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RESEARCH PAPER

Kehlmann's *Tyll* as a Tale of an Artist's Tenacity

Dr. Aamer Shaheen [1] Mehran Ahmed [2] Sadia Qamar* [3]

1. Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. BS (Hons), Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

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***Corresponding Author**

sadiaqamar@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Tyll Ulenspiegel in Daniel Kehlmann's *Tyll*, plucked from German folklore, and is placed inside the whirlwind of the Thirty Years War, with nothing but his wits at his disposal against the Four Biblical Horsemen of the Apocalypse: War, Plague, Famine, and Death. Fleeing his home after the hanging of his father blamed of witchcraft, Tyll finds himself performing as a travelling artist, alternating between entertaining and insulting both the masses and the royalty, deftly dodging death while others around him are not nimble enough to avoid the Grim Reaper's scythe. Employing historiographic metafiction and narrative strategies of the war novel, Kehlmann highlights how war destroys human life. He depicts war with all its inglorious and gruesome details, bashing 'historical' accounts through the ridiculousness of his own characters attempting to write the same. Tyll, the artist, becomes the only character who is authentic and unheard, resilient in life but obscure in posterity. To explicate all of the above statements, the paper exploits the theoretic observations of Linda Hutcheon (1988) and Lidia Yuknavitch (2001).

Introduction

"Some nations are chastised with the sword, others with famine, others with the man-destroying plague. But poor Germany hath been sorely whipped with all these three iron whips at the same time […] for above twenty ye[a]rs space" is what Edmund Calamy is quoted to have said by John Matusiak in his book *Europe in flames: The Crisis of the Thirty Years War* (2018, p. 11). Fought by soldiers "from the four corners of the Continent – Spanish, French, Swedish, Danish, Italian, Croat, Scottish; Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist; conscripts, mercenaries and freebooters alike" (p. 11),

it was one of the most brutal conflicts not just in European but global history, "spawning a death toll that the most reliable estimates now set at some 8 million souls" (p. 11). Matusiak quotes Joachim Betke describing the state of Germany during the conflict: "You travel ten, twenty or forty miles without seeing a single human being, no livestock, not one sparrow, if there are not some few places where you find one or two old men or women or a child" (p. 12).

Daniel Kehlmann places his protagonist, the wily Tyll Ulenspiegel, in the whirlwind of the War. Toughened by the trauma of his childhood, Tyll glides through the conflict with artistic grace and a thief's stealth, finding benefactors and friends. His resourcefulness lets him juggle his circumstances like the stones in his childhood; without much effort. He never gets too involved in the process and removes himself when the going gets tough, like a switch from a socket. He is not a plant, he is a tent.

The Thirty Years War birthed from acrid religious animosity between the Catholics and the Protestants, and the Lutherans and the Calvinists among the latter. Matusiak quotes a Protestant writer in 1610 lamenting the theologians blinded by a religious rage and fervor to "have so greatly aggravated and augmented the disastrous strife among the Christians […] that there seems no hope of all this screaming, slandering, abusing, anathematising, etc., coming to an end before the advent of the Last Day" (p. 26). The words of Landgrave Maurice of Hesse-Kassel to Louis XIII of France on March 23, 1615, predicting that "the states of the Empire, quarrelling fiercely among themselves, may start a fatal conflagration embracing not only themselves […] but also all those countries that are in one way or another connected with Germany" (p. 27) proved prescient to a degree no one could have imagined. The 'conflagration' made Nimrod's fire look like a firecracker, enveloping whole empires in a fire that smoked not just in the physical world but in the hearts of men as well, driving them to murder, looting, rape, and wreaking desolation.

Tyll finds its protagonist at the center of this quandary. The novel is structured in such a way that the readers find Tyll Ulenspiegel dealing with a different situation at different points of time in his life. 'Shoes', the first section of the novel, sees him performing in a village and mesmerizing the audience with his unreal tricks. When he leaves, he brings the war to the hitherto peaceful village.

