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The films discussed in Part II illustrated the tension between social engagement and the existential guiding ethic, demonstrating criticisms of existentialism when it leads to solitude. The films analysed in the following chapters – *The Keep, The Last of the Mohicans, The Insider* and *Ali* – explore social engagement in terms of a social conscience; the protagonists of these films work for the benefit of others. In these films, therefore, the existential guiding ethic is exercised in relation to wider social concerns, particularly the concerns of communities.

Social interaction can complicate the existential guiding ethic, as sometimes the heroes’ desire to improve society can be a distraction from the fundamental self. Their desire to do good can then be perverted into acts that are harmful to themselves or others. This perversion is linked to the protagonists’ involvement with social institutions, which feature prominently in the films discussed in Part III. Forces such as imperialism (in *The Last of the Mohicans*), fascism (in *The Keep*), racism (in *Ali*) and corporatism (in *The Insider*) affect the Mann Men, but their relationships with these institutions vary. In two of the films discussed in Part III, the hero and the institution are in clear opposition to each other, but in the other two, involvement with the institution leads to bad faith, i.e. not acknowledging or utilising existential freedom. In these cases, the protagonists must experience angst in order to reassert their vital programme, escape the control of these forces, and succeed in being what they purpose with a social conscience.

The exercise of existential freedom in these films is paralleled with the cause of freedom from oppression; the heroes relate their existential guiding ethics to their socio-historical environments with a social conscience. *The Keep* will be analysed in this chapter as an introduction to these discussions of social conscience motivated by an existential...
guiding ethic. Mann's adaptation of the source material makes *The Keep* particularly appropriate for an introduction to this section. F. Paul Wilson's novel upon which the film is based (1981) is a magical tale in which the events are the final part of an epic war between good and evil. Nothingness is ‘the shade of vanished metaphysical powers’ (Kovacs, 2006: 136), and Mann places the story within this shade by removing the supernatural backstory and emphasising the existential choices of the characters. Therefore, Mann replaces supernatural powers with an assertion of existential responsibility for perhaps the ultimate human evil, Nazism, which the hero opposes.

The action of the film occurs in 1941 in the Carpathian Alps. A German platoon occupies an ancient fortress known as the Keep in a peasant village and releases a supernatural force that feeds upon humans. The release of this force summons a mysterious traveller in Greece, who sets out for the Keep. The platoon commander requests reassignment, but instead an SS detachment arrives and executes villagers in order to discourage partisans. This does not stop the deaths, and a Jewish professor who has studied the Keep is summoned to explain what is happening. The supernatural monster persuades the professor to help it escape from the Keep so that it can destroy the Nazis. The traveller from Greece arrives and forms a relationship with the professor’s daughter, before revealing his true identity as a supernatural warrior who will fight the monster. The creature eventually kills all the Germans, but the professor realises its evil and opposes it, before the traveller finally destroys it and also himself.

Steven Rybin describes *The Keep* as ‘the most stylistically excessive of Michael Mann’s films’ (2007: 60), which confounded critics such as Kim Newman (1985: 127–8) and Saskia Baron (1984: 14) upon its release. It has been included as part of a cycle of supernatural/horror/fantasy films released in the early 1980s (Rybin: 59–60), but within Mann’s oeuvre it is an anomaly due to its European setting and lack of a central protagonist. An existential guiding ethic is a motivating factor within the film, but it is not as focused as it is in Mann’s other work. *The Keep* does feature a Mann Man, but also other characters who appreciate their freedom and responsibility within the world that they inhabit, although they do not have a discernible existential guiding ethic. The first of these is Captain Klaus Woermann (Jürgen Prochnow).

Woermann is a loyal German soldier, but loathes the regime of Adolf Hitler, describing the Nazi ideology as ‘a psychotic fantasy’. The