

4. Lion Feuchtwanger and Veit Harlan: *Jud Süß*

This essay explores the relationship between Lion Feuchtwanger's literary work based on the historical figure Josef Süß Oppenheimer (1698–1738) and the anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jud Süß* directed by Veit Harlan (1940). Despite the fact that both Feuchtwanger's drama and his hugely successful novel *Jud Süß*, published in 1917 and 1925 respectively, were absent from the Nazi collaborators' public discourse, the film evokes Feuchtwanger's texts, twisting and reversing the core of the Jewish writer's work. Josef Süß Oppenheimer emerges as a father in Feuchtwanger's texts, and his fictional daughter Tamar (play) / Naemi (novel) provides both an ideal centre and turning point of the narrative. In Harlan's Nazi film, the central female figure Dorothea Sturm (played by Kristina Söderbaum) is, again, represented as ideal. Her violation and subsequent suicide transform Josef Süß Oppenheimer's execution (historically a miscarriage of justice) into a symbol of the judicial court's true righteousness that is hailed by the masses. Like a negative image, the film is a tonal inversion of Feuchtwanger's narrative as it mirrors the literary text's central elements in reverse; Lion Feuchtwanger's depiction of Josef Süß Oppenheimer's journey from a power-hungry financial and political genius to a more enlightened human being is turned into an anti-Semitic propaganda piece: a simplistic, linear narrative of a Jew's shameless abuse of power culminating in his supposedly inevitable and legitimate punishment.

Veit Harlan's propaganda film *Jud Süß* (1940) is definitely not a straightforward transposition¹ of Lion Feuchtwanger's phenomenally successful novel *Jud Süß*

¹ Since the mid-1970s, scholars such as Michael Klein, Gillian Parker, Geoffrey Wagner and Dudley Andrew have tried to classify certain types of adaptations and create categories according to how 'faithful' the adaptation is in relation to the original text. They all identify three different groupings: the first category contains 'transpositions' (Wagner) or films that resemble the original narrative or 'give the impression of being faithful, that is, literal translations' (Klein/Parker) of the literary text. Dudley Andrew identifies this rather 'tiresome' group of adaptations with 'fidelity and transformation.' See Michael

(1925) or of his preceding *Jud Süß* play² (1917) into the medium of film, but nevertheless the Jewish author's texts and the Nazis' anti-Semitic melodrama are closely linked. Lion Feuchtwanger himself most certainly considered Harlan's film an adaptation of his novel *Jud Süß*³ that perverted and reversed the intentions of his text, as he writes in his open letter to seven Berlin actors after having read a review of the film in a NSDAP newspaper:

Ich lese im *Völkischen Beobachter*, daß Sie die Hauptrollen gespielt haben in einem Film 'Jud Süß', der in Venedig preisgekrönt worden ist. Der Film zeigt, berichtet das Blatt, das wahre Gesicht des Judentums, seine unheimliche Methodik und vernichtende Zielsetzung; er zeigt das unter anderm dadurch, daß er vorführt, wie der Jude Süß sich eine junge Frau durch die Folterung ihres Gatten gefügig macht. Kurz, wenn ich das geschwollene, am Bombast des Führers geschulte Geschwafel ins Deutsche übersetze, dann bedeutet es: Sie haben, meine Herren, aus meinem Roman 'Power' (*Jud Süß*) mit Hinzufügung von ein bisschen Tosca einen wüst anti-semitischen Hetzfilm im Sinne Streichers und seines Stürmers gemacht.⁴

Klein and Gillian Parker, *The English Novel and the Movies*, Ungar: New York, 1981, pp. 9–10; Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema*, Dickinson UP: Rutherford, N.J., 1975, pp. 222–231; Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, Oxford UP: Oxford, 1984, pp. 98–104. A summary of these categorizations can be found in Robert Giddings, Keith Selby and Chris Wensley, *Screening the Novel: The Theory and Practice of Literary Dramatization*, Macmillan: Houndmills, 1990, pp. 11–12.

- 2 Several of the actors starring in the Nazi film had worked with Lion Feuchtwanger and appeared in the stage version after World War One. See Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Offener Brief an sieben Berliner Schauspieler,' Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Box D8a, typescript, 7 pages. Published in *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1941; German original in *Aufbau* (New York), 4 July 1941. In his letter, he addresses Werner Krauss (who plays a number of Jews in the Nazi film, among them Rabbi Loew and Süß' secretary Levy), Eugen Klöpfer (the film's Landschaftskonsulent Sturm), Heinrich George (Duke Karl Alexander), Albert Florath (Obrist Röder) and Veit Harlan, who directed the anti-Semitic propaganda piece.
- 3 *Power* was the title of the American translation (1926) of Feuchtwanger's novel, and also the American title of Lothar Mendes's 1934 film *Jew Süß*.
- 4 Feuchtwanger, 'Offener Brief an sieben Berliner Schauspieler,' Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, typescript, p. 1.

Even without having seen the film, Lion Feuchtwanger had no doubt that Veit Harlan and his collaborators had expropriated his novel and adapted it to the purposes of Nazi propaganda. The synopsis of the film narrative provided in the review highlighted a perversion of the plot of Feuchtwanger's text that the author instantly recognized. He identifies the focal point of the distortion when he refers to the desperate young woman and the sexual abuse she endures. She is indeed a prime example of the Nazis' ruthless misrepresentation, and her character, her rape and tragic death prove the Nazis' deliberate abuse of the Jewish writer's work. Any discussion of the film as adaptation, however, is somewhat controversial, as scholars regularly identify the choice of rooting both literary and film text in a specific chapter of Württemberg history as the only factor that loosely ties the two narratives together.⁵ This view is based on research published by Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, who stated in their 1983 article on Lion Feuchtwanger, Lothar Mendes and Veit Harlan: 'In Wirklichkeit aber hat der Harlan-Film mit dem Drama und Roman "Jud Süß" nur die historische Vorlage gemeinsam, sonst nichts [...].'⁶

- 5 See, for example, Dorothea Hollstein, *'Jud Suess' und die Deutschen: Antisemitische Vorurteile im nationalsozialistischen Spielfilm*, Ullstein: Frankfurt a. M., 1983, p. 78: 'Da der Autor in Deutschland seit 1933 als Jude verfeimt war, konnte das Buch von den nationalistischen Drehbuchautoren nicht benutzt werden. Sie ließen aber auch andere literarische Bearbeitungen außer acht und lieferten eine eigenständige Version des *Jud Süß*-Themas.' Or: Stefan Mannes, *Antisemitismus im nationalsozialistischen Propagandafilm: Jud Süß und Der ewige Jude*, Teiresias: Cologne, 1999, p. 27: 'Der Drehbuchautor Ludwig Metzger, der seit Herbst 1939 im Auftrag Goebbels an einem Filmmanuskript arbeitete, nahm sich des Themas weitgehend unabhängig von den vorherigen literarischen und filmischen Bearbeitungen an.'
- 6 Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, 'Lion Feuchtwangers "Jud Süß" und die gleichnamigen Filme von Lothar Mendes (1934) und Veit Harlan (1940)'; in: Heinz Ludwig Arnold, ed., *Lion Feuchtwanger, Text & Kritik*, 79/80 (1983), pp. 99–121 (here: p. 100). Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski have both (together and individually) published outstanding research on the medialization of Josef Süß Oppenheimer, propaganda film, Veit Harlan, Ferdinand Marian, etc. See for example Friedrich Knilli, 'Dreißig Jahre Lehr- und Forschungsarbeit zur Mediengeschichte des "Jud Süß": Ein Bericht,' in: Alexandra Przyrembel, Jörg Schönert, eds, *Jud Süß' – Hoffjude, literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild*, Campus Verlag: Frankfurt a. M., New York, 2006, pp. 75–121.

Consequently, the complexity of the relationship between the original and its perverted adaptation was largely ignored.