In the section of the novel titled 'Lord of the Air', Tyll is a child learning the trade that would be his livelihood for the rest of his life. He has a traumatic experience when he is left alone in a forest for two nights, affecting him, damaging him. After escaping the forest, another trauma befalls him; the torture and subsequent hanging of his father on charges of being in league with the Devil. Tyll runs away from his village with Nele, a fellow child villager, in the company of Gottfried, a travelling entertainer. His adventure begins.

The section of the novel titled 'Zusmarshausen' jumps to the battle it is named after, the final battle of the thirty years war. Martin von Wolkenstein is deputed by the Kaiser to fetch Tyll from a half-destroyed Abbey. On their way back, they find themselves as inadvertent participants in the battle, escaping death by a hair's breadth.

The section of the novel titled 'Kings in Winter' does not see Tyll for a long time, focusing on Frederick V, the 'Winter King', and his English wife, Elizabeth, living in exile, struggling to regain the splendor they squandered. Tyll makes his entrance with the offer to become their court jester, Nele in tow. The chapter ends with the death of the Winter King, Tyll retrieving Nele and his donkey from the stables earlier, when the King's death is not known.

The section 'Hunger' hearkens back to Tyll and Nele's childhood and their torment with Pirmin, who is a cruel teacher, not sharing his food with them and punishing their performances out of them. The chapter ends with the two of them hungry and clasping hands, the fire about to go out soon.

The section 'The Great Art of Light and Shadow', centers on Athanasius Kircher and certain German scholars as they aid the polymath in his quest to find a dragon. They meet Tyll's circus. One of the scholars takes Nele with him to be his wife, while Tyll himself leaves the scene.

The section 'In the Shaft', lives up to its name, set in a collapsing mineshaft during the Siege of Brno. Tyll is trapped under the detritus with three other companions, who eventually die as the shaft continues to collapse. Tyll refuses to die and the chapter ends with Tyll's vehement declaration to not die, then or ever.

The section 'Westphalia', restores Elizabeth, the Winter Queen, to the center of the narrative, as she strives to bring her son to his father's status and escape the state of scarcity she has been reduced to, employing her diplomatic acumen to her advantage. Tyll appears only at the end, delivering another riveting performance, the final stunt being vanishing into thin air. He makes good on his intention to not die and he lets Elizabeth know that his intention is to "never die."

Literature Review

Tyll, shortlisted for the International Booker Prize 2020, was immediately well-loved by critics, who were vociferous in their praise. Irina Dumitrescu calls the novel "a magnificent story of an artist's transcendence over the petty superstitions, convenient betrayals and widespread brutality of his time" (*The New York Times*, 2020).

For Marcel Theroux, *Tyll* is "a testament to Kehlmann's immense talent", aiding him in "writing a powerful and accessible book", a book that highlights the "many ways in which [*Tyll*'s] strife-torn Europe, fractured by religion, intolerance and war, is a reflection of our own times" (*The Guardian*, 2020). James Wood gushed over *Tyll*, praising its "riven world, bristling with boundaries both political and ideological", the world in which "dances our slippery survivalist, our great expansionist, Tyll—amoral, rebellious, untrustworthy, and exciting" (*The New Yorker*, 2020). Kai Maristed heaps praise on Kehlmann's "narrative gift" which "is so prodigious as to be almost aggravating." The novel with its "crisp, adroit language" is a pleasure "can and should be enjoyed—right now" (*The Art Fuse*, 2020).

"Kehlmann, like Tyll, is a trickster", says Jon Michaud of, the novel rewarding "close readers with grace notes and unexpected narrative connections" and thus, "entertaining us like a jester on a tightrope and reminding us of the danger of a fall", its relativity to present political scenarios unhidden (*Washington Post*, 2020). Simon Ings calls *Tyll* "a laugh-out-loud-then-weep-into-your-beer comic novel about a war", while being "[a]mbitious, clever, tricksy, self-reflective", *Tyll* is also "a thoroughly contemporary novel" which is "artful and ironic and self-conscious" (*The Times*, 2020).

