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Francesca
Teltscher Taylor

A Topos Subverted

Italy in the 20th and 21st century German literary imagination

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Contents

1. Introduction: the literary topos from Winckelmann and Goethe to Mann

> Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn, / im dunklen Laub die Goldorangen glühn, / ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht, / die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht? / Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! / Dahin möcht' ich mit dir, / O mein Geliebter, ziehn.
>
> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Mignon* (1795)

> Kennst du das Land, wo die Faschisten blühn, / im dunklen Laub die Diebslaternen glühn, / ein Moderduft von hundert Leichen weht, / die Freiheit still und hoch der Duce steht? / Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! / Dahin möchte ich mit dir, / mein *Adolf Hitler*, ziehn!
>
> Erich Mühsam, *Mignon 1925* (1925)

In 1795, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's poem *Mignon* offered a celebratory tribute to Italy, positioning Italy as an idyll in the German imagination. The *blühende Zitronen* and *glühende Goldorangen* came to represent the German *Sehnsucht* for a warmer, freer, more fertile place full of promise and hope. Goethe's poem has become so representative that to reference his imagery of the blooming, blossoming citrus is to engage with the German imagination of Italy more broadly. But what has happened to this idyll in the 20th and early 21st centuries? By opening his poem with the words "Kennst du das Land" and "blühn" and "glühn", Erich Mühsam positions himself within the tradition of Italy in the German imagination (Mühsam). But as early as 1925—shortly after Adolf Hitler was released from prison—Mühsam radically repositioned Goethe's imagery. Mühsam's Italy is no longer an idyllic "other" that satisfies the German imagination and *Sehnsucht*. Instead, Italy and Germany are bound together in the early 20th century by their projects of fascism. Mühsam's re-working of Goethe's imagery is one technique of many used by authors to subvert earlier German literary narratives of Italy.

Today, the relationship between Germany and Italy continues to inform Germany's understanding of itself within Europe. Now, northern and southern Europe are placed within the joint project of the European Union (EU). The tensions arising from this economic alliance repeatedly express themselves in debates about southern European economies in the EU context and about economic austerity. In the political arena, debates about how best to respond to refugees arriving at Europe's southern border have spurred a recent reassertion of national borders in Europe, further heightened by "Brexit" and border closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The intellectual geography of Europe clearly remains important, as the cultural mapping of Europe continues along a North-South divide. Germany's engagements with Italy in the EU context do not represent a first "use" of Italy to define Germany's identity

in relation to southern Europe. Famously, Goethe's project of Weimar Classicism (from roughly 1786–1805) aimed to define a distinctly German national identity in relation to Italian classicism. Goethe couched the nascent German national identity in the terms of *Bildung*. The inclusion of Goethe's poem *Mignon* in his *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, indicates the central role that Italy plays in Goethe's understanding of *Bildung* broadly, and the formation, or *Bildung*, of a German national identity more specifically.

The continued relevance of Italy within German discourse extends well beyond the economic and political debates in the EU context. The visual arts and sculpture offer rich engagements with the German-Italian cultural relationship. Since the evolution of the Grand Tour in the 16th century, Italy has been a prime destination that artists, including sculptors and painters, travel to, to develop and refine their skills. Embodying and symbolising these values is Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), who lived for 30 years in Italy and studied classical archaeology and the modern science of art. As articulated in his publication *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, Greece and by extension Italy embodied the classical ideal towards which Winckelmann strove. Both Winckelmann's own works and Goethe's writings about Winckelmann created an aesthetic ideal: the artist was to strive not only to replicate classicism, but also to embody it. As Goethe wrote to Johann Peter Eckermann on 16 February 1827, "'[m]an lernt nichts, wenn man ihn lieset, aber man wird etwas'" (Goethe qtd. in Traeger 49). The artist's skill-development becomes closely linked to Goethe's concept of the *Bildungsreise*. While I focus on the literary topos that offers particularly complex and epistemologically interesting material, it could be interesting to explore what role Italy continues to play in this context of art and sculpture and the extent to which Goethe's and Winckelmann's ideas still have relevance.

Italy also has much to offer any study of questions relating to migration and cultural integration, as seen in Franco Biondi's 1985 series of short stories entitled *Passavantis Rückkehr. Erzählungen*. His series explores the North-South European divide from the perspective of a fictional Italian *Gastarbeiter* who, like many Italians, came to Germany from 1955 as part of the German-Italian *Anwerbeabkommen*, or recruitment agreement, between Germany and Italy. The German cultural values and perceptions that continue to shape the Italo-German relationship express themselves also in popular travel narratives. This is seen in film in the post-war context, as Germans wished to enjoy life and leave the past behind, so "entstehen als Folge dieser Italiensehnsucht romantische Liebesfilme wie *Mandolinen und Mondschein (1959), Das blaue Meer und du (1959), Der Stern von Santa Clara (1958)* und *Ohne Krimi geht die Mimi nie ins Bett (1962)*" (Sitzler-Sawicki 4). Similarly, the 1991 film *Go Trabi Go* uses Italy to assert a German tradition. In the musical

context there are "sehnsüchtige, schwärmende, romantische deutsche Lieder über Italien wie *Komm ein bißchen mit nach Italien (1956), Zwei kleine Italiener (1962)* und *Rote Rosen, rote Lippen, roter Wein (1952)*" (Sitzler-Sawicki 4). In these popular genres, as in travel guides, we see an obsession with the sweet, Italian life—*la dolce Vita*—, an obsession that can teach us at least as much about German cultural history as it can about Italy. Each of these areas—visual arts and sculpture; migration and cultural integration; popular travel narratives in film, music, and travel guides—shape European intellectual geography and reveal how the relationship between Germany and Italy continues to inform Germany's understanding of itself as a European nation. Politically, the southern European border has been used to justify social and political agenda. While these narratives are interesting, they play a smaller range of roles in cultural discourses than the literary topos "Italy", which is particularly complex and historically and culturally significant. I will focus on the topos "Italy" specifically as it has been treated in fictional 20th and early 21st century German texts.

In order to explore this modern literary topos, the context of the early 1800s is important, when classicism was re-born in German intellectual circles. The *blühende Zitronen* and *glühende Goldorangen* in Goethe's *Mignon* poem became a leitmotif for the process of *Bildung* with reference to Italy (the term *Bildung* can be translated as "the development of the self through knowledge" (Mikics 40), or self-formation; the English "self-formation" and German *Bildung* will be used interchangeably). To this day, *Bildung* continues to play a central role in German culture, appearing in many facets of German society, from the *Bildungsbürger*, to *humanistische Bildung*, the *Bildungsanstalt*, and the *Ministerium für Bildung*. Beginning around 1800 during Weimar Classicism, with seminal works by Goethe (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–96)) and Christoph Martin Wieland (*Geschichte des Agathon* (1767)), the *Bildungsroman* has at its centre the narrative of self-formation.[1] Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause define this as a "Streben nach harmonischem Ausgleich zwischen Ich und Welt" (143).[2] The *Streben* is experienced

1 The term *Bildungsroman* was coined by Johann Karl Simon Morgenstern (1770–1852) and then further legitimised in 1870 and popularised in 1905 by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). For a discussion of the *Bildungsroman*, see for instance Franco Moretti; Martin Swales; Gerhart Mayer; Rolf Selbmann; Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause; and Todd Kontje. For a discussion of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy, see for instance Albert Meier, Heinz Holldack, Peter Gendolla, and Gunter Grimm et al.

2 This is in contrast to the European "societal" novel, which focusses rather on a prevailing social problem. Other related but (generally accepted as) distinct sub-genres, include the *Entwicklungsroman* (which focusses more on general growth, rather than self-cultivation), the *Erziehungsroman* (which focusses more on training and formal schooling), and the *Künstlerroman* (which fo-

by the protagonist, who transitions from youth to adulthood and has "Erlebnisse der Freundschaft und Liebe, über Krisen und Kämpfe mit den Realitäten der Welt", before ultimately reaching a "Klarheit des Bewußtseins" (Schweikle 53). While a *Bildungsroman* tells of this conflict between individual desire and societal norms, these struggles are usually reflected within the protagonist. In these narratives, it is particularly noteworthy that the subject of the narrative itself, and the value of the struggle through an arduous process of self-formation, are not questioned. We will see that the 20th and early 21st century narratives of travel to Italy continue to engage with these ideas of *Bildung*, but they begin to question the assumed value—and achievability—of this process of self-formation. This questioning has interesting implications for the way German authors imaginatively position themselves in relation to the southern European, Italian culture.

One aspect (of many) that is often associated with this "narrative" of *Bildung* is travel, particularly travel to Italy. Not only Greece, but also Italy was seen by Johann Joachim Winckelmann as a place in which to "access" Greek antiquity. As Albert Meier explains, for Winckelmann,

> [d]a Griechenland aus politischen und infrastrukturellen Gründen im 18. Jahrhundert nur schwer zugänglich war, konnte das klimatisch ähnliche und in der Antike zum großen Teil griechisch besiedelte Italien einen bequemen, zweckmäßigen Ersatz darstellen. (Meier 292)

Goethe cemented this idea. His published journal *Italienische Reise* plays a pivotal role in the 19th century shift away from the early Enlightenment tradition of travel for the sake of knowledge acquisition, towards travel for the sake of personal development (*Bildung*) through the "ästhetische[] Erfahrung des Südens" (Meier 291). This shift can also be seen in the closely related genre of travel literature, with the object of study becoming "der je individuelle Erkenntnisprozeß, nicht das fertige Resultat einer kompilatorischen Faktensammlung" (Neuber 59). The rationalist, "herkömmliche enzyklopädische Interesse" in Italy was gradually replaced by the primacy of the aesthetic and with it, a focus on the individual, on the "Kultivierung der Persönlichkeit des Reisenden" (Meier 291). This new captivation with Italy became a leitmotif for Weimar Neoclassicism. For Winckelmann, Italy was the place in which to experience, in both moral and sensual terms, a "voll entwickelte[] Persönlichkeit" (Meier 292). In Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, which expressed Winckelmann's ideals, Italy represents a rich feast for the senses and travelling there allowed "die harmonische Ausbildung sowohl der rationalen wie der ästhetischen Anlagen" (Meier 297). Forming the theoretical basis of Goethe's ideals is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Erziehungsideal eines autonomen und in sich ausgeglichenen Individuums, das gerade durch

cusses on the self-formation specifically of an artist). See for instance Ortrud Gutjahr 11–14.

seine optimal zum Tragen kommende Subjektivität für die Allgemeinheit wertvoll werden konnte" (Meier 297). Founded on these views, Goethe's *Italienische Reise* became a, if not the, central text in the German literary canon of the *Bildungsreise*, and Italy became the setting par excellence of such narratives.[3]

But how have ideas of *Bildung* and the articulation of German culture with reference to Italy changed in 20th and early 21st century narratives? While some have explored the 20th century literary treatment of "Italy" (most notably Gunter Grimm et al., Italo Michele Battafarano and Hildegard Eilert, and Ralf Czapla and Anna Fattori[4]), the research on this question is fairly limited. Given that the *Bildungsroman* and the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy are well researched, it is surprising that this research effort barely extends to the 20th and early 21st centuries.

In order to better understand how Germany, as expressed in its literary culture, continues to articulate and understand itself in relation to southern Europe, this monograph considers what has happened to the close connection between *Bildung* and travel to Italy. It approaches this question in two ways: firstly, by hypothesising that the 20th and early 21st century literature engages with "Italy" in a reflective manner, by showing its awareness of earlier texts and entering into a critical dialogue with them; secondly, I focus on texts that explore a significant shift in the epistemic paradigm underpinning "Italy". They reflect on their own role in reworking culturally held values and assumptions. As the texts engage with the broad topos of Italy, they consider not only its motifs, but also its epistemological dimensions.

Focussing on Italy as a topos elicits a richer investigation than if I were to focus on Italy as a motif in the literature. A motif is a narrower, situation-

3 It is worth noting that there are also many 19th century examples of the *Bildungsroman*. In the German tradition this includes for instance Karl Leberecht Immermann's *Die Epigonen* (1836), Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855), Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857), and works by Wilhelm Raabe. Beyond the German tradition there are many famous examples, for instance Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (1869) and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860). For a discussion of the 19th century German tradition, see for instance Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause.

4 In contrast to my work, Czapla and Fattori focus exclusively on Rome-literature and argue—in contrast to Grimm et al.—that Goethe's influence still reigns supreme. They do however also acknowledge that the 20th century Rome-experience is not a naïve one. And Battafarano and Eilert make similar points, for instance that the 20th century texts self-consciously engage with the topos, and that "[e]ine unpolitische Wahrnehmung Italiens, wie sie bei den Italienreisenden aus dem Norden bis dahin üblich war, [nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg] nicht mehr erlaubt", and that "die klassische deutsche Italiensicht […] obsolet [ist]" (Battafarano and Eilert 30).

bound element, the content of which can be described schematically (Schweikle 292). A topos, by contrast, encompasses an epistemological dimension. This is reflected in the disciplinary approach of *Toposforschung*, which Ernst Robert Curtius was instrumental in reviving in the 20th century, with his 1947–1948 publication *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. As Axel Fliethmann outlines, "Curtius' project was the first major attempt to explicitly retrieve philological *topoi* for epistemological purposes" ("Blumen Berg" 61). Epistemology "is concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge" (Craig 362). A topos, too, has an epistemic quality. Both epistemology and topoi share a concern with the validity of a statement as true knowledge. In ancient dialectics, "topos" referred to "ein Element der Methode, in Form eines Gesprächs kunstgerecht eine Untersuchung über eine Aussage zu führen, die nicht durch erste Gründe bewiesen oder widerlegt werden kann (Topik)" (Mittelstraß 322). This topological study of "Italy" investigates the shared cultural beliefs that are taken, by the texts, to be forms of knowledge, and evaluates the status of these beliefs. This approach should reveal epistemic shifts in the way authors engage with the fictional world (in this case the fictional Italy) in the search for self-understanding.

In the texts I study below, these epistemic shifts reveal themselves in relation to four themes: intertextuality, *memoria*, gender, and imagination, each of which, although distinct, constitute the topos' episteme. The epistemic qualities of a topos can express themselves in any number of ways, due to the changing content and shifting uses of meaning throughout history. This fluidity of a topos gives it central relevance for literary and cultural studies. As Thomas Schirren and Gert Ueding write, perhaps a topos' lack of clarity is its strength:

> Lothar Bornscheuer hat von der notwendigen Unschärfe gesprochen, die den Topikbegriff kennzeichnet, und diese Einschätzung ist seither vielfach selbst zu einem Topos geworden: die Polyvalenz des Begriffes scheint sich einer definitorischen Fixierung zu entziehen. (xiii)

Jürgen Mittelstraß agrees: "Dabei zeigt sich, daß die Unschärfe des Begriffs T[opos] einer der Gründe für die ungeheure Produktivität der Topik in der Geschichte der abendländischen Wissenschaften ist" (323). Wolfgang Müller even contends that an interesting engagement with a topos is one that reformulates and revitalises its various aspects: "Topoi können die Plattheit von 'Gemeinplätzen' annehmen. Sie können aber auch neu formuliert und neu gedeutet und damit revitalisiert werden" (666). This study of the literary "Italy" reaches beyond the presentation of motifs of the South, to reveal modern shifts in a wide range of cultural and philosophical assumptions.

By exploring the topos "Italy" and its shifting epistemic paradigms, this study also distinguishes itself from a broader study of travel literature. The texts do exhibit movement through space, as is characteristic of travel literature more broadly. And much of the literature engaging with Italy could be

considered through the lens of *Reiseliteratur* (some of the questions raised by the selected texts are also discussed in the scholarship on travel literature).[5] However, the spatial aspect in the context of a topos differs from that found in travel literature. Scholars of travel literature have drawn a distinction between a more "static" topos and the peripatetic "Raum" of travel literature. Christiane Weller suggests that in travel literature, "das alte Thema 'Raum' nicht so sehr als normativ festgestellter Topos, sondern vielmehr als Produkt einer sozialen Praxis verstanden [wird]" (Weller 14). Etymologically, this distinction is intuitive, given that "topos" comes from the Greek for "Ort", or 'common place'.[6] The foundation of a topos is the shared physical and philosophical experience of a "common place", whether or not this involves movement through space, which would be emphasised in travel literature. This study explores movement of a different kind. By analysing the selected texts under the 'umbrella' of the topos "Italy", rather than under that of "travel literature" more broadly, I focus on movement at the epistemic level, rather than at the level of travel as a motif.[7] I hope to learn from

5 They both stem from a bourgeois tradition, with travel in general—and to Italy specifically—having been undertaken primarily by a wealthy, educated class with the "Ziel der bürgerlichen Selbstbestimmung (im doppelten Wortverstand als '-definition' und '-behauptung')" (Neuber 61), at least until around the 20th century. Scholars of both areas have similar foci, such as the "Überschreitung der Genregrenzen" (Weller 9), shifts in the nature of the German engagement with the "Fremde" (see for instance Peter J. Brenner, "Der Reisebericht"), and changes in the genre over time (see for instance Wolfgang Neuber). While others focus on more specific aspects, such as travel in the city (see for instance Conrad Wiedemann (ed.), and Anke Gleber).

6 How to best translate "topos" has been debated. Walter Veit suggests that "[w]ir [...] das Wort [Gemeinplatz] nicht verwenden [können], da es seine ursprüngliche Bedeutung verloren hat. Deshalb behalten wir das griechische topos bei" (122). Rome's function as a "common ground" is expressed in the etymology of topos or *Ort*. Thomas Schirren and Gert Ueding argue that the etymology of "Topika", "als Substantivierung eines Adjektives topikón, das auf tópos, der Ort, zurückgeht, müßte [...] eigentlich mit 'zum Orte Gehöriges', 'Örtliches' oder 'Verortetes' übersetzt werden" (xiii).

7 It is worth noting, however, that the genre of travel literature—like any genre—also exhibits its own epistemic qualities in the form of shared assumptions. As Wolfgang Neuber observes of travel literature, "die Autonomieästhetik bleibt impliziter, unbefragter Maßstab" (51). Just as there was a shift in the German engagement with Italy in the early 1800s, away from the documentation of travel as a form of 'encyclopedic' knowledge, towards a more subject-focussed *Bildung*, there was also a shift in *Reiseliteratur* more broadly. In both cases, this presented itself in a metafictional development: "Durch die Verschiebung zugunsten eines autotelischen Erzählens steht zu-

these changes in the German literary engagement with Italy, to further understand the shifts in intellectual geography in the European context, and the shifts in the cultural values and concerns underpinning 20th and early 21st century German literature more broadly.

The selected texts challenge the notion of a static topos by reflecting on and facilitating a rupture with the central claims and assumptions underpinning the topos "Italy". Whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, the key assumption articulated by Winckelmann and Goethe is that travel to Italy will facilitate a process of *Bildung* that leads to greater harmony. If one faithfully follows this view, then it does seem that a topos can have a certain epistemic stasis. Supporting this idea, we see that to this day, German travel guides about Italy tend to emphasise (aesthetic) *Bildung*. But I will discuss texts that draw attention to, explore, and question these assumptions. By doing so, they bring movement into a supposedly static topos.

The works considered below are not the only texts to disrupt or challenge the assumptions and values that underpin and inform earlier narratives of Italy. Rather, subversion and revision are part of the topos itself. As John Zilcosky contends, in the context of Weimar Classicism "Goethe Oedipally [sic] attacks the neoclassicism of his father and Winckelmann, only to reclaim this demolished antiquity on his own terms" (423). Subversion is a stable fixture of the ever-changing topos. And increasingly, the texts come to self-consciously reflect on this. As Martin Donougho argues, for both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "art is essentially a trope, an image, a sign, and in the end it comes to signal that fact" (Donougho 428). The texts discussed below fit within this shift, as they increasingly signal that same fact. Their self-conscious signalling represents a "decisive[] [break] with [the] classical aesthetics" lauded in Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (Donougho 419). The texts share self-reflective characteristics, but the foci of their critiques differ to Goethe's, as does the nature of their subversions. Whereas Goethe (in *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*) critiqued Winckelmann for being preoccupied with himself but unable to observe himself with any accuracy (Goethe wrote, "daß er sich immer mit sich selbst beschäftigte, ohne sich eigentlich zu beobachten. Er denkt nur an sich, nicht über sich" (253)), the texts no longer strive for accuracy or for a classical unity between art and reality. They do not hope to unite the fictional and non-fictional

nehmend nicht mehr die Reise selbst, sondern die Darstellung derselben im Mittelpunkt" (Weller 11). As Weller further explains, the "Raumparadigma" becomes a "Fluchtpunkt in der Re-Evaluierung der Moderne an sich" (15). But travel literature is a broad and enormous field in its own right. Manfred Link was the first (in 1963) to attempt to put all forms of travel literature under one umbrella and define their shared characteristics, dividing the genre into four categories (Neuber 51). Travel literature exceeds the scope and focus of this study.

worlds. Rather, in their search for greater self-knowledge through the fictional world, they reflect on their inevitable failure to accurately know, or represent, themselves in the world.

Before turning our full attention to the six selected texts, it is worth further discussing the literary landscape that forms their intertextual backdrop. To discuss ideas about Italy and classicism from during the period of Weimar Classicism, I will turn to Thomas Mann's (1875–1955) *Der Tod in Venedig*. While this might seem a surprising place to turn, Mann's novella is the 20th century text that has most influenced the German imagination of Italy, and it reveals the continuing relevance of Weimar Classicism (particularly of Goethe and Schiller) on this topic. As Ellis Shookman makes clear in the opening pages of his overview of scholarship on the novella, *Der Tod in Venedig* has been referenced endlessly and in many contexts. Articles engaging with the novella reach far beyond literary scholarship into the realms of film, art, architecture, music, economics, law and justice (Shookman 1). It clearly holds a central position in the German consciousness. For this study, Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* cannot be ignored. In the novella, Mann engages with the Weimar Classicism of Goethe and Schiller "to preserve and develop a tradition of humanism that is distinctively German as well as European" (Bishop 22). In this respect, Mann's was a forward-looking conservatism that was less interested in accurately representing the past (as Winckelmann was in his *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*), and more in line with Goethe's approach, engaged with "classicism" for the purpose of defining what it means to be German and European. As Paul Bishop recognised, Mann's conservatism was, as Mann termed it in 1926, "a 'Zukunftskonservatismus' […], 'serene, removed from all crude, sentimental atavism', and a conservatism 'which, its eye fixed on the new, plays with old cultural forms, in order to rescue them from oblivion' (Bishop 22). In Mann's vision for the future—and the artist's role in this future—he consciously positioned himself in relation to the tradition of thought represented by Weimar Classicism.

Weimar Classicism, which was positioned within "the middle phase of Goethe's life (roughly 1786–1805)", represented "a reassertion of Classical aesthetic models that rejected all things redolent of mysticism and the Middle Ages, which in the early nineteenth century meant all things Romantic" (Nicholls, "Goethe the Writer" 194). Angus Nicholls describes the period as having "the sober Kantian influence of Schiller", as well as "balanced and formal qualities" (296). It is worth noting, however, that this apparent "opposition between the Classical and the Romantic" is not straightforward (Nicholls 294). Critics have claimed that "Weimar Classicism was in fact a 'legend' or 'pseudo-epoch' that was merely the retrospective ideological construction of a recently unified Germany in search of a national literature,

which meant that it was really only European Romanticism with a special German label" (296). Along with Jane Brown and others, Nicholls suggests

> that Weimar Classicism and early (Jena) German Romanticism are both attempts to deal [in poetic terms] with [...] the role played by art in mediating between human subjectivity and nature [...] within the broader context of post-Kantian European Romanticism. (299)

While I do not focus on this epoch-debate, the literary topos of the *Bildungsreise* in the 20th and early 21st centuries shares this preoccupation with the role of art in "mediating between human subjectivity" and their world(s) (Nicholls 299).

While Mann celebrated Weimar Classicism, he also saw it as an ideology that contained the kernel of its own demise. In the opening pages of *Der Tod in Venedig*, Mann directly references Schiller's essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* and, by extension, Weimar Classicism:

> Der Autor der klaren und mächtigen Prosa [...], deren ordnende Kraft und antithetische Beredsamkeit ernste Beurteiler vermochte, sie unmittelbar neben Schillers Raisonnement über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung zu stellen: Gustav Aschenbach also war zu L., einer Kreisstadt der Provinz Schlesien, als Sohn eines höheren Justizbeamten geboren. Seine Vorfahren waren Offiziere, Richter, Verwaltungsfunktionäre gewesen, Männer, die im Dienste des Königs, des Staates ihr straffes, anständig karges Leben geführt hatten. Innigere Geistigkeit hatte sich einmal, in der Person eines Predigers, unter ihnen verkörpert; rascheres, sinnlicheres Blut war der Familie in der vorigen Generation durch die Mutter des Dichters, Tochter eines böhmischen Kapellmeisters, zugekommen. (*TiV* 507 f.)[8]

Here we learn that Mann's protagonist Aschenbach is an heir to this bourgeois tradition. He is a "devotee of classicism" (Robertson 97) and is "part of a German literary tradition represented by Winckelmann, Goethe, and Platen" (Shookmann 244). However, "Aschenbach's classicism has an unacknowledged underside" inherited from his mother and revealed "in his romantic affinities and his repressed emotions" (Shookman 244). While celebrating Weimar Classicism, Mann attempts to conserve the period's values for a changing future, by presenting Aschenbach's career as a case-study in what Ritchie Robertson labels the "pitfalls" of classicism (96).