According to film scholars such as Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, Dudley Andrew or Geoffrey Wagner, an adaptation of a literary text 'regards the source merely as raw material' (Klein/Parker). It is an act of 'borrowing' (Andrew) that might represent a 'fairly considerable departure' (Wagner) from the original text. The act of 'borrowing' a narrative, an idea, a myth, is according to Dudley Andrew, the 'most frequent mode of adaptation'⁷. In the script of the 1940 film written by Veit Harlan, Eberhard Wolfgang Möller and Ludwig Metzger,⁸ and slightly revised by Joseph Goebbels himself, not surprisingly, no mention of the Jewish author Lion Feuchtwanger is ever made. Be that as it may, the film is an adaptation of Feuchtwanger's play and novel that ventures far beyond a mere link in history.

The historical 'Jud Süß' was Joseph Ben Issachar Süßkind Oppenheimer (1698–1738)⁹, a successful businessman who became financial advisor and,

7 Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 98.

8 The first script was written by Ludwig Metzger. Möller was brought on board when Metzger's script was considered lacking in anti-Semitic spirit. Harlan eventually reworked the screenplay. See Susan Tegel, 'Veit Harlan and the Origins of "Jud Süß," 1938–1939: opportunism in the creation of Nazi anti-Semitic film propaganda,' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 16, no. 4. 1996, pp. 515–531. According to a number of collaborators on the film, Goebbels made changes to the script in green ink that were beyond discussion. Veit Harlan, for example, refers in his autobiography to a number of changes Goebbels demanded, among them to cut Süß's final curse of the people of Württemberg. See Harlan, *Im Schatten meiner Filme*, ed. H.C. Opfermann, Mohn Verlag: Gütersloh, 1966, p. 96. See also William Small, 'Jud Süß between Art and Politics: Veit Harlan and Lion Feuchtwanger,' in *Aliens – Uneingebürgerte: German and Austrian Writers in Exile*, ed. Ian Wallace, Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1994, pp. 85–99 (= *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 37). See Harlan quote, p. 94.

9 See the biography by Hellmut G. Haasis, *Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, genannt Jud Süß: Finanzier, Freidenker, Justizopfer*, Rowohlt: Reinbek, 1998. Lion Feuchtwanger was familiar with Manfred Zimmermann's *Josef Süß Oppenheimer, ein Finanzmann des 18. Jahrhunderts. Ein Stück Absolutismus- und Jesuitengeschichte. Nach den Verteidigungs-Akten und den Schriften der Zeitgenossen* (Rieger'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung: Stuttgart, 1874) when he wrote his play and novel *Jud Süß*, and only later read Curt Elwenspöck, *Jud Süß Oppenheimer: der grosse Finanzier und galante Abenteurer des 18. Jahrhunderts; erste*

eventually, Privy Councillor of Finance for Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg in Stuttgart. Perhaps the most elegant and powerful Jewish advisor or 'Hofjude' of his time suggested and implemented numerous new taxes that provided for the Catholic Duke's lavish lifestyle but angered the public and their Protestant representatives. When the Duke died in 1737, Joseph Süß Oppenheimer was arrested and accused of an array of crimes, chiefly of 'Präpotenz' (i.e. the 'Court Jew's' supposedly preposterous assumption of being in charge of Württemberg), but also of fraud, exploitation, and numerous love affairs and adultery with Christian women. He was tortured in prison and tried in court, refusing to convert to Christianity to his very end. According to Gudrun Emberger and Rotraud Ries, the death sentence for Joseph Süß Oppenheimer had been determined even before the trial officially began.¹⁰ 'Jud Süß,' as he is derogatively called in most legal documents relating to the case, was hanged in Stuttgart on 4 February 1738, where his body remained gibbeted for six years.

Even though Lion Feuchtwanger used the historical figure and context for his literary narrative, he did not regard Joseph Süß Oppenheimer's 'Hofjude' biography as particularly interesting:

Die Geschichte dieses Juden Josef Süß Oppenheimer ist ja wirklich an sich nicht eben interessant. Er war Hofjude wie viele andere vor ihm und nach ihm, einer von den nicht wenigen jüdischen Finanzleuten, die im Dienst von Fürsten und hohen Herren für diese Geld scheffelten und dabei sich selber nicht zu kärglich bedachten. Solcher jüdischer Finanzleute gab es vom frühen Mittelalter bis hinein in unsere Zeit nicht wenige, und nicht wenige endeten in folgerichtiger Erfüllung nach einem Leben voll Pracht im Kerker oder am Galgen. Denn

Darstellung auf Grund sämtlicher Akten, Dokumente, Überlieferungen; mit zahlr. Bildern u. Faksimiles nach zeitgenöss. Originalen (Süddeutsches Verlagshaus: Stuttgart, 1926) and Selma Stern's biography *Jud Süß: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen und zur jüdischen Geschichte* (Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums: Berlin, 1929). The most recent exhibition of archival material relating to the court case against Joseph Süß Oppenheimer in 1738 took place in the Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, 22 November 2007 – 14 March 2008.

¹⁰ Gudrun Emberger and Rotraud Ries, 'Der Fall Joseph Süß Oppenheimer,' in: Alexandra Przyrembel, Jörg Schönert, eds, *Jud Süß' – Hofjude, literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild*, pp. 29–55, here p. 44.

daß der Herr, dem er diene, wenn die Sache schief ging, ihn als Sündenbock vorschicken würde, war das selbstverständliche Risiko eines jeden, der das Amt eines solchen Hofbankiers übernahm.¹¹

It is a common story, Feuchtwanger tells us, about 'den Mann, der Erfolg hat';¹² in this case, it focuses on the Jewish financial advisor who profits soundly from his collaboration with a noble lord and who is sent to the gallows as a scapegoat when problems arise.

Lion Feuchtwanger, who had originally planned to write about the Jewish businessman, writer and Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic Walther Rathenau, had little interest in destroying an anti-Semitic legend or saving 'den Mann Josef Süß'.¹³ Rather, the author's imagination was captured by a small detail: Josef Süß Oppenheimer could have saved himself by converting to Christianity, but he did not. He chose to remain Jewish, a faith his fictional self had never fully embraced and only partly belonged to. (The novel suggests his biological father to have been a Christian aristocrat). The ability to accept his destiny was both his fortune and his downfall. Feuchtwanger writes: 'es war dies, daß ich sah, wie er sich fallen ließ. Ich begriff sein Glück und seinen Sturz in einem. Ich sah ihn gleichnishaft den Weg beschreiten, den unser aller Entwicklung geht, den Weg von Europa nach Asien, von Nietzsche zu Buddha, vom alten zum neuen Bund.'¹⁴ Josef Süß Oppenheimer's fall is at the same time his achievement. It is the journey from the European will to power, to the Egyptian will to immortality to, finally, the 'Lehre Asiens vom

11 'Über Jud Süß', *Freie Deutsche Bühne*, 11.1, 5 January 1929, in: Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, Greifenverlag: Rudolstadt, 1956, p. 388f.

12 Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Über die Ursachen meines Erfolgs', typescript (2 pages), Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Box D8a, folder 4, p. 1: 'Was "Jud Süß" anbelangt, so behandelt dieses Buch den Mann, der Erfolg hat, sowohl für die Erfolgreichen, die nachdenklich sehen, wenn jemand den mühsam errungenen Erfolg fallen lässt, als auch für die Erfolglosen, deren Ehrgeiz aus diesem Buch teils Nahrung und Hoffnung schöpft, teils die eigenen Phasen des Weges zu Erfolg sorgfältig studiert.'

13 Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, p. 390.

14 Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, p. 389f.

Nichtwollen und Nichttun'¹⁵ or the understanding of the emptiness of material possessions and power; consequently, the ability to accept one's destiny as a vital, inevitable step on the path of vision.

Among the various literary adaptations¹⁶ of the historical text beginning with Wilhelm Hauff's 1827 novella,¹⁷ Lion Feuchtwanger's 1925 novel has surely been the most successful. The novel was preceded by the play *Jud Süß*, which Feuchtwanger wrote in 1916 and which premiered in Munich in 1917.¹⁸ He withdrew the play a couple of years later and began working on the novel, believing it to be a more suitable genre¹⁹ that would allow him more effectively to represent the journey of both the gifted entrepreneur and the human being Josef Süß Oppenheimer and his counterpart the Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg.²⁰ While the play introduces Süß as the Duke's already established 'Geheimer Finanzienrat,' the novel begins prior to their

15 Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, p. 390. See also William Small, 'In Buddha's Footsteps. Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß*, Walther Rathenau, and the Path to the Soul,' *German Studies Review*, 12.3 (1989), pp. 469–485.