Anthony Cummins reads *Tyll* as "Kehlmann's portrait of bygone dark times" which "both indulges and disrupts the apocalyptic turn in present-day commentary on current affairs." The novel with "string of disconnected, slyly contradictory vignettes" suffused with "vivid detail and neat comic timing" is "intricate and cleverly done" (*The Guardian*, 2020). For Boyd Tonkin, Kehlmann, summoning "comedy, farce, wisecracking badinage, even romance" from the "blighted time" of the Thirty Years War, rife with "massacre, starvation, epidemic, torture and pillage", makes the novelist's "own graceful sleight-of-hand … past and present, myth and history, merge" in *Tyll* (*Financial Times*, 2020).

Clea Simon reads Kehlmann's "darkly brilliant" novel as the "compelling personal story" of its "mercurial protagonist", a story "he alternately reveals in jest and dances away from" (*Boston Globe*, 2020). J.W. McCormack lauds Kehlmann for "straddling both playful modernity and classical romanticism" in *Tyll*, calling the novel "a sense of personal stakes." According to him, the novel reflects the personality of its creator; "curious, scholarly, and intellectually good-humored" (*Publishers Weekly*, 2019).

The attention to detail, the legerdemain of language, and the sheer aesthetic pleasure pervading *Tyll* arrested the attention of critics. The eponymous protagonist and the similarities he shared with his creator, the ingenious Kehlmann, enamored critics. Both are jugglers entertaining their audience, walking a tightrope with infinite

grace, making it appear as easy as walking on solid ground when the truth is the opposite.

Theoretic Framework

Lidia Yuknavitch, in *Allegories of Violence: Tracing the Writings of War in Late Twentieth-Century Fiction* (2001), identifies a number of narrative strategies employed by authors in war novels. They are: 'narrative reflexivity', 'cross-use of discourses', 'breakdown of narrative content', 'citation and pastiche', and 'narrative fragmentation' (p. 8). Kehlmann uses all these strategies like a shrewd military general and the victory he bags is heroic, to say the least.

Kehlmann generates narrative reflexivity through "the disruption of linear time and narrative sequentiality" (Yuknavitch, 2001, p. 8) in his narrative telling of Tyll Ulenspiegel's story. The narrative moves from Tyll's childhood to the end of the Thirty Years War and back to another period, only to move forward again into another battle. Time is not linear, its thread woven in an intricate pattern like a spider's web, in which one vibration makes the whole web move.

Through "cross-use of discourse", the narrative replaces metanarratives with "discourses from other disciplines." Tyll himself is a figure of German literature, either a hero or a freedom fighter. In Kehlmann's prose, he becomes an artist and a trickster, both a street performer and a royal jester. Kehlmann plants a historical figure in another timeline for artistic purpose.

Narrative fragmentation is observed in the disappearance of the protagonist from the scene, as is seen in the final chapter of the novel for the most part, only for Tyll to reappear again out of the blue and vanish just like that, like a rabbit out of a magician's hat. The plot is also divided into non-chronological pieces and most of the time, the time the chapter is set in is never outright mentioned. For example, readers will know the time *Kings in Winter* is set in only if they are aware that Frederick V died in 1632 AD. Similarly, readers incognizant of Zusmarshausen will not know that the chapter with the same name is set in 1648 AD.

Historiographic metafiction is also at the heart of *Tyll*. Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) posits that "the problems of writing history are not unlike those of writing fiction" (p. 107). Kehlmann brings those problems to the fore more than once. The distortion of mnemonic facts, even those of immense personal importance to characters, stands as telltale indication of the fallibility of historical authenticity.

Hutcheon also writes that in historical fiction, "the real figures of the past are deployed", validating "the fictional world by their presence" (p. 114). Athanasius

Kircher, Frederick V, Elizabeth Stuart, all make appearances in the novel, interacting with Tyll at different points. Kehlmann delves in their minds as well, telling the story through their eyes, pointing out the relativity of truth.

In historiographic metafiction, multiple points of view is a mode of narration. The absence of a subject "confident in his/her ability to know the past with any certainty" (p. 117) leads to the dispersion of "stable narrative voices" that "use memory to try to make sense of the past" (p. 118), resulting in "*truths* in the plural, and never one truth" (Italics in original, p. 109).