Although *Der Tod in Venedig* unfolds from Aschenbach's perspective, Mann undermines his own protagonist's views. Aschenbach's imagination is saturated with the illusions of Goethe's Weimar Classicism. As Goethe apparently said to Johann Peter Eckermann on 2 April 1829—in what has become one of his most famous sentences—, "Das Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke" (Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe* 92). But Mann blurs any clear divide between the northern Apollonian and the south-

8 *TiV* for *Der Tod in Venedig*.

ern Dionysian, the Romantic and the Classical, the "sick" and the "healthy". The novella begins with Aschenbach longing for change, having grown tired of his strict, bourgeois work routine, which had led to his success, but had also tamed his emotions into submission. While his strict routine (inherited from his father's northern, Apollonian side) led to his literary success, this success is vulnerable to being destabilised by his Dionysian emotions (inherited from his mother's side). The original imbalance in Aschenbach's Apollonian-dominated personality leads to a dangerous overcompensation when his emotions, and his infatuation with the attractive boy Tadzio, lead to his demise. Aschenbach's conceptualisation of the differences between the North and South are also undermined when we learn that Tadzio—whom Aschenbach sees as embodying the classical, aesthetic perfection of Greek antiquity—is in fact not Italian, but rather Polish, from the North.

Aschenbach initially uses Classicism to justify his obsession with Tadzio, convincing himself that he enjoys Tadzio's beauty in classical terms, likening him to the Spinario statue of the boy extracting a thorn.[9] As long as his obsession with Tadzio falls within the category of distant, classical aesthetic appreciation, Aschenbach represents Goethe's and Schiller's classical ideals. But Aschenbach's desire for Tadzio strays far from distant, aesthetic appreciation. Increasingly, Mann has Aschenbach involved in mental gymnastics: classicism appears to be an excuse perhaps not only to mask Aschenbach's desire, but also a broader cultural failure to acknowledge that deep physical and emotional desires are a fundamental aspect of human nature. This includes homosexual desire. As he becomes emotionally invested in the boy, Aschenbach's appreciation of Tadzio becomes intertwined with homosexual desire. In Schiller's view, aesthetic appreciation can lead to moral behaviour.[10] But in Aschenbach's attempt to embody Schiller's approach of a distant, classical aesthetic, he suppresses his emotion, which leads him to the immoral decision not to inform Tadzio's family of the deadly cholera out-

9 As Ritchie Robertson makes clear, this is "a Greek statue formerly thought to date from the fifth century BC, but now considered Hellenistic" (101 f.).

10 In his essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, Schiller draws on Kantian aesthetics, with nature playing a key role in his definition of naivety. In Schiller's view, art, in contrast to nature, is not naïve. Art is doomed to fail as it strives to embody the naivety of nature. Nonetheless, Schiller claims that it is necessary to strive for this naivety, because doing so brings one closer to morality: "[d]araus erhellet, daß diese Art des Wohlgefallens an der Natur kein ästhetisches (auf die Schönheit gerichtetes), sondern ein moralisches (sittliches) ist […]. Es sind nicht diese Gegenstände, es ist eine durch sie dargestellte Idee, was wir in ihnen lieben […]. Sie sind, was wir waren; sie sind, was wir wieder werden sollen. Wir waren Natur wie sie, und unsere Kultur soll uns auf dem Wege der Vernunft und der Freiheit zur Natur zurückführen" (Schiller 4 f.).

break in Venice. Culturally, the northern, Apollonian control is rewarded. Afterall, Aschenbach's literary work is lauded by the state when he receives the honorary title of "von Aschenbach" (*TiV* 501). But inherent in Aschenbach's control is his own downfall. Mann exposes a tension and instability that underpins the bourgeois, classical humanism that Aschenbach represents.

Aschenbach's demise symbolises the demise of classicism. Although Mann admired Weimar Classicism—in Mann's writings "Schiller emerges [...] as almost saintly" (Bishop 30)—in contrast to Goethe and Schiller, Mann "was 'attached to nothing that did not emanate from himself'" and was open to exploring whether or not classical humanism could survive (Bishop 30). In contrast to Goethe's comparably outward-looking engagement with the world, Mann's works are more focussed on the inner world of the individual. This difference reveals "a central divergence in aesthetic principles between, on the one hand, Thomas Mann, and, on the other hand, Goethe, Schiller, and the school of Weimar classicism" (Bishop 30).

The texts considered in detail below follow in Thomas Mann's footsteps by continuing this intellectual mapping, seeking to articulate the relationship between the subject and their world with reference to Italy. Inevitably, they frequently do so with *Der Tod in Venedig* in the back—if not the forefront—of their minds. Rather than dedicate a chapter to Mann's novella—which would mean following a well-trodden path—this discussion of *Der Tod in Venedig* sits in the introduction above the other texts, like a giant in whose shadow they mingle. The debates introduced here by *Der Tod in Venedig* continue to inform many literary engagements with Italy. By introducing *Der Tod in Venedig* here, in the chapters below I can focus on uncovering significant, under-researched texts that offer unique perspectives and afford new insights.

Structurally, I will dedicate the first half of this study to three texts that are particularly self-conscious about their own intertextuality. As was most common shortly before and shortly after the Second World War, the three texts engage particularly closely with Thomas Mann's understanding of the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. In the second half, I will turn my attention to texts that have different observational foci. Even if Mann's works continue to offer a textual paradigm for later post-war texts, they increasingly take a step away from a direct intertextual fascination with Mann and, in the case of the last three texts analysed below, focus on *memoria*, gender, and imagination respectively.

The first chapter is dedicated to Thomas Mann's novella *Mario und der Zauberer* (1929). The novella introduces the self-reflective characteristics seen throughout the texts analysed below. Mann's novella begins to challenge numerous cultural assumptions and values that counted as *given*—as epistemic

truths—in earlier narratives of Italy. By narrating Italy, Mann evaluates the very soul of the German author's culture. Narratives of Italy

> spiegeln [...] nicht nur die Persönlichkeit dessen wieder, der sich niederschrieb, sondern sie zeigen auch den geistigen Bereich auf, aus dem der Schreiber stammt und in dem er sich bewegt. Es ist so, als ob die Deutschen immer von neuem ihren eigenen Standpunkt mit den Maßen Italiens vergleichen und mit ihnen in Beziehung setzen wollten. Und daher ist die Geschichte der deutschen Italienauffassung ein Ausschnitt aus der allgemeinen deutschen Geistesgeschichte. (Holldack 285)

The *geistige Bereich* Mann inherited in the early 20th century includes the assumption that the traveller and narrator (usually presented as one individual) can be a fairly objective observer who maintains a high degree of rational distance. He (unlikely she) comes to Italy as an outsider in order to be transformed through an experience of (aesthetic) *Bildung*. The *geistige Bereich* also includes the assumption that the protagonist is male. The rational, male traveller is often destabilised, and then transformed, by an encounter with a (usually feminine) Italian or the place Italy itself. There is frequently "eine Art gefährlicher Widergänger oder vielmehr Widergängerin, die dem jungen Mann das Selbst zu nehmen droht" (Gendolla 73). Commonly, this culminates in the imagery of a *Wiedergeburt*. We see a rational Germany and a seductive Italy: "Italien, das Gegenbild Deutschlands im Guten wie im Bösen: Dem nüchternen Deutschland steht Italien, Land der Schönheit und der Kunst, Land der gefährlichen Verlockungen, verführerisch und bedrohlich gegenüber" (1). The "verpflichtete Bildungsprogramm der deutschen Klassik" was accompanied by a particular "Humanitäts- und Fortschrittsgedanke" (Battafarano and Eilert 100), and a belief in the "rationale Beherrschung aller Verhältnisse" (Grimm 23). In the name of progress, the traveller strove towards an ideal that was located in antiquity, accessible in Italy, and ready for adaptation to contemporary society. Goethe had promised transformation and outlined how to achieve it: travel to Italy to come into contact with the "living unity of Greek art" and its exemplary antique character (Grossmann 114 f.). Hope, suggests Goethe, is located in the aesthetics of antiquity, which are to be found in Italy.

Beginning with Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, we see the selected 20th and early 21st century authors critically grappling with this "normativity" (that is seen more easily in hindsight). The "Beziehung deutschen Wesens zu Italien" reveals, as Heinz Holldack argues, this classical "normativen Wert" (in contrast to "die romantisch-historische Betrachtungsweise") (285). It is this normativity, and in particular the assumption of rational distance, that Thomas Mann (1875–1955), Wolfgang Koeppen (1906-1996) and Gert Hofmann (1931–1993) resist and subvert in their texts. In *Mario und der Zauberer*, Thomas Mann challenges the trope of the distant, rational, German observer in Italy. This challenge reverberates in the works by Koeppen and

Hofmann. Together, the three texts form a close intertextual relationship. In *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) and *Mario und der Zauberer* (1929), Mann's narrators are unable to maintain a distant, rational position.[11] Both protagonists remain very close to, and engage directly with, the *bildungsbürgerliche* ideal of aesthetic *Bildung*, while beginning to articulate its indefensibility.

Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* (1954) continues Mann's critical evaluation by entertaining two pronounced intertextual relations: explicitly with *Der Tod in Venedig* (as indicated immediately by the title) and implicitly, as I will show, with *Mario und der Zauberer*. Set in the fascist context of World War Two Rome, *Der Tod in Rom* critically radicalises and undermines Rome's perceived promise of aesthetic *Bildung*, or self-formation. Already in 1954, *Der Tod in Rom* seems to have rendered earlier literary attitudes irredeemable and invalid.

But the relevance of these literary concerns has remarkable longevity. In 1982, Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* interacts with the very same intertext, drawing closely on Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*. *Bildung* still drives Hofmann's text, albeit in a "negative" sense, as something that he mocks. Hofmann's engagement with ideas of *Bildung* is less politically "utopian" than in the 1800s, when the mandatory "Bildungsprogramm" (Battafarano and Eilert 100) was championed by Goethe, who believed that

> die antike Kunst nicht tot oder unwiederbringlich untergangen [war]. Sie lebte vielmehr, indem sie belebte. Als Betrachter fühlte [Goethe] sich verwandelt, neu geboren. Das war das Ergebnis der geistigen und seelischen Beziehung zum Gegenstand seiner Betrachtung. (Traeger 48)

Literary admirers of Goethe presented Italy as promising an "Erfahrung, die nicht nur die antike Kultur wiederbelebt, sondern den Prozess der Selbstausbildung des Reisenden [...] in Gang setzt" (Gendolla 39). Although Goethe introduced the idea, central to the *Bildungsroman*, of (internal) struggle being necessary, he did not doubt the premise that *Bildung* is ultimately attainable:

> [D]er nordische Reisende glaubt, er komme nach Rom, um ein Supplement seines Daseins zu finden, auszufüllen, was ihm fehlt; allein er wird erst nach und nach mit großer Unbehaglichkeit gewahr, daß er ganz den Sinn ändern und von vorn anfangen müsse. (Goethe, *Italienische Reise* 257)

Goethe's ideas continue to dominate, as seen in Sitzler-Sawicki's assertion that "der Hauptgrund der Reise in das Sehnsuchtsland [immer noch] die Kulturreise [ist]" (23). In *Auf dem Turm*, Hofmann engages with these ideas,

11 One central example for this model of aesthetic *Bildung* is provided by Friedrich Schiller, who suggested that through aesthetic education one could brave political corruption, become a better person, and have a positive influence on a corrupt political state (see for instance Hans Feger (ed.) 31).

demonstrating that they do remain influential. But he also taunts this Goethean promise of self-formation, presenting it as somewhat utopian.[12] Like Mann and Koeppen, Hofmann draws attention to his own departure from this belief. Stylistically, Hofmann goes even further. In contrast to the doubt and despair articulated in *Mario und der Zauberer* and in *Der Tod in Rom* respectively, Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* articulates a dark irony and enjoys undermining Italy's perceived promise of self-formation.

All three works—by Mann, Koeppen and Hofmann—are examples of particularly intertextual engagements with Italy. They bring into question the image of the rational, German (often male) protagonist who, as the hero of the *Bildungs*-narrative, loses, transforms, and re-finds himself in Italy. They each represent intertextual versions of the same subversive gesture towards the promise of an aesthetic *Bildung*. Although the intertext is treated highly critically and subverted, it is clearly not forgotten. Rather, the intertextual fascination with Italy continues. Contributing to the same intertext, Koeppen and Hofmann follow in Mann's self-reflective footsteps.

Friedrich Christian Delius' (1943*) *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* (2006)—the focus of the fourth chapter—challenges a different aspect of the *geistigen Bereichs*, a different normative assumption evoked by "Italy". In contrast to the classical, Goethean celebration of the "eternal city" of Rome, Delius self-consciously studies the historical shifts in the meaning with which the Italian capital has been imbued. By reflecting on the varied cultural roles played by "Rome", the novella also questions Italy's eternal promise of *Bildung*. The historical relativism of *Bildung* that Delius narrates, runs counter to the neoclassical idealisation of antiquity, in which nature and art find their perfect, eternally resonant unity in the "beruhigend Immer-Gültige" (Holldack 288). Czapla and Fattori argue that the post-war authors cannot free themselves from this canon, with Goethe still reigning supreme. But Delius' text adds complexity by placing the canon in historical context, showing that what endures from the so-called "eternal city" is its ever-shifting nature; each text has its own "geistesgeschichtliche[] und persönliche[] Position[]" (Eickmeyer 125). While the works of Mann, Koeppen, and Hofmann engage in a defined, literary, intertextual dialogue, Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* expands the archive beyond literature to explore a process of *Bildung* facilitated by *memoria* and material artefacts. This is something that Rolf Dieter Brinkmann also explores in *Rom, Blicke*, as I will discuss in the chapter

12 Anecdotally, Richard Block also considers Goethe's narration of Italy to be utopian. He contends that "Goethe's real education in Italy is learning to become a master illusionist" (9), seducing "future writers to seek in Italy a classical or artistic ideal that was in fact never there to be found and, as a result, sends legions of writers on a chase that can only end in disillusionment and turn up traces of deception" (2).

on Delius. While Delius' narrator peers over his pregnant mother's shoulder as she walks through wartime Rome, he, in 2006 at the time of narration, "reads" a different narrative from the physical parchment of the city. Rome serves as a material bridge between past and present, between the protagonist's walk through Rome and the reader's walk through the text. Upon the parchment of "Rome" Delius inscribes a topos of *memoria* that offers the reader a chance to imaginatively re-create the city while "walking" through the textual Rome.

By contrast, in Bodo Kirchhoff's (1948*) *Widerfahrnis* we see a reassertion of the more "traditional" roles of male and female characters. Typically, German-language Italy-narratives have been populated almost exclusively by bourgeois, white, male protagonists, who travel to Italy with the hope of attaining (aesthetic) *Bildung* by "encountering the foreign". Kirchhoff's novella—with *Encounter*, or *Widerfahrnis*, as its title—reproduces this trope. The protagonist unreflectively and uncritically reproduces gender stereotypes. In Goethe's case, these stereotypes were validated by the belief in a universally valid "character type", or *Weltbürger*. Goethe believed, for instance, that in Italy he would come closer to articulating

> ewige[] und unabänderliche[] Naturkräfte, und die Aufgabe des Dichters scheint ihm, das einzelne Menschendasein ideal, d.h. als Vertreter eines allgemein gültigen Typus darzustellen, wobei durch die Ableitung aus natürlichen Bedingungen und Grundkräften die schematische und unlebendige Abstraktion vermieden werden soll. (Holldack 288)

From this perspective, a retreat from the political and historical is valid. As Holldack argues, "[z]unächst bedingt diese Anschauung die Abkehr von Politik und Geschichte. Denn die historische Betrachtung geht auf die Feststellung des Einmaligen und Einzigartigen aus; sie läuft Gefahr, im Relativismus zu enden"; Goethe had a "Verlangen nach dem Begreifen des Gesetzmäßigen [eine] Abneignung gegen Politik und Historie" (288); his worldview was underpinned by the search for a "Weltbürgertum" (289).

But this "universal" *Weltbürger* "happened" to be particularly white, particularly European, and particularly male. The class, race, gender, and historical context in which the "universal traveller" is positioned, are more obvious today. Viewed in retrospect, the narrated "Italy" tells us less about Italy, and more about the German protagonist. Richard Block identifies this in Goethe's case, arguing that Goethe "wanted to cut himself off from the real Italy", which served "as a repository for the repressed or censored remnants of German classicism" (4). In a discussion of 19th century narratives, Gendolla goes so far as to suggest that Italy became a name, "der nichts als eine Projektionsfläche bezeichnet; Leinwand, Schirm, leere Tafel einer durch tradierte Fragmente wohl angeregten, schließlich aber freigelassenen Fantasie" (13).

In an approach reminiscent of such 19th century Italy-narratives, we see in Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* a yearning to reintroduce these *Geheimnisse*, through various *encounters* in Italy. As Martin Donougho observes, "[n]o longer are there any 'mysteries' (*Geheimnisse*) which the artist feels compelled to display: everything has been exposed. The religious motivation of the artist is empty; man has only himself, *Humanus*, as a sacred image" (Donougho 427). In 2016, *Widerfahrnis* attempts to reproduce the universal *Weltbürger* who is able to see Italy as a mysterious, feminine "other" onto which the protagonist can project his desires. Ostensibly, the text is about the so-called "refugee crisis", with the white male pensioner relaying his encounter with "the migrant Other" (Steckenbiller 75). But I will unpack *Widerfahrnis*' gender-dynamic, which is inherited from Goethe's *geistigem Bereich* but is less culturally palatable today. *Widerfahrnis*' reproduction of these 19th century tropes elicited in me (and in Steckenbiller and other scholars) a cultural cringe that actually helps to expose cultural shifts in relation to gender roles and brings into question the idea of the *Weltbürger* and the promise of *Bildung* that Goethe used Italy to fashion.

Widerfahrnis plays with the metafictional conundrum about the political, narrating the protagonist's desire to escape his mental world in favour of leading a more political life. But there is no ongoing process of *Bildung*, because the protagonist believes he is "fully formed" due to his encounters with "mysterious" women, girls, and refugees in Southern Italy. His resurrection of a contemporary *Bildungs*-narrative collapses, in contrast to the other texts, which do not attempt to resurrect, but rather reflectively and ironically interrogate Goethe's Italian episteme.

In the final chapter, I will discuss Bettina Blumenberg's (1947*) novella *Vor Spiegeln*, which forms a stark contrast to Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis*. Blumenberg's novella undermines the assumption that the protagonist of a literary Italian journey is male[13] and that the authority of the travel narrative comes from the protagonist having been in Italy. Instead, the authority of Blumenberg's protagonist comes from her imagination, which performatively alters assumed gender roles.

The novella resists the dominant intertext that precedes it.[14] Simply by having a female protagonist travelling to Italy, *Vor Spiegeln* is unusual:

> Die jahrhundertalte literarische Tradition ist bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg vorwiegend durch zwei Typenstränge gekennzeichnet: Die in Italien spielen-

13 In this respect, with its female protagonist, Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* also weakens assumptions of masculinity in the literary tradition.

14 A product of his time, even Goethe, in his seminal work *Italienische Reise*, made comments such as the following, when referring to Angelika Kauffmann on 18 August 1787: "Sie hat ein unglaubliches und als Weib wirklich ungeheures Talent" (230).

> den Werke deutscher Schriftsteller sind entweder fast ausschließlich von Italienern und Italienerinnen bevölkert, oder es sind Deutsche männlichen Geschlechts, die in Romanen und Novellen nach Süden aufbrechen [...]. Ganz selten ist es der Fall, daß die Beziehung einer deutschen Frau zu einem Italiener in Italien thematisiert wird. (Battafarano and Eilert 153 f.)

If Germany and Italy are assigned gender roles, Germany is generally presented as the male or masculine, Italy as the female or feminine (Battafarano and Eilert 154 f.). Historically, the protagonist has often been self-fashioned as an honourable German, in contrast to a more sensual Italy or Italian:

> Konzentration auf Äußerlichkeit und auf die Liebe wurde den Italienern immer wieder als Kernpunkte ihres Wesens bescheinigt, während der Deutsche sich gern zum treuen, ehrlichen und tapferen Mann stilisierte. [...] Goethe bezeichnete 1816 daher gemäß einer bereits konsolidierten Tradition und selbst wieder traditionsbildend in seiner *Italienischen Reise* die Italiener als 'ganz sinnliches Volk'. (Battafarano and Eilert 155)

Battafarano and Eilert's description of the "common" male protagonist rings true for many texts, including Gert Hofmann's (critically and ironically presented) protagonist in *Auf dem Turm*. But in addition to Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln*, a few exceptions do exist. In his novel *Die Rote*, Alfred Andersch "dreht [...] die traditionelle Rollenverteilung um" (Battafarano and Eilert 155). And most famously, Ingeborg Bachmann had a close relationship to Italy and critically engaged with ideas of "gender", "male" and "female", as I will discuss in the final chapter on Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln*.

Although Bachmann's contribution is most famous, Blumenberg's self-conscious narration of a female protagonist contributes a unique and fascinating narrative that deserves greater attention. While Bachmann's exploration of the suppression of a female literary voice on the one hand, and her interest in Italy, on the other, tend not to overlap in her key works, Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* offers a compelling exploration of both. Blumenberg's 1983 novella exposes a new development in Italy-narratives. Unsurprisingly, the novella is also reflective about the process of *Bildung*, but it offers a unique perspective on this process. Particularly through the technique of narrating a journey undertaken to Italy purely in the protagonist's imagination, Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* explores how to narrate a female voice into the cultural *Italienbild*.

In intriguing ways, each of the six texts analysed in detail below revise various cultural assumptions underpinning the literary topos "Italy". In the 18th century, Goethe was fascinated with Italy, using southern Europe to define a distinctly German, national culture. This fascination continues to this day. Germany continues to understand itself in relation to its southern European, now fellow European Union member state. But the self-knowledge that Italy facilitates, has shifted. The texts now engage with Italy to interrogate the cultural truths and the epistemic assumptions that they inherit from their

literary forebears. Although the authors redefine themselves, they continue their cultural mapping of these topics along a North-South divide; the intellectual geography of Europe remains important.

The idea of *Bildung* with reference to "Italy" continues to sustain rigorous debate in the selected texts. However, the longstanding promise of self-formation associated with Italy has lost validity within the 18th century terms of the tradition. As expressed in *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, Goethe considered Winckelmann unable to observe and represent himself, despite being preoccupied with himself (253). With this accusation, Goethe introduced his literary attempt to observe and understand himself with reference to the natural and the fictional world, as seen in his engagement with artworks, sculpture, and the natural world in Italy. The texts I will discuss below continue to explore how the fictional world can facilitate greater self-understanding. They transform the fictional Italy into a "commonplace" in which to ironically and reflectively probe literature's ability to facilitate the subject's understanding of their position in the world. The texts' probing facilitates an epistemic shift, as we will see through the themes into which this monograph is divided: intertextuality (Mann, Koeppen, Hofmann), *memoria* (Delius), a white, male nostalgia for Goethe's Italy (Kirchhoff), and the performative powers of imagination (Blumenberg). While the German literary classics of the Italian *Bildungsreise* continue to resonate in these texts, they are self-consciously treated ironically, radicalised, and subverted. The mo-dern texts revise the ideal of a universal process of *Bildung*—and the promise of its achievability—by adding an essential subtlety in which gender, class, race, and historical context become the more defining aspects of the topos. But perhaps most importantly, the texts tend to acknowledge and accept responsibility for their capacity to perpetuate or alter culturally held values and assumptions. As we will see, they share a metafictional self-reflectivity, as they consider their own textual contributions in the areas of intertextuality, *memoria*, gender, and imagination.

2. Intertextuality

Thomas Mann's works form the bedrock of 20th and early 21st century explorations of the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. As such, this first chapter is dedicated to one of Mann's works—*Mario und der Zauberer*—and this first section focusses on close intertextual engagements with Mann's literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. This attention on Mann's work, and on two intertextual preoccupations with it, serves also as a meaningful platform for the second half of this discussion. Although the texts considered in the second section stray beyond a direct intertextual focus, Mann's works continue to hold an implicit paradigmatic position.