16 Regarding literary adaptations by Wilhelm Hauff, Paul Kornfeld, Klaus Pohl, see especially essays by Friedrich Knilli, Gabriele von Glasenapp, Itta Shedletzky, Britta Hermann, Mona Körte and Anat Feinberg in: Alexandra Przyrembel, Jörg Schönert, eds, *Jud Süß' – Hofjude, literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild*, pp. 75–200.

17 Lion Feuchtwanger considered Hauff's novella 'naively anti-Semitic,' as he states in the afterword to his novel *Jud Süß*. Cf. Itta Shedletzky, 'Tragik verfrühter Emanzipation – Topography jüdischer Mentalität: Die Deutungen des "Jud Süß" bei Selma Stern und Lion Feuchtwanger,' in: Alexandra Przyrembel, Jörg Schönert, eds, *Jud Süß' – Hofjude, literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild*, p. 137. In Hauff's novella, the dominant female figure is Lea, Josef Süß Oppenheimer's sister, who ends up drowning herself, when her lover Gustav refuses to marry her and her brother is hanged.

18 Lion Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten (vier Bildern)*, Georg Müller: Munich, 1918. See also Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, 'Lion Feuchtwangers "Jud Süß" und die gleichnamigen Filme von Lothar Mendes (1934) und Veit Harlan (1940),' p. 101f.

19 Perhaps the sense of having failed was also due to the cynicism and scorn that was heaped on the play by openly anti-Semitic critics both in Germany and in Austria in 1919.

20 Marta Feuchtwanger conveyed during an interview with Lawrence Weschler that Lion was unhappy with his *Jud Süß* play, because 'He had recognized himself that *Jud Süß* didn't give what he wanted; he couldn't tell in a play what he wanted to say.' See Marta Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life: Munich, Berlin, Sanary, Pacific Palisades*, interviewed by

first meeting and offers a much more detailed and multi-faceted account of time and place as well as the of main characters, convincingly unfolding their psychology; the basic idea and structure as well as the key narrative strands, however, remain largely identical. On the one hand, Feuchtwanger tells the highly ambivalent story of the vain and ruthless businessman, the elegant, popular socialite and subservient Jew Josef Süß Oppenheimer, who enables Karl Alexander's court to flourish while profiting soundly from his endeavours. Feuchtwanger presents a decadent, weak ruler, avaricious and insatiably materialistic men, women seduced by power and charm, and an anti-Semitic people that might kill Jews or 'nagende Würmer' (265)²¹ for the fun of it – 'aus purem Gaudium' (408). On the other hand, Feuchtwanger creates a father. His Josef Süß Oppenheimer has a daughter, who is innocent, beautiful and kind²² – and whom he keeps hidden away in a house near Hirsau, in order to shield her from the corrupting influences of the world he made his home. The white house in Hirsau is located within a *hortus conclusus* reminiscent of a Renaissance painting, a delightful walled garden filled with flowers, ensconcing the Virgin Mary and symbolizing her purity and virginity. The characterization of Süß's daughter (called 'Tamar'²³ [palm tree] in Feuchtwanger's drama and 'Naemi'²⁴ [pleasantness] in the novel) is entwined with the beauty, unaffectedness and isolation of the garden. This blossoming, perfect home of his daughter, mirrors the young woman in the eyes of her father: she is the 'best

Lawrence M. Weschler, vol. 2, completed under the auspices of the Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976, p. 525.

- 21 Page numbers given in the text refer to the 1925 novel: Lion Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß, Aufbau*: Berlin and Weimar, 1991.
- 22 Magus holding the dead child: 'Deine Seele, Kind, war sie nicht wie klares Wasser und Gott und seine Engel spiegelten sich darin?' Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten*, p. 99.
- 23 Tamar is Hebrew for date palm or palm tree.
- 24 The biblical Naemi, related to Naomi and Hebrew for 'pleasantness', is also the name of the Caliph's love of his youth in Else Lasker-Schüler's Oriental story 'Ached Bey' (see *Die Nächte der Tino von Bagdad*, 1907) and might be a reference to Lasker-Schüler's ambivalent tyrant and his love for Naemi.

part²⁵ of Josef Süß, the part of his soul that has remained untouched by all the ruthless compromises, vain ambitions, and insalubrious dealings. She is pure love and the fountain of life, symbolized by the well or fountain in her garden, again reminding us of *hortus conclusus* depictions in visual art.

By thus equipping this historical figure with fatherhood, Feuchtwanger not only reflects on his and his young wife Marta's own experiences of the deep love for and devastating loss of a baby daughter, he also creates a human being. Not a monster, as the court documents will have it, but a person who is willing to compromise in order to advance professionally. It is Süß's choice to focus on his career, accumulate material riches and, essentially, power, and only the creation of Tamar/Naemi truly highlights the problematic nature of this path. Only when his daughter dies, does he begin to understand properly the emptiness of his pursuits. His revenge on the Duke leads to his own destruction, but this is no longer his concern. The *Jud Süß* drama begins with a quote from Alfred Döblin's 1915 Expressionist novel *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun*, and clearly this story about the trials and tribulations of the so-called 'Wahrhaft Schwachen' that practice 'Nicht-Widerstreben' and live by the increasingly popular ancient Chinese 'Prinzip des Nicht-Handelns' inspired both Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß* novel and play.

According to one of the principal works of Tibetan Buddhism, the *Abhisamayalankara*, acceptance is an inevitable step on the path of vision. Acceptance of suffering, the ability to let go, goes hand in hand with the understanding of the greatness of perfect wisdom.²⁶ Inspired by Döblin's work, Feuchtwanger incorporated Buddhist philosophy into the life journey of his fictional character. By letting himself be maltreated and hanged, Josef Süß Oppenheimer hopes to find the purity he had recognized and adored in his beloved daughter. This is highlighted in the novel when, in a cognition of sameness, he accepts his death as chosen or 'freiwillig' (467), similar to Naemi's

25 Süß to Tamar: 'Du bist das beste Teil von mir.' Lion Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten*, p. 64.

26 This text, translated and introduced by Edward Conze (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente: Rome, 1954), can be downloaded at <<http://www.empty-universe.com/yogacara/abhisamayalankara.pdf>>; see especially pp. 34ff.

decision²⁷ to fling herself from the roof of their house in order to free herself from the Duke and an inevitable rape. By way of proximity the father hopes to find a path that reunites him with his child. Feuchtwanger represents Josef Süß Oppenheimer's life as an allegory:

Das Gleichnis dieses westöstlichen Menschen erblickte ich in dem Manne Josef Süß, in seinem heftigen Ergreifen und in seinem überzeugten Sichfallenlassen, in seinem wilden Tun und in seinem gelassen-kräftigen Nichttun. So betrachtet, ergab sich mir die Kurve dieses Lebens sinnvoll in Wille und Notwendigkeit.²⁸

Although Josef Süß still struggles in prison and has moments of anger and despair, he eventually embarks on his final journey with serenity, having actively contributed to the failing of the Duke's political ambitions.

Feuchtwanger's depiction of the ambitious, vain and power-hungry Jew Josef Süß Oppenheimer is certainly not meant to be anti-Semitic, as it studies and outlines the character and journey of this historical figure. However, in hindsight, Feuchtwanger's astonishment at the criticism and, later, abuse of his work is surprising. In his 1929 article on *Jud Süß*, he refers to the amount, in his view, of rather peculiar interpretations and severe criticism from both Jews and anti-Semites²⁹ that his depiction of Jewish characters evoked. At this stage, however, he was convinced that neither side would be able to exploit his novel for their purposes, believing that 'weder die Nationalsozialisten noch

27 Tamar's death in the play is represented as accidental; Tamar does not want to die: 'Ich will nicht – ich will nicht sterben!' (p. 97). The Duke describes the events leading to her death as such: 'Sie wich zurück, immer zurück – Sie war so verschreckt und wich immer zurück und trat in die leere Luft – Wie ich sie halten wollte wars schon zu spät [...]', p. 99.