Combining techniques of the war novel and historiographic metafiction, Kehlmann makes his subject, the misery, war unleashes on the common people generally and the artist specifically, focusing the lens on the marginalized, demolishing the dominant discourses of war, written in intentional ignorance of the prevalent paucity of provisions present everywhere else.

Discussion

Daniel Kehlmann in *Tyll* plucks "Till or Tyll Eulenspiegel, a figure in German literature well-known since the 15th and 16th centuries, and seen as a typical hero of a rough farce" (Schweissinger, 2019, p. 138) from its time and places it in the quandary that is the Thirty Years War. By placing the hero of "a rough farce" amidst the desolation of one of humanity's bloodiest conflicts, Kehlmann explores the tenacity of the artist in the face of insurmountable odds, odds that bend the backs of emperors and warriors.

Facing the Four Horsemen

In *Tyll*, Germany is beleaguered by the Four Biblical Horsemen of the Apocalypse; War, Plague, Famine, and the mightiest, Death. Casting the shadow of his sickle over Germany, Death lets his fellow horsemen wreak havoc on the country and its hapless dwellers who are ultimately his victims. The opening paragraph of the novel states: "We lived in fear and hope and tried not to draw God's wrath down upon our securely walled town" (Kehlmann, 2020, p. 3). The German masses feared that the apocalypse was upon them, as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse ravaged their land.

Worsted by War

In the maelstrom of the war, Tyll walks with a grace absent elsewhere. When he performed in the village in the first chapter, "He neither teetered nor tried to find his balance—he simply walked" (p. 12). The rope becomes the war that no one else

can seem to walk on and Tyll makes it look easy. Interestingly, the rope is tied "to the window grille of the church tower" (religion) on one end and "flagpole jutting out of the wall next to the window of the town hall" (administrative authority) on the other (p. 12). Religious intolerance and the unwillingness of decisive authorities to opt for peace is what keeps the war going, like the buildings keeping the rope in the air.

The brawl that ensues in the opening chapter, thanks to Tyll, is a microcosm for the thirty years war. Kehlmann writes of two villagers fighting: "Moritz Blatt and […] Simon Kern pummeled each other so ferociously that someone who thought they were fighting over shoes could not have understood, since he would not have known that Moritz's wife had been promised to Simon as a child" (p. 16). Similarly, "Lore Pilz and Elsa Kohlschmitt […] had hated each other for so long that even they had forgotten why" (p. 16). The latter characters seem to be personifications of Germany and France, two states that share a long history of brutal warring between them.

War destroys lives and Kehlmann establishes that with the character of Martha in the first chapter: "One day she would tell her husband and then much later her incredulous grandchildren […] that she had once seen him in the flesh" (p. 5). This prediction is spurious as Martha is killed that very night along with her fellow villagers, shattering "the future that had a moment ago been hers … the husband she would never have and the children she would never raise and the grandchildren she would never tell about a famous jester one morning in spring" (p. 19). How many lives were claimed by war, not becoming what they could?

During his quest to retrieve Tyll, the Count and his party pass "[t]he village of Markl", which consists of "walls full of holes, cracked beams, rubble in the road, a few old people begging for food next to the filthy well." The presence of war is established through the use of vivid images and the agents of war exacerbate their effect. "The enemy […] had taken everything, and the little that they had been able to hide had been taken afterward by friendly troops" and later on, "what the villagers had managed to conceal even from them was in turn taken by more enemy forces" (p. 138). In war, no matter which side people support, they always get the short end of the stick, left with disease, destitution, and death. The strong live off the weak without remorse, no sense of morality or national brotherhood staunch enough to stop them.

As the journey continues, war persists in its presence. It "had laid waste to the north, turned west, had extended one arm eastward and one southward, then heaved its full weight into the south, only to settle again for a while in the north" (p. 138). Like a storm that leaves nothing but havoc in its wake, war has eviscerated whole regions of life, leaving "No people far and wide. Only a goose that must have fled from someone stood ragged next to a well" (p. 135).