2.1 Re-evaluating the literary *Bildungsreise*: Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*

In his 1929 novella *Mario und der Zauberer: Ein tragisches Reiseerlebnis*, Thomas Mann self-consciously considers the literary "Italy". Although Mann's protagonist undertakes a *Bildungsreise* to Italy, the narrator scrutinises his hope of aesthetic *Bildung*. As such, the narrator divides his *narrating* self and his *narrated* self (who is his past self, the protagonist). The narrator presents his past behaviour as indefensible, but he simultaneously attempts to justify this past behaviour, in order to maintain a coherent narrative. In this case, the narrator is both the narrated and the narrating character. In this, I follow Hartmut Böhme's distinction between the two levels of narration: "Damit tritt der Erzähler, der auf der Handlungsebene passiver Betrachter ist, auf der Reflexionsebene als interpretationsaktive Instanz hervor. Der Erzähler ist also nicht nur vom Autor, sondern auch in sich selbst zu unterscheiden" (168).[15] By balancing these two contradictory narrative layers within himself, the narrator re-evaluates the hope of aesthetic *Bildung* with reference to "Italy". A naivety about "Italy's" promise of aesthetic *Bildung* is lost, and the loss of this naivety occurs, by no coincidence, in 1929 during the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. If the literary "Italy" has historically facilitated *Bildung*, then what role can "Italy" play in this 1929 context, in which the narrator articulates not a formation, but rather a crisis of self-understanding?

The historical context for Mann's re-evaluation of aesthetic *Bildung* is important. The fictional events were inspired by a trip to Italy that Mann went on with his family, from 31st August until 13th September in 1926. Mann travelled, with his wife Katia and his two youngest children Elisabeth and Mi-

15 Gérard Genette has used the term "homodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator" to describe the same narratological set up (Genette 228–234).

chael, to the holiday location Forte dei Marmi.[16] Set in the Italian town "Torre di Venere", the novella is closely based on this trip. This technique of narrating lived experiences was common for Mann, as Rolf Renner recognises: "Verwischung der Grenze zwischen Text und Leben, Literatur und Wirklichkeit" define "Thomas Manns Schreibweise" (263). At the time of their trip, Italy was already, at least in practice, ruled by a fascist regime. It was at this point that

> sich die faschistische Bewegung in Form einer totalitären Einparteiendiktatur institutionalisierte. Alle Parteien außer der faschistischen wurden verboten, die Pressefreiheit beseitigt und die Freimaurerei als Stütze des alten Liberalismus in Italien unterdrückt (Ognibene 66).

In April of that year, strikes were forbidden (Pörnbacher 23). Mann's trip to Forte dei Marmi in 1926 provided him the opportunity to observe a fascist regime firsthand.

The rise of fascism, not only in Italy but also in Germany, influenced Mann's shifting ideas about aesthetic *Bildung*, which are analysed in the novella. Mann wrote to Henry Hartfield on 20 April 1947: "'Im Grunde war die Novelle wohl eine erste Kampfhandlung gegen das, was damals schon die europäische Gesamtatmosphäre erfüllte und durch den Krieg nicht aus ihr vertrieben worden ist'" (qtd. in Sautermeister 136). As Müller-Salget picks up, "[h]ier polemisiert Thomas Mann gegen eine umfassende antirationale, anti-aufklärerische Tendenz in Philosophie und Politik" (53). Elisabeth Galvan also notes that the rise of fascism in Germany influenced Mann's desire to write about his experiences a few years after the trip to Italy (5). In Germany, Mann's contemporaries read the novella as a "Warnung vor der Vergewaltigung durch das diktatorische Wesen" (Müller-Salget 63). In the three years between Mann's holiday and his narration of the events, fascism strengthened in both Italy and Germany. Hans Vaget contends that "die Befürchtung, auch Deutschland könnte sich einem finsteren Zauberer á la Cipolla überantworten", was the political concern preoccupying Mann at the time (Vaget 597). In his 1939 essays *Bruder Hitler*, Mann described "den 'Führer' als Künstler"; Mann's concern with manipulative, charismatic leaders comes to life through the literary figure Cipolla, who is a manipulative magician and hypnotist (Müller-Salget 57).

Hypnotism was also a common contemporary interest, which the novella focusses on as it re-evaluates the contemporary *Bildungsbürgertum*. The contemporary relevance of hypnotism made Mann's philosophical exploration relatable to the contemporary reader. As Gert Sautermeister argues, "in den zwanziger Jahren dieses Jahrhunderts waren hypnotische Veranstaltungen eine häufig wiederkehrende Sensation" (32). The performance of hypnotism in the novella is even based on a performance that Mann visited in Italy:

16 For further biographical details of the trip see Fabio Ognibene.

"Mann [erhob] den Hypnotiseur C. Gabrielli, auf dessen Veranstaltung im September 1926 *Mario und der Zauberer* zurückgeht [...], zur literarischen Figur" (Beller 246).[17] Mann's narration of hypnotism in the novella illustrates his main metaphysical concerns: "Das metaphysische Problem der Willensfreiheit, die Frage nach der Möglichkeit der Triebkontrolle durch den Intellekt, die Dialektik von Form, Unform und Überform im Sinne Kristiansens" (Reinhard 138). As Georg Lukács perceives it, *Mario und der Zauberer* reveals "the helplessness of the German middle class faced by the hypnotic power of fascism" (84). The historical reality of fascism led Mann to re-evaluate his understanding of the role of aesthetic *Bildung* (especially for the *Bildungsbürgertum*).

In this context, as fascism spread across Europe, Mann presents his *bildungsbürgerlichen* narrator-protagonist in an ambiguous light. As a representative of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, his protagonist holds dear the self-prescribed traits of rational and intellectual distance and superiority. In turn, these values shape the nature of the aesthetic *Bildung* that he expects during his *Bildungsreise* to Italy. By directly appealing to the reader in this context, the narrator also involves the reader and their assumptions about this tradition. By appealing to the reader from the position of a German intellectual in the context of Italy, Mann follows the literary tradition represented by Winckelmann and Goethe. As Lukas Bauer argued, Goethe also used Italy as a setting to discuss German politics; in Goethe's case, "Italy" enabled him to respond "to the debate about German identity and what a unified Germany should look like" (5). Mann uses Italy to challenge the assumed connection between a rational, intellectual traveller and the process of aesthetic *Bildung*. By criticising his own narrator, Mann questions the status of the intellectual German as the representative of a contemporary aesthetic *Bildung*. In 1918, in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* and in his letters, Mann had expressed the view that an author should present various opinions without advocacy from a distanced, rational perspective.[18] But in *Mario und der Zauberer*, Mann re-evaluates and challenges this assumption. He questions the ability of the *italienische Reise*—so long as it has these implicit assumptions—to promise a coherent process of *Bildung*, particularly in the context of fascism. Gary Schmidt goes so far as to suggest that the narrator "reflects the [shifting] position of the author Thomas Mann" (310). Hermann Kurzke supports this reading of Mann's shifting political views, noting that "[d]ie Wandlung zum Republikaner [...] der wichtigste und meistkommentierte Vorgang der Bio-

17 It is interesting to note that the link between hypnotism and manipulation was commonly considered at the time (Dierks 88) and Mann informed himself about the "Hypnose- und Suggestionstherapie" (Dierks 73), with the novella closely following the hypnotist Forel's description of hypnotism (Dierks 87).

18 For a further discussion of this, see Elisabeth Galvan 15.

graphie Thomas Manns [ist]. Wie kam es dazu? [...] ['K]urz, durch das Heraufkommen des Faschismus'" (30). Kurzke believes that Mann's political views shifted due to the rise of fascism, and that this shift is evident in the novella (although it is worth noting that this shift began even earlier, with the murder of the German Foreign Secretary Walther Rathenau in 1922). Mann articulates a crisis of self-understanding by questioning the position of the narrator and the common assumptions of aesthetic *Bildung* that he brings to his *italienische Reise*.[19]

This analysis adds a new perspective to the existing scholarship by focussing on the way that *Mario und der Zauberer* re-evaluates assumptions of rational and intellectual distance that underpin previous literary *Bildungsreisen* to Italy. Scholars, such as Gert Sautermeister, have focussed on the narrator's decision not to leave Cipolla's performance. Readings of the text as political, which place the novella in the Italian fascist context, are also commonplace.[20] But as Vaget points out, the novella received "eine widersprüchliche Einschätzung" (596). Hans Mayer and Gert Sautermeister, for instance, emphasise the political content, and Kurzke focusses on the ethical. Even Mann's own comments about the novella shift from emphasising predominantly the ethical to then also the political (Vaget 597). Critics (such as Gary Schmidt, Nadja Reinhard, and Claudia Liebrand) have also frequently focussed on the narrator's use of his children as a shield for his behaviour. But in my reading of the novella, the children serve to reveal the narrator's re-evaluation of his own self-understanding. Numerous scholars focus on the narrator's similarities to the magician Cipolla, as well as his inability to identify the contradictions in his behaviour and his irrationality.[21] This supports my reading of the narrator as attempting to present himself as distanced from Cipolla, as coherent, as rational, and as a passive observer, while simultaneously revealing that he is in fact not a passive observer. Rather, he reveals his own complicity.[22] Mann creates a tension between the protagonist's complicity in fascism, and the narrator's attempts to justify this past

19 It is interesting to note that Goethe's narrative of Italy also served to articulate an "inherent ambivalence of his representation of Italy and of his German self" (Bauer 17).

20 See for instance Gert Sautermeister, Klaus Müller-Salget, Karl Pörnbacher, and Eva Geulen.

21 This includes Nadja Reinhard, Gary Schmidt, Andrew Webber, Eva Geulen, Alexander Scheufens and, to some extent, Karl Pörnbacher. Whereas Schmidt and, to a lesser extent, Reinhard focus on the narrator's poor parenting as a pedagogical lesson, Liebrand considers the children a screen for the narrator's homoerotic desires.

22 Here my reading differs from that of, for instance, Ilsedore Jonas, who tends to take at face value the narrator's presentation of himself as a passive observer.

behaviour. I will focus on this tension between the narrator's voice and the protagonist's narrated actions, before considering the wider implications of this tension.

2.1.1 The protagonist's narrated actions (thematic level) and the narrator's voice (performative level)

Mann's novella re-evaluates the aesthetic *Bildung* promised by previous literary *Italienreisen*, by criticising its own protagonist, who represents the values of rational and intellectual distance, common to Italy-narratives. *Mario und der Zauberer* is characterised by a tension between the protagonist's dubious behaviour and the narrator's attempts, in retrospect, to justify this behaviour. This narrative tension is foreshadowed by the atmosphere in "Torre di Venere". The town is "atmosphärisch unangenehm. Ärger, Gereiztheit, Überspannung lagen von Anfang an in der Luft" (*MdZ* 212).[23] Mann immediately alludes to the novella's uneasy ending, "zum Schluß kam dann der Chock mit diesem schrecklichen Cipolla" (*MdZ* 212). The setting, including the weather, contrasts starkly to the ideal the protagonist holds in his mind of the Italian holiday, including the literary history and romantic ideal it entails. By addressing the reader directly with rhetorical questions, the narrator shatters the distinction between the narrated world and the reader, thereby narrating his disillusionment with the literary ideal of Italy: "Die Hitze war unmäßig, soll ich das anführen? Sie war afrikanisch; die Schreckensherrschaft der Sonne […]. Mögen Sie das? Mögen Sie es wochenlang?" (*MdZ* 219). The town's name, "Torre di Venere" (*Turm der Venus*, *Tower of Venus*), connotes the myth of antique Italy, which German poets and philosophers have frequently drawn on, particularly since the 18th century. But Mann pays ironic lip service to the tradition, summarising it in an empty fashion: "das Klima erblühender Menschheitskultur, die Sonne Homers und so weiter" (*MdZ* 219). As Fabio Ognibene points out, "[h]ier waltet nicht die Kunst, sondern illusionistische Gaukelei, und selbst 'die Sonne Homers' wirkt 'stumpfsinnig'" (82).[24]

23 *MdZ* for *Mario und der Zauberer*.

24 It is interesting to note that, in contrast to Mann's Italy, Goethe's Italy in his *Italienische Reise* sets the scene for gaining control. As he wrote on 17 March 1787: "Was ich mir immer sagte, ist eingetroffen: daß ich so manche Phänomene der Natur und manche Verworrenheiten der Meinungen erst in diesem Lande verstehen und entwickeln lerne" (124). Mann's narrator articulates the opposite experience, one which supports Block's argument that the chase for a "classical or artistic ideal" in Italy "can only end in disillusionment and turn up traces of deception" (2).

The atmosphere at the beach immediately establishes Mann's concern about the political situation in modern Italy. He presents the beachgoers as overvaluing dignity and honour and interprets this as demonstrating, "daß Politisches umging, die Idee der Nation im Spiele war" (*MdZ* 221). The Italians' shocked reaction to his daughter's nakedness on the beach also reveals the patriotic atmosphere and the Italian sense of honour, which the narrator presents as exaggerated to absurdity. From his perspective, his daughter's nakedness resembles the antique statues and Venus, the goddess of love after which the town is named. His references, both to nakedness and to Venus, evoke the neoclassical appreciation of antiquity, but provide a stark contrast to the modern, political Italy, which is presented as degenerated. In order to wash the sand out of her bathing costume, his daughter runs naked "zum wenige Meter entfernten Wasser, schwenkt ihr Trikot und kehrt zurück" (*MdZ* 222). The beachgoers, including the "patriotischen Kinder", interpret the event as "einem dankvergessenen und beleidigenden Mißbrauch der Gastfreundschaft Italiens" (*MdZ* 223). Following Winckelmann, nakedness ought to be celebrated in the way the Greeks did when they modelled their art from the naked body, which "von keinem ängstlichen Zwange in ihrem Putze [wußte]" (6). In his discussion of both male and female nakedness during ancient Greek festivals, Winckelmann suggests that "jedes Fest bei den Griechen eine Gelegenheit für Künstler [war], sich mit der schönen Natur aufs genaueste bekanntzumachen" (9). Mann's narration of his daughter's nakedness can be positioned within this tradition. Yet in contemporary Italy not only the Italian adults, but also the patriotic children are shocked by her nakedness. The narrator presents the Italian children as having lost the graceful innocence of antiquity, which the protagonist's daughter still embodies.

Using the example of his daughter's nakedness, the narrator presents Germans, including himself (the narrator-protagonist), as representatives of this antique culture. The modern Italians, by contrast, are represented by the "grotesque" figure of the "patriotischen Kinder" (*MdZ* 222). During the incident on the beach, a public authority is telephoned; "ihr Vertreter erschien am Strande, er nannte den Fall sehr ernst, molto grave"; they had to follow him "zum 'Platze', ins Municipio" and had to pay a "Sühne- und Lösegeld von fünfzig Lire" (*MdZ* 224).[25] The concerned narrator interprets the event as an extreme example of Italian patriotism amongst local beachgoers and authorities alike. Gary Schmidt discusses how "[t]he Italians' unwillingness to see

25 It is interesting to note that this scene is reminiscent of similar scenes in Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, such as on 14 September 1786: "man solle den Podesta rufen, welcher dergleichen Dinge zu beurteilen wisse" (16) and on 26 October 1786: "Darauf erbot ich mich, mit ihnen nach der Stadt zurück und zum Podesta zu gehen, ihm meine Papiere vorzulegen, da er mich denn als einen ehrenvollen Fremden anerkennen werde" (66).

this [the nakedness] as a harmless, i.e. innocent, display of a non-sexual body reveals for the narrator their moral depravity" (313). The narrator presents his past self, the protagonist, as having been concerned by this deterioration, since antiquity, in the Italian culture. He sees himself, by contrast, as the rightful, German heir to this tradition.

The narrator seeks to justify his status as the bourgeois representative of antiquity by emphasising the comparatively poor behaviour of the Italian staff at the Grand Hotel, who refused them a veranda seat for dinner: "[W]ir wurden mit etwas verlegener Höflichkeit bedeutet, daß jener anheimelnde Aufenthalt 'unserer Kundschaft', 'ainostri clienti', vorbehalten sei. Unseren Klienten? Aber das waren wir" (*MdZ* 215). The protagonist is confused and suspicious of the forces motivating this behaviour. The same forces motivate the residents' behaviour at the Grand Hotel. When a mother complains about the protagonist's child's illness, the protagonist believes that she is driven by forces of cultural decay. She has a "weibliche[s] Vollgefühl" with a stubborn, powerful temperament: "[D]er Arzt des Hauses—nur dieser, nicht etwa ein von uns bestellter—[möge] zur Entscheidung berufen werden" (*MdZ* 216). The protagonist believes that even the manager is driven by these irrational forces, which inconvenience him and his family: "[D]a erklärt der Manager: daß wir die Zimmer räumten und in der Dependance Wohnung nähmen, bleibe auch nach den Feststellungen des Arztes geboten" (*MdZ* 216). By narrating these strange events, the narrator pre-emptively justifies the protagonist's subsequent behaviour.

The narrator presents his own past behaviour as having been reasonable and justifiable in comparison to this fellow holidaymaker, the mother, who he presents as unreasonable and irrational. He explains: "Wir hatten gut beteuern, die Kinderkrankheit befinde sich im Stadium letzten Abklingens, sie habe als überwunden zu gelten und stelle keinerlei Gefahr für die Umgebung mehr dar" (*MdZ* 216). He justifies his own behaviour as having been supported by the rational science of the doctor: "Der Doktor kommt und erweist sich als ein loyaler und aufrechter Diener der Wissenschaft. Er untersucht den Kleinen, erklärt das Übel für abgelaufen und verneint jede Bedenklichkeit" (*MdZ* 216). His own behaviour—in contrast to that of the residents and staff—is presented as having been reasonable, rational, supported by science, and in line with ideals from antiquity. The narrator even pre-empts any potential accusations of his narrative as a mere justification, by making an admission: "ich persönlich gestehe, daß ich schwer über solche Zusammenstöße mit dem landläufig Menschlichen, dem naiven Mißbrauch der Macht, der Ungerechtigkeit, der kriecherischen Korruption hinwegkomme" (*MdZ* 218). He admits his weaknesses, thereby gaining trust and presenting himself as self-aware, which lends him further credibility.

In a further endeavour to endear himself to the reader, the narrator uses the second person to make a direct appeal:

> Sie haben recht, ohne das dumme Geschichtchen mit dem Keuchhusten hätte ich es wohl nicht so empfunden; ich war gereizt, ich wollte es vielleicht empfinden und griff halb unbewußt ein bereitliegendes geistiges Motiv auf, um die Empfindung damit, wenn nicht zu erzeugen, so doch zu legitimieren und zu verstärken. (*MdZ* 219)

By explaining his prior frustration, the narrator emphasises his self-awareness and justifies his past behaviour; he aims to appear reasonable, rational, and level-headed, having recovered from his frustration.

In an effort to emphasise his self-restraint, the narrator comments on the many retorts he would have liked to make during the incident with his daughter's nakedness. He would have liked to respond:

> [D]aß wir, ohne Euphorismus gesprochen, nicht sowohl die Gäste Italiens, sondern der Signora Angiolieri seien [und] daß die moralische Verwahrlosung in diesem schönen Lande je einen solchen Grad erreicht gehabt habe, daß ein solcher Rückschlag von Prüderie und Überempfindlichkeit begreiflich und notwendig erscheinen könne. (*MdZ* 223)

He considers contemporary Italy to be morally corrupt, whereas the "schöne Land" of antique Italy apparently exists only in the German imagination of this past.

In this early stage of the novella, the narrator presents himself as having been an honourable representative of the humanist tradition of ancient Italy. This is despite him having been left wondering whether he and his family should have left then and there—"[h]ätten wir nicht abreisen sollen?" (*MdZ* 224). To justify not having left "Torre di Venere", the narrator also emphasises his curiosity. He explains: "Wir blieben auch deshalb, weil der Aufenthalt uns merkwürdig geworden war, und weil Merkwürdigkeit ja in sich selbst einen Wert bedeutet, unabhängig von Behagen und Unbehagen" (*MdZ* 224 f.). He also uses rhetorical questions to justify his curiosity: "Soll man die Segel streichen und dem Erlebnis ausweichen, sobald es nicht vollkommen danach angetan ist, Heiterkeit und Vertrauen zu erzeugen?" (*MdZ* 225); "[s]oll man 'abreisen', wenn das Leben sich ein bißchen unheimlich, nicht ganz geheuer oder etwas peinlich und kränkend anläßt?" (*MdZ* 225). The narrator answers these questions immediately, in order to make clear that the questions are rhetorical and therefore that his decision to remain was clearly the correct one: "Nein doch, man soll bleiben, soll sich das ansehen und sich dem aussetzen, gerade dabei gibt es vielleicht etwas zu lernen" (*MdZ* 225). And besides, he points out, the unbearable heat had subsided: "Gleichzeitig [...] schlug auch das Wetter um" (*MdZ* 225). Furthermore, the man who took offence against his daughter's nakedness has also departed: "dieser Selbst war vom Strande verschwunden" (*MdZ* 224). After all, "zwei Drittel unserer für Torre vorgesehenen Zeit waren ohnehin abgelebt" (*MdZ* 225 f.). But the narrator's skills of justification are tested further when

they decide firstly to attend and then to remain at the magician Cipolla's performance.

The narrator does not yet admit his inability to defend his self-prescribed values of rational and intellectual superiority. Instead, he continues to justify himself, initially by using his children as a justification for attending the magician's performance: "Von Stund an lagen sie uns in den Ohren, für den Abend des Taschenspielers Eintrittskarten zu nehmen, und [...] wir [gaben] in der Erwägung nach" (*MdZ* 226). And besides, he had "einige[] Kenntnisnahme von Cipollas wahrscheinlich bescheidenen Künsten"; he planned, "daß auch die Kinder am folgenden Morgen ausschlafen könnten" and he learnt that their host Signora Angiolieri had "eine Anzahl von Vorzugsplätzen für ihre Gäste in Kommission [...], unsere vier Karten" (*MdZ* 226). Besides, he further justifies, the children were very excited: "[D]ie dringende Neugier der Kinder bewährte eine Art von Ansteckungskraft" (*MdZ* 226). The narrator mentions the children to emphasise his curiosity and indicate that he was acting reasonably.

Once at the performance, the narrator uses the children to justify having remained there: "Die Kinder lachten von Herzen. Von den gewechselten Worten hatten sie fast nichts verstanden" (*MdZ* 234). This lack of understanding is presented both as a concern, and as a saving grace. Schmidt makes a similar argument:

> The absence of a linguistic meaning through which the children might have understood the spectacle is positively valued by the narrator because it maintains their innocence [...] yet, one might ask if the absence of linguistic meaning makes the children any less susceptible to the Dionysian effects of the performance. (319)

Here, the narrator's justification is less convincing. On the one hand, the children are meant to be protected by not understanding, but on the other, the protagonist was supposedly protected by his ability to understand.

Increasingly, the narrator cannot justify his past behaviour. Almost immediately, he introduces his regret that his children were present during Cipolla's manipulative performance:

> Daß [...] auch noch die Kinder anwesend sein mussten, war eine traurige und auf Missverständnis beruhende Ungehörigkeit für sich, verschuldet durch die falschen Vorspiegelungen des merkwürdigen Mannes. (*MdZ* 212)

By admitting his regret that his children were present, the narrator reveals that he was not in control of the situation; he attempts to regain narrative control by admitting this previous loss. But by using the word "traurig[]", he admits that the situation is unfortunate and regrettable, despite seeking to present himself as having been powerless, and therefore blameless (*MdZ* 212). The name Cipolla, meaning *Zwiebel* or *onion*, also generates early concern, for he must be a character of all skin and no core. But the narrator

also uses Cipolla as part of his justification. By describing Cipolla as both "merkwürdig[]" and responsible for misleading him with "falschen Vorspiegelungen", he places blame on the magician (*MdZ* 212). He recalls: "Gottlob haben sie nicht verstanden, wo das Spektakel aufhörte und die Katastrophe begann, und man hat sie in dem glücklichen Wahn gelassen, daß alles Theater gewesen sei" (*MdZ* 212). But already in the first paragraph, the narrator establishes both his regret that his children were present and his desire to excuse himself for having brought them there.

The narrator's excuses—and by extension his rationality and intellectual distance—become increasingly unconvincing. Before Cipolla's performance has even begun, he is concerned about when his children will make it to bed, because the performance is delayed by approximately one hour:

> Diese Säumigkeit machte uns etwas besorgt. Den Kindern färbte schon jetzt eine mit Erwartung hektisch gemischte Müdigkeit die Wangen […]. Sie begreifen unsere Nervosität. Wann würden die Kinder ins Bett kommen? Es war ein Fehler gewesen sie herzuführen, denn ihnen zuzumuten, den Genuß abzubrechen, kaum daß er recht begonnen, würde sehr hart sein. (*MdZ* 227 f.)

Not only is this an open expression of regret and an admission of irresponsibility, but his justifications begin immediately, again in the form of a direct appeal in the second person: "Sie begreifen unsere Nervosität" (*MdZ* 228). By choosing to mention that it would be unreasonable to expect the children "den Genuß abzubrechen", he anticipates criticism and pre-emptively provides a justification (*MdZ* 228).