28 Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, p. 390.

29 'Erlauben Sie mir, über meine Auffassung des Judentums zu sprechen, wie ich sie in dem Roman "Jud Süß" niedergelegt zu haben glaube. Das Buch hat in diesem Bezug die merkwürdigsten Ausdeutungen erfahren. Juden haben es als antisemitisch, deutsche Chauvinisten als jüdisch-chauvinistisch bezeichnet, und beide Parteien haben mich kräftig angepöbelt.' Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Über *Jud Süß*', (1929), in: Lion Feuchtwanger, *Centum Opuscula*, p. 388.

die Zionisten daraus Kapital schlagen können.³⁰ But it requires little effort to isolate critical descriptions and negative character traits of Feuchtwanger's Josef Süß. Once the character is thus reduced and made entirely one-dimensional and, furthermore, contextualized according to Nazi ideology formulated by anti-Semites such as Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Heinz Bader or, indeed, Adolf Hitler,³¹ the depiction of the ruthless and determined Jew could all too easily be included into anti-Semitic narratives. Feuchtwanger's repeated descriptions of Süß's love of power – 'So spannte er ein Netz von Unternehmungen, vielfältig verästelt übers Land. Er dehnte sich und badete in der Macht.' (151) – could thus be placed alongside examples of Nazi propaganda such as Fritz Hippler's 'documentary film' *Der ewige Jude* (1940) or Erich Waschneck's *Die Rothschilds* (1940) that outline the Jews' worldwide conspiracy to expand their power and eventually cause the downfall of the Aryan race.

In 1940, the historical figure Josef Süß Oppenheimer became the epitome of the threatening, ruthless Jew of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda and the perfect example of a carefully designed construction of deviance. Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* is probably the most infamous of all Nazi propaganda films and has been discussed by many scholars of this field.³² The complicity of the German

30 Ibid.

31 For a comparison of Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, see Daniel Knopp, *Wunschbild und Feindbild der nationalsozialistischen Filmpropaganda*, Tectum: Marburg, 1997, esp. pp. 50–70.

32 See, for example: David Stewart Hull, *Film in the Third Reich: A Study of the German Cinema 1933–45*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1969; Dorothea Hollstein, *Antisemitische Filmpropaganda: Die Darstellung des Juden im nationalsozialistischen Spielfilm*, Dokumentation: Munich, 1971; Linda Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in Third Reich Cinema*, Duke UP: Durham, 1996; Daniel Knopp, *Wunschbild und Feindbild der nationalsozialistischen Filmpropaganda am Beispiel von Leni Riefenstahls 'Triumph des Willens' und Veit Harlans 'Jud Süß'*, Tectum: Marburg, 1997; Constanze Quanz, *Der Film als Propagandainstrument Joseph Goebbels*, Teiresias: Cologne, 2000; Harro Segeberg, ed., *Mediale Mobilmachung: das Dritte Reich und der Film*, Fink: Munich, 2004. *Jud Süß* has become synonymous with Nazi propaganda, as in Rolf Giesen's book on a large number of Third Reich films: Rolf Giesen, *Hitlerjunge Quex, Jud Süß und Kolberg*, Schwarzkopf: Berlin, 2005 (*Jud Süß*, pp. 254–259); see also: Claude Singer, *'Le juif Süß' et la propagande nazie*, Belles Lettres: Paris, 2003. Most recently, Harlan's film has been the topic of an exhibition at the Haus der Geschichte

film industry becomes apparent when examining the production of the film. The impetus was given by both Lothar Mendes's 1934 adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß* novel and, certainly, by the novel's phenomenal success. Marta Feuchtwanger refers to Lothar Mendes's film when asked about the Nazis' anti-Semitic version of *Jud Süß*:

The Nazis had of course noticed this big success of the movie, and they thought that they would take advantage of it and also the success of the book. They made a movie and turned everything into the contrary. It was a very anti-Semitic movie, and the greatest actor, Werner Krauss, played I think four or five parts, each one more anti-Semitic than the other.³³

As Marta Feuchtwanger infers, Joseph Goebbels, the crafty designer of the Nazis' politics of entertainment, was indeed aware of Lothar Mendes's 1934 adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel. He arranged for a screening of Mendes's film *Jew Süss (Power)*³⁴ during the pre-production phase of the Nazis' own version of *Jud Süß*. The audience included members of the production team, such as the director and scriptwriter Veit Harlan and the scriptwriter Ludwig Metzger.³⁵ As Alfons Arns³⁶ has rightly pointed out, it is more than

in Stuttgart: 'Jud Süss' – Propagandafilm im NS-Staat (14 December 2007 – 3 August 2008).

33 Marta Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life*, p. 552.

34 Lothar Mendes's *Jew Süss* premiered in 1934, the film was released in the USA as *Power* (the title of the American edition of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel). Dorothy Farnum wrote the script, Conrad Veidt stars as Josef Süß Oppenheimer.

35 Work on the script commenced in February 1939, screen testing took place in October/November. The film premiered in Germany on 24 September 1940. After the end of the Second World War, Metzger declared he had not written the script, but only a treatment. See Susan Tegel for details regarding the production history of the film in: 'Veit Harlan and the Origins of "Jud Süss", 1938–39,' here p. 520.

36 Alfons Arns, 'Fatale Korrespondenzen: Die Jud-Süß-Filme von Lothar Mendes und Veit Harlan im Vergleich,' in: Cilly Kugelmann, ed., *Jüdische Figuren in Film und Karikatur: die Rothschilds und Joseph Süß Oppenheimer*, Thorbecke: Sigmaringen, 1995, pp. 97–133. 'Man kann davon ausgehen, daß zumindest Goebbels, Harlan, und die Drehbuchautoren Eberhard Wolfgang Möller und Ludwig Metzger den Film und damit auch den Roman von Feuchtwanger bestens kannten.' See p. 101.

likely that Harlan and his collaborators were all too familiar with Feuchtwanger's text. Susan Tegel suggests that it was Mendes's philo-Semitic film that prompted Goebbels to produce a German film version of *Jud Süß*. According to the film's designated director Veit Harlan, it was Joseph Goebbels who insisted that the Germans 'make their own version, since the British had already made one. Even then Goebbels could not bring himself to mention the name Feuchtwanger, for this is how Harlan reported the conversation: "Conrad Veidt, a German actor, has made an anti-German film in England on a German subject by the German classic writer Wilhelm Hauff"³⁷. The spirit of Feuchtwanger's novel and Mendes's adaptation were diametrically opposed to the anti-Semitic core of Nazi ideology. Therefore, Joseph Goebbels was adamant that 'a new film version had to be made.'³⁸ His 'Ministry of Illusion'³⁹ with the help of an all too accommodating film industry turned Feuchtwanger's bestselling novel into a 'Schandwerk',⁴⁰ as the author put it in 1941.

The film⁴¹ was shot in Berlin Babelsberg (Ufa studios) and in Prague (Barandow atelier and Baroque castle Troja) from March to late June 1940 with a stellar cast that included Ferdinand Marian⁴² (*Jud Süß*), Heinrich George

37 Susan Tegel, 'Veit Harlan and the Origins of "Jud Süß", 1938–39,' p. 526. Tegel quotes Veit Harlan, *Im Schatten meiner Filme*, Mohn: Gütersloh, 1966, p. 93.

38 Susan Tegel, 'Veit Harlan and the Origins of "Jud Süß", 1938–39,' p. 526.

39 Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife*, Harvard UP: Cambridge, MA, 1996.

40 Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Offener Brief an sieben Berliner Schauspieler,' p. 5.