When the landscape is described: "The forests had disappeared, the villages had burned down, the people had fled, God knows where" (p. 147), it gives the impression as if after a conflagration of Biblical proportions, bleaching all life from the region and the impression is not far-off from reality. The conflagration is of war, lit by Nimrods for their selfish interests, and the masses make the fuel.

The character of Korff stands as the representative of the individuals, found in no small number, who have no qualms with killing their fellow human beings. Lacking in morals and squeamishness, Korff is ruthless and thus, invaluable to any master he serves. He has much experience with fighting and killing. When trapped in the shaft with Tyll and Matthias, he says that in war, "it's possible. To do what you want to people" (p. 296). And he has taken the liberty to do just that, enjoying the carte blanche bestowed on him to do what he wants to people.

The final lamentation against the war is heard in the final chapter: "The war has been going on so long that most people alive today have never seen peace. That only the old can still remember peace" (p. 319). There is no exaggeration in that claim. Most of the youthful who could have remembered the era of peace had perished in the pestilence of war. It was the fatigue that forced the fighters to seek a peaceful resolution.

Tyll, while seeming to fare better than his fellows, cannot escape the clutches of war. In the first chapter, when he jumps on the rope, which stands for war, he has to land on it again as he cannot stay in the air forever, regardless of his skill, reminding that "even he had weight and couldn't fly" (p. 14). His efforts can distance him from the war, but not for long. Tyll's ultimate inability to escape the reality of war faced by countless others is seen at different instances. For example, Tyll "came to Brno", not suspecting that "Torstensson would march here with half the Swedish army" (p. 290). There, he was forced to join the army, which led to him getting buried in a mineshaft.

Similarly, Tyll finds himself involved in the fighting during the Battle of Zusmarshausen, even though he has no allegiance to either side. He manages to survive, with his reflexes and quick thinking, but not without injury (p. 160). Tyll finds himself face-to-face with war and evades the embrace of death with a narrow margin, death closing in on its slippery target further and further, only to watch it escape. The artist is as disturbed by war as others, but his resilience and unwillingness to give up sustains him, more effective than the swords and shields of soldiers.

Pestilential Plague

Kehlmann seizes the opportunity to explore the gruesomeness of war through plague, which in no small part was caused by the general lack of hygiene concomitant to war. As he writes: "cleanliness didn't prevail when thousands upon thousands of soldiers along with their supply train were camping in one place" (p. 202). The camp mentioned is not spared by the plague. The damage wrought by plague is seen in "men with sores, men with bumps on their faces, men with watering eyes and drooling mouths. Not a few lay there motionless and bent; you couldn't have said whether they were dead or dying" (p. 205). And the camp is not exceptional in the prevalence of plague: "In all camps there were plague victims. No one spoke of it, for no one wanted to think about it; there was nothing anyone could do" (p. 207). For Germany and her people, war was a plague and the plague was a war; festering and spreading, inexorable and indomitable.

Tyll, the hero preceded by misfortune, encounters plague as well and survives it. The Winter King dies of the plague he had contracted days ago (p. 232). Tyll stays with him, not deserting him even in the moments of his death (p. 234). Even in such close proximity to a plague victim, the trickster artist stays unaffected. He appears a demon who manipulates destiny itself from time to time to circumvent disease and dis-ease.

Fleeing Famine

Famine is perhaps what affects Tyll the most. Not even someone as wily as him can make food out of thin air to sustain himself. Whenever he appears, hunger accompanies him like a shadow. When he appears before the fat Count, he is "a scrawny man with hollow cheeks" (p. 148). He says of his current residence, "There's nothing left to eat here, everything is falling apart" (p. 149). His current residence is his immediate dwelling and the whole of Germany as well.

Kehlmann describes Tyll as standing "bent forward, his cheeks were hollow, his eyes were set deep in their sockets," (p. 150). When Kircher meets Tyll, he observes him to be "incredibly gaunt", with eyes "set deep in their sockets" (p. 275). The description changes little with the years and it's no surprise. In a land redolent with the fug of famine, everyone goes hungry, except those who steal and those who reign.