Early in the performance the protagonist's concerns are minor: "Die Kinder begannen mir leid zu tun; aber für den Augenblick waren sie einfach glücklich, dabei zu sein" (*MdZ* 238). Time and again the narrator presents the children's joy as having been a reason for staying: "Die Kinder waren überwältigt" and they thought "es war herrlich" (*MdZ* 245). But the children's curiosity can no longer serve as a justification when the children are asleep: "Es muß damals bestimmt schon mehr als elf Uhr gewesen sein, wahrscheinlich noch später. Die Kinder schliefen. Die letzte Versuchsserie war für sie recht langweilig gewesen" (*MdZ* 253). He knows that he should have left: "Das war […] doch auch wieder ein Grund zum Erbarmen und eine Mahnung, sie in ihre Betten zu bringen" (*MdZ* 253). He even wishes to leave: "Ich versichere, daß wir ihr gehorchen wollten, dieser rührenden Mahnung, es ernstlich wollten" (*MdZ* 253). But he ultimately fails to behave responsibly and rationally, admitting, when "ihr flehentlicher Widerstand begann […], gaben [wir] nach" (*MdZ* 253).

The narrator wishes to justify his past actions to the reader, whom he perhaps imagines is a fellow representative of the humanist tradition. But he presents his justification skills as tested further by the fascist, nationalist atmosphere during Cipolla's performance:

> [Es konnte] von persönlicher Scherzhaftigkeit oder gar Clownerie in seiner Haltung, seinen Mienen, seinem Benehmen nicht im geringsten die Rede sein [...], vielmehr sprachen strenge Ernsthaftigkeit, Ablehnung alles Humoristischen, ein gelegentlich übellauniger Stolz, auch jene gewisse Würde und Selbstgefälligkeit. (*MdZ* 230 f.)

When two boys "sich nur über Cipolla lustig machen wollten", Cipolla reacts with a seriousness that is reminiscent of the nationalism the protagonist observed earlier on the beach: "Er war beleidigt und angewidert [...] und blickte dabei, mit dem Fuße wippend, in strenger Ablehnung, wie ein Mann, der sich vor einer durchaus verächtlichen Erscheinung auf sich selbst und seine Würde zurückzieht" (*MdZ* 239). As with the beach scene, the narrator again wishes to present himself as having been rational and level-headed, with a reliable perception of the situation.[26] Despite this attempt, the narrator adopts long, rambling sentences while describing Cipolla; in this way, he generates the same anticipatory and enchanting atmosphere that he describes the manipulative Cipolla as using (*MdZ* 231). The narrator's style reflects Cipolla's style, which indicates that the narrator is not purely analytical but rather, at least to some extent, also experiences this anticipatory excitement. And in this way, the novella's ending is anticipated.

Even after the event, the narrator falls prey to Cipolla's techniques; he writes (on page 249) in a long, hypnotic, rhythmic sentence of 115 words, creating the same hypnotic and manipulative atmosphere that Cipolla created for his audience (this technique is repeated several times, for instance on page 269). The narrator's narrative techniques parallel Cipolla's, which is perhaps unsurprising, considering that the narrator's content matter is Cipolla's performance: "Aber er wandelte die Grundform mehrfach ab und durchflocht diese Versuche, so daß viel Zeit darüber verging, mit Improvisationen verwandter Art, zu denen die Berührung mit dem Publikum ihm auf Schritt und Tritt verhalf" (*MdZ* 251). Wladimir Admoni and Tamara Silman make a similar point: "In der Novelle 'Mario und der Zauberer' wird die Spannung der Cipolla-Szene [...] von Seite zu Seite erhöht" (122). Eva Geulen also draws a structural parallel:

> [T]he narrator's strategies are modelled on Cipolla's own [...]. The two part structure of the magic show corresponds to the two part narrative [...]. While the narrator becomes a victim of one performer, so the reader be-

26 This scene is reminiscent of a number of scenes in Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, for instance on 22 September 1786, when Goethe condescendingly narrates his own distant superiority to Italian audience members, who "lauter Dinge [sagten], wie sie der Haufen denkt und denken kann" (30). He wrote on 4 October 1786: "Hierüber freuen sie sich kindisch, schreien wieder, klatschen und lärmen" (42) and, on 24 November 1786, that the Italians "nicht ein Haar anders sind, als sie in Höhlen und Wäldern auch sein würden" (80 f.).

> comes a victim of the other [...]. The reader is placed into a strangely complicitous position. (17 f.)

While the reader may become aware of their "strangely complicitous position" (Geulen 18), the narrator articulates no awareness of the parallels between Cipolla and himself.

By generating these parallel techniques of performance that he and Cipolla share, the narrator reveals his similarity to the magician and discredits his own rationality and critical distance. In this way, as Nadja Reinhard and Eva Geulen similarly argue, the narrator deceives both himself and the reader:

> Der Leser wird aber nicht durch den Erzähler [...] willentlich manipuliert, sondern in dem Maße betrogen, als der Erzähler sich selbst betrügt und belügt, sodass sich auch der Leser marionettengleich durch einen vermeintlich zuverlässigen Erzähler verführen lässt. (Reinhard 152)

As Claudia Liebrand argues, "Cipolla manipuliert sein Publikum, aber auch der Erzähler geht manipulativ mit seinen Lesern um" (365). The narrative seduces the reader in much the same way that Cipolla's performance seduces the audience, including the supposedly rational protagonist. Reinhard likewise argues:

> Der Erzähler gewinnt das Vertrauen der Leser einerseits durch seine scheinbar rational überlegene Perspektive, die Seriosität, Glaubwürdigkeit und Objektivität suggeriert, anderseits durch die Einweihung des Lesers in seine Innensicht. (152)

The narrator cannot convincingly present himself as having been rational and trustworthy, since "[d]as sich so gern hinter dem 'Wir' verbergende Ich des Textes befindet sich in prekärer Nähe zum Illusionisten" (Liebrand 367). The narrator claims rational authority, despite exposing his own manipulative techniques and his lack of self-awareness about his seduction at the hands of Cipolla's very same techniques.

Cipolla's justification of his behaviour also parallels the narrator's justification of his past behaviour. Cipolla intermittently loses control and tries to justify his drinking habits: "Er betonte dies stark und oft, daß er es außerordentlich schwer habe, wahrscheinlich um seine Stärkungsbedürftigkeit und das häufige Greifen zum Gläschen zu erklären" (*MdZ* 250). As we have seen, the narrator's narrative is also full of justifications. Because he is unconscious of this hypocrisy—as he unwittingly generates this parallel between himself and Cipolla—the narrator renders himself untrustworthy in the company of Cipolla and the nationalistic audience members.

The concerning, nationalistic atmosphere intensifies and further exposes the narrator's unreliability. When Cipolla refers to one boy as Giovanotto, the nationalistic atmosphere is evoked. As Manfred Dierks points out, this is a name choice which "an die *Giovinezza* anklingt, die Hymne der faschistischen Bewegung" (89). Giovanotto has "die Modefrisur des erweckten Va-

terlandes" (Dierks 43). This new haircut, "die ihn etwas entstellte und afrikanisch anmutete" (*MdZ* 233), represents the new, nationalist Italian "Vaterland[]" (Dierks 43), which is removed from the narrator's cherished ideal of Italy. Giovanotto, and the associated Italian patriotism, fuels Cipolla's manipulation: "'Du gefällst mir, Giovanotto [...]. Solche Leute, wie du, haben meine besondere Sympathie, ich kann sie brauchen" (*MdZ* 233). Cipolla attempts to manipulate Giovanotto into following his bidding, by removing the divide between wanting and doing: "[E]s müßte bequem und lustig sein, nicht immer so den ganzen Kerl spielen und für beides aufkommen zu müssen, das Wollen und das Tun" (*MdZ* 233). The narrator recounts these examples to communicate his concern.

Increasingly, the narrator presents Cipolla's growing control, and his own lack of self-awareness:

> Eine gewisse Abneigung und Aufsässigkeit war durchzufühlen; aber von der Höflichkeit zu schweigen, die solche Regungen im Zaum hielt, verfehlten Cipollas Können, seine strenge Sicherheit nicht, Eindruck zu machen, und selbst die Reitpeitsche trug, meine ich, etwas dazu bei, daß die Revolte im Unterirdischen blieb. (*MdZ* 246)

The "Reitpeitsche" is a reference to the bound bundle of wooden rods called the "Rutenbündel", or fasces, from which fascism derives its name (*MdZ* 246). His description of the "Reitpeitsche", and of Cipolla's certainty and lack of humour, presents Cipolla's total control at the expense of the audience's control, now including the narrator.

The protagonist's participation in the performance becomes increasingly worrying, as the narrator describes Cipolla's grotesque body. Cipolla's body is the antithesis of the antique statues commonly celebrated in narratives of Italy. Because Mann's protagonist has internalised the tradition's values and aesthetic, Cipolla's body symbolises its decay, "mit seiner asthmatisch-metallischen Stimme" (*MdZ* 234) and with his head: the

> oberer Schädel war fast kahl, und nur eine schmale, Schwarz gewichste Scheitelfrisur lief, wie angeklebt, vom Wirbel nach vorn, während das Schläfenhaar, ebenfalls geschwärzt, seitlich zu den Augenwinkeln hingestrichen war. (*MdZ* 237)

Cipolla has a

> 'kleine[n] Leibesschaden' [...], die Brust war zu hoch [...], der Verdruß im Rücken schien nicht an der gewohnten Stelle [...], sondern tiefer, als eine Art Hüft- und Gesäßbuckel, der den Gang zwar nicht behinderte, aber ihn grotesk und bei jedem Schritt sonderbar ausladend gestaltete. (*MdZ* 237)

Even his speech is "kalt und verbissen" (*MdZ* 239) and his eyes become "über ihren Tränensäcken zugleich welk und brennend" (*MdZ* 242); "[w]irklich sah er schlecht aus zwischenein, hohläugig und verfallen" (*MdZ* 248). His features are aggressive and suspicious:

> Klein[e] streng[e] Augen, mit schlaffen Säcken darunter […], verkniffenen Mundes […]. Den tief eingeatmeten Rauch stieß er, arrogant grimassierend, beide Lippen zurückgezogen […] als grauen Sprudel zwischen seinen schadhaft abgenutzten Zähnen hervor. (*MdZ* 231)

He also drinks and smokes in excess: Cipolla "goß sich aus dem Flakon, das offenbar Kognak enthielt, ein Gläschen ein und kippte es geübt" (*MdZ* 234). As this movement is "geübt" (*MdZ* 234), he is an unhealthy man; "er 'trank viel'" (*MdZ* 248). The narrator recalls how "er den tief eingezogenen Rauch zwischen den entblößten Zähnen ausströmen [ließ]" (*MdZ* 239), and "der eingeatmete Rauch [sprudelte] ihm grau aus der Lunge" (*MdZ* 248). Cipolla's body and his smoking and drinking embody the modern, patriotic Italy described earlier. But while the protagonist is disgusted and uncomfortable, he is fascinated by the magician and, unlike the bourgeois image he has of himself, he becomes emotionally involved.

Initially, the narrator continually emphasises how his cultivation distinguishes him from the other (presumably Italian) audience members. But this narrative defence becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. He endeavours to describe the audience in separate terms: "Damit wandte er [Cipolla] sich, das Publikum seinen Eindrücken überlassend, zum Rundtischchen" (*MdZ* 234). By describing "das Publikum" as an entity to which he does not belong, the narrator asserts his own distance from the manipulation and from the audience's enthusiasm (*MdZ* 234). He even presents himself as the rightful heir to classical antiquity, from which modern Italy has departed. The narrator fashions himself as an astute observer, integrating into his language the Italian language characteristics that he observed. Ilsedore Jonas for instance highlights his closeness to the Italian language when he "das Adjektiv 'stakkiert' aus 'staccato' bildet, und vor allem, wenn er den italienischen Ausdruck für Muscheltiere 'frutti di mare' als 'Meeresobst' wiedergibt, handelt es sich um deutsche Neubildungen nach dem Italienischen" (83). As Ognibene picks up, "[d]er Eindruck des Negativen und sogar Dämonischen in Italien erhält erst dadurch seine besondere Kraft, dass sich alles vor dem Hintergrund durchaus realistischer Schilderungen des Milieus abspielt" (87).[27] The narrator presents himself as having been a distant, accurate, rational observer who is in control of himself in this nationalistic situation. But it becomes increasingly clear that such distant and rational observation is hardly possible; the narrator cannot completely hide his complicity.

27 Anecdotally, in his *Italienische Reise*, Goethe made similar observations in relation to the Italian language on 5 October 1786: "So unübersetzlich sind die Eigenheiten jeder Sprache: denn vom höchsten bis zum tiefsten Wort bezieht sich alles auf Eigentümlichkeit der Nation, es sei nun in Charakter, Gesinnung oder Zuständen" (44).

The narrator's justifications weaken further as he shifts from rational analysis to passive avoidance by using the indefinite pronoun "man": "Man hatte die Szene mit Spannung verfolgt und applaudierte ihr, als sie beendet war, indem man sowohl 'Bravo, Cipolla!' wie 'Bravo, Giovanotto!' rief" (*MdZ* 243). His use of "man" renders the protagonist's position in the audience unclear and reduces the separation between the narrator and the narrated protagonist. The narrator fails to maintain a critical distance from the content he narrates and, consequently, he exposes his own false sense of superiority. Admoni and Silman also analyse this use of "man":

> Bald bedeutet 'man' die ganze Familie des 'Ich-Erzählers', bald nur das reisende Ehepaar, die Kinder ausgeschlossen, dann wieder das Publikum im Zuschauerraum ohne jegliche Differenzierung, dann nur die demokratische 'Sphäre der Stehplätze'. Der Standpunkt des Erzählers wechselt jeden Augenblick, das 'Erlebnissubjekt' ebenfalls, und so entsteht ein Bild von größter menschlicher Fülle, dramatischer Beweglichkeit und psychologischer Spannung. (25)

This technique enables him to incorporate many narrative perspectives. And these shifts of perspective generate the dramatic, tense atmosphere of Cipolla's performance. While the narrator uses "man" in an effort to maintain an image of himself as rationally distant, it rather exposes his complicity; his position is no longer as clearly distanced from the audience he criticises.

The narrator seems more uncertain than objective. As Alexander Scheufens contends (much like Geulen), the narrator's apparent objectivity actually blocks his self-awareness (157), which leads him to deceive not only himself but also the reader (as Reinhard discusses) (152). But the narrator's use of "man" grants the reader some distance and the opportunity to see his rational justification weakening and his self-deception increase. The narrator even begins to openly express doubt: "Aber ich bin nicht sicher, wie weit das Verhalten des Saales nur dem menschlichen Taktgefühl zuzuschreiben war, in dem der Süden uns überlegen ist, und wie weit es auf eigentlicher Einsicht in das Wesen der Dinge beruhte" (*MdZ* 243). Although the narrator previously judged the Italian audience to be less rational than him, he now admits his own susceptibility to emotional manipulation. The assumption he seemed to have, that aesthetic *Bildung* with reference to Italy is achievable purely for rational representatives of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, is unconvincing. The narrator is no longer sure how to see himself; he cannot distinguish performance from manipulation, and he finally admits "ich bin nicht sicher" (*MdZ* 243).

Having admitted his emotional involvement, the narrator tries once more to appeal to the reader directly with the second person: "Auch langweile ich Sie nicht mit der Schilderung dieser Versuche; jeder kennt sie, jeder hat einmal daran teilgenommen" (*MdZ* 248). His appeal grows stronger:

> Jeder hat auch dabei seine kleinen, neugierig-verächtlichen und kopfschüttelnden Einblicke in den zweideutig-unsauberen und unentwirrbaren Charakter des Okkulten getan, das in der Menschheit seiner Träger immer dazu neigt, sich mit Humbug und nachhelfender Mogelei vexatorisch zu vermischen. (*MdZ* 249)

Böhme makes a similar argument, suggesting that the narrator still seeks to justify himself in an effort at self-legitimation. Indeed, the narrator comments: "Ich sage nur, daß alle Verhältnisse natürlich sich verstärken, der Eindruck nach jeder Seite an Tiefe gewinnt, wenn ein Cipolla Leiter und Hauptakteur des dunklen Spieles ist" (*MdZ* 249). But this description serves both as a warning and as a justification for any behaviour to come.

By admitting his doubt, the narrator critically evaluates his assumed values of rationality and Italy's promise of aesthetic *Bildung*. The narrator is increasingly unable to hide a degree of doubt, as the word "vielleicht" indicates: "Vielleicht war die Schärpe reiner Humbug, so gut wie das wortlose Dastehen des Gauklers, der immer noch nichts tat" (*MdZ* 232). And he is now part of the crowd, included in the personal pronoun "man" that refers to the audience: "Man lachte, wie gesagt, und die Heiterkeit wurde fast allgemein" (*MdZ* 232). He can no longer deny his own involvement in the scene, now an active member of the audience.

Increasingly, Cipolla imposes his fascist nationalistic values upon the audience: "Es ist ein schlechter Scherz […] eine Bezichtigung laut werden zu lassen, mit der ihr nicht nur euch selbst erniedrigt, sondern auch die Regierung und das Land dem Gerede aussetzt" (*MdZ* 240). Whereas Cipolla "blieb kalt, zeigte vollkommene Überlegenheit", the protagonist and his wife, "als wir […] einander bedenklich ansahen", are presented as having become increasingly concerned (*MdZ* 241). But they do not leave. Cipolla begins manipulating the audience, now including the protagonist, into wanting what he wants: "Indem man mir einen guten Abend wünscht, wünscht man sich selber einen, denn das Publikum wird nur in dem Falle einen guten Abend haben, daß ich einen habe" (*MdZ* 235). Remaining at the performance means "für die Größe des Vaterlandes teilzunehmen" (*MdZ* 235). As Ognibene points out, "diese zur Schau gestellte Würde [äußert] sich also in einer seltsamen, aber für radikale politische Bewegungen charakteristischen Verbindung von Prüderie und Patriotismus" (84). Cipolla becomes increasingly aggressive, standing "etwas erhöht, dicht vor dem Streitbaren […]. Die Reitpeitsche hing an seinem Arm" (*MdZ* 242). He plays with the free will of the audience members: "'Die Freiheit existiert, und auch der Wille existiert; aber die Willensfreiheit existiert nicht, denn ein Wille, der sich auf seine Freiheit richtet, stößt ins Leere'" (*MdZ* 247). The narrator remains in Cipolla's performance, without justification, and the question becomes: how much free will does the supposedly rational *bildungsbürgerliche* protagonist have left? And what

does this say about the hope of aesthetic *Bildung*, which the *Bildungsbürgertum* usually associates with Italy?

2.1.2 Implications of the narrator's failed justifications

As the narrator cannot justify his past behaviour, both he and the *Bildungsbürgertum* he represents are rendered unreliable. The topos of the *italienische Reise*, which for such *bildungsbürgerliche* protagonists represents the promise of aesthetic *Bildung*, is re-evaluated in the process. Despite his many reassurances, the narrator continually fails to justify his past behaviour. He recalls, "[w]as uns betraf, so tauschten wir einen Blick, und ich erinnere mich, daß ich unwillkürlich mit den Lippen leise das Geräusch nachahmte, mit dem Cipolla seine Reitpeitsche hatte durch die Luft fahren lassen" (*MdZ* 234). Here, he no longer uses "man" (referring presumably to the Italians), but rather "uns" (he and his wife), and he narrates his behaviour to be "unwillkürlich" (*MdZ* 234). His behaviour is involuntary; the image of him as self-aware and rational has dissipated. When the "römische[] Herr[]" in the audience "endgültig besiegt [wurde]", "kommentiert" the narrator "das breite Lächeln des Unterworfenen, scheinbar zustimmend" (Müller-Salget 57 f.). The narrator's approval contradicts his usually critical attitude and his use of rational argument as a justification. The protagonist's *breites Lächeln* reveals his increasing complicity; his active participation made him smile. Besides, the narrator comments, "[w]ahrscheinlich kann man vom Nicht-Wollen seelisch nicht leben" (*MdZ* 262). The protagonist's desires appear to be aligning with Cipolla's.

This complicity, as Müller-Salget similarly reads it, serves as a warning to Mann's intellectual contemporaries: "Diese [...] Sätze sind [...] auf die Passivität des konservativen deutschen Bürgertums angesichts des anwachsenden Nationalsozialismus bezogen worden" (58). The protagonist's assumption—that being an intellectual renders him the rightful heir to the tradition of aesthetic *Bildung*—is re-assessed. The narrator and his family are not, as Ilsedore Jonas suggests, "nur passive Zeugen des Geschehens" (82). Rather, the narrator's presentation of the protagonist (his past self) reveals that being a mere witness does not remove responsibility. More convincing is Scheufens' argument that the narrator "erleben [muss], wie die von ihm repräsentierte bürgerliche Aufgeklärtheit in ihrem Anspruch versagt und Cipollas Verführung nicht widersteht" (158). The narrator's distinction between German intellectuals—as representatives and inheritors of the humanist tradition of classical Italy—and the nationalistic, depraved, modern Italians, becomes increasingly hard to maintain. While the narrator presents his children as having been protected from Cipolla's Dionysian manipu-lation by their inability to understand, it seems unlikely that his own understanding afforded him any safety. His decision to remain in this manipulative perfor-

mance was involuntary. As Reinhard points out, the narrator lacks self-awareness when he "jedoch die auch ihn ergreifende, ungebrochene Sogwirkung des Irrationalen [unterschätzt], die er zwar erkennt aber vielleicht gerade deswegen für sich selbst verleugnet" (137). Cipolla's performance poses a threat to the audience members during the discrete time of the performance but also, after the performance, to the narrator's ability to provide a narrative justification for his behaviour and for his self-ascribed bourgeois values of rationality and intellectual distance.

Eventually, the narrator acknowledges his crisis and re-evaluates his self-image. In the process, the narrator indicates that unless the *Bildungsbürgertum* challenges its self-image as rationally superior, then it will be susceptible to fascism and will not be able to articulate a *Bildungsreise* that has contemporary relevance in the context of fascism. As such, *Mario und der Zauberer* causes a rupture with the *bildungsbürgerlichen* tradition of the *italienischen Reise*. The narrator admits his lack of understanding and his inability to rationally justify having remained at the performance: "Unfehlbar werden Sie mich fragen, warum wir nicht endlich weggegangen seien—und ich muß Ihnen die Antwort schuldig bleiben. Ich verstehe es nicht und weiß mich tatsächlich nicht zu verantworten" (*MdZ* 252 f.). The narrator can justify neither his past behaviour nor his sense of rational superiority. Mann's "Italy" becomes a space in which to critically examine the nature of the literary *Bildungsreise*. The *Bildungsreise* is no longer exclusively the domain of the *Bildungsbürgertum*; rationality and intellectual enquiry can no longer be assumed, nor are they necessary traits of the literary protagonist undertaking a *Bildungsreise*. Despite Mann's initial stance as a royalist who did not support democracy, his *Mario und der Zauberer* exposes his transition in thinking.[28] In the novella, even the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy is, in a sense, democratised by the narrator's critical self-evaluation.

Mann's narrator becomes a medium through which to reflect upon the habitus of the German intellectual, as someone who "unterliegt insoweit Cipollas Einfluss, als er in anhaltend-ambivalenter Faszination die Abreise immer länger aufschiebt" (Reinhard 144). Hans Meyer describes the protagonist's presence as "ein[] halbe[s] Mitmachen[]" (168). Mann's narrator cannot occupy the authoritative position of an uninvolved spectator. As Meyer rhetorically asks, "[w]as nützt es ihm also, wenn er den Spuk beobachtet und ana-

28 Hans Vaget goes so far as to suggest that the narrator represents Mann and that Mann, "der in seiner Familie Zauberer hieß [...] selbst dem Zauberer ein wenig verfallen [ist]"; "[h]ier manifestiert sich eine kollegiale Ansprechbarkeit des Erzählers auf die Täuschungsstrategien des Zauberers und ein Eingeweihtsein in das Metier des Hypnotiseurs" (600). For more on the development of Thomas Mann's political thought, see for instance the 2009 *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch*, vol. 22, edited by Sprecher and Wimmer, or Herbert Lehnert's "Beiträge".

lysiert, solange er nichts tut [...]. Es zeigt sich nämlich, daß man nicht *halb* dem Zauberer zu widerstehen vermag" (168). Instead, the narrator articulates his inability to justify his past behaviour: "Ich gestehe, daß ich mich vor diesem Punkte meines Berichtes gefürchtet habe, fast seit ich zu erzählen begann" (*MdZ* 252). He admits: "Zu entschuldigen ist es nicht, dass wir blieben, und es zu erklären fast ebenso schwer [...], unsere Gefühle für Cavaliere Cipolla waren höchst gemischter Natur, aber das waren, wenn ich nicht irre, die Gefühle des ganzen Saales" (*MdZ* 253). By relating his feelings to (rather than his judgement of) the other audience members, he narrates his lack of critical distance and his increasingly emotional reaction.

