was Marcel's whispering voice; but she had wanted to say exactly the same thing - in German, of course. / 'What are you afraid of?' - He answered her question in a voice that was suddenly rough and a little wheezy. 'Dangers - dangers everywhere ... Oh, we're already lost! ... What guilt have we brought upon ourselves that we are condemned to such punishment?...Ah, Marion - Marion ...' His words died on her neck. Perhaps he was crying. / 'We'll manage - with everything!' she murmured confidently. But her eyes also had a horrified look, as if an abyss had suddenly opened up before them. (my trans.)

The *Abgrund* (abyss) is another name for the volcano and represents a central, recurring metaphor in the narrative. It symbolises the historical phenomenon of European fascism and its destructive violence, which robs individuals of their roots, possessions, freedom and even the possibility of love, as Marcel realises: "Noch einmal Marcel's keuchende Flüsterstimme: 'Gefahren, wohin ich schaue...Kampf – Kampf ohne Ende...Ich sehe Mord –: Mord und Tränen...Voici le temps des assassins! Die mörderische Zeit ist angebrochen...Wohin retten wir uns? Wohin fliehen wir mit unserer Liebe? Wohin, Marion, wohin?'" 'Once again Marcel's wheezing whisper: "Dangers wherever I look ... Fight - fight without end...I see murder -: Murder and tears...Voici le temps des assassins! The murderous time has dawned...Where do we save ourselves? Where do we flee with our love? Where to, Marion, where to?"' (130; my trans.).

The narrator advises his characters to be mindful of the violent nature of the volcano, urging them to avoid heroic acts and seeking personal salvation:

"Hüte dich, Marion! Wage dich nicht gar zu sehr in die Nähe des Schlundes! Wenn das Feuer dein schönes Haar erfaßt, bist du verloren! / Wenn einer der emporgeschleuderten Felsbrocken deine Stirne streift, bist du hin! Auch könnte es sein, daß du am Qualm elend ersticken mußt. / Hütet euch, Marion und Marcel! Furchtbar ist der Vulkan. Das Feuer kennt kein Erbarmen, Ihr verbrennt, wenn ihr nicht sehr schlau und behutsam seid. Warum flieht ihr nicht? Oder wollt ihr verbrennen? Seid ihr versessen darauf, eure armen Leben zu opfern? – Aber ihr habt nur diese! Bewahrt euch! Wenn auch ihr im allgemeinen Brand ersticken solltet –: niemand würde sich darum kümmern, niemand dankte es euch, keine Träne fiel über euren Untergang. Ruhmlos – ruhmlos, Marion und Marcel, würdet ihr hingehen!" (129–130)

'Beware, Marion! Don't venture too close to the maw! If the fire catches your beautiful hair, you are lost! / If one of the rocks hurled up grazes your forehead, you're gone! It could also be that you will suffocate miserably from the smoke. / Beware, Marion and Marcel! The volcano is terrible. The fire knows no mercy, you will burn to death if you are not very clever and careful. Why don't you flee? Or do you want to burn? Are you hell-bent on sacrificing your poor lives? - But you only have these! Preserve yourselves! Even if you were to suffocate in the general conflagration -: no one would care, no one would thank you, no tears would fall over your downfall. Ingloriously - ingloriously, Marion and Marcel, you would go!' (my trans.)

The two characters find their temporary oasis of peace in their love, turning away their look from the flames of the volcano:

Der Griff seiner Hände, der von verzweifelter Heftigkeit war, lockert sich endlich. Er schmiegt sich an sie. Nebeneinander ruhen ihre erschöpften Häupter. Ihre Augen waren geblendet von Feuerbränden, die den Horizont nicht erhellen, sondern purpurn verfinstern. Da der eine nun die atmende Nähe des anderen spürt, dürfen sie endlich damit aufhören, ins schauerliche Gewoge der Flammen zu schauen – der Flammen aus dem Vulkan. Sie schließen die Augen. Mit dem Seufzen, das alle Liebenden haben – und das nach Qualen klingt, während es doch so viel mehr ausdrückt als nur die Schmerzen – vertrauen sie sich den Umarmungen an, und ihr letzter Trost sind die Küsse. (130)

The grip of his hands, which had been desperately fierce, finally loosens. He snuggles up to her. Their exhausted heads rest side by side. Their eyes were blinded by fires that did not light up the horizon, but darkened it crimson. Now that one feels the breathing closeness of the other, they can finally stop gazing into the ghastly clamour of the flames - the flames from the volcano. They close their eyes. With the sigh that all lovers have - and that sounds like agony, while it expresses so much more than just pain - they entrust themselves to the embrace, and their last comfort are the kisses. (my trans.)