Defying Death

Throughout the novel, Tyll has various close encounters with death, encounters he escapes. He falls in the stream in the section of the novel titled 'Lord of the Air'. He is also left alone to fend for himself in a forest for two nights straight. Though he emerges traumatized from the event, he manages to live. In another section of the novel: 'Zusmarshausen', a metallic kiss from death leaves him bleeding

from the back of his head. In 'Hunger', he bears a dark night in a forest on an empty stomach, ushering in memories of the past. 'In the Shaft', shows him recalling "[t]hat time in the forest he was closest to Godfather Death, he felt his hand" (p. 297), while buried under rubble. "Fair flower, beware. So fresh and green, so bonny and bright today, tomorrow with his scythe so keen, he'll cut your life away" (p. 298) is what Tyll sings in concert with his two fellows while buried in the mineshaft, a song warning of death.

Though death may appear to be on the sidelines, its presence is as pervasive as the air and sunlight. It claims the hapless villages in 'Shoes', Claus Ulenspiegel in 'Lord of the Air', soldiers in 'Zusmarshausen', the Winter King in 'Kings in Winter', Korff, Matthias, and Iron Kurt in 'In the Shaft', among others. However, Tyll goes to bed with death and wakes up alive. He cavorts away from death's dogged pursuit of him, his conviction to not die allowing him to escape the inevitable while others succumb to it.

Fictional Non-fiction

The character of Martin von Wolkenstein's embodies historians and figures of importance trying to jot down their life experiences as authentic accounts of 'what transpired.' There is constant undermining of narration, especially observed in the section "Zusmarshausen", in which the narrator/Kehlmann points out the fallacies in the Count's account of his quest to find Tyll and bring him to the Kaiser, highlighting the Count's weakness of memory, flights of self-embellishing imagination, and simple inability to find and string the right words together to tell the story playing central role in deviation from what actually happened, thus asserting that "the problems of writing history are not unlike those of writing fiction" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 107). Thus, the Count telling what *actually* happened is just as credible as what *may have* happened. In the same vein, what did *not* happen is just as believable as what *did* happen. After writing on assumption that he and his party walked for two hours, the Count writes of their walk: "the loud silence of the forest enveloped us, birds shrieked, branches broke, and the wind whispered to us from the treetops" (Kehlmann, 2020, p. 154). The contradiction of the claim is a dilly of irony, letting Kehlmann drive his point across without effort. And this is just one of the many instances interspersed through the novel. The count's account of "the last battle of the great German war" was beholden to "a popular novel" in which "he found a description he liked." The account "didn't quite fit, because that passage was about the Battle of Wittstock, but it didn't bother anyone, no one ever raised any questions." Grimmelshausen, whose account the count pilfered/recycled, "had himself been unable to describe it and instead had stolen the sentences of an English novel translated by Martin Opitz, the author of which had never witnessed a battle in his life" (p. 160). The authors appear enmeshed in their inability to relate to others their

experience with authenticity, leaning on their predecessors for support who themselves are no better.

Frederick V and his wife Elizabeth Stuart possess memories little better than Martin von Wolkenstein, if at all. In Elizabeth's memory, *she* is the one who convinces Frederick to accept the Bohemian crown. On the other hand, Frederick remembers that "he had finally persuaded her, as he had persuaded everyone else" (p. 211) that accepting the Bohemian crown was the right course of action.

Similarly, their memories of their wedding night do not coincide. In Elizabeth's recollection, after they broke a carafe, "three rose petals floated like little ships. There had been three—that she remembered clearly" (p. 185). For Frederick, "[t]here had been five petals. That he remembered clearly" (p. 210). This minor difference of detail is a humungous highlight of history's fallibility. The divergent memories of the royal couple become proof of "the multiplicity and dispersion of truth(s)" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 108).

The protagonist is not an exception. He is played by his memory like a fiddle, not unlike others. Nele and Tyll also cannot make up their mind about the death of Pirmin and who killed him. Nele claims that "Tyll killed him" (Kehlmann, 2020, p. 197). Tyll relates that, "Nele cooked [Pirmin] a mushroom dish that he did not soon forget, or rather, he forgot it immediately, that is, he died from it" (p. 226).