As the narrator becomes part of, rather than distanced from, the audience, he shifts further away from "they" and "one", or "man", which removes him from the actively guilty position, and begins referring to *"our"*: "Beanspruchte er auch noch unser Mitgefühl?" (*MdZ* 256). He makes a final attempt to judge the audience as less rational and more gullible than he is: "ein lachendes, kopfschüttelndes, sich aufs Knie schlagendes, applaudierendes Publikum, das deutlich im Bann einer Persönlichkeit von strenger Selbstsicherheit stand" (*MdZ* 256), and appeals to the reader directly: "Nehmen Sie das als Erklärung unserer Seßhaftigkeit an, oder nicht! Etwas Besseres weiß ich einfach nicht vorzubringen" (*MdZ* 254). Here, he finally admits that he does not expect to be trusted, thereby revealing his failure to justify his position as a rational and objective representative of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

He even admits that he inappropriately used his children as an excuse for his own complicity, revealing that it reached "ziemlich weit nach Mitternacht" (*MdZ* 263). As Gary Schmidt suggests, the narrator "loses credibility in regard to both his paternal and narratorial role" (311). Finally, the narrator even openly admits his shortcomings:

> Die Kinder waren wach um diese Zeit. Ich erwähne sie mit Beschämung. Hier war nicht gut sein, für sie am wenigsten, und daß wir sie immer noch nicht fortgeschafft hatten, kann ich mir nur mit einer gewissen Ansteckung durch die allgemeine Fahrlässigkeit erklären, von der zu dieser Nachtstunde auch wir ergriffen waren. (*MdZ* 263)

The narrator no longer represses his flaws, instead criticising his past behaviour. As Schmidt puts it, no longer does he "repress[] the very act of repression" (320). Instead, he exposes his own complicity. The narrator fails in his role as a rational father "aus pädogoischer Absicht", to give the reader the opportunity to examine their own vulnerability to manipulation (Reinhard 153).

The novella's critical examination of the bourgeois *Bildungsreise* to Italy reaches its pinnacle when the narrator openly admits his own limitations in the final scene of Cipolla's performance. Cipolla manipulates the Italian boy Mario into kissing him on stage: "'Küsse mich!' [...] 'Glaube, daß du es darfst!

Ich liebe dich. Küsse mich hierher' [...]. Und Mario neigte sich und küßte ihn" (*MdZ* 270). The narrator presents Mario's ensuing shock and retaliation: "Mario, geweckt, fuhr auf und zurück [...], drückte die Hände an seine mißbrauchten Lippen [...] und zwei flach schmetternde Detonationen durchschlugen Beifall und Gelächter" (*MdZ* 271). The narrator presents this as "[e]in Ende mit Schrecken, ein höchst fatales Ende. Und ein befreiendes Ende dennoch—ich konnte und kann nicht umhin, es so zu empfinden!" (*MdZ* 272). Despite having continually justified his presence in the performance by emphasising his rational superiority and critical distance to Cipolla's performance, the narrator now emphasises the freedom that this emotionally-driven action granted him. This causes—as Reinhard observes—a reversal in the status of emotion and rationality: "Das Ende spiegelt damit eine für den Erzähler überraschende und nicht zugetraute Rollenumkehr. Marios Nettigkeit und seine 'dienstfertige Passivität' wandelt sich im Tötungsakt zu einer 'männlich-aktiven' Direktheit" (145). Rather than being able to rely on his own intellect, the narrator presents his former self as having relied on the emotional teenage boy Mario for his freedom, for "ein befreiendes Ende" (*MdZ* 272). This circumstance is catastrophic for the self-identification of the narrator; of all people, it is a man from (what the narrator sees as) the masses of the nationalistic, depraved, modern Italy, who manages to free the supposedly rational protagonist from Cipolla's spell.[29] His strategy so far—to present himself as having been an observer of the events—now breaks down. He is merely a participant like all the others. He exposes his inability to rely for protection upon his own self-assigned qualities and values of rational, critical distance and intellectual superiority.

The narrator has gone to great lengths to portray his protagonist's behaviour as relatable and to make his narrative act of justification appealing. But why has he continually maintained a tension between the protagonist's narrated

29 In contrast to Goethe's "Italy", Mann adopts "Italy" to be a space in which his self-narrative becomes confused. Mann's focus on this confusion distinguishes his representation of Italy from Goethe's. In his *Italienische Reise*, Goethe repeatedly reveals his view of an essence, a true identity, which he believes one can find when in Italy. For instance, on 9 March 1787, he writes that one can know the intrinsic worth of a lemon tree when in Italy: "Was von Münzen, Gemmen, Vasen einzeln, wie die gestutzten Zitronenbäume, nach Norden kommt, sieht in Masse hier ganz anders aus, da, wo diese Schätze einheimisch sind. Denn wo Werke der Kunst rar sind, gibt auch die Rarität ihnen einen Wert; hier lernt man nur das Würdige schätzen" (116). Regarding the ancients, on 17 May 1787 he comments: "Sie stellen die Existenz dar, wir gewöhnlich den Effekt; sie schilderten das Fürchterliche, wir schildern fürchterlich; sie das Angenehme, wir angenehm usw." (191). In contrast to Goethe's attempt to find essence or truth in Italy, Mann's experience in Italy disturbs the aesthetic values he previously held to be true.

behaviour and the narrator's justifications? In answering this question, the political and social context of 1929 becomes important again, because *Mario und der Zauberer* participates in the contemporary debate about the role of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the context of rising fascism throughout Europe. The narrator, as discussed, represents the German intellectual class at this time, and there is perhaps no better way to engage this intellectual class than to couch these questions within the context of literary engagements with "Italy". As Böhme distinguishes, not only is "der Faschismus symbolisch widergespiegelt", but the narrator also seeks to defend "de[n] Status der bürgerlich-humanistischen Intelligenz vor Irrationalismus und Gewalt" (167). Equally, the narrator exposes his failure to narrate a convincing defence. Consequently, he articulates an Italy-narrative that speaks to the bourgeois intellectual's growing crisis of self-understanding. As Reinhard argues, "[d]ie starke Einbeziehung der Erzählfigur in das Geschehen macht die Gefährdung des Bildungsbürgertums in der Zeit des stärker werdenden Faschismus deutlich" (148). Alexander Scheufens similarly argues that there is an "Erschütterung der bürgerlichen Welt" of the protagonist (155). By assigning himself the role of a rational, German intellectual, and by directly appealing to the reader in this role, the narrator addresses a reader who he likely imagines is like him. As Herbert Lehnert puts it, the narrator makes a "bewußte[s] Spiel [...] mit dem Leser" ("Thomas Mann" 137) and Hartmut Böhme suggests, that "[d]er Erzähler [...] den fiktiven Leser [benutzt], um eine mit ihm einverständige Rezeption vorzubilden" (169), but "[i]n Wahrheit bricht die geistige Dominanz des Erzählers zusammen" (169). Andrew Webber also makes an interesting comment that for Mann there was "an anxiety at the base of the representative speech act and of the order which authorises its performance" (68). Although he is discussing gender and sexuality, Webber's comment illustrates Mann's concern with the significance of the act of narration. Here, Mann begins to undermine the status of narration as a bourgeois intellectual activity. By narrating his crisis of self-understanding, the narrator invites the reader to participate in this subverted process of *Bildung*, which destabilises a sense of self, and to think about their own vulnerability to fascist manipulation.

Mann's rearticulation of "Italy" contributes to a broad political message that is directed at the intellectual bourgeoisie in the context of fascism. As Percy Matenko summarises, Mario "is able to destroy the evil magician while better educated and cleverer persons than he could not do so" (135). With this challenge, Mann also destabilises the narrative of German intellectual superiority which, at least according to Zilcosky, Goethe established in his *Italienische Reise*.[30] Particularly the novella's ending renders this attitude of in-

30 As John Zilcosky discusses, Hans Christoph Buch identifies Goethe as "programmatically [attempting to] ban from his garden the tropical flora [the foreign, beyond continental Europe] that offend all 'classical moderation'"

tellectual superiority unjustifiable, because it is not rationality, but rather the emotional boy Mario who offers the bourgeois protagonist his freedom. As Scheufens puts it, the "Haltungs- und Handlungsreservoir [der Intellektuellen] bietet ihnen keine Strategien an, dem Neuen, den Einbrüchen der Moderne wirkungsvoll zu begegnen" (161). The narrator never offers a clear or convincing explanation for remaining in the performance and it is his lack of explanation and his questionable justifications that encourage reflection on what meaningful role an intellectual might play in the context of totalitarianism. The narrator renders indefensible the attitude of intellectual superiority—characteristic of narratives of travel to Italy—in the context of charismatic, political manipulation. The narrator presents the risk of self-deception posed by assuming that intellectual prowess, or a rational perspective, can offer protection against political or emotional manipulation. The novella therefore breaks with the bourgeois expectations evoked by the intertext of German Italy-narratives.

Paradoxically, the reader must rationally analyse the novella in order to better understand the very limitations of rational analysis that Mann exposes. This raises an intellectual bind: by better understanding the mechanisms of one's mind, one becomes further embedded in the very rational, intellectual role that is being problematised. With this conundrum, Mann ushers in a new, 20th century metafictional iteration of the topos "Italy". *Mario und der Zauberer* serves as a microcosm; just as Mann experienced powerlessness in the context of rising fascism in Forte dei Marmi, the protagonist had the same experience in "Torre di Venere", and the reader is also encouraged to question their self-image while reading the novella.

In order to articulate an aesthetic *Bildung* with contemporary relevance, Mann's narrator firstly cripples the assumption of intellectual and rational superiority that characterises the bourgeois, literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. In Forte dei Marmi, Mann did experience a performance with a magician, represented here by Cipolla: "[D]er 'Zauberkünstler' war da und benahm sich genau, wie ich es geschildert habe" (Erika Mann (ed.) 299). But, as Mann explained, the gunshot did not occur (instead, his daughter gave him the idea to include the gunshot in his narrative, as discussed by Erika Mann (ed.) (299)). In the novella, Mario's gunshot wounds Cipolla, ending the performance and freeing the protagonist from Cipolla's manipulation. Although the gunshot ends the performance, it does not liberate the protagonist from his crisis of self-understanding. Instead, Mann confronts us with the impotence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (at least as they understood themselves at the

(Zilcosky 427). Furthermore, as Zilcosky recognises, Goethe's narrative of losing himself in Italy is an "artifice [that] allows for Goethe's self-relocation within European classicism" (430). Block also identifies Goethe as becoming a "master illusionist" in Italy (Block 9).

time) in the face of fascism. Mann—who "Irrationalismus [...] als neue politische Gefahr bekämpft"—was not in favour of an emotional, or a working-class revolution (Sautermeister 24). He does not advocate for the "Marios" of the world to dictate an emotionally-driven and violent resistance. Equally, he provides no alternative and leaves behind a crisis of self-understanding and no answer to the question: how can a bourgeois intellectual meaningfully resist fascism or indeed any emotionally manipulative regime?

2.1.3 Conclusion

Thomas Mann develops a subtle dynamic in *Mario und der Zauberer*. Initially, his protagonist-narrator embodies the values of rationality and intellectual distance. But increasingly, the narrator fails to justify his past behaviour. Instead, his self-understanding is placed in crisis by the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. The narrator reveals that his curiosity—which he continually provides as a justification for remaining in Cipolla's performance—is merely a justification for his emotional behaviour and his lack of insight into his own weaknesses. While Goethe strove to show greater self-awareness than Winckelmann, his striving was aimed at articulating a new, harmonious position for his re-born self. Mann, by contrast, questions and undermines the position he had found for his narrator. His narrator cannot hold himself accountable to the rational standards that he applies to the other audience members, and his direct appeals betray his desperation and uncertainty. Mann even presents his narrator as unwittingly adopting the same narrative techniques as Cipolla.

The narrator's critical self-evaluation in *Mario und der Zauberer* seems to parallel shifts in Mann's own views. Mann—as Elisabeth Galvan indicates—believed that an author

> mehrere, auch einander entgegengesetzte Perspektiven zu Wort kommen lässt, ohne für die eine oder andere Partei zu ergreifen [...]. Diese Haltung unterscheidet ihn—wie Thomas Mann in den Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen erklärt hatte—grundlegend vom Politiker, der naturgemäß für eine bestimmte Idee Partei ergreifen und sie verteidigen muss. (Galvan 15)

It seems that in 1918, when Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* was published, Mann believed that the role of the narrator, as opposed to that of a politician, is to present various perspectives (rational or irrational) from the rational, distant, and uninvolved position of a spectator. But in *Mario und der Zauberer*, Mann re-evaluates this role of the intellectual. In the novella, Mann revisits his earlier perspective and presents rationality and intellectual distance as unproductive when confronted by a manipulative magician, a charismatic politician, or a political dictator. Mann's critical self-evaluation challenges earlier *Bildungsreisen* to Italy, which lauded the achievement of greater rational, intellectual distance and understanding. *Mario und der*

Zauberer turns "Italy" into a space of critical self-evaluation, rather than a space that promises the traveller an attainable, harmonious, stable, and clear position in the world.

The novella encourages the reader to gain more distance from, and a greater intellectual understanding of, their own position. Rather paradoxically, this entrenches the reader yet further in the very position of intellectual distance that is being challenged, and thereby encourages critical self-analysis. Neither passive critique nor rational analysis, but rather Mario—whose *Körper* and *Geist* are united—ends Cipolla's manipulative control with his emotionally-driven action. The narrator, who saw himself as merely *Geist*, is not the true heir to antiquity, as he first believed; it is rather Mario who embodies grace, having maintained the unity of *Körper* and *Geist*.[31] Not the protagonist, but rather Mario captures the classical image of Italy and the South, which had previously been disavowed by the nationalistic southerners on the beach. Although Mann does not oppose rationality, Mario's balance offers an important contrast. The novella warns against mere passive rationality in a politically manipulative context. The narrator offers no answers, but rather presents his own powerlessness in this political context. Rational analysis and intellectual distance are demonstrably insufficient, not only as tools for political resistance, but also as behaviours that facilitate a process of *Bildung* that can lead to harmony. Mann's novella re-evaluates and shifts the expectations of the classical *Bildungsreise* to Italy, and ushers in an early 20th century era for the topos "Italy", which is characterised by a self-conscious examination of the promise of *Bildung*.

31 This German idealisation of Italians as balanced is a longstanding trope. As Goethe wrote on 19 March 1787 in his *Italienische Reise*, "[u]nd so gibt es noch manche originale Unterhaltung, wenn man mit dem Volke lebt; es ist so natürlich, daß man mit ihm natürlich werden könnte" (126).

2.2 The literary *Bildungsreise*'s post-war downfall: Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*

In light of Thomas Mann's critique of the role that "Italy" plays in the German self-understanding, it is worth asking whether Wolfgang Koeppen's (1906–1996) *Der Tod in Rom* (1954) continues *Mario und der Zauberer*'s critical examination of the promise of (aesthetic) *Bildung*. Although some research has been done into Koeppen's relationship to Mann (by for instance Widdig, Pizer, Richner, and von der Lühe), as Langer notes, more research needs to be done on this question (7). *Der Tod in Rom*—with its reference to Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*—clearly draws on Mann's oeuvre. Written in 1954, Koeppen's work questions what a German self-understanding with reference to "Italy" might look like post-war. Koeppen does so by drawing on Mann's "Italy", as well as on the mythologies that underpin many literary engagements with "Italy". As a number of scholars have discussed, *Der Tod in Rom* responds not only to Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*, but also to his other texts, including *Doktor Faustus* (see Irmela von der Lühe) and *Tonio Kröger* (see Anneliese Langer). It appears that no research has drawn connections between Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* and Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*. Significant links do however exist between their engagements with "Italy", particularly between their explorations of the role of aesthetic *Bildung* in the context of fascism. Significant differences exist too. Oliver Herwig (551) for instance recognises that Koeppen critiques the literary tradition itself, as represented by Mann. In *Der Tod in Rom*, Koeppen unpacks the promise of aesthetic *Bildung* in a much more direct and realistic manner than Mann, making the pledge: "'Kein Platon, kein Streben nach der Welt der Idee, kein Phaidros mehr. Realität!'" (qtd. in Pizer 101). With his more direct aesthetic, Koeppen critiques Mann's view of the artist in the context of German fascism. This chapter focusses on *Der Tod in Rom*'s engagement with "Italy"—particularly Mann's "version" of it—to uncover the intertextual relationship between their works. I suggest that Koeppen narrates a fractured "Italy", and this mirrors his fractious image of the post-war self.

Der Tod in Rom is the last novel belonging to Koeppen's post-war trilogy: *Tauben im Gras* (1951), *Das Treibhaus* (1953) and *Der Tod in Rom* (1954). As Manfred Koch discusses (103), the inspiration for *Der Tod in Rom* came to Koeppen when he was in Rome and it is German literature's most famous 1950s engagement with the topos "Italy". In 1965, Koeppen received "den 'Literaturpreis der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste'" (Richner 7). As he explores what literary *Bildung* might look like post-war, Koeppen draws on the classical-humanist debates about the search for a balance between the Dionysian and the Apollonian forces in man. Here, Friedrich Nietzsche's discussion of the "Apollonian" (North) and "Dionysian" (South) resonates with Koeppen's work. Nietzsche is credited with having popularised the terms "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" in his *Geburt der Tragödie* (1872).

As Nietzsche discusses, Apollo and Dionysus—both sons of the Greek god Zeus—form foundational principles of Greek culture, representing opposing sides of "man": Apollo, the god of logic, rationality and order, is associated with the North, and Dionysus, the god of emotions, irrationality, chaos, instinct, and a love of wine and dance, is associated with the South. Nietzsche saw Apollo and Dionysus as "mythological sparring partners" at the heart of Greek tragedy's struggle (Burnham 12). Although Dionysus often renders the protagonist unable to make order in a chaotic, Dionysian world, Nietzsche identifies Dionysus as lighting a spark that is essential to the creation of any art. While repositioning these debates within the post-war context, Koeppen draws on his personal experience of fascism in Europe. As Manfred Koch outlines, in 1934, "wenige Monate nach Erscheinen der 'Unglücklichen Liebe'" (24), Koeppen left Germany to live with friends in the Netherlands, returning to Germany in 1939. David Basker comments that for Koeppen, a German "non-Nazi writer[]" early in his career, long term "emigration probably meant impoverishment" (184), hence his return to Germany. In his post-war writing, Koeppen identifies the continuation of fascism in Germany, as evidenced by the "Remilitarisierung, de[m] wirtschaftliche[n] Aufstieg, d[er] unterbleibende[n] Abrechnung mit der Vergangenheit", the German governmental writing-off of their *Nürnberger Todesurteile*, and the issuing of high pensions to former Nazi generals (Letsch 22). In *Der Tod in Rom*, Koeppen presents the *Bürgertum* as having facilitated the Nazi regime and as still alive and well in post-war Germany.[32] Walter Erhart argues that Koeppen "die Literatur als Medium zur Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit ins gesellschaftliche Bewußtsein gebracht [hat]" (7). In contrast to the *Literatur der Stunde Null* at the time, Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* draws a firm line of continuum between pre- and post-war Germany, making impossible an escapism from the realities of the immediate past.[33] Koeppen draws

32 Anecdotally, Manfred Koch suggests that Koeppen's critique of the *Bürgertum* could have contributed to the early critical reception of *Der Tod in Rom*, with the "bundesdeutschen 'Wohlstandsgesellschaft'" criticising him of "Unredlichkeit, Ressentiment und Zynismus" (9). Although they do not focus on the novel's engagement with "Italy", numerous other scholars also read *Der Tod in Rom* as a critique of the post-war German *Bürgertum*'s failure to come to terms with Germany's past (this includes such scholars as Letsch, Kimmich, Langer and, to some extent, Richner).

33 Anneliese Langer makes a similar argument that Koeppen a "zeitkritische[r] und existentielle Probleme behandelnde[r] Autor [ist]" (6). As Langer explains, scholarship after 1984 went "in zwei verschiedene Wege: und zwar stellt die eine Gruppe den existentiellen und die andere den zeitkritischen Charakter der Nachkriegsromane heraus"; the former was led by Walter Jens and the latter by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (from as early as 1963 but growing in popularity through the 1970s) (Langer 3).

a link to Mann's pre-war articulation of "Italy" in *Der Tod in Venedig* and in *Mario und der Zauberer*, but he also distinguishes himself from it.

In contrast to Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, which closely follows the protagonist-narrator's developing thoughts, Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* shifts between the perspectives of many characters to develop a fractured aesthetic. In this respect, his novella has a filmic style, like a camera that cuts from one frame, or perspective, to the next. This technique fractures Koeppen's narrative and makes it difficult to identify closely with any one character. Koeppen divides the novel into the disparate perspectives of the members of an extended German family who, for different reasons, all find themselves in Rome. When, by chance, they all meet (*TiR* 205), their conflicting ideas about what it means to be German in the post-war context struggle to co-exist.[34] One narrated perspective is however somewhat privileged. Siegfried Pfaffrath is the only character whose perspective is narrated in the first person. And as an artist (a composer) his perspective comes closest to offering a fitting aesthetic in the post-war context. From Siegfried's privileged perspective, a successful process of aesthetic *Bildung* while in Italy would involve liberating himself from his family's conservative expectations and finding an artistic expression that gives voice to the post-war dissonances he experiences as a German artist.

Siegfried hopes to find refuge in Rome, as he attempts to escape his family's Nazi legacy. His father, Wilhelm Pfaffrath, "und dessen jüngere[r] Sohn Dietrich", who is Siegfried's brother, represent the "Bürgertum" (Letsch 22). They embody the German bourgeoisie who, during the Second World War, did not actively commit atrocities but facilitated them and profited from doing so: "Pfaffrath hat es in seiner Stadt zum Bürgermeister gebracht" (Letsch 21). In Felicia Letsch's words, the Pfaffraths represent "[d]as opportunistische Erfolgsbürgertum gestern und heute", who "in erster Linie mit der Wahrung seiner Karriere- und Besitzinteressen beschäftigt" ist (26). And then there is Judejahn, Siegfried's uncle who, a former Nazi general, is in Rome "um für einen arabischen Staat Waffen zu kaufen" (Koch 439). Judejahn lacks all insight into his own behaviour, but the narrator offers some explanation for his active and eager involvement during the war: he overcompensates for his suppressed feelings of weakness and intellectual inferiority. The larger-than-life bully is simultaneously small and pitiable, preferring to be called Götz, to avoid remembering that in the eyes of his father he will always be "de[r] kleine[] Gottlieb" (*TiR* 202). Judejahn's wife Eva is also in Rome. But she, like her husband, is stuck in the past and unable to see a role for herself in post-war Germany. She is presented as psychologically deranged and her genetic line dies out, as her only son Adolf chooses priestly celibacy and will spawn no future generations. As she continues to believe in the Nazi cause,

34 *TiR* for *Der Tod in Rom*.

she becomes a symbol of Germany's dark, deranged past. The Nazi Judejahn, his wife, and the bourgeois Pfaffraths are all presented in a highly critical light.

Among the many characters' perspectives, the positions of Siegfried and Adolf are most subtle and complex. It is they—as representatives of the younger generation—who must work out what role Germany's past might play in its future. They offer alternative answers regarding how to exist in harmony with the world as a German, post-war. While both characters wish to break with the past, the two figures offer highly contrasting and somewhat contradictory visions for the future. Siegfried tries to live in productive tension with his pessimism, whereas Adolf "sucht Zuflucht beim Katholizismus und befindet sich in Rom, um die Priesterweihen zu empfangen" (Letsch 21). For Adolf, Catholic Italy represents an escape from his Protestant, bourgeois family in Germany. Siegfried's artistic experience of Rome, by contrast, does not offer him an escape. Although Adolf hopes to find refuge in religion, the role of religion in the text more broadly supports Siegfried's experience of dissonance. Koeppen challenges Rome's reputation, as the capital of Catholicism, to provide religious refuge. Siegfried cannot escape his past in Rome and the Catholic capital is stripped of its capacity to offer sanctuary and spiritual balance. Koeppen engages with Christianity in order to create a counter-narrative that ruptures with the Christian tradition. When religion features in Koeppen's novel, and in the other texts analysed in this monograph, it often serves to fracture aspects of Christianity as well as the stability of the topos. In *Der Tod in Rom*, the Italian capital stages a performance of Siegfried's dissonant, twelve-tone composition, which represents a musical embodiment of his discomfort with the past and his search for a suitable artistic expression.[35] This search is the closest the novel comes to articulating a new form of aesthetic *Bildung* with reference to Italy. Two further characters, who are not members of the family, also play an important role in the text and in Siegfried's search for an appropriate aesthetic. The conductor of Siegfried's composition, Kürenberg, and his wife Ilse both attempt to distance themselves physically and emotionally from their past in Germany. They hope to find a meaningful role and an artistic expression for themselves in Rome. Their sensual, artistic lifestyle references the promise of aesthetic

35 It is interesting to note that the role of Siegfried's twelve-tone composition in *Der Tod in Rom* resonates with the role of the Schoenbergian twelve-tone music found in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. As Federico Celestini comments, Mann saw music's potential to embody the satanic, "[d]enn die Musik selbst stellt ihm zufolge ein dämonisches Gebiet dar, indem sie 'berechnetste Ordnung und chaosträchtige Wider-Vernunft' vereint, also zugleich 'abstrakt und mystisch' sei" (195). For more on the role of music in Mann's work, see Federico Celestini's *Musikpolitische Konstellationen in Thomas Manns "Doktor Faustus"*, or Hans Vaget's *Seelenzauber: Thomas Mann und die Musik*.