41 The film can be viewed at the Bundesarchiv Berlin and the bfi in London.

42 Marian had famously played an elegant womanizer and rogue in Gerhard Lamprecht's *Madame Bovary* (with Pola Negri) and in Detlev Sierck's *La Habanera* (with Zarah Leander, both 1937). After World War Two he was banned from working in the film industry and died in a car crash on 7 August 1946. There were widespread rumours that he committed suicide due to his participation in the propaganda film *Jud Süß* and his subsequent ban from film-making – a plausible explanation of events in Marta Feuchtwanger's opinion (see Marta Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life*, p. 553: 'Marian played Jud Süß. What Erich Maria Remarque told us was that he was in a way sympathetic. It seems that the actor did everything to make it not too anti-Semitic. After he had finished filming, then he committed suicide. He had been [menaced] with threats by Goebbels: he had to do it, but he was then so disgusted that he committed suicide'). His death, however, occurred after the collapse of the Third Reich, six years after the film had premiered in Berlin. But

(Herzog Karl Alexander), Werner Krauss (Rabbi Loew, Süß's assistant Levy, and other Jewish characters), Kristina Söderbaum (Dorothea Sturm), Eugen Klöpfer (her father, Landschaftskonsulent Sturm), Albert Florath (Obriest Röder) and Malte Jäger (Dorothea's fiancé Faber). Apart from Veit Harlan,⁴³ the actors Werner Krauss, Eugen Klöpfer, Heinrich George and Albert Florath were well acquainted with Lion Feuchtwanger and had appeared in his *Jud Süß* play. Judging from his 'open letter' to these actors, Feuchtwanger was shocked when he learned that colleagues, men he had worked with in the past and who had all read his novel 'Power' (the American title of *Jud Süß* he prefers in Californian exile), would agree to participate in this propaganda film or anti-Semitic version of, as he most certainly believed, 'his' *Jud Süß*:

Sie alle kennen meinen Roman 'Power'. Fünf von Ihnen, soviel erinnere ich mich bestimmt, sie können es aber auch alle sieben gewesen sein, haben in Bühnenarbeitungen dieses meines Romans gespielt. Sie haben, über Einzelheiten mit mir diskutierend, gezeigt, daß Sie das Buch verstanden haben; Sie haben in Worten der Bewunderung darüber gesprochen.⁴⁴

Feuchtwanger is convinced that in preparation of his part in the film, the actor Heinrich George would have, 'once again,' read and studied his novel. And a hard-nosed entrepreneur such as Joseph Goebbels would have had no reluctance to ignore two thirds of his book and pilfer those elements suitable to augment anti-Semitic attitudes among the German people:

Ich stelle mir vor, wie Goebbels gelegentlich zu einem von Ihnen sagt: 'Und da wäre dann noch dieser Jud Süß. Feuchtwanger hat ihn so populär gemacht, und er hat, objektiv, wie diese Juden nun einmal sind, auch alles so bequem zur Schau gestellt, was sich gegen den Juden ausdeuten lässt. Da könnte man doch einfach

even in 1946, persistent rumours suspected Jews of having loosened the screws on one of the wheels on the film star's car. Just as many felt, however, that if this was true, it was 'fair enough, really.'

43 See Siegfried Zielinski, *Veit Harlan: Analysen und Materialien zur Auseinandersetzung mit einem Film-Regisseur des deutschen Faschismus*, R.G. Fischer: Frankfurt a. M., 1981.

44 Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Offener Brief an sieben Berliner Schauspieler,' p. 1.

hingehen und sich das klauen. Man braucht nur die andern zwei Drittel des Buches zu unterschlagen, und man könnte die besten Geschäfte machen.⁴⁵

Nazi film consistently emphasizes the Jew's otherness, his detrimental effects on individuals and his race's threat to the German community.⁴⁶ Time and again, the motif of geographical, legal, and social boundary is used in order to establish the otherness of the Jew. In Harlan's film, *Josef Süß Oppenheimer* changes his outward appearance, leaves the ghetto and, masked as a Gentile, gains access to the community and the court. The journal *Der Film* (20 January 1940) describes Ferdinand Marian's *Josef Süß Oppenheimer* as 'der elegante Finanzberater des Hofes, der schlaue Politiker, kurz: der getarnte Jude.' Here, *Josef Süß Oppenheimer's* true skill is deceit, as he masquerades as a Christian gentleman and all too quickly turns the Duke into a dependent puppet. Ruthlessly, Süß exploits and punishes the masses and individuals alike, and, like a vampire, begins to suck the life spirit from the community. Only when he rapes the daughter of his political opponent Sturm does the exploited and suppressed community rise against the 'ruthless parasite.' Only after this most violent transgression, the sully and destruction of the symbol of purity is he arrested, tried and sentenced to death.

Lion Feuchtwanger's novel and Veit Harlan's film share a number of similarities, such as the characterization of *Josef Süß Oppenheimer* as a vain, ambitious businessman, the central female figure as ideal, the (attempted) rape and subsequent suicide as climax and turning point of the narrative, and the dialectics⁴⁷ of rejection and integration of the 'Other'. However, while Feucht-

45 This would not be the first time, as Feuchtwanger points out: around the same time as the Nazis' rise to power, a large edition of *Jud Süß* had been published. Only a few volumes were burnt, the rest were sold in Austria and Switzerland for valuable foreign currency. See Feuchtwanger, 'Offener Brief an sieben Berliner Schauspieler,' pp. 2 and 3.

46 See, for example, Dorothea Hollstein, *Antisemitische Filmpropaganda: Die Darstellung des Juden im nationalsozialistischen Spielfilm*, 1971; Hollstein discusses the representation of Jews in propaganda films such as *Die Rothschilds* or *Der ewige Jude*, but also in examples of mass entertainment such as *Robert und Bertram* (Hans Zerlett, 1939) or in anti-British propaganda films such as *Ohm Krüger* (Hans Steinhoff, 1941).

47 See Régine Mihal Friedmann, *L'image et son Juif. Le Juif dans le cinéma Nazi*, Payot: Paris, 1983, p. 111f.

wanger depicts greed, vanity and ambition as human weaknesses inevitably found among both Jews and Gentiles, the film focuses entirely on the Jew as a dangerous and recklessly underestimated threat. Accordingly, in the opening credits, the 1940 film claims authenticity – ‘Die im Film geschilderten Ereignisse beruhen auf Tatsachen’ – and introduces Josef Süß Oppenheimer as a ghetto Jew in traditional attire who hides unimaginable riches in his modest abode. Shortly after this introduction and clear-cut identification of the main lead as Jewish and marginalized, seemingly safely contained in the ghetto, the film cuts to an elegantly dressed gentleman in a carriage: all too quickly and without any effort at all, Josef Süß Oppenheimer masks his true identity and is on his way to Stuttgart. His transgression or violation of the border (Stuttgart is ‘judenfrei’), is at the same time a violation of the community. The film focuses on Josef Süß Oppenheimer as an insatiable and merciless egomaniac lacking conscience, gifted only in manipulation and the expansion of financial wealth. The Jew here is clearly depicted as the deviant ‘Other’,⁴⁸ and Klaus Kreimeier⁴⁹ rightly points to the ‘timing’ of anti-Semitic propaganda films and the Nazis’ strategic organization of mass murder. The danger for the community, as it is depicted in the film, lies in the flexibility of Jud Süß (as representative of his entire race) and his desire to transgress into the community to erode it from within. His cunning flexibility and heartlessness make him dangerous, his fantastic wealth is his asset, and his sexualization highlights the potentially fatal rupture of the community through the destructive force of his presence.

- 48 On the issue of deviance, see especially: Linda Schulte-Sasse, ‘Courtier, Vampire, or Vermin? *Jew Süß*’s Contradictory Effort to Render the “Jew” Other,’ in: Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson, eds, *Perspectives on German Cinema*, Hall: New York, 1996, pp. 184–220; Alfons Arns, ‘Fatale Korrespondenzen: Die Jud-Süß-Filme von Lothar Mendes und Veit Harlan im Vergleich,’ pp. 97–133, especially p. 126ff; Yizhak Ahren, Stig Hornshoj-Moller and Christoph B. Melchers, *Der ewige Jude: Wie Goebbels hetzte – Untersuchungen zum nationalsozialistischen Propagandafilm*, Alano: Aachen, 1990.
- 49 Klaus Kreimeier, ‘Antisemitismus im nationalsozialistischen Film,’ in: Cilly Kugelmann, ed. *Jüdische Figuren in Film und Karikatur: die Rothschilds und Joseph Süß Oppenheimer*, Thorbecke: Sigmaringen, 1995, pp. 135–167; see ‘Timing des Massenmords und der “Reklame” für den Tod der Juden,’ p. 142f.