The volcano appears for the second time in the third chapter of the second part of the novel, when Marcel tells Marion about his decision to go to Spain: "Sie ist sehr erschrocken, als er ihr's gesagt hat: Ich gehe nach Spanien. [...] Als sie nachts neben ihm lag, sah sie wieder, vor den fassungslos geöffneten Augen, den feuerspeienden Berg, den Vulkan. Rauchmassen, lodernder Brand, und die Felsbrocken, die tödlich treffen. Wehe – was ist uns bestimmt?" 'She was very shocked when he told her: I'm going to Spain. [...] As she lay next to him at night, she saw the fire-breathing mountain, the volcano, before her stunned eyes. Masses of smoke, blazing fire, and the boulders that hit deadly. Alas - what is it we are destined for?' (217; my trans.). The volcano appears to Marion at night, following her desperate reaction to Marcel's announcement. Usually the one to comfort and help others, she begs him not to go, or at least to take her with him. She acknowledges her unwillingness to remain alone or to recite poetry in Moravian Ostrava while he is elsewhere, where the decisive battle will be fought. In response, Marcel finally states that they must part ways:

'Es gibt Wege, Marion, die man allein zu gehen hat! Du kannst nicht mit mir kommen. Ich will nicht, daß irgend jemand mit mir kommt.' – Da verstummte sie und hielt das Gesicht lange gesenkt, wie beschämt. Erst viel später war es, daß sie leise sagte: 'Wahrscheinlich hast du recht. Es gibt Wege – die muß man alleine gehen.' (217)

'You're not serious, Marion! You can't really want that!' When she remained obstinate, he had to become stern and almost threatening. 'There are ways, Marion, that you have to go alone! You can't come with me. I don't want anyone to come with me.' – Then she fell silent and kept her face down for a long time, as if ashamed. It was only much later that she said quietly: 'You're probably right. There are ways - you have to go them alone.' (my trans.)

By the time the volcano appears for the third and final time, Marion has found the strength to make her own way in the world, as Marcel predicted. Following Marcel's abandonment and death, she finds herself alone in the United States once more. Tullio has returned to Europe to fight fascism, leaving her behind. Pregnant, she marries university professor Abel. Marion is a fighter, as her sister acknowledged in the passage in which having a baby in times of crisis is compared to fighting against circumstances and political engagement: "Marion, du bist ein starker Charakter, und du kannst kämpfen, du kannst herrlich kämpfen. Es ist eine Freude, dich kämpfen zu sehen. / Aber ich nicht kämpfen. / Ich kann kein Kind haben, und kämpfen kann ich eigentlich nicht. / Ich interessiere mich ja im Grunde gar nicht für Politik." 'Marion, you are a strong character and you can fight, you can fight marvellously. It's a pleasure to see you fight. / But I don't fight. / I can't have a child and I can't really fight. / I'm essentially not at all interested in politics.' (225; my trans.).

In April 1938, she looks out of the window of her cosy house in North Carolina and can almost enjoy her overcome anxieties: "Dieser Aprilabend war schön und mild; durchs offene Fenster kamen Blütengerüche. Junge Leute schlenderten draußen vorbei; manche sangen, andere lachten nur. Welcher Friede! Wie weit entrückt waren Qual und Aufruhr!" 'This April evening was beautiful and

mild; the smell of flowers came through the open window. Young people strolled past outside; some sang, others just laughed. What peace! How far away were agony and turmoil!' (386; my trans.).

Unfortunately, the situation in Europe has developed to the point where no country could offer the group of refugees she had belonged to for five years any living space. Like other Europeans who had entered the United States prior to the most recent political developments, Marion receives now numerous SOS calls from acquaintances for whom America is the only hope. In order to enter the country, they need a financial guarantor, who in turn has to prove that they can support the immigrant in case they are unable to do so themselves. This makes it difficult for Marion to come to terms with her marital happiness and the idea of life going on, as symbolised by the birth of her son: "'Der Vulkan...' Jetzt konnte sie nur noch stammeln. 'Wir alle, an seinem Rande...Auf unseren Stirnen schon sein glühender Atem; die Augen geblendet, die Glieder gelähmt, die Lungen voll erstickendem Qualm...Und da soll man Kinder bekommen!'" "'The volcano..." Now she could only stammer. "All of us, on its edge...Its glowing breath already on our foreheads; our eyes blinded, our limbs paralysed, our lungs full of suffocating smoke...And one is supposed to have children!'"(387; my trans.)