Bildung as it was articulated in earlier literary engagements with "Italy". They, and the neoclassicism they represent, entice Siegfried. But their classical aesthetic does not meet Siegfried's need for an artistic expression that captures his confusion about what it means to be a German artist post-war. Koeppen's Rome is a stage for Siegfried's struggle to articulate a new aesthetic.

2.2.1 *Der Tod in Rom* undermines the classical promise of aesthetic *Bildung*

By mocking the topos' past glory, *Der Tod in Rom* introduces a more fractious aesthetic. With a wry irony, Koeppen references previous celebratory narratives of the city, but metaphorically reduces contemporary Rome to the status of a shabby cat:

> Katzen gibt es überall in Rom, sie sind die älteste Familie der Stadt, ein stolzes Geschlecht wie die Orsini und die Colonna, sie sind wahrlich die letzten echten Römer, aber diese hier sind Gestürzte. Cäsarische Namen! Sie heißen Otello, Caligula, Nero, Tiberio. (*TiR* 12)

The cats, which symbolise "die letzten echten Römer" (*TiR* 12), become a symbol of fascism when the narrator comments:

> Ein Kater mit mächtigem Schädel, schwefelgelb und kurzhaarig, herrscht böse über die Schwächeren. Er tatzt. Er teilt zu. Er nimmt weg. Er trägt die Schrammen der Machtkämpfe im Gesicht. Er hat eine Bißwunde am Ohr,—diesen Krieg verlor er. An seinem Fell frißt die Räude. Die Kinder nennen den Kater zärtlich 'Benito'. (*TiR* 13 f.)

With a bitter irony, Koeppen has the former Nazi general Judejahn name his adopted cat Benito, after Benito Mussolini (*TiR* 26). Manfred Koch reads *Der Tod in Rom* as a critique of the cultural demise of Rome:

> Noch relativ harmlos klingt die Satire auf die 'Klassische' Bildungsreise der Deutschen nach Rom, wenn das 'Land der Sehnsucht' und die Repräsentationssucht des Oberbürgermeisters Pfaffrath in einem Atemzug genannt werden. (118)

But, as Koch further comments, the critique grows harsher when Koeppen places this tradition firmly within its post-war context:

> Bissiger wird der Tonfall dort, wo Koeppen auf Pfaffrath und andere 'an deutscher Tüchtigkeit Genesene' zu sprechen kommt, die als 'Davongekommene' die Schlachtfelder des Zweiten Weltkrieges aufsuchen, aber nicht, um mit sich und dem Faschismus ins Gericht zu gehen, sondern um noch einmal die soldatischen Eskapaden—im aggressiven Landserjargon—wachzurufen. (118)

In the wake of the Second World War, Koeppen's Rome contrasts starkly to the *Sehnsuchtsort* of the pre-war literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy.

Having firstly evoked the "'Land der Sehnsucht', das bildungshungrige Touristen besuchen, um [...] 'das alte, das antike, das römische Rom' zu bewundern" (Koch 118), Koeppen shifts focus to the atrocities of the war. The Pfaffraths proudly remember,

> 'hier stand unsere Batterie, hier spuckten wir runter, hier hatten wir uns festgekrallt, hier hielten wir stand', und dann würde sich's zeigen was für ein feiner Kerl er war [...], er bewunderte sich als fairen Krieger, als tötenden Sportsmann sozusagen. (*TiR* 40)

In order to reveal the shifting cultural significance of historical artefacts, Koeppen places the bourgeois experience of Rome as the city of *Bildung* in sharp contrast to the Rome he witnesses, which is overrun by "Normal-Touristen" who "sich [...] von ihrem Reiseführer vorbuchstabieren lassen [müssen]" (Durzak 128). As Manfred Durzak notes, Koeppen reduces Rome to "nur die allegorische Verfallskulisse für eine von Atriden-Schuld beladene deutsche Familiengeschichte" (128). The nostalgia that the Kürenbergs and Siegfried experience for the "old", classical aesthetic of Italy appears anachronistic and is presented as a way to avoid reckoning with recent history.

Although *Der Tod in Rom* is fascinated by Mann's work, in the post-war context it critically evaluates Mann's aesthetic. Firstly, the death referenced in both titles (in *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Der Tod in Rom*) is of very different characters. Mann's title refers to the death of the novelist and protagonist Aschenbach, whereas Koeppen's title refers to that of the former Nazi general, Judejahn. Given this, the death to which Koeppen refers has connotations of "'Hölle oder 'Krieg'" (Koch 105). Koeppen does not shy away from, but rather lays bare a death that is associated with politics and war. With this greater directness Koeppen positions himself "[g]egen den Ästhetizismus des Kulturschriftstellers Thomas Mann" (Herwig 544). In contrast to Mann's distant, observational irony, Koeppen stylistically narrates from "within", capturing numerous, interweaving narrative perspectives. This is reflected in his intimate presentation of Rome as the innards of a body through which Judejahn travels:

> So trieb er ab, trieb in den Corso hinein, einen langen Darm, gefüllt mit Wagen und Menschen. Wie Mikroben, wie Maden, wie Stoffwechsel und Verdauung zog es durch den Längsdarm der Stadt. Judejahn schwemmte der Sog des Verkehrs nach rechts. (*TiR* 77)

Dietmar Voss considers this the "[in] die moderne Metropole eingeströmte 'dionysische Meer'" (251). Siegfried belongs in this world, on the streets, searching for God not in high places but "in Sackgassen" (*TiR* 210).

Aschenbach and Judejahn—the men referred to in the titles—are diametrically opposed. Whereas Mann's Aschenbach is an example of the *Bildungs-*

bürgertum, Koeppen's Nazi Judejahn dislikes the educated class, including in particular Goethe: "Judejahn dachte an die Nacht des Reichstagsbrandes. Das war die Erhebung gewesen! Man war angetreten! Eine Epoche hatte begonnen! Eine Epoche ohne Goethe!" (*TiR* 50). By generating this association between Aschenbach and Judejahn in the title, *Der Tod in Rom* ironically mocks (albeit with great regret) the descent of the neoclassical aesthetic into fascism. At the debut of Siegfried's composition, Judejahn is surrounded by people he assumes are "verschlagene[] Juden und heimatlose[] Schieber[]", and he thinks that they are "die Schicht, die nach dem schmählichen Treubruch an Mussolini zur Macht gekommen war" (*TiR* 194). With a dark irony, Koeppen has Judejahn—the despicable and unintelligent character—impart a truth that the apparently intelligent, educated audience cannot see or ignores: the *Bürgertum* profited from and was embedded in fascism. Koeppen's reference to Aschenbach in his title is not a straightforward celebration of Mann's work, but rather signals critique, by placing the political and unrefined reality of death and history in the spotlight. As Thomas Richner explains,

> [d]as ist wohl Koeppens Hauptvorwurf an Thomas Mann: dass er das Leben nicht in seiner natürlichen Wirklichkeit und derben Echtheit darstellt, dass er dem Tod nicht offen ins Angesicht schaut, sondern ihn sublim und distanziert zu bewältigen sucht. (15)

Der Tod in Rom is not so much a celebration as a radicalisation of *Der Tod in Venedig* that captures the fracturing of the *Bürgertum* into fascism and the avant-garde.

Having initially romanticised Aschenbach's mantra *durchhalten*, Koeppen eventually came to consider it a symbol of fascism. As John Pizer reminds us, Koeppen was conscious that Aschenbach's motto *durchhalten* mirrors that of "the first significant nationalist in modern Germany history: Friedrich the Great. Aschenbach's ancestors were, like the elder Pfaffrath and Judejahn, political, legal and military functionaries of the state" (104). Aschenbach and Judejahn are also linked by the near-identical reporting of their deaths at the conclusion of each novel. *Der Tod in Venedig* ends with the words: "Und noch desselben Tages empfing eine respektvoll erschütterte Welt die Nachricht von seinem Tode" (*TiV* 592). The equivalent passage in *Der Tod in Rom* runs: "Die Zeitungen meldeten noch am Abend Judejahns Tod, der durch die Umstände eine Weltnachricht geworden war, die aber niemand erschütterte" (*TiR* 254).

Just as *Der Tod in Rom* responds to Mann's novellas with a comparably direct aesthetic, Siegfried shocks his post-war audience with his dissonant, twelve-tone composition, which the bourgeois audience cannot understand, as they wish not to confront the experience of history that it attempts to articulate. Richner similarly recognises,

> [d]ass die bürgerliche Blindheit und Beschränkung mit Siegfrieds Musik, mit Koeppens Schreiben, diesem einzigen existentiellen Aufschrei, nichts

> anzufangen weiss, erstaunt nicht; man sträubt sich in Oberflächlichkeit gegen die Töne von Kälte und Untergang: 'Siegfrieds Töne machen sie [die Pfaffraths] frösteln, sie empfangen Unbehagen'. (90)

In contrast to Aschenbach's aesthetic, which is (at least initially) disciplined, orderly, and distant, Siegfried's music is tormented, "die Töne klangen wie der Ruf eines verirrten Vogels in einem fremden Wald" (*TiR* 189). When listening to Siegfried's symphony, Adolf believes that he hears "Gegensätzliches, wohltuenden Schmerz, lustige Verzweiflung, mutige Angst, süße Bitternis, Flucht und Verurteilung der Flucht, traurige Scherze, kranke Liebe und eine mit üppigen Blumentöpfen bestellte Wüste" (*TiR* 199). But the *bürgerliche* audience does not understand Siegfried's music; they fail to appreciate the relevance for them of the tormented nature of Siegfried's symphony. With his narration of the audience's wilful blindness, Koeppen encourages the reader, by contrast, to confront the aesthetic blindness of the post-war audience. As Pizer argues, Koeppen plunges the reader

> directly into the world in all its contingency and corporeality. As Dieter Kafitz says of Koeppen: 'Sein Werk beschreibt nicht Wirklichkeit, sondern ist Wirklichkeit in all ihrer Zufälligkeit und all ihrem Chaos. Das bedeutet, daß Sprache nicht als Ordnungsinstrument fungiert, sondern daß sich in ihr das Geräusch der Welt ausdrückt'. (99)

Like Siegfried's composition, Koeppen's style—with the narrative switching from one character's perspective to the next—is fractious. In relation to Koeppen's *Tauben im Gras*, Sabina Becker perceives the concentration as broken into "mehr oder weniger gleichzeitig spielenden Sequenzen"; "[es] werden dreißig Personen verfolgt" (102). As Felicia Letsch and Karl Prümm also observe, the same principle applies to *Der Tod in Rom*, which creates a cacophony of narrative voices, evoking an aesthetic that reflects the contemporary experience in much the same way that Siegfried's symphony communicates this experience to his audience.

Koeppen repurposes "Italy" for his new aesthetic. This is made clear in the opening pages, when Rome's central mythologies are referenced: "Es war einmal eine Zeit, da hatten Götter in der Stadt gewohnt" (*TiR* 7). But the novel immediately displaces these mythologies into a disjointed modern context: "Jetzt liegt Raffael im Pantheon begraben, ein Halbgott noch, ein Glückskind Apolls, [Danae] hebt auch nicht ihr Kleid, den Gott zu empfangen. Perseus wird nicht geboren" (*TiR* 7). The mythologies of Italian antiquity no longer facilitate an Italian *Bildungsreise* that allows the characters to see themselves anew. Ilse Kürenberg, for instance, is presented as a goddess from antiquity who embodies a classical aesthetic. She even resembles statues from antiquity: "Ilse Kürenberg trug ein einfaches schwarzes Kleid. Auch ihr Kleid saß wie auf Marmor genäht. Es lag wie eine enge schwarze Haut auf einer wohlerhaltenen Marmorbüste" (*TiR* 189). The Kürenbergs praise Rome: "[Sie] liebten den festen Marmor, die erhabenen Gestalten, die

der Mensch nach seinem Bilde schuf, die kühlen Sarkophage, die verheißende Wölbung der Mischkrüge" (*TiR* 23), and "[s]ie dachten an die schöne Venus und dachten an die springenden Faune" (*TiR* 24). Koeppen's reference to Venus brings to mind *Mario und der Zauberer*'s "Torre di Venere" (Tower of Venus). But in both *Der Tod in Rom* and *Mario und der Zauberer*, the mythological Venus is displaced by the narratives' contemporary political settings. Siegfried sees that Ilse Kürenberg is like "die Statuen in den römischen Gärten [...] und vielleicht ist sie doch die Göttin der Musik, die Muse Polyhymnia, erfahren und jungfräulich" (*TiR* 141). The Kürenbergs attempt to embody a classical aesthetic in the hope of achieving a harmonious existence, but they ultimately fail.

Kürenberg's wife Ilse comes from the same city as the Pfaffraths and the Judejahns, sie "mußte jedoch als Jüdin in der NS-Zeit emigrieren und verlor ihren Vater im KZ. Sie hat Deutschland seitdem nicht mehr betreten" (Letsch 21). Having fled Germany, Ilse Kürenberg searches in Italy for a balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, harmony in her marriage, and liberation from her past through an artist's lifestyle. As Letsch suggests, "[d]as Bemühen, nur die heitere Seite des Lebens wahrzunehmen, läßt Ilse und ihrem Mann Italien als den geeigneten Aufenthaltsort erscheinen, wo sie in Rom klassischen Ästhetik- und Lebensidealen huldigen" (25). Siegfried finds this attempt appealing. He admires their embodiment of classical-humanist ideals. For Siegfried, they "waren der Mensch der ich sein möchte, sie waren sündelos, sie waren der alte und der neue Mensch, sie waren antik und avantgarde, sie waren vorchristlich und nachchristlich, griechisch-römische Bürger" (*TiR* 57). The Kürenbergs embody the literary ideal of the *italienischen Reise*, in which the German traveller searches for a balance between Dionysian and Apollonian forces.

The classical ideals are however rendered fragile by Koeppen's pen. The novel destabilises the Kürenbergs' enjoyment of Rome by presenting it as an act of escapism from their past. Ilse Kürenberg fled Germany in an attempt to leave behind her past, including her Jewish father, who was murdered by the Nazis. But the past is presented as unavoidable when, towards the end of the novella, she is fatally shot by the Nazi Judejahn:

> Ilse Kürenberg stand da in einem weißen Frisiermantel, ein wenig vom Fenster entfernt, aber er sah sie nackend, nackend wie in der Nacht, nackend wie die Frauen vor den Leichengraben, und Judejahn schoß das Magazin von Austerlitz' Pistole leer. (*TiR* 249)

In this brutal scene, the past comes back to haunt Ilse. The classical aesthetic she seeks cannot offer her harmony. Rome is neither a physical nor a psychological refuge. Although the classical-humanist aesthetic appeals to Siegfried, in this scene Koeppen delegitimises it as a form of escape from the past. Letsch makes a similar argument:

> Den ohne Einschränkung positiv gezeichneten Gestalten der Kürenbergs scheint die Sympathie des Autors zu gehören, doch hält er offensichtlich den Versuch, ein von klassisch-humanistischen Idealen geprägtes, aber am Rande der Realität künstlich geschaffenes Leben zu führen, für zum Scheitern verurteilt. (26)

Ilse wished to forget, "[s]ie hatte [...] in ihrem Leben erfahren, daß es besser sei, Leid und Wehmut zu fliehen. Sie wollte nicht leiden. Nicht mehr" (*TiR* 21). But by fleeing her past, Ilse was unable to move into the future.[36] Ilse is even presented as lifeless; due to her attempt to forget, she is unable to bear the fruit of the future. This is something that Dorothee Kimmich also suggests:

> Ilse Kürenberg ist die klassisch Kinderlose: Ihre Gelassenheit, ihre fast unmenschliche Beherrschtheit, ihre statuenhafte Schönheit sind faszinierend, haben aber einen hohen Preis. Sie hat ihre Geschichte verdrängt, ist fast frei von Erinnerungen, versucht die Vergangenheit zu vergessen und negiert den Tod [...]. Es ist, als hätten Marmorstatuen miteinander geschlafen. (214)

Symbolically, Ilse has no future and by implication, nor does the classical-humanist aesthetic she represents. Following the debates between such figures as Goethe and Heine about the classical South and the romantic North, Ilse fails—like most who follow in Goethe's footsteps—to uncover that which Goethe promised and to find a healthy balance between the two.[37]

Ilse's husband, the conductor Kürenberg, is also unable to find the balance that Goethe's *Italienische Reise* implied could be found in Italy. Kürenberg finds himself in a compromised position as he conforms to the demands of his audience. Just as Thomas Mann presented the audience in *Mario und der Zauberer* as susceptible to fascism, Koeppen also presents Kürenberg as de-

36 An interesting parallel can be drawn here to Delius' female protagonist who, also a young woman, struggles to bridge her past and her future as she tries to ignore the cognitive dissonances caused by her experiences of fascism. This will be discussed in the chapter on Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*.

37 In chapter four of his publication *The Spell of Italy*, Richard Block discusses how Goethe's Italy was valuable because of its air of mystery, a mystery that was maintained through "the purity of [...] absence" (113). Heinrich Heine, by contrast, represented a threat to this mystery and was consequently exiled from Germany: "Heine threatens [this purity] by merely reenacting and chronicling the mechanics of the [Goethe's] cover-up" (Block 113). Heine, as a Jew, was seen "like the Italian [as] a 'Knoblauchfresser'" (114); by sending him into exile, it was hoped that "what was jettisoned or cut off in Italy [by Goethe] will never return to contaminate and haunt Germany's 'classistic' revivals" (114).

pendent upon, and performing for, a fascist-sympathising audience. In particular, the "Frack" (*TiR* 185) becomes a symbol of *bürgerlicher* conformity. Although Siegfried refuses to wear it, Kürenberg is invested and entangled in the bourgeois institution that the "Frack" symbolises (*TiR* 185). When Siegfried chooses not to wear the tailcoat he comments: Kürenberg "würde mir böse sein, weil ich die Konvention, die den Kunstbetrieb erhielt, wieder mißachtet und mich vor dem Publikum nicht verneigt hatte" (*TiR* 203). As Siegfried searches for a new aesthetic that resonates post-war, he wishes to place his faith in Kürenberg, but realises that Kürenberg is unable to unite the Dionysian characteristics of the South with his northern Apollonian traits.

Kürenberg turns Siegfried's honest, chaotic, and tortured symphonic reckoning with the past into a more orderly, Apollonian item of enjoyment that, like Ilse, does not give voice to the past:

> Kürenberg glättete, gliederte, akzentuierte Siegfrieds Partitur, und was Siegfried wehe Empfindung war, das Suchen eines Klangs, eine Erinnerung an einen Garten vor aller Geburt, eine Annäherung an die Wahrheit der Dinge, die nur unmenschlich sein konnte, das wurde unter Kürenbergs dirigierender Hand human und licht, eine Musik für gebildete Zuhörer [...], die gebändigte Empfindung strebte zur Harmonie, und Siegfried war unruhig. (*TiR* 9)

The names "Siegfried" and "Kürenberg" are clearly significant, Siegfried being a key figure in the Germanic mythology of the *Nibelungen* and *Der von Kürenberg* a poet from the Middle Ages who adapted the *Nibelungenlied*. Both figures are grounded in Germany, in the North, and relate to the tradition of Romanticism, their mythologies having been created in resistance to classicism. The names of both characters imply the darker story of the *Nibelungenlied*, with its many murders, revenge, misplaced love, treason, and ultimately chaos and destruction at Etzel's (or Attila's) court. Following the Nazi appropriation of the *Nibelungenlied*, Koeppen's reference to it also implies the unlikelihood of Siegfried and Kürenberg escaping both their more distant Germanic and their more recent fascist history in favour of classicism.

Koeppen's reference to the *Nibelungenlied* signals that Siegfried's and Kürenberg's attempts to escape Germany and find balance in Italy is—like Ilse's attempt—doomed. Considering their telling names, Kimmich also contends that Kürenberg is unable to embody the classicism associated with Italy:

> Sein vermeintlich reiner Klassizismus täuscht, denn er heißt nicht umsonst nach dem mittelalterlichen Lyriker Kürenberger. Dieser stammt bekanntlich wie die Nibelungen aus dem Donauraum; er wird zum Teil bis heute als Kompilator der Nibelungenlied-Fragmente genannt und umgekehrt der Nibelungendichter mit dem Kürenberger identifiziert. (214 f.)

Kürenberg gives Siegfried hope of finding a new means of artistic expression when he sends him copies of Schoenberg's twelve-tone music. But Kürenberg, like his wife Ilse, cannot renounce his German, Romantic heritage, despite being enamoured of the Classical tradition. Here, a further parallel can be drawn between Nietzsche and Koeppen's character, Siegfried. Not only do they both engage with music as a way to find a new, modern artistic expression, they both also draw on Wagner (referenced in *Der Tod in Rom* by the name Kürenberg). Just as Nietzsche's idolisation of Wagner provided him "solace and support" (Burnham 9), Siegfried also finds solace and support in Kürenberg. But Nietzsche

> realizes that Wagner cannot help him any further in his fight against the status quo of contemporary 'philistinism' [...]. Nietzsche now realized that Wagner was not a modern composer at all, but one steeped in the Romantic tradition, (Burnham 9)

and Siegfried also becomes disillusioned by Kürenberg, who—having been the one to introduce Siegfried to twelve-tone music—Siegfried increasingly considers to be tied to the institution. Kürenberg is, like Wagner, "steeped in the Romantic tradition" (Burnham 9). Although both the Kürenbergs at first appear to embody the classical ideals associated with Italy, Koeppen compromises the characters and with them, the classicism and the hope of balance and harmony that they represent. Siegfried's process of aesthetic *Bildung*, if successful, will not embody harmony, but rather dissonance.

Having undermined the classicism represented by the Kürenbergs, *Der Tod in Rom* turns to Siegfried to articulate a fractured aesthetic. As an artist and an outside observer, he articulates a musical aesthetic that gives voice to the dissonances of the Second World War. Siegfried reflects, "[i]ch liebe Rom, weil ich ein Ausländer in Rom bin, und vielleicht möchte ich immer ein Ausländer sein, ein bewegter Zuschauer" (*TiR* 173). Kürenberg also identifies these artistic traits in Siegfried and encourages his isolation:

> Gehen Sie auf die Straße. Lauschen Sie dem Tag! Aber bleiben Sie einsam! Sie haben das Glück, einsam zu sein. Bleiben Sie auf der Straße einsam wie in einem abgeschlossenen Laboratorium [...], vielleicht finden Sie den neuen Klang! (*TiR* 69)

In his refusal to accept the dominant aesthetic of Italy-narratives, *Der Tod in Rom* also fractures the classical ideals of platonic love by narrating images of homosexuality much more directly than Thomas Mann did. Presentations of platonic love and *Knabenliebe* have played a central role in literary preoccupations with Italy, both within German literature (for instance by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Thomas Mann) and beyond (for instance by Lord Byron, Oscar Wilde and E. M. Forster).[38] Just as the Kürenbergs appeal to

38 For an overview, see Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean*.

Siegfried because of their search for an aesthetic balance between *Körper* and *Geist*, the long tradition of *Knabenliebe* in Italy also appeals to Siegfried as being more "pure" than heterosexual love, which may be driven by a procreative desire. Siegfried is in fact disgusted by the thought of reproduction: "Ich sah einen Mann ein Weib begatten, und mich ekelte, weil ihre Vereinigung das Leben fortsetzen konnte" (*TiR* 109).