In the film, Ferdinand Marian's dark Josef Süß Oppenheimer is placed early on in opposition to young, blond Dorothea Sturm (played by Veit Harlan's wife Kristina Söderbaum), who is a symbol of health and purity, beauty and youth – clearly a representative of the Nazis' ideal woman⁵⁰ and an 'Aryan' version of Feuchtwanger's Tamar and Naemi. In a complete inversion of the narrative structure and intention of Feuchtwanger's novel and play, the ideal woman here is not the adoring and adored daughter of a Jew, but placed in opposition to the menacing 'Other' whose victim she inevitably becomes. Not the Duke is the rapist, but the Jew. However, the description of the Duke's attempted rape of Süß's daughter and her subsequent suicide in Feuchtwanger's play and novel are almost identical and both bear striking similarities to the rape of Dorothea Sturm by Jud Süß in the Nazis' film script. In all three texts, the (attempted) rape is the climax of the narrative, its *Wendepunkt*. In all three texts, the virgin victim is a symbol of purity and beauty, the 'best part,' and the most precious character in the narrative.

In Feuchtwanger's texts, Josef Süß Oppenheimer's demise is clearly linked with his effort to punish the Duke for his violent and fatal transgression, having desecrated a virtually celestial realm. When the Duke first lays eyes on Tamar in the second act of the play, he calls her 'eine Göttin'⁵¹ who must have descended from the heavens. In the novel, the Duke also voices his admiration – 'Achtes Weltwunder! Hebräische Venus!' (314) – but at the same time his carnal desire for 'Venus' is more pronounced, labeling Naemi 'Braten' (313) and 'frisches Weiberfleisch' (315).

The Duke's carnal, even carnivorous, desire is more than reminiscent of Veit Harlan's depiction of Josef Süß Oppenheimer's predatory sexuality in the film. In a reversal of Feuchtwanger's literary texts and, specifically, the tragic

⁵⁰ Regarding the Nazis' cinematic depiction of ideal womanhood, see a.o. Linda Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in Third Reich Cinema*, Duke UP: Durham, 1996; Jo Fox, *Filming Women in the Third Reich*, Berg: Oxford, 2000; Antje Ascheid, *Hitler's Heroines: Stardom and Womanhood in Nazi Cinema*, Temple UP: Philadelphia, 2003; Angela Vaupel, *Frauen im NS-Film. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Spielfilms*, Verlag Dr. Kovac: Hamburg, 2005.

⁵¹ Lion Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten*, p. 85.

events leading to the death of Süß's sweet daughter, the central female figure of the Nazi film – the pure, good-natured 'Dorothea'⁵² [literally, a 'gift of God'] – is the daughter of Süß's political opponent, the Protestant Landschaftskonsultent Sturm (played Eugen Klöpfer). The rape here is presented as the final and most significant act of Josef Süß Oppenheimer's violent transgression. The Jew as sexual beast and vampire, sucking the life spirit from individual and community alike is an all too common motif in anti-Semitic propaganda and is put to effective use in Harlan's 1940 film.

Lion Feuchtwanger's play depicts a disgusting, greedy, but at the same time playful and naïve Duke, who calls Süß's beautiful, young daughter 'Täubchen', 'Närrchen', 'Püppchen', 'Tierchen', 'Schüchternes', 'Gehetztes.'⁵³ In the novel, the Duke appears similarly as lusty, sweating old profligate, but he lacks the patience for seductive gentleness. The Duke, who in the play still notices Tamar's trembling, in the novel no longer recognizes Naemi's terror.⁵⁴ Only the Duke's first address of Naemi in the novel (while making his way into her bedroom through an upstairs window) – 'Hab ich Sie erschreckt? Dummes Kind. Hab Sie keine Angst!' – is a direct quote from the play. References to the innocent, fearful child and imminent victim are also made in the Nazi film, when Süß calls Dorothea Sturm 'mein Kind' and asks her to enter his bedroom: 'Komm' Sie schon her, hat Sie Angst?'⁵⁵

When Tamar resists, the Duke of the play is annoyed and impatiently and brutally takes hold of her. She is entirely terrorized and desperate: 'Lieber, großer, guter Gott!' But her prayers only provoke the Duke further, who replies ('in entzügelter Gier'): 'Küsse mich! Du Widerspenstige! Du süße, kleine, schwarze, scheue Widerspenstige! (Brutal, herrisch, jedes Wort unterstre-

52 From Greek *doron* (gift) and *theos* (God): gift of God. The construction of the character and her name correspond with and highlight religious overtones in Nazi ideology.

53 Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten (vier Bildern)*, 1918, p. 95 and 96.

54 Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel*, 1918, p. 95f., and Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß*, [1925] 1991, p. 317f.

55 See p. 317 in Feuchtwanger's novel, p. 95 in his play. Cf. film: shot 505, [01:15:20].

ichend) Willst du mich küssen! Bist eines solchen Vaters Kind und willst dich zieren? Dich werd ich lehren! Dich werd ich fügsam machen und kirre!⁵⁶

Both in the novel and in the play, a sexually aroused, brutal Duke is attacking a terrified, fragile child who seeks strength and protection in prayer: 'Tamar (sich windend, entsetzt): Nicht! Nicht! (Sinnlos Gebete lallend).'⁵⁷ But to no avail – 'sinnlos' – for the Duke is an animal and not deterred. In the novel, Naemi 'flatterte in die äußerste Ecke des Zimmers, sinnlos unhörbare Gebete lallend, kauerte sich in sich zusammen. Er, ihr nach, sprach beruhigend wie zu einem kleinen Kinde auf sie ein; doch seine grauenhafte Freundlichkeit ließ sie noch schreckhafter schauern.' Praying senselessly, Naemi is frozen stiff in fear and stares at the Duke, who eagerly and violently seizes the young girl: 'bis er [...] ungeduldig, brutal sie an sich riß, küssend über die Eiskalte herfiel, nach ihrer Brust tastete.' But finally the child manages to free herself and flees up the stairs: 'Unter den Händen fort glitt sie ihm, schrie mit kleiner tonloser Kinderstimme nach dem Oheim, riß sich los, gewann die Tür, wehte eine Treppe hinauf' (318). The stairs lead to the roof of the house, and Naemi takes flight. Time and again, Feuchtwanger emphasizes her fragility, silent innocence, and almost ethereal appearance on the one hand, and the Duke's noise and sweat, his indifferent, barbaric lust on the other: 'Da stapfte es die Treppe herauf, schnaufend, leise fluchend. Das Tier.' Death is his victim's salvation. Her valet discovers her small, broken body among the flowers of her violated garden: 'In den Blumen liegt sie!' (318).

The Nazi film⁵⁸ reaches its climax when Dorothea Sturm seeks an audience with Josef Süß Oppenheimer, in order to request the release of her elderly father and Faber, her new husband, from prison. Dorothea – or 'Dorle' as she is

56 Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel*, 1918, p. 96.

