

## Auf den Marmorklippen

*E. Jünger*

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Ernst Jünger has a reputation of being a man on the extreme right. One who glorified war, death and sacrifice for your country. Whose report from the First World War - *Stahlgewitter*, excited the Nazis, who saw in him a natural ally. Nothing of this is false, but supposedly he repudiated the barbarism of the Nazis as that of a plebeian horde, instead glorifying the aristocracy. Indeed, it was out of the begruntled aristocracy the only real attempt at Hitler's life was made. A failed attempt, maybe even a bungled one. Those conspirators have in the light of posterity assumed a rather heroic position, later commentators forgetting that they did not mind Hitler so much when he was successful, that the military exploits of Germany fired their hearts, and it was only when they saw their country over-extending itself, being led to catastrophe by a man, more mad than sane, that they thought action should be taken to avert the inevitable. Still we think of them as innocents, innocent of extermination of persecution, as pure nationalists, out not for murder but understandable military glory. Where does Jünger fit into this?

The book is an allegory, a parable written as a fable, anchored to no specific time or place. This is somewhat disturbing, and means that you lose your bearings when you read. It becomes more like an extended prose poem, intended more to evoke than to inform. The German language is beautiful, and the author surely knows his craft. The text is mesmerizing, leading you on, even when you do not understand what it is all about.

Supposedly it is an allegory against Nazism, written in 1939 at the pinnacle of the Nazi might. Hitler is represented by the figure of the 'Oberfrster' who leads a gang of thugs. The narrator lives with his brother close to a monastery. They spend their time collecting plants, reading old manuscripts and writing poetry, with intermittent visits to the monk nearby to engage in exalted philosophical conversations. A refined life devoted to the mind. But there are dark shadows, a sense of doom, soon to flare up. Once they go looking for a rare plant, and find it by the edge of a meadow. But close by they see a horrific site, revealing traces of human degradation. Later on they are visited by a young Prince and a certain Braquemart, a former member of the Mauritanier sect. They come in a car and walk inside. While the young prince says almost nothing, he engages their sympathy, while the older man does most of the talking, he inspires but mixed feelings with his contemptuous air. They stay for most part of the night, and they part formally without warmth, acknowledging the inconclusive nature of their exchange and the concomitant disappointment. They leave the car behind as they walk up into the woods. And the car remains for several days after they left and the narrator and his brother start to make inquiries. They decide to look for them. The narrator sets out alone, armed by just a hunting rifle. He enlists the help of a farmer and his hired hands, arming themselves with medieval gear, such as hillebards, swords and morning stars. And most importantly a pack of ferocious dogs. As they leave the farmer takes a passionate farewell from his young wife. As they approach they find one of their men trapped and killed and release the corpse

from the jaws of the contraption. A fight of dogs ensues, but those of the enemy outdog those of the narrator and his allies. He sees a castle on fire, and close to it the severed heads of the two missing men. That of the prince brings tears to his eyes, so young and innocent does he appear, while that of Braquemart, his spiteful smirk still residing on his face, instills disgust. He concludes that he must have shortly before his death have bitten into that capsule of poison that a Mauritanier was expected always to carry with him. He takes down the head of the prince, and in so doing he is hit by a bullet in his arm. It does not hurt, no blood is seen, but the arm gets paralyzed. Nevertheless he manage to get back to his home, passing by piles of dead bodies, be they of humans or dogs, and on top of one he sees the farmer, dead, his head split in two, his white beard drenched in blood. Further on the farm itself is on fire being looted. The sky gets fiery red reflecting all the fires aglow, as he finds more and more houses alight. Back home he has only time to join with his brother and wash the decapitated princely head. As they both flee the scene, carrying the head as a trophée of sorts, they turn around seeing their home on fire as well. Years of work going into smoke, and the narrator reflects *Es wird kein Haus gebaut, kein Plan geschaffen, in welchem nicht der Untergang as Grundstein steht, und nicht in unseren Werken ruht, was unvergänglich in uns lebt.*<sup>1</sup>. And that is it.

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<sup>1</sup> The is no house built, nor any plans conceived, in which not demise rests as a foundational stone. And nothing dwells in our work, that lives unperishably in us.