Despite not believing that he will find a sense of belonging or completeness in Rome, Siegfried is drawn to the classical model of love. He idealises platonic love and *Knabenliebe*, because it is grounded in the cultural authority of the ancient Greeks. Ilse Kürenberg "war ihm sympathisch, weil sie kinderlos war. Er dachte: sie hat nicht geboren, sie hat so wenig geboren wie die Statuen in den römischen Gärten geboren haben" (*TiR* 141). From Siegfried's perspective, the heterosexual Ilse can embody a classical aesthetic. As Herwig argues (similarly to Felicia Letsch (31)):

> Während im *Tod in Venedig* die Gestalt Tadzios einen ebenso mythologisch überhöhten wie sexuell überformten Charakter erhält, sucht Siegfried in gegenläufiger Bewegung die Befreiung von seiner Geschlechtlichkeit in (hetero)sexueller Abstinenz. Sie alleine verspricht ihm, die Perpetuierung des sinnlosen Erdendaseins und damit den Kreislauf von Macht und Machtmißbrauch zu durchbrechen. (548)

Siegfried approves of Ilse Kürenberg because he desires a removed aesthetic beauty that transcends the corporeal, in line with classical ideals. But, like the Kürenbergs' decision to move to Italy, Siegfried's (hetero)sexual abstinence stems from his desire not to reproduce the past. His fascination with "Italy", and his desire to model himself on the image of the homosexual artist undertaking an *italienische Reise*, is also exposed as a form of escapism, and contradicts his desire to confront the past through his music.

How then can Koeppen engage with the classical trope of *Knabenliebe* while also confronting the past? He does so by, in contrast to Mann's aesthetic subtlety, narrating Siegfried's sexuality explicitly. Koeppen evokes images of the character Tadzio from *Der Tod in Venedig* (the young boy whom Mann's Aschenbach desires). Mann's Aschenbach merely fantasised about Tadzio, enjoying him aesthetically like a classical statue. Siegfried, by contrast, has sex with a male prostitute.[39] Like Mann, Koeppen develops a "mythical, reli-

39 Perhaps due to the cultural shock in response to this imagery, the reception of *Der Tod in Rom* has varied greatly over time. Initially, it received harsh criticism. Manfred Koch explains that "[w]o Heinrich Böll und Günter Grass mit ihren sozialkritischen Romanen auf breite Zustimmung stießen, fand Koeppen noch Ablehnung und Unverständnis" (9). But as Thomas Richner explains, this initially harsh criticism was an "an der Oberfläche bleibende[] Kritik [, die] sich meistens in völkischer Entrüstung und nicht zuletzt in vordergründiger Prüderie [ergeht]" (8). But there were also positive assess-

gious undertone to Siegfried's erotic adventure" but, as Pizer rightly indicates, "Siegfried's episode is told in the first-person, undermining Mann's ironic detachment and underscoring the frank, distinctly nonplatonic realism of the homoerotic encounter" (105). If Koeppen wishes to shock, I suggest he does so in order to expose the bourgeoisie's tendency to turn a blind eye to "reality", including their role in fascism. I suggest this because Koeppen links Siegfried's homosexuality to his involvement with the Hitler youth, at which point Siegfried first became sexually interested in other boys. During his sexual encounter in Rome, Siegfried remembers

> die Jungenswelt der Ordensburg, den Geruch der großen Schlafsäle, die nackten Knabenkörper in spartanischer Erziehung im Frühnebel des Waldlaufs über den frostigen Boden gejagt, und weiter die Welt der Männerbünde, die Horte, Lager und Heime der nationalen Bewegung, auch die Kameradschaft der Soldaten [...], aber mit diesen Burschen [den italienischen Prostituierten] verbanden mich Herkunft und Erziehung in unterweltlicher Weise und sie waren Erscheinungen eines schlechten Gewissens, von dem ich mich noch befreien mußte. (*TiR* 155 f.)

Here, Koeppen politicises the aestheticization of the young male body, rendering it impossible to disentangle human relations from historical reality.

The distant, classical Greek aesthetic, whereby the male appreciation of a young male body is considered an aesthetic act of a higher order than heterosexual desire, is positioned firmly into an historical context. Siegfried's sexual desire is caught in tension between historical reality and the desire to belong in the safe, apolitical realm of aesthetic appreciation and platonic love. As Herwig observes,

> Siegfried wähnt zwar für einen Augenblick, 'Petronius der Dichter' zu sein, der die 'Schönheit der Knaben' genießt, und wandelt so auf den Spuren Aschenbachs, doch nur, um im gleichen Atemzug die Illusion krude zu durchbrechen: 'es gibt keine Unsterblichkeit und die Schönheit verfault'. (546)

For Siegfried, Aschenbach's distant appreciation is impossible, as Koeppen presents a stark counter-image to Mann's beautiful Tadzio. Siegfried's experience of pederastic desire is inextricably linked to the culture of the Hitler youth, and with it, to shame and guilt:

> Doch der übelste der Burschen trat in die Zelle, Wasser tropfte herab, er stank nach dem stinkenden Wasser des Tibers, wie auch das ganze Badeschiff nach diesem Wasser stank, das unter den Bohlen faulte und gluckste wie tausend gierige Münder, Flecken sprenkelten die Haut des verkomme-

ments of the novel, both initially and increasingly over time. As Richner explains, "[s]chon früh gab es vereinzelte Rezensenten, die wohl mehr intuitiv erkannten, dass es bei Koeppen nicht mit Ausdrücken wie 'Fäkalienphantasie' oder 'langweilige[s] deutsche[s] Spülicht' getan ist" (8).

> nen Jünglings, Pickel blühten rot und eitrig im schlaffen Felde des früh verdorbenen Gesichts, die Augen waren trübe […] und sein Haar war strähnig von dem stinkenden Wasser. (*TiR* 160)

I do not wish to argue, as A. F. Banoe does, that Siegfried "is plunged back into his own immaturity, the origins of his perversion, the pernicious years at the Nazi *Parteischule*" (131), because that would be to imply that homoeroticism is a phase—that ought to be overcome with maturity—or a disorder in the formation of identity. Rather, it seems that Koeppen draws on the theme of pederasty in order to subvert the classical aesthetic, associated with "Italy". By radicalising Mann's imagery of homosexual desire, *Der Tod in Rom*'s "frank, distinctly non platonic realis[t]" aesthetic (Pizer 105) exposes the pre-existing aesthetic as an attempt to flee to the apolitical realm of aesthetic appreciation, be that for instance in the form of platonic love, in the form of the classical appreciation of statues, or in the form of the musical institution that the Kürenbergs serve.

2.2.2 *Der Tod in Rom*'s "Italy": literature about literature

In its search for a fitting post-war aesthetic, *Der Tod in Rom* radically subverts the promise of an aesthetic *Bildung* that can provide a harmonious alignment between oneself and the world; a promise that Mann began to question pre-war in both *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Mario und der Zauberer*. Rather than celebrate Mann's protagonist, the *bildungsbürgerlichen* novelist Aschenbach, Koeppen's engagement with Mann's work reveals the shifting role of literature. As Bernd Widdig similarly notes:

> Es scheint fast, als könne man aus dieser Verdopplung eine Genealogie der Moderne herauslesen. Am Anfang steht Gustav von Aschenbach, der sterbende Vertreter der bürgerlichen Kultur gegen Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Sein Erbe verdoppelt sich: Der eine Strang führt in die Avantgarde der Zwölftonmusik [Siegfried], der andere in den Faschismus [Judejahn]. (165)

Both fascism and Siegfried's post-war twelve-tone music are rooted in the past that Mann's *bildungsbürgerlicher* Aschenbach represents.

Der Tod in Rom inherits a topos that has become circular, in which literature writes about literature. By articulating this circularity, *Der Tod in Rom* gives voice to the limitations of the topos "Italy". Becker also identifies this circularity in Koeppen's works, commenting:

> der Begriff der Moderne sei in Gefahr, selbst zu einem Mythos zu werden […]. Von daher lassen sich seine [Koeppens] Romane im Umfeld des Themenfeldes 'Literatur über Literatur' beschreiben, allesamt sprechen sie über die Bedingungen von Literatur, nicht zuletzt ihr starker intertextueller Charakter verweist darauf: Jeder der drei Romantitel ist bereits ein Zitat. So sind Koeppens Werke auch Romane über das Erzählen, sie reflektieren

> den Prozeß des Erzählens, wobei die Selbstreflexion des Erzählers vielfach gar zur Destruktionsarbeit am Erzählen gerät. (113)

As the "Italy" narrative becomes self-referential, Siegfried's thoughts mirror this crisis of circularity, landing him back where he began:

> Ich glaube zwar; aber ich glaube, daß alles sinnlos ist. Oder nicht alles ist vielleicht sinnlos, aber daß ich hier bin, ist sinnlos, daß ich mit diesen Menschen rede, ist sinnlos, daß wir hier fotografiert werden, ist sinnlos, der künstliche Blitz ist sinnlos, meine Musik ist sinnlos, aber sie brauchte nicht sinnlos zu sein, wenn ich nur etwas Glauben hätte. (*TiR* 142 f.)

Recent history leaves Siegfried unable to believe in anything but the absurd circularity of history. As Becker suggests, "[d]ie seinen Romanen immanenten Anspielungen auf den Mythos beinhalten die Deutung von Geschichte als die Wiederkehr des Immergleichen", evoking Nietzsche's similarly burdensome thought of eternal repetition as seen in *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Becker 114). Post-war, Siegfried is left without belief, but with the insight that belief is necessary in order for there to be any sense to his life.

By 1954, Koeppen finds that the topos "Italy" can no longer promise the hope of achieving a harmonious aesthetic balance. Rather, Siegfried is left uncomfortably aware of his own impotence. Letsch agrees:

> Der mangelnde Glaube an die Menschen und ihre Möglichkeiten zu menschlicherer Entwicklung wird Siegfried zur Begründung, warum er selbst sich nicht für die Schaffung einer besseren Gesellschaft einsetzt oder gegen die restaurativen Tendenzen ankämpft, die er in seiner Heimat wieder aufkommen sieht. (30)

Siegfried must even confront his hypocrisy:

> Die Schwäche dem Leben gegenüber, die Siegfried Adolf vorwirft, ist also bei ihm, wenn auch in anderer Form, vorhanden, Adolf flüchtet sich aus 'Angst vor dem Leben' in die Arme der kirchlichen Autorität, Siegfried in die 'Freiheit der Kunst'. (Letsch 32)

But this "'Freiheit der Kunst'" (Letsch 32) offers Siegfried neither metaphysical nor aesthetic sanctuary.

In his reflections on literature, Koeppen narrates a crisis of the novel as the central medium of *Bildung*. Widdig makes a similar argument, suggesting that Koeppen no longer even bothers "jenen Schein der Totalität zu erzeugen" (166). Rather, Widdig suggests,

> die allegorische Figur Judejahns im allegorischen Raum der Stadt Rom, deutet darauf hin, daß die geschichtliche Katastrophe des Faschismus für Koeppen nicht nur den Tod des Romans bedeutet, sondern auch daß die ungeheure Sinnlosigkeit dieser geschichtlichen Periode die Frage aufkommen läßt, wie diesem Erlebnis von Geschichte zu begegnen ist. (166)

Simon Ward similarly reads a disabling modernism in Koeppen's works. Although Ward discusses Koeppen's later works, his observation could equally serve as a description of Siegfried's outsider status and his disabling intellectual pessimism. Ward connects

> the failure of the modernist search for a rooted identity [...] with the specific callings of the intellectual outsider, unable to commit himself to [...] engaging in the resistance to the Nazi dictatorship [...]: the intellectual has disqualified himself. (98)

In this respect, although *Der Tod in Rom* reacts to Mann's aesthetic, it also exhibits great similarities to *Mario und der Zauberer*. Just as Mann narrated the intellectual's realisation that he is not impervious to fascism, in *Der Tod in Rom* the artist has disqualified himself in the context of fascism and in the novelistic pursuit of "a rooted" or coherent German self-understanding in the immediate post-war period (Ward 98). While *Mario und der Zauberer* impairs the narrator's authority as a distant intellectual observer, Koeppen undermines the novel's promise that the *italienische Reise* can offer the artist a meaningful sense of self, given literature is doomed to a circular analysis of its own limitations.

Siegfried's disabling crisis of circularity is communicated metaphorically in a poignant scene in which a poor donkey evokes the myths of Prometheus and Pandora. In discussion with Adolf, Siegfried comments,

> 'der Esel zog den Wagen. Er meinte, das Gefährt himmelwärts zu ziehen, und bald würde das Paradies kommen, ohne Eselslast, mit ewig grüner Weide und den Raubtieren als freundlichen Spielgefährten [...]. Zum Glück hat man ihm immer Scheuklappen angelegt, damit er nicht merkt, daß es nie voran, sondern immer im Kreis geht, daß er keinen Wagen, sondern ein Karussell bewegt, und vielleicht sind wir eine Belustigung auf einem Festplatz der Götter, und die Götter haben nach ihrem Fest vergessen, das Karussell abzubauen, und der Esel dreht es noch immer, nur die Götter erinnern sich nicht mehr an uns'. (*TiR* 208 f.)

From Siegfried's narrated perspective, hope is a curse. Koeppen's donkey warns of the plight of Prometheus, who lets hope onboard his boat: "'Die Hoffnung war darum auch eine der bedenklichen Gaben des Prometheus; statt des Vorauswissens der Unsterblichen gab er den Menschen die Hoffnung'", which, for Koeppen, "der Garant der Götter dafür [ist], dass die Qual des Menschseins durch die Hoffnung auf ein besseres Leben immer wieder verlängert wird" (Richner 130). Similarly, the hope that the Kürenbergs, Adolf, and even Siegfried had, of finding a balance in Italy is presented as delusional. The aesthetic pursuit of harmony is a pursuit as futile as the donkey's hope of finding paradise; hope leads history to forever continue in the circular motion of the carousel. In Siegfried's case, the allure of classical aesthetic ideals, which he associates with Italy, seduces him with hope. As an artist, he was drawn to Italy in the hope of finding a fitting aesthetic, as he

cannot help but desire to articulate a meaningful role, a meaningful aesthetic, for himself. And so, despite seeking to stare futility in the face, like the donkey, Siegfried "dreht" the hope of achieving aesthetic *Bildung* "noch immer" (*TiR* 209).

Der Tod in Rom maintains its narrative tension—between the futility of hope, and the continuing desire to find an appropriate, or fitting aesthetic—by settling on an image of Siegfried belonging in Rome as a 20th century space of transit. Siegfried belongs in Rome because it does not offer a solid "identity"; because it is a city of outsiders. Even the audience for Siegfried's symphony is "ein nicht ernst zu nehmendes zwar von Spreu im Weltwind, von heimatlosen Modenarren, in keiner Kultur verwurzelt[es Publikum]" (*TiR* 211). Siegfried likewise "belongs" in motion: "Mir war das Geld des Preises willkommen. Ich würde nach Afrika reisen. In Afrika würde ich eine neue Symphonie schreiben […]. Ich weiß, Europa ist schwärzer. Aber ich will nach Afrika reisen, ich will die Wüste sehen" (*TiR* 240). Without offering the hope of balance, *Der Tod in Rom* strives to find an aesthetic expression that at least captures the imbalances and dissonances that the character Siegfried experiences and that Koeppen observes.

In a noteworthy parallel, Koeppen found himself needing to travel beyond the novel in his search for alternative literary genres. At the end of the 1950s, after writing *Der Tod in Rom*, Koeppen transitioned to the genre of the travelogue. With this move, Koeppen avoided the need for an active subject. As Onur Kemal Bazarkaya suggests, "sein Gattungswechsel [ging] auf Gründe des romanästhetischen Ungenügens [zurück]" (141). Having pushed the limits of the novel in *Der Tod in Rom*, "nach der Veröffentlichung von *Der Tod in Rom* verspürte Koeppen daher einen 'Überdruß an der Romanform'" (Bazarkaya 140). Another parallel can be drawn here to Nietzsche's attempt, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, to "establish conditions for [the] revival" of "a literary form symbolic of a metaphysically tenable world view" (Burnham 12). Burnham's description of Nietzsche resonates with Koeppen's literary project; a symbolic revival

> cannot be a form of simple return to preconscious conditions of Greek life. A re-establishment is envisaged instead, a 're-birth' of the preconscious world view of tragedy under modern conditions. Since the clock of history cannot be turned back it has got to be pushed forward. A radically modern, highly synthetic form of art is propagated. (Burnham 12)

In the post-war context, Koeppen repeats Nietzsche's project. Siegfried tries to do just this with his music, and Koeppen does so with *Der Tod in Rom*. Like many others—such as Heinrich von Kleist, who explores this in the terms of a "fall from grace" in his *Über das Marionettentheater*—*Der Tod in Rom* attempts to narrate a clear-sighted, artistic way forward for post-war art, in which he can articulate a "literary form symbolic of a metaphysically tenable world view" (Burnham 12), which symbolically articulates a post-war Ger-

man self-understanding. Just as Siegfried's narrated pessimism leads him to travel further South to Africa, Koeppen's pessimism about the novel led him to venture to the genre of the travelogue. Koeppen's outsider status, as a satirist[40] of a classical-humanist aesthetic, is reflected in the character Siegfried's outsider status as an artist who wishes to confront Germany's uncomfortable past, which he saw his contemporary society ignoring.

2.2.3 Conclusion

In *Mario und der Zauberer*, Thomas Mann fashions "Italy" into a space of critical self-evaluation rather than a land that promises a process of *Bildung* leading to harmony. In the post-war context, Koeppen's critique extends Mann's. Koeppen redefines a successful process of aesthetic *Bildung* as not leading to harmony, but rather to dissonance. Rather than finding harmony, the continuing *search* for an appropriate aesthetic becomes the characteristic of Siegfried's *Bildung*. For Koeppen's Siegfried, a process of *Bildung* involves liberating himself from his family's conservative expectations. In the process, *Der Tod in Rom* not only undermines, but entirely delegitimises the assumption that a *Bildungsreise* to "Italy" will lead to harmony. *Der Tod in Rom* renders futile the hope, which the Kürenbergs possessed, of achieving harmony by engaging with the aesthetic ideals symbolised by "Italy". What role can art possibly have in Koeppen's wasteland of history? Is the promise of aesthetic *Bildung* completely invalidated, or can a *Bildungs*-narrative, albeit an altered one, still be meaningful post-war?

In its effort to wrestle honestly and clear-sightedly with the realities of the Second World War and its implications for the German author, *Der Tod in Rom* finds the genre of the novel no longer sufficient for its purposes. But the very existence of *Der Tod in Rom* indicates Koeppen's desire to keep searching for an apt artistic expression. He has not given up on art entirely. Rather, he redefines the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy as the search for new narrative forms that can articulate the fractiousness he observes. Koeppen's "Italy" does not represent the pursuit of harmony, but rather a space in which to re-evaluate the role of art in the immediate post-war context. Koeppen's novel does not expect literature to directly combat the political situation, but rather to articulate a space within which to provide a clear-sighted reckoning with the past. In Siegfried's narrated words,

> [d]ie Musik war nicht dazu dar, die Menschen zu ändern, aber sie stand in Korrespondenz mit der gleichfalls geheimnisvollen Macht der Zeit, und so konnte sie vielleicht mit der Zeit zu großen Veränderungen beitragen, aber

40 Interestingly, Richner makes the point that Koeppen's satirical nature led to a crisis of narrative self-understanding, because the satirist becomes defined in negative contrast to the subject of his satire (137).

> was ist in der Zeit ein Jahrhundert, was ein Jahrtausend, wir messen die Zeit aus dem Standort unseres flüchtigen Lebens, aber wir wissen nicht, was die Zeit ist. (*TiR* 172)

Koeppen later elaborated on this question in discussion with Bienek. He believed that the author cannot have political control but can perhaps contribute to change by engaging the minds of his readers and encouraging reflection and discussion. As Koeppen said:

> 'Ich erwarte nicht [...], daß man meine Strategie versteht, mein Wort ist nicht politisch bewußt, aber eine politische Wirkung in irgendeiner Zukunft würde mich freuen'. 'Was ich mir wünsche', wird an anderer Stelle hinzugefügt, 'daß durch mein Schreiben eine Änderung von Leben, von Denken, von Bewußtsein einträte bei irgendjemand und sich diese wieder auf einen anderen übertragen würde'. (qtd. in Koch 10)[41]

Siegfried's art is neither a direct driver of political change nor a medium through which to experience a harmonious place in the world. Rather, *Der Tod in Rom* takes the form of "literature about literature", thereby articulating a new role for art in the post-war context. In *Der Tod in Rom*, "Italy" becomes a space in which to confront, dispute, and rearticulate ideas of aesthetic *Bildung* in a self-reflective, clear-sighted way. *Der Tod in Rom* continues the critical re-evaluation, which Mann began, of the role of aesthetic *Bildung*. In Koeppen's novel, narrative is not an "Ordnungsinstrument" (Pizer 99). Rather, it plunges the reader into a cacophony of narrative voices and articulates contradictions and critically evaluates the role of the German artist post-war.

In the immediate post-war period, *Der Tod in Rom* flounders in its post-war realisation that narrative must articulate chaos rather than order. It holds a mirror up to a newly fractured German self-understanding. As we will see in the following chapter, by 1982, Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*—while sharing a similar focus and concern—does not flounder, but rather adopts a dark irony to revel in this "reality" that Koeppen exposes.

41 Koeppen's perspective can be placed in historical context. As Koch shows, Koeppen's views aligned with his contemporaries Böll and Grass: "In der Skepsis gegenüber unmittelbarer politischer Einflußnahme durch literarische Bestätigung stimmt Koeppen mit den populärsten Nachkriegsschriftstellern, Heinrich Böll und Günter Grass, überein, wie fast gleichlautende Äußerungen bezeugen: 'Als Schriftsteller kann einer nur mittelbar politisch wirken, und er muß auf diese mittelbare Wirkung vertrauen. Sonst muß er Politiker werden', erklärte Böll 1967 gegenüber Reich-Ranicki" (Koch 10).

2.3 Embracing aesthetic impotence: Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*

Following Wolfgang Koeppen's 1954 rearticulation of "Italy", the southern destination might no longer appear to offer a fruitful common ground, or topos, having been rendered rather barren. But in 1982, Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* (1982) revisits earlier iterations of "Italy", thereby revealing the topos' resilience and its ability to offer material that is relevant in new socio-historic contexts. Just as *Der Tod in Rom* draws on Thomas Mann's texts, here too numerous links can be drawn between Hofmann's and Mann's works. Immediately, the *Torre di Dikaiarchaeia* referenced in Hofmann's title *Auf dem Turm* brings to mind the *Torre di Veneri* found in Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*. Mann was indeed one of Hofmann's most notable "Vorbilder[]" (Kosler foreword). As Michael Butler suggests, Hofmann was well versed in the literary tradition, having "for many years [...] worked abroad as a Germanist" (475). Hofmann even completed his doctorate on Thomas Mann and Henry James in 1957 ("Gert Hofmann", *The Times* 17). In *Auf dem Turm*, Hofmann engages specifically with Mann's "Italy" as found in his novella *Mario und der Zauberer*. The links between the two texts are striking and unmistakable, lending Mann's novella a paradigmatic status for Hofmann's novel.[42] What remains less clear is whether Hofmann, similarly to Koeppen, parodies *Mario und der Zauberer*'s aesthetic paradigm, and whether or not Hofmann generates a shift in the literary understanding of "Italy". In pursuit of an answer to these questions, this chapter will closely consider the relationship between *Auf dem Turm* and *Mario und der Zauberer*.

It is unsurprising that *Auf dem Turm* draws on *Mario und der Zauberer*, given that Hofmann's novel inspects the modern fragility of "Italy's" promise of achieving harmony through aesthetic *Bildung*. Just as *Mario und der Zauberer* examined this fragility in the fascist context of the late 1920s and early 1930s, *Auf dem Turm* does likewise in the novel's 1980s context. In Hofmann's novel, *Mario und der Zauberer* serves as a reference point for the role that "Italy" plays in the 20th century as a "common ground" for re-evaluating the hope of achieving a harmonious balance through an aesthetic engagement with Italy. *Auf dem Turm* articulates doubt that it is possible to achieve this balance. Like Mann and Koeppen, Hofmann experiments with an "Ästhetik der Ohnmacht" (Wilke 515). What Sabine Wilke calls "Ästhetik der Ohnmacht" (515), Daniel Chaffee labels "reflexive individualism" and ex-

42 The term novel, or *Roman*, perhaps seems unsuitable. In an interview with Gert Hofmann, Hans Kosler questioned the label for Hofmann's works—"Wobei man Ihnen schon oft den Vorwurf gemacht hat, kein Romancier zu sein" (45)—to which Hofmann replied, "[e]s liegt in den Händen des Verlegers, wie er das Kind, das er vor sich hat, nennt. Ich gehe doch nicht hin und sage: Ich schreibe einen Roman" (qtd. in Kosler 45).

plains that this "does not mean more reflection, [it] does not mean that people are more conscious, but rather they are more aware that control is impossible" (Chaffee 107). Unlike Mann, Hofmann explores this "Ästhetik der Ohnmacht" not in response to the rise of fascism, but rather more broadly in response to the status of the contemporary subject.