57 Ibid., p. 97.

58 For the following quotes, see the last 18 minutes of Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (1940), from Dorle entering Süß's apartment to Faber carrying her dead body and crying 'Der Jude hat sie auf dem Gewissen'; 01:13:30 – 01:20:19; trial and death sentence; 01:20:20 to 01:31:20, or Thomas Maurer and Thomas Til Radevagen, 'Protokoll des Spielfilms "Jud Süß"', in: Friedrich Knilli, Thomas Maurer, Thomas Radevagen, Siegfried Zielski, *Jud Süß* – *Filmprotokoll, Programmheft und Einzelanalysen*, Verlag Volker Spiess: Berlin, 1983, pp. 71–199. See especially shot sequence 492–515, i.e. pp. 176–180.

called to emphasize her child-like innocence – was hurriedly married in order to shield her from the advances of the Duke's powerful advisor Süß. The marriage, however, was not yet consummated by the shy, young couple and, therefore, Dorothea's symbolic purity is maintained. She implores Süß: 'Ich flehe sie an, Exzellenz, helfen sie mir! Ich habe alles aufgeschrieben. Hier – hier ist das Bittgesuch!' But Süß tears up the petition, he is not interested, treating her like a child, using the informal 'Du' and threatening that the Herzog will have her loved ones shot. Terrified, Dorle begs for mercy and even offers her wedding ring as a bribe. But Süß laughs at the small and insignificant piece of jewelry and offers to show her a 'proper' ring in his bedroom. When she hesitates, he seemingly allows for safe distance by suddenly using the formal address, asking her three times to enter the other room. The third time provocatively: 'Komm' Sie schon her, hat Sie Angst?' – clearly evoking the beginning of the tragic encounter between Süß's daughter and the Duke in Feuchtwanger's texts mentioned above. The significance of the ring, as a symbol of Josef Süß Oppenheimer's success and power, also links this scene to Feuchtwanger's novel and Süß's 'Solitär,' a prized possession and symbol of achievement that Süß even wears for his execution and, finally, takes to his grave.

Like Tamar and Naemi, Dorle whispers prayers when Süß impatiently and brutally embraces her. When she frees herself from her assailant, Süß angrily hints at the economy of their exchange, comparing her to a 'Vogel' not unlike the 'Täubchen'⁵⁹ in Feuchtwanger's play. He lets her hold a white handkerchief from the window and suddenly the imprisoned Faber's screams cut into her (and the audience's) ears. Süß encourages her to remove it to stop the torture: 'So nimm's doch weg, mein Kind!' (ill. 4) And when the 'child' clasps the handkerchief to shield her loved one from further pain, while praying 'Vater im Himmel –' Süß unnecessarily clarifies his intentions: 'Wir Juden haben auch einen Gott. Es ist der Gott der Rache' [01:16:50] before brutally throwing Dorothea on his bed and himself on top of her. The film then cuts to Süß giving the order to immediately release the 'Aktuarienrat Faber,' and then to the rape victim, running, with her hair undone, her dress untidy and

59 Feuchtwanger, *Jud Süß. Schauspiel in drei Akten (vier Bildern)*, 1918, p. 95.

obviously in a state of utter confusion and desperate bewilderment. The consequences of the rape or attempted violation are fatal both in Harlan's film and Feuchtwanger's texts: Tamar and Naemi fall or throw themselves from the roof of their idyllic home near Hirsau, Dorothea in the film drowns herself, a recurring fate of Kristina Söderbaum's screen personae, earning her the nickname 'Reichswasserleiche.' When darkness has fallen literally and metaphorically, members of the community are out on the lake searching with long poles for Süß's latest victim. Soon, young Dorothea's body is discovered and her stone-faced husband carries her all the way to the castle, with an increasing number of citizens joining him – the surge of anger and rage against the Duke's Jewish advisor rising with every step. The people of Stuttgart unite for the purpose of self-preservation and national renewal, Dorle's rape and death unambiguously signifying the imminent disintegration of their community. When an officer of the Duke's army (Obrist Röder) appears, Faber apologizes for the commotion and clarifies: 'Der Jude hat sie auf dem Gewissen!' [01:20:19] and gently lays Dorle's body down on the steps of the castle. The camera closes in on her beautiful, perfect face, virtually caressing her ideal form. For twelve long seconds the audience sees nothing but her lifeless faultless features while Wolfgang Zeller's tragic score underlines the injustice of her untimely death. Twelve long seconds to clarify the Nazis' simple logic: it is time to act. In order to safeguard our identity and home, the Jew has to die. When Röder proclaims: 'Der Jude muß weg!', the masses enthusiastically shriek their approval [01:20:49].

This film, like all other propaganda films produced during the Third Reich, contributed to the maintenance of the *Volkgemeinschaft*, the community of German, Aryan people theoretically united under the colours of the Nazi flag, by 'reverberation and [...] ethnic distinction'⁶⁰ as Werner Sollers put it. As others have stated, the Nazis' idea of this particular German community emerged as a symbolic product after the 'Schande von Versailles' and economic disaster, metaphorically evoking the bleeding, broken bodies that emerged

60 Werner Sollers, 'Introduction,' *The Invention of Ethnicity*, Oxford UP: Oxford, 1989, p. xx.

from the Great War. The Nazis' idyllic evocation of strength, beauty, youth and health – personified by Dorothea Sturm in Harlan's film – contrasted with the hardship of the Weimar era, a celebration of the body that Leni Riefenstahl manifests in her propagandistic *Triumph des Willens* (1935). Although Third Reich cinema's strategies of entertainment did not as effectively 'construct and maintain a genuine national community,'⁶¹ as Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien and others have pointed out, anti-Semitism in Nazi cinema was nonetheless instrumental in evoking fear of the Jews' supposed detrimental, corrupting effects on the symbolic Aryan community.⁶²

The narrative structure of the film is linear and suggests a sense of community and identity predominantly by constructing difference: Josef Süß Oppenheimer is the cunning force of evil that effectively masks his true identity in order to feed on this ideal, traditional, distinctly structured community. Its purest member and symbol is Dorothea, who unknowingly facilitates his encroachment into Stuttgart in her carriage. Her naïve kindheartedness has dire consequences for the community. As soon as the Duke is financially dependent on the wealthy, cunning Jew Süß, no injustice is committed, no evil deed is revealed without Josef Süß Oppenheimer being centrally implicated and responsible for the tragic event. The mounting injustices and abuses culminate in the rape scene that entwines Dorothea's fate with all members of her community and manifests Josef Süß Oppenheimer as 'Other' and the most serious threat. The narrative is one-dimensional and directed exclusively at depicting Jews as despicable, dangerous human beings that threaten the fabric of any healthy, solid community. The trial and death sentence of the Jew Süß is presented as the community's difficult beginning of an inevitable fight for freedom. The film ends with the second, this time public proclamation of the death sentence (ill. 5 and 6), and Süß's hanging for his sexual encounter with a Christian woman: 'Wo sich aber ein Jude mit einer Christin fleischlich vermenget, soll er mit dem Strang vom Leben zum Tode gebracht werden.' His

61 See Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien, *The Politics of Entertainment in the Third Reich*, Camden House: Rochester, 2003, p. 263.

62 Adorno's much quoted statement comes to mind: 'Der Antisemitismus, könnte man sagen, ist so etwas wie die Ontologie der Reklame.'

public asphyxiation is declared a just and lawful punishment and a lesson to all: 'Ihm zur wohlverdienten Strafe, jedermann aber zur Abschreckung. – Mögen unsere Nachfahren an diesem Gesetz ehern festhalten, auf daß ihnen viel Leid erspart bleibe an ihrem Gut und Leben, und dem Blut ihrer Kinder und Kindeskinde[r]' [01:31:10].

The maintenance of the purity of the race is conveyed in this film as the precondition for the preservation of the German community and the survival of the Aryan race. As Nazi ideologist Hans Heinz Bader argues in his *Wir und die Anderen*⁶³ at the same time, the Third Reich is facing a time of struggle or 'Kampfzeit' which will determine the survival of the racial elite or 'rassische Auslese'.⁶⁴ In his view, the recovery from racial impurities (i.e. centuries of 'corruption') – 'Vermischung und Entartung' – is imperative to the preservation of the German community: 'Eine Genesung setzt nun eine völlige Befreiung von allen fremdrassigen Elementen wie Juden usw. voraus [...]'.⁶⁵ Blood is the measure of difference, and its purity imperative to the definition, containment and protection of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Despite the fact that none of the collaborators on this Nazi-propaganda film openly discussed the Jewish (and illegal) writer Lion Feuchtwanger's best-seller *Jud Süß* as the backdrop of their *Hetzfilm*, there is reason to believe that virtually all involved in the production of the film were familiar with Feuchtwanger's text. Moreover, it seems, not the process of the 1940 adaptation of this

63 Hans Heinz Bader, *Wir und die Anderen. Eine völkerrechtliche Studie*, Wilhelm Limpert Verlag: Berlin, 1942. On the first page (p. 3) of his book, Bader quotes Goethe: 'Sich im Unendlichen zu finden, Mußt unterscheiden und dann verbinden.' Later he states: 'Im Mittelpunkt all unseres Denkens steht die deutsche Volksgemeinschaft.' (p. 90). At the centre of his 'rassisch-völkische Weltanschauung' (p. 90) is the protection and maintenance of the community of Germans. This includes Aryans only, of course.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 91. 'Trotz eines jahrhundertelangen fremden und zersetzenden Einflusses gelangte die Urkraft dieses Wesens zum Durchbruch. Dieser Kampf um die Befreiung von fremden Einflüssen geht weiter. Seine Notwendigkeit ergibt sich nicht allein aus der Tatsache, daß das deutsche Volk von artfremden Ideologien heimgesucht, sondern daß es vor allem blutsmäßig zersetzt wurde. Das aber, was Jahrhunderte vernachlässigten, kann nur ganz allmählich wieder gutgemacht werden.'