In this final scene, the volcano clearly appears to be Marion's hallucination, given that she is described as a prophet who can foresee Prag's destiny and the impending war:

Heftig und mit einem Schluchzen in der Stimme sprach sie von den Freunden in Wien. 'Sie waren alle so voll Vertrauen! Sie meinten, es müsse ihnen geholfen werden. Niemand hat ihnen geholfen...Was kommt nun an die Reihe?' fragte sie drohend. 'Wer wird das nächste Opfer?' Sie reckte das Haupt mit der Purpur-Mähne – das stolze und leichte Haupt –; ihre Augen hatten den Flammenblick – nur leuchtete er jetzt nicht von Zuversicht, war vielmehr von düsterster Ahnung verfinstert. 'Prag wird fallen!'–: Sie sprach es mit schaurig gedämpfter Stimme, fast war es nur noch ein Murmeln. 'Frankreich und England werden die Tschechoslowakei so wenig verteidigen, wie sie das arme Österreich verteidigt haben.' (387)

She spoke fiercely and with a sob in her voice about her friends in Vienna. 'They were all so full of faith! They thought they had to be helped. Nobody helped them...What's next?' she asked threateningly. 'Who will be the next victim?' She raised her head with the purple mane - the proud and light head; her eyes had the look of flames - only now they were not shining with confidence, they were darkened by a gloomy foreboding. 'Prague will fall!' -She said it in an eerily muffled voice, almost a murmur. 'France and England will defend Czechoslovakia as little as they defended poor Austria.' (my trans.)

The image of Marion as a prophetic figure, with her red hair and burning gaze, reflects her husband's perception of her as a beautiful woman rather than a political activist (Wilson Choubey 221). His matter-of-fact attitude is consistent with his profession as a historian, as demonstrated by his response to her desperate remark: "'Ich schäme mich! [...] Wir sitzen hier in Sicherheit, es geht uns gut, wir haben unser Heim – und überall wächst das Unglück! Das **Unglück** breitet sich aus wie die Pest. Wann ist je so viel gelitten worden?' – 'Immer', sagte der Historiker, liebevoll und pedantisch. 'Oder meistens. Meistens ist so viel gelitten worden. Es war selten besser.'" "'I am ashamed! [...] We are sitting here in safety, we are doing well, we have our home - and misfortune is growing everywhere! Misfortune is spreading like the plague. When has there ever been so much suffering?" - "Always," said the historian, lovingly and pedantically. "Or mostly. There has usually been so much suffering. It was rarely better.'" (386; my trans.).

Her husband's attitude convinces her that she will have her baby, regardless of how she feels about it, simply because it is too late for an abortion:

'Heute ein Kind zu kriegen – so ein Frevel...', brachte sie hervor, 'so eine Sünde, eine Dummheit ... Kriege werden kommen, Revolutionen, Kampf ohne Ende ... Mein armes Kind wird vernichtet...' / 'Es wird leben', sagte Professor Abel – sehr ruhig, aber dezidiert. / 'Nein nein nein!' Sie schüttelte angstvoll den Kopf. 'Ich kann es immer noch entfernen lassen. Es ist wohl noch nicht zu spät...' / 'Es ist ganz entschieden zu spät', versetzte er, fest und gelassen. (Mann 388)

'To have a child today - such a blasphemy...', she said, 'such a sin, such stupidity ... Wars will come, revolutions, struggle without end ... My poor child will be destroyed...' / 'It will live,' said Professor

Abel - very calmly, but firmly / 'No, no, no! She shook her head fearfully. 'I can still have it removed. It's certainly not too late...' / 'It's definitely too late,' he said, firmly and calmly. (my trans.).