When Nele recounts a fairy tale to Tyll, she thinks of the process of making up a fairy tale: "once you have begun, [the story] continues of its own accord, and the parts assemble themselves, sometimes one way and sometimes another, and you have a fairy tale" (p. 236). This is very similar to the process the Count practices when writing 'historical' account of his quest to find Tyll.

Tyll, while trapped in the mineshaft, thinks, "you grow more and more muddleheaded here. You can still remember distant events clearly, but the closer something was to the bang a short while ago, the more soupy and runny it is in your mind" (p. 291). The shaft stands for the war. People who witnessed it and then wrote about it are in their attempt to recount it and make sense of it, like their memory, muddled and confused.

Along with weakness of memory and inability to reign in recalcitrant words into regular sentences, the desire for comfort and convenience leads to falsification of reality. Kircher says that "To save time, [he has] already written the chapter in Rome" (p. 261), meaning he has already determined what happened before time and before even being there where all of that 'happened.' Later, his secretary reads for him *what transpired* when nothing has happened yet and probably won't, considering the fact that the account includes finding a dragon. Kehlmann wallops history again while

also asserting that time, the mightiest of them all, "would be powerless against this" (p. 262).

'Tyll ist Deutschland'

Tyll is Germany. All the tribulations he faces and survives are Germany's own. Though there is a price that he has paid and he has been scarred, he is alive with the gumption to go on. "I have two feet, and a judge with a robe or a guard with halberds, they also have only two. Each of them has the same number of feet as I do. No one has more" (p. 118) can be taken as Tyll's motto of life. The words showcase his resilience, clarity of mind, and willingness to adhere to his decisions and convictions no matter the odds he is facing.

He is resourceful and always finds ways out of his predicaments. While staying at the Abbey of Andechs, tired of hunger, he lets the Kaiser know of his location, thus becoming the provocateur of a search and retrieve mission. He does not hold back in telling the fat Count: "His Majesty, His Idiotic Majesty with his golden crown on his golden throne, heard about me because I sent for you" (p. 149). He has the artist's defiance of authority, flouting it without fear, flaunting his fool's license in the faces of others. He clings to his identity and expresses himself, even if it may be to his detriment.

Tyll's vociferous declaration "I'm not going to die here. I'm not going to die today. I'm not going to die!" (p. 307) is as much Germany's as his. Trapped in absolute darkness underground with no way out, he is adamant to not die. His bleak situation is like Germany grinding through the war. Eventually, they both conquer their foe, whether factions or environmental forces. In a face-off spanning decades with the Four Horsemen, who alone have wiped out empires off the face of the Earth, they are not unscathed, but they are the ones who prevail.

Conclusion

Tyll's conviction to never die is similar to the Holy Roman Empire. Though both have stopped existing, they are both alive in history and fiction, like *Tyll* itself. With his artistic expertise and accomplishments, he becomes immortal in the annals of history, literary and otherwise. Had Germany not been beleaguered by belligerents, there is no telling what fame and fortunes he would have garnered, similar to Germany herself. Both Tyll and Germany suffer because of the war and shoulder immense losses, but are persistent to persist.

Through the character of Tyll Ulenspiegel, Kehlmann preaches the immortality of the artist. Tyll is one of "the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history", the protagonists of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 114). He is the son of a miller and the highest station he has ever enjoyed is of being

a court jester of a King without country. And yet, he carves out his place in history, similar to finding his place in the Winter King's court. He is pursued by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and emerges the better one in the competition. It is Tyll's art that elevates him above his companions, allowing him to blaze through the stratosphere of history and make his existence known, thus making good on his conviction to never die.

Tyll is a tale of war, of history, and of the artist trapped in the whirlwind of both, trying to survive and find his way out. With his clever use of historiographic metafiction and narrative strategies of the war novel, Daniel Kehlmann constructs a story that has the artist's adroitness and vitality as its brick and mortar. Tyll Ulenspiegel, with his élan and cunning, sashays across the landscape of the novel and the war, never halting in his performance, the wounds inflicted upon him too trivial to trounce him.

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