65 *Ibid.*, p. 86f.

particular historical narrative was influenced by Feuchtwanger's interpretation of the figure, but rather Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß* was dissected, twisted and adapted to fit the demands of an aggressive anti-Semitic agenda. Apart from the title of the film, which the German public at the time would have associated predominantly with Feuchtwanger, even the font design of the 1940 *Filmkurier* announcing Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* is virtually identical to the title design of the 1925/27 edition of Feuchtwanger's bestselling novel published by Drei Masken Verlag, implicitly marketing the film as an adaptation of the bestseller that so many Germans had enjoyed.

In line with the anti-Semitic misrepresentation of Feuchtwanger's texts, the injustice of Josef Süß Oppenheimer's death penalty, clearly emphasized by Feuchtwanger and Mendes, is presented as exact opposite, i.e. just (and necessary) punishment, by Veit Harlan and his Nazi collaborators. The insufferable pain at the loss of his beloved daughter in Feuchtwanger's texts is turned into the wrath and complete lack of empathy in Harlan's version. The victim is in both literary texts and Nazi adaptation an almost sacred, untouched, perfect young woman, filled with goodness and tenderness. The ideal of beauty, purity and wholeness is transferred from the 'hebräische Venus' Naemi/Tamar to Dorothea Sturm, a symbol of an idyllic community and ideal Nazi womanhood. Josef Süß Oppenheimer's humanity is mirrored in Feuchtwanger's Naemi – his monstrosity is reflected in Harlan's Dorothea Sturm.

Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß* is an exploration of our self-image as civilized, modern human beings, whereas the film is a call for mass murder. A reading of Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* as adaptation illustrates the mechanisms of 'the fearsome, word-and-thought defying banality of evil,'⁶⁶ as Hannah Arendt put it in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Although J.M. Coetzee has recently lamented the fact that the term 'banality of evil' has become a 'clichéd currency' that often misses the complexities of 'the everyday banality of a bureaucratically administered, industrially organized policy of wholesale extermination,'⁶⁷ the mechanisms at work during the production of *Jud Süß* as cinematic entertain-

66 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Penguin: New York, 1994, p. 252.

67 J.M. Coetzee, 'Portrait of the Monster as a Young Artist,' *NYRB*, 54.2 (2007), p. 11.

ment and anti-Semitic propaganda illustrate just that: the everyday banality of individual (in)action, the cowardly silences, and seemingly minor compromises, that eventually lead to crimes before which 'our human understanding recoils in bewilderment.'⁶⁸ While the magnitude of death and suffering during the genocidal Nazi regime might be beyond our ability to comprehend or adequately describe, film projects such as *Jud Süß* hold, as Hamlet put it, 'the mirror up to nature' exemplifying, as Lion Feuchtwanger would have it, 'human weakness'⁶⁹ and 'the destructive urge with which Nature has endowed us [...] modern barbarians.'⁷⁰

For the author, citizen and exile Feuchtwanger, it was a question of choice. Already in the late 1920s, when Feuchtwanger wrote his 'Bullerjahn' speech⁷¹ for the *Liga für Menschenrechte*, he wondered how a great, strong people like the Germans could recognize injustice and still remain passive and accept unfairness and discrimination. In the typescript for this speech, he crossed out 'starke Nation' and replaced it with 'seit Jahrhunderten zivilisierte Nation', a civilized nation that 'in müdem Verzicht' ['Resignation' was crossed out and replaced] abandons and sacrifices its sense of justice. The change from resignation to 'tired abandonment' highlights the issue of choice. This is a civilized nation that chooses to watch passively as justice is miscarried and power is

68 Ibid.

69 In her memoirs, Kristina Söderbaum describes the pressure exerted by the propaganda ministry, namely by Josef Goebbels, but also admits her and her collaborators' weakness and cowardice. However, she does not admit guilt, since in her mind, it was all God's fault: 'Er hat uns schwach sein lassen, feige gar, darum haben wir einen fürchterlichen Auftrag erfüllt. Möge also Gott urteilen, inwieweit Schwachheit Schuld ist.' See Kristina Söderbaum, *Nichts bleibt immer so: Rückblenden auf ein Leben vor und hinter der Kamera*, Hestia: Bayreuth, 1983, especially pp. 120ff.

70 Feuchtwanger, 'Are we modern Barbarians?' (1932), typescript (4 pages), Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Box D8a, folder 6, p. 4.

71 In December 1925, Walter Bullerjahn was sentenced to 15 years in prison for treason, of which he served eight. The Bullerjahn case was a much discussed example of miscarriage of justice during the latter half of the Weimar Republic. The manuscript of Feuchtwanger's speech can be found in the Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Box D8a, folder 2.

abused. Time and again, even before the Nazi thugs were elected into office as well as during his years in exile, Feuchtwanger pleaded for resistance to barbaric, militaristic, chauvinistic attitudes and for 'fairness', continually working towards 'the great edifice of a de-barbarised mankind.'⁷²

In 1939/40, however, after having spiraled into the depths of passivity, chauvinism and national aggression, the barbaric Nazi state's willing collaborators fragmented Feuchtwanger's multi-faceted, abundant *Jud Süß* narrative and forced it into the linear and simplistic logic of an anti-Semitic propaganda film. After burning his books, stripping him of his citizenship and doctorate, taking possession of his home and his library, the Nazis' appropriation of Feuchtwanger's bestselling work, their adaptation of *Jud Süß*, was nothing less than a brutal violation. Lion Feuchtwanger wished to 'ameliorate the condition of mankind through literature.'⁷³ Veit Harlan and his all too willing colleagues helped to prepare the ground for genocide.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the Department of Special Collections, UCLA Library's permission to quote from Marta Feuchtwanger's *An Émigré Life: Munich, Berlin, Sanary, Pacific Palisades* (Interviewed by Lawrence M. Wesch-

72 Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Are we modern Barbarians?' p. 4. Regarding the idea of fairness and writers collaborating with the Nazi regime, see also: Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Dichtung und Wahrheit,' Jewish Auxiliary/Speech 17 June 1942, typescript (7 pages), Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Box D8a, folder 17, p. 5.

73 'I am no Utopian. I know that to wish to ameliorate the condition of mankind through literature is equivalent to an attempt to drain the sea with a spoon. But stimulated by your encouragement, I shall dip my spoon with greater devotion.' Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Speech upon arrival in England?' [no date, unclear orig.], typed, 1 page, corrections are handwritten and not by Feuchtwanger. He apologizes for poor English; I would assume that this speech was given during his trip to Great Britain in 1927.

ler. Vol. 2. The interview was completed under the auspices of the Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976). Many thanks are due to the staff at the British Film Institute London and at the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, to Peter Latta for his support and the stills of Harlan's *Jud Süß*, and to the Feuchtwanger Memorial Library at the University of Southern California. I am especially grateful to the Feuchtwanger Curator Michaela Ullmann for her invaluable assistance. For their insights and encouragement, I am deeply indebted to Ulf Strohmayer, Eoin Bourke and Ian Wallace.