Marion eventually let herself be convinced by Abel's petty-bourgeois morality that sees a form of heroism in the ability to cope with everyday life with resilience, the survival of the individual as an essential condition for the pursuit of collective happiness:

'Es ist kein kleines, privates Glück!' Er hob tadelnd den Zeigefinger. 'Ein schwieriges, tiefes Glück, nach vielen Leiden gewonnen. Haben wir's uns nicht verdient, liebe Marion? – Nun müssen wir's tragen und fruchtbar machen. Auch dazu gehört Tapferkeit – oder gerade dazu. Stürzen, sich fallenlassen, sterben – auch heroisch sterben –: das ist leicht. Leben ist schwerer und ernster. Glücklich sein – das ist am schwersten und am ernstesten für uns, die wir weder ruhig sind noch kalt. Die überlegene Haltung überlassen wir den Künftigen, die über uns urteilen mögen. Was uns betrifft, wir bleiben beteiligt, ergriffen, immer wieder angefochten, erschüttert, immer in Gefahr. Aber geduldig! Aber tapfer! Dem Gesetz dieses Lebens gehorsam. Geduld und gehorsam sollen wir sein. (Mann 390)

'It's not just a small, private happiness!' He raised his index finger reprovingly. 'It's a difficult, deep happiness, won after much suffering. Haven't we earned it, dear Marion? Now we must bear it and make it fruitful. This too, or mostly this, requires bravery. Falling, letting yourself fall and dying — even dying heroically — is easy. Living is harder and more serious. Being happy is the hardest thing for us, as we are neither calm nor cold. We will leave the superior attitude to those who may judge us in the future. As far as we are concerned, we will remain involved, moved, constantly challenged and shaken, and always in danger. But patient! But brave! Obedient to the law of this life. (my trans.)

Following this turning point in the plot, the image of the volcano does not reappear. In the final chapter of Mann's novel, an angelic intervention - notably, the figure of a divine messenger - appears to impart knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible to the reader. This challenges the mostly realistic style and raises questions about narrative reliability to a much greater extent than the volcano scenes and Marion's occasional hallucinations (Santi 145).

In the novel, the volcano provides an image of the explosive situation created by Hitler and the impending war. At the same time, it explains Europe's initial response to Hitler's aggression by comparing it to a natural catastrophe, such as a volcanic eruption. The term *Naturkatastrophe* (natural disaster) appears in the first chapter of the story to highlight the extraordinary social circumstances created by exile:

Im Exil aber begegnete man sich zunächst ohne jene Voreingenommenheiten, durch die in Berlin die verschiedenen Zirkel und Cliques voneinander separiert worden waren. Eine neue Herzlichkeit stellte sich her, so etwa wie nach Naturkatastrophen; die Bewohner eines brennenden Hauses, die sich auf der Straße vor den Trümmern ihrer Habe zusammenfinden, oder die Passagiere eines sinkenden Schiffes im Rettungsboot, vergessen Unterschiede, die noch vor Stunden bedeutsam waren. (Mann 20)

In exile, however, people initially met without the prejudices that had separated the various circles and cliques in Berlin. A new cordiality arose, like after natural disasters; the inhabitants of a burning house who come together on the street in front of the ruins of their possessions, or the passengers of a sinking ship in a lifeboat, forget differences that were significant only hours ago. (my trans.)

In the second chapter of the third part of the novel, the expression *Naturkatastrophe* is used to describe Tullio's sensuality, linking the sphere of man-woman relationships to violence. The image of Marion's lover screaming after sex as if he is being tortured also alludes to the violence perpetrated by fascists against their political opponents:

Marion hatte sich nie mit solcher Heftigkeit lieben lassen. Er war unersättlich. Sein Ernst in der Umarmung, seine beinahe wütende Sachlichkeit bei den Liebkosungen waren erschreckend. Er warf sich über sie wie ein Ringkämpfer auf seinen Gegner. Er war geschwind befriedigt, und dann rief er: 'Noch einmal!' –: es klang wie ein Schlachtruf. Auch sein erhitztes, schweißbedecktes Gesicht sah wie das eines erschöpften Kriegers aus, mit durstig trockenen Lippen, dem feucht verklebten Haar, den

gierig weit geöffneten Augen. Seine Zärtlichkeit war vehement wie eine Naturkatastrophe. Sein Körper bäumte sich wie in Qualen. Auch sein Stöhnen klang, als ob es von einem Gefolterten käme. (Mann 322)

Marion had never let herself be loved with such vigour. He was insatiable. His seriousness in the embrace, his almost furious objectivity in the caresses were frightening. He threw himself on her like a wrestler on his opponent. He was quickly satisfied, and then he shouted: "Once more!" -: it sounded like a battle cry. His heated, sweat-covered face also looked like that of an exhausted warrior, with thirsty, dry lips, damp, sticky hair and greedy, wide-open eyes. His tenderness was as vehement as a natural disaster. His body arched as if in agony. His moans also sounded as if they were coming from someone being tortured. (my trans.)

Finally, in chapter four of part three, the expression *Naturkatastrophe* refers to the natural catastrophe itself, following Marion's comments on Hitler's annexation of Austria on 12th March 1938, and her predictions of the fall of Prague, the defeat of the Spanish Republic, and the deaths of millions of people. The image of Nazism as a volcano 'spewing fire' conveys the notion of the world passively accepting its aggression as if it were the consequence of a natural disaster, thereby emphasising the paralysis of democratic powers and the urgent need for resistance:

'Prag wird fallen.' Marion machte eine abschließende kleine Handbewegung, als wäre dies nun erledigt. 'Auch die Spanische Republik wird untergehen – ein paar Dutzend Millionäre wünschen es. Tschechische Flüchtlinge, spanische Flüchtlinge; auch französische und schweizer Flüchtlinge könnte es noch geben –: woher sollen wir denn all die Affidavits nehmen? – Die Chinesen sterben, anstatt zu fliehen. Millionen sterben. In Wien wütet der Selbstmord wie eine Epidemie. Das neue Barbarentum, die Faschisten, die Hunnen – nicht einmal kämpfen müssen sie! Ohne Kampf läßt man sie siegen! Sie begegnen keinem Widerstand, keinem Gegner!...Man läßt das Scheußliche rasen, zerstören, sich austoben – als wäre es eine Naturkatastrophe! Als lebten wir auf einem Vulkan, der Feuer speit! Es gibt keine Hilfe. Jeder wartet, ob es ihn trifft...' (Mann 387)

'Prague will fall'. Marion made a final little gesture with her hand, as if this was now a done deal. 'The Spanish Republic will fall too - a few dozen millionaires want it. Czech refugees, Spanish refugees; there could be French and Swiss refugees too - where are we going to get all the affidavits from? - The Chinese are dying instead of fleeing. Millions are dying. In Vienna, suicide is raging like an epidemic. The new barbarism, the fascists, the Huns - they don't even have to fight! They are allowed to win without fighting! They meet no resistance, no opponent!...The abomination is allowed to race, to destroy, to run riot - as if it were a natural catastrophe! As if we were living on a volcano spewing fire! There is no help. Everyone waits to see if it will hit them...'

Klaus Mann's character Marion von Kammer does not accept the idea that fascism is a natural phenomenon or that it is impossible to stop its destructive rage. She does not see herself as a prophet; everyone can see the flames engulfing Europe, although everyone seems to think that there is nothing they can do but wait and try to avoid being affected by them – an irrational reaction for which she cannot offer a rational explanation: "Welcher Gott hatte dieses Volk mit Blindheit geschlagen? Welcher Dämon hatte es taub gemacht? Es züngelten schon die Flammen...Muß man eine Seherin sein, um das Feuer zu sehen?" "What god had struck this people with blindness? What demon had made them deaf? The flames were already flickering...Do you have to be a seer to see the fire?" (387 my trans.)

As seen in the first image of the volcano appearing to her in the narration, fascism is an abyss of humanity in which she seems to be willing to look inside. The use of the German word for 'abyss', *Abgrund*, echoes Nietzsche's aphorism 146 from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886): "Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehen, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein." "Those who fight monsters should take care not to become monsters themselves. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into you." (Nietzsche 98; my trans.).

At the end of the story, Klaus Mann has his heroine desist from her fascination with the abyss and instead acquiesce to the natural force of maternity. A decidedly anti-Nietzschean attitude.

Stylistically, *Der Vulkan* combines symbolism - best exemplified by the volcano metaphor - with a realistic narrative guided by an omniscient narrator who explains his characters' actions by entering their minds and imaginations. The narrator also allows himself long digressions for commentary and reflection. The language is formal and controlled throughout, in both the narrative passages and the dialogues between characters. The only exception to a classical literary style that Mann allows himself is the frequent use of punctuation marks for expressive purposes, such as exclamation marks, hyphens and suspension points, to mark passages of particular emphasis.

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