Although Hofmann is no longer particularly well known, his works are worthy of further research, having remained "the 'bekanntesten unter den literarischen Geheimtips' [...] at the periphery of the German literary scene" (Butler 475). From the end of the 1970s, Hofmann's works "became famous throughout Germany" and continue to be of interest ("Gert Hofmann", *The Times* 17). As Hans Kosler argued,

> Gert Hofmann zählt zu den renommiertesten Autoren der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur [...]. Seine Texte gehören zu den von der Literaturkritik am ernsthaftesten besprochenen, sie wurden ausgezeichnet mit dem Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis, mit dem Alfred-Döblin-Preis. Die 'Zeit' stellte das Werk von Gert Hofmann auf die gleiche Stufe mit Vorbildern, von denen er sich indessen längst emanzipiert hat: Thomas Bernhard, Canetti, vor allem Beckett. (foreword)

In 1982, *Auf dem Turm* also received Germany's Alfred Döblin prize ("Review", *The New Yorker* 131).

Hofmann is particularly self-conscious of the act of writing literature, which John Osborne largely accredits to him having studied German and English literature in Leipzig and Freiburg and having taught German at universities in Germany and abroad. Owing to this professional background, Hofmann was "always aware of writing under the shadow of other artists, and that the status of the artist is itself a problematic affair" (Osborne). He exhibits his awareness, "daß die Literatur nicht mit ihm begonnen hat" (Kosler 7) and that "amidst the cacophony of contemporary life the small, quiet voice of the writer is frequently drowned, his words obscured and trivialised by the verbiage with which the individual is constantly bombarded" (Butler 376). In light of this, and as Sabine Wilke writes, *Auf dem Turm* "handelt sich doch immerhin um eine Kritik des postmodernen und poststrukturalistischen Paradigmas in der zeitgenössischen Literaturwissenschaft" (515). Hofmann's literature studies the contemporary individual's self-understanding and how this is shaped by other influential narratives.

It is unsurprising that Hofmann was drawn to the imaginative space of "Italy", which is richly populated by many literary voices, given Hofmann was concerned with the influence of literary predecessors on contemporary authors, and their attempt to articulate a fitting narrative of aesthetic impotence. Hofmann places his protagonists into imaginative spaces: "Many of Hofmann's protagonists live in worlds of their own devising" (Brunskill 1), testing "how much external reality those private worlds will stand" (Brunskill 1). In metafictional style, *Auf dem Turm* enquires into the produc-

tion of narrative and the role it plays in the contemporary individual's self-understanding.[43] As Hofmann commented in an interview with Kosler, "[d]er Autor sollte sich bewußt sein, daß die Welt ein Chaos ist, daß er aber nicht die Welt herstellt, sondern ein kleines Werk, das gegliedert zu sein hat und—selbst wenn es auf dem Kopf steht—Anfang, Mitte und Ende haben muß" (qtd. in Kosler 45). While Hofmann knows that his narrative must remain "orderly", he is interested in the paradox of narrating chaos; he explores the possibility of resisting the meaning-making nature of narrating, by embodying, in narrative, the chaotic experience of the contemporary individual. To use Hofmann's own words:

> Der Schauplatz meiner Werke [...] ist und bleibt der Menschenkopf, der, da es ein moderner Kopf ist, ein unübersichtlicher und heikler, von allen Seiten bedrängter, von Druck, Lärm und Gestank unablässig überfluteter, mit sich selbst und den anderen tödlich entzweiter Kopf ist. (Hofmann qtd. in Kosler 33)

Hofmann focusses less on theoretical and political questions of "modernity", and more on narrating the experience of individual characters (Kosler 33). As Sabine Wilke puts it, Hofmann is concerned with

> den aktuell diskutierten Thesen vom Verschwinden des Subjekts im Diskurs der philosophischen Moderne und Postmoderne. Statt dieses Theorem zu untermauern, macht Hofmann sich daran, das Subjekt gerade unter den Bedingungen seines Verschwindens in Form einer erratischen Selbstbehauptung und damit einhergehend einer Ästhetik der Ohnmacht zu denken. (515)

Hofmann feigns a loss of control of his own narrative of the world in order to provide insights into the individual's experience of a fractured self-understanding in the late 20th century.

Like Mann and Koeppen, Hofmann engages with the German literary imagination of a *Bildungsreise* to Southern Italy. But in the novel's 1980s context, Hofmann re-evaluates the relevance of this topos. Next, I will briefly outline the novel, before considering the textual parallels between Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* and Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, which serve to expose the narrator's limited freedom in *Auf dem Turm*, as he remains aware of narrating in the shadow of his literary predecessor. *Mario und der Zauberer* casts a shadow over Hofmann's novel, like the oppressive tower that overshadows the Italian town in the novel's setting. While Hofmann explores the possibility of escape through parody, *Auf dem Turm* draws so heavily on Mann's novella that it could be considered an adaptation or a modern re-writing. The enduring presence of Thomas Mann's novella exposes the contemporary

43 With this metafictional reflection on the production of literature, as well as his use of imaginative space and imaginative worlds, Hofmann's 1982 novel shares key similarities with Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* (see the final chapter of this book), which was also written in the early 1980s.

author's limited power to redefine the topos when working, inevitably, in the shadow of dominant literary predecessors. The key differences between *Auf dem Turm* and *Mario und der Zauberer* do however reveal a window of opportunity for contemporary authors to develop a uniquely modern aesthetic with reference to Italy. Hofmann's text pays tribute to, yet distinguishes itself from, its literary predecessors by reflecting in metafictional terms on the production of literature and exposing the paradox of narrating chaos and impotence.

2.3.1 The power of intertext: *Mario und der Zauberer* in *Auf dem Turm*

Before looking closely at Hofmann's textual references to *Mario und der Zauberer*, it is worth briefly outlining *Auf dem Turm*'s plot. Hofmann's narrator recalls how he (the protagonist) and his wife were returning to Germany at the end of their holiday in Italy, when their car broke down in the southern Italian town of *Dikaiarchaeia*. It is not a popular tourist destination. With an eerie atmosphere, it is dirty and smelly. The setting in *Dikaiarcheia* mirrors the state of the relationship between the protagonist and his wife. In Southern Italy, the protagonist's wife informs her husband that she is pregnant with their second child. Shortly after, the protagonist admits to her that he has a son with another woman. By using a third person omniscient narrator, Hofmann develops an intimacy with the protagonist who—as in *Mario und der Zauberer*—is the narrator's past self. We learn of the protagonist's thoughts, including his desire to divorce his wife. Although the protagonist has not yet told his wife of this wish, the narrator reveals that the protagonist would like to initiate the separation while in *Dikaiarchaeia* (Greek for "Stadt der Gerechten" (*AdT* 6)).[44] But before he gets a chance to tell her, the unhappy couple is interrupted by what turns out to be increasingly strange events.

Firstly, they witness a group of Italian boys brutally slaughtering a goat outside their hotel window (*AdT* 10 f.). Their unhappy discussion is then further interrupted by a local Italian tour guide, who is referred to as the Cicerone, or the Kustode, and who has satanic characteristics (*AdT* 12). The Cicerone lures them into taking a tour of the town. He tells them stories about *Dikaiarchaeia*, although the protagonist is never quite certain what is "fiction" and what is historic "fact". The stories become increasingly grotesque, with the tour culminating in a deadly performance in which the attractive Italian boy Mimiddu—earlier seen slaughtering the goat—jumps to his death from the *Torre di Dikaiarchaeia* for the entertainment of the protagonist, his wife, and the other tourists gathered at the performance. Hofmann engages with the

44 *AdT* for *Auf dem Turm*.

darker side of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy, which has a long tradition, having been evoked most famously by Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise*, with the phrase "Et in arcadia ego", or "Auch ich in Arkadien", which not only points to the traveller, but also to death. With this phrase, Goethe refers to Giovanni Francesco Barbieri's painting, in which the phrase "Et in arcadia ego" is engraved on a stone, upon which a skull sits. The deadly performance organised by the Cicerone momentarily interrupts the protagonist's obsession with his marital problems, leaving him with the thought, "[v]ielleicht sollten wir uns nicht immer so viel mit uns selber beschäftigen" (*AdT* 212). In his presentation of these strange events, the narrator struggles to justify his past behaviour and increasingly reveals disturbing and critical insights into the protagonist. By generating this intimacy between the protagonist (his past self) and himself, the narrator renders questionable not just the protagonist's behaviour, but also his own narrative justifications. This narrative technique mirrors that used in *Mario und der Zauberer*.

The similarities between the two texts expose the powerful, overshadowing influence of earlier literary iterations of "Italy". Hofmann indicates these similarities immediately, linking the texts through the towers that feature in Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* and in Mann's "Torre di Venere". Another significant intertextual link can be drawn between Gert Hofmann's tower and the *Turmgesellschaft* in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*—a key 18th century *Bildungsroman*—which is associated with "Bildungskonzepte[n] und d[er] Bedeutung von Bildung, Liebesglück, und auch d[er] zufällige[n] Handlungsfügung im Verhältnis zu rationalen Methoden der Lebensführung" (Jannidis, qtd. in Katrin Fischer 1). The role of the *Turmgesellschaft* in the text is debated, but it does represent German literature's longstanding interest in the complex concept of *Bildung*. The tower in *Auf dem Turm* indicates that Gert Hofmann positions his novel in relation to this tradition. Hofmann's tower is central to both the sexual and the devilish undertones of the novel. When the Cicerone refers to the *Turm* as *Torre di Dikaiarchaeia*, while raising "die Brauen hoch", it is as if he wishes to indicate his awareness of both the intertextual reference and the sexual undertones (*AdT* 23). *Auf dem Turm* is also structured in parallel with Mann's novella. Both narrators recall travelling South to Italy—Hofmann's narrator refers to "unsere Reise durch Sizilien" (*AdT* 5)—and both emphasise the "afrikanisch[e] [...] Hitze" (*MdZ* 219). Both narrators recall past events, and the protagonists represent their past selves.[45] The narrators recall feeling uncomfortable due to the strange atmosphere, and the two texts culminate in a disturbing local Italian performance. Furthermore, both narrators can neither justify nor understand their past behaviour during the strange events they recall. Upon reaching their respective Italian towns, the protagonists find themselves un-

45 It is worth noting that in Gérard Genette's terminology, this would be the homodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator (see Genette 228–234).

able to enjoy the locality, which is dominated by what they see as the strange behaviour of the locals. Hofmann's narrator also recalls he and his wife being in a "verpesteten, verkoteten, von Fliegen durchschwärmten und von Ratten durchhuschten Ort" (*AdT* 70). *Auf dem Turm* is set in

> an apparently deserted, broken-down Sicilian village, dusty, hot, with strong shadows and a pervasive sense of dread. The natives are grotesque types in the Fellini manner. There is even a flock of sinister children who carve up a bleeding goat and flutter about as if they had dropped in from Kafka's Trial. (P. K. Ackermann 455)

Ackermann's use of the colonialist term "natives" reflects Hofmann's presentation—much like Mann's—of the local Italians as depraved (455). He reproduces the common stereotype of the Italians as examples of a cultural "other" that is comparatively irrational, even animalistic.

Auf dem Turm further acknowledges its literary predecessor by creating stylistic parallels to Mann's novella. As in *Mario und der Zauberer*, the atmosphere in *Auf dem Turm* becomes ever stranger; Hofmann's protagonist and his wife observe the local children slaughtering a goat:

> Zu fünft, wie auf ein Signal, sind die Kinder, alles Jungen, alle schmutzig, alle verwahrlost, alle schön, plötzlich über die Ziege hergefallen, haben sie [...] an den Ohren und den Beinen und am Schwanz festgehalten, und dann hat ihr ein schöner schlanker Junge [...] unter großer Mühe und mit beiden Händen ein langes, wahrscheinlich lange nicht mehr geschliffenes Messer, in den Hals hineingesteckt und herumgedreht. Um das Loch in dem Hals dann nach allen Seiten—er arbeitet rasch—zu vergrößern und den Hals nach und nach, erst von oben nach unten und dann von unten nach oben, durchzuschneiden. (*AdT* 10 f.)

In a striking similarity to Mann's novella, Hofmann's protagonist here witnesses children who have lost their innocence. In *Mario und der Zauberer*, the children have lost their innocence about the naked body (*MdZ* 222 f.) and in *Auf dem Turm* the narrator sees the Italian children as depraved, as they conduct this grotesque slaughter in the *piazza*. In *Mario und der Zauberer*, various children are humiliated by the performer Cipolla; in *Auf dem Turm*, the Cicerone takes the protagonist and his wife to "[e]in[em] trümmerhafte[n] Findelhaus [...] mit einer Durchschuböffnung für die 'überflüssigen Kinder' jener Schreckenslandstriche" (Brode 147). The Cicerone, or Kustode, describes the "traditional" process of deserting the children; he points out the "Öffnung, sehen Sie, die, sagt er und zeigt darauf, gerade groß genug ist, daß man einen Säugling hineinschieben kann [. Hier] sind *die überflüssigen Kinder*, meist gleich nach ihrer Geburt, zu uns gebracht und hineingeschoben worden" (*AdT* 59). While comparatively exaggerated, the role of children in *Auf dem Turm* is reminiscent of their role in *Mario und der Zauberer*.

Although *Auf dem Turm* self-consciously exists in the shadow of Mann's iteration of "Italy", it begins to distinguish itself somewhat by exaggerating the

strangeness—which Mann also emphasised—to new extremes. The scene becomes more gruesome when the Kustode explains that

> Ein vielleicht vierjähriges, ein vielleicht fünfjähriges Kind in so eine Öffnung stecken, stellen Sie sich das doch vor, ruft er. Kopf und Schultern passen in diesem Alter ja gar nicht mehr hinein. Und der Kinderkopf, wenn er mit Macht in so ein Loch hineinsoll, muß dabei ja beschädigt, zumindest abgeschürft werden. (*AdT* 60)

The Cicerone explains "hierher hat man jahrzehntelang alle unerwünschten, alle *überflüssigen* Kinder gebracht" (*AdT* 57), before asking the wife, "wie viele Kinderchen hat die Signora denn? […] Ein Kind, sage ich […]. Nun, sagt er, die Signora ist ja auch noch jung, Kinderchen können ja noch kommen" (*AdT* 58). This makes the situation very uncomfortable for the protagonist's pregnant wife and for the protagonist, who has expressed his wish for her to miscarry or have an abortion. It is as if the Cicerone intuitively understands their marital problems and gives voice to the protagonist's dark thoughts; events in *Dikaiarchaeia* conspire to worsen their situation.

Auf dem Turm exaggerates, to extremes, the strangeness Mann described in his Italy-narrative. The Cicerone shows the protagonist and his wife a one-room house full of women, "Menschen sind es natürlich, warum nicht? Die einerseits, sagt er, auch noch leben, während sie andererseits natürlich längst tot sind" (*AdT* 42). The women have been there "schon lange, sehr lange, sagt der Kustode, nachdem er etwas nachgedacht hat. Manche schon dreißig, vielleicht vierzig, ja, an die fünfzig Jahre. Und fast ganz ohne auszugehen" (*AdT* 42 f.). The Cicerone seeks to convince the protagonist that they "weder tot noch lebendig sind" (*AdT* 44). In light of these strange events, Starr Smith, in his review of *Auf dem Turm*, describes the Cicerone as a "satanic local supervisor [who] takes them on a forced march of terror, culminating in a grisly 'spectacle' devised as tourist entertainment" (914). Hofmann's Cicerone begins to exceed the disturbing nature of Mann's Cipolla.

The Cicerone's disturbing characteristics are indicated by the title "Cicerone" itself, which is an old term for a tour guide. Perhaps Robert Aickman's (1914–1981) short story, entitled *The Cicerones*—belonging to the collection *Sub Rosa: Strange Tales* (1968)—inspired Hofmann. In *The Cicerones*, an Englishman, carrying a book about the famous antique Italian relics, wishes to visit a cathedral in Italy. But the cicerones in the cathedral guide him to his doom in the same suspenseful style used by Hofmann's narrator.[46] The description of Aickman's work by Dinah Birch and Katy Hooper in the *Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature* could just as well describe Hofmann's work: "fus[ing] traditional elements of ghost fiction with oblique

46 *The Cicerones* was also rendered into a short film, directed by Jeremy Dyson, and produced by Jan Roldanus.

narrations concerned with 'the void behind the face of order'" (*Ghost Stories*). Hofmann's Cicerone describes himself "als *der hiesige Kustode*, ja, so nennt er sich"; he was "von unserer Ankunft sofort verständigt worden und [sei] herbeigeeilt und [freut] sich, uns in D. willkommen heißen zu können, endlich, endlich!", as if he had been expecting them (*AdT* 13). The narrator describes him as "den Mann samt seinen Fliegen", characteristically surrounded by flies, like the lord of the flies, the devil (*AdT* 14). The protagonist observes "seinen verschwitzten Hemdkragen, das stoppelige Doppelkinn [...], den fauligen Atem" (*AdT* 17), and witnesses how "er ganz ungeniert—ich kann es erst kaum fassen, meine Frau schaut auf der Stelle weg—sein Geschlechtsorgan in seiner engen Hose streichelt und hin- und her-, von rechts nach links, glaube ich, legt" (*AdT* 17). His "Geschlechtsorgan" (*AdT* 17) features repeatedly: "Und da drüben, sagt der Kustode und legt seine Linke auf sein Geschlechtsteil, ist der Sterbeverein" (*AdT* 51). Hanspeter Brode aptly describes the Cicerone as

> eine düster-zudringliche Gestalt, ein[en] Verführer und Psychagoge[n] von furchtgebietend dämonischer Allüre, den plastisch herausgearbeitet zu haben eine Meisterleistung des Erzählers Hofmann genannt werden darf. Jener 'Kustode' läuft merkwürdig knirschend, er hinkt, beim Sitzen schiebt er sein Geschlechtsorgan mit unangenehmer Auffälligkeit von einer Seite zur anderen, also: eine Leitfigur von unübersehbar teuflischem Zuschnitt. (146)

In the case of Mann's Cipolla and Hofmann's Cicerone, emphasis is placed on the discomfort caused by their devilish attributes, their disturbing physical appearance, and the sexual undertones of their behaviour.

Hofmann's protagonist, like Mann's protagonist, sees himself as rational, level-headed, and reasonable. But Hofmann's narrator exaggerates, even further than Mann's, the unreliability of his past self. He sees himself as speaking "in kurzen, klaren, nüchternen Sätzen" (*AdT* 10), but his narrated behaviour reveals his arrogance, for instance when he considers himself to be smarter than his wife. They hear a noise outside the window, which is perhaps "[d]er *meccanico*, der den Wagen bringt, fragt sie [seine Frau] hoffnungsvoll. Möglich, sage ich, obwohl ich es besser weiß, denn ich habe längst, nein, *schon immer* gewußt, daß wir dem Kustoden so einfach nicht entgehen" (*AdT* 172). His colonial attitudes are revealed when he sees himself as superior to the "locals", even as a victim of their ignorance: "Was ein Gast ist, weiß man hier nicht. Und im Bewußtsein dieser Ignoranz und dieser Infamie und dieser drückenden Last von oben und meines bedrohten Denkens und Fühlens [...]"; the list goes on (*AdT* 8). Even as Mimiddu—the Italian boy seen slaughtering the goat—is about to leap to his death in the performance at the tower, the protagonist finds himself watching on, unable to act more rationally than the others, commenting:

> Das ist der Augenblick, auf den ich gewartet habe, auf den alles ankommt. Dein Augenblick, denke ich. Der Augenblick, um einzuschreiten, denn noch

> ist nichts geschehen. Der Augenblick, um aufzuspringen und mit ruhiger Stimme, der Stimme der Vernunft, den makabren Scherz, der nun schon viel zu lange dauert, endlich zu beenden. (*AdT* 145)

But, like Mann's protagonist, Hofmann's protagonist did no such thing. Both protagonists are not saved by their self-described rationality. Rather, they find themselves passive audience members, unable to act. Instead of acting "mit [...] der Stimme der Vernunft" (*AdT* 145), the narrator presents how he remained seated and, "statt endlich einzuschreiten, gähne ich dann sogar, gähne zu dem Jungen hinauf" (*AdT* 145). The narrator even admits that he enjoyed the performance, having secretly wished that Mimiddu would jump to his death, "[g]ut denke ich, er springt also nicht. Und bin enttäuscht, wie die andern [...]. Spring doch endlich, denke ich" (*AdT* 149).

Auf dem Turm continues to evoke the ever-present shadow of the topos—as represented by *Mario und der Zauberer*—by having its protagonist, like Mann's, unaware of the limits of his self-perception. But Hofmann goes further than Mann by focussing in greater detail on the protagonist's relationship with his wife and his failure to realise that his treatment of her is despicable. The protagonist shows no remorse when he tells his wife, Maria, that he does not wish to have their unborn child and reveals to her that he has "auch noch ein dreijähriges uneheliches Kind, einen Jungen, Mario, [...] 'von dem du bis jetzt nichts gewußt hast und für den ich ja gleichfalls aufkommen muß'" (*AdT* 6). The son's name develops a further, incidental link to *Mario und der Zauberer*. The protagonist sees himself as rational, and his wife as unreasonable, because she "von mir nun wissen [wollte], wer die Mutter von Mario, den ich in meinem Leben nur ein einziges Mal gesehen habe, sei" (*AdT* 10). But the reasonable nature of Maria's question rather renders the protagonist's narrated judgement of her unreasonable. Instead, the protagonist appears self-absorbed, in what Brode labels his "Partnerschaftskrise" (148). He neither recognises the effect of his behaviour on his wife, nor the effects of his "Wohlstandstourismus" on the wealth discrepancy between "Nord und Süd" (Brode 148). He does not ask Maria whether she would like to continue the pregnancy. Instead, he pushes her, in the hope that she will fall and miscarry. Here, as John Osborne also points out, "the extreme unreliability of the narrator is at once ridiculous and disturbing" (32). The ridiculousness of his behaviour and his lack of personal insight—exaggerated almost to absurdum—give the novel an almost humorous effect, as if he is parodying Mann's novella. Although the narrator sees himself as having behaved logically and rationally, he, like Mann's narrator and protagonist, reveals his own inconsiderate nature, his lack of personal insight, and his inability to justify his past behaviour.

While his text remains under Mann's shadow, Hofmann raises the stakes even higher with the performance that concludes the text. While Mann hints at Cipolla's possible death when a shot is fired, the death in *Auf dem Turm*'s

performance is explicit. Hofmann's narrator is therefore even less able to justify having remained at the Cicerone's performance. Initially, he tried to resist the Cicerone's pleas:

> Wie ich sehe, ist es später, als ich dachte. Eigentlich sollten wir wieder nach Hause gehen. Zumal wir ja nun schon einiges gesehen haben. Ja, sage ich, kehren wir um! Umkehren, ruft der Kustode und fährt erschrocken auf. Dann schüttelt er heftig den Kopf. Aber das ist ganz unmöglich [...]. Wegen der Veranstaltung, sagt er [...]. Und warum, frage ich, sollen gerade wir zu Ihrer Veranstaltung gehen? [...] Schauen Sie doch, wie erschöpft wir sind! [...] Was ist das für eine Zumutung, uns bei dieser Hitze durch diese im Grunde völlig ungeschützte Dorfstraße hindurchzujagen? [...] Sie vertrödeln nur Ihre Zeit mit uns. [...] Jawohl, sagt er, zum Turm. Also gut, sage ich, also zum Turm! (*AdT* 47 f.)

The texts both emphasise the corrupting, irrational, and sexual influence of southern Italians. However, Hofmann's narrator's presentation of himself as rational—and the Italians as irrational—is revealed to be an excuse. It is not the Cicerone, but rather the narrator who fails to justify his own irrational decision to visit the *Turm* despite his wife's pleas to return to their accommodation.

Auf dem Turm's final performance, while paralleling Mann's, is more extreme. In both performances, Italian boys are manipulated into violent and dangerous behaviour. But in Hofmann's, Mimiddu is manipulated into leaping to his death: "[A]uch wenn er wollte, er kann nicht mehr zurück, sondern er stürzt [...], ein Schreckensschrei am Mund, die Landschaft umkreist ihn wild, das Haar flattert, die Finger spreizen sich, zur Erde, in den Tod" (*AdT* 150).[47] Significantly, the actors in these horrific scenes are both attractive Italian boys, and both protagonists find the Italian boys sexually attractive. As the historian Robert Aldrich indicates, "[t]he stereotype of a man from the Mediterranean region is their sexual, and perhaps romantic, fantasy, an ideal of masculine beauty and virility" (xi). The exemplary object of desire,

47 It is interesting to note that the moment when Mimiddu falls from the tower to his death is reminiscent of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*. Nathanael's madness, and his jump to his death from the tower, could be read as a critique of contemporary enlightenment society (see for instance Ulrich Hohoff, and Oliver Jahraus (ed.)). By making reference to E. T. A. Hoffmann's tower, Gert Hofmann implies devilish undertones, but applies this earlier societal critique to his own contemporary context, having the devilish undertones expose desperation, poverty and inequality. While not the explicit focus of this analysis, clear links can also be drawn between the theme of religion in both texts, as both characters see the devil in the crowd beneath them and Gert Hofmann's novel erodes religion's promise of "completeness". Hofmann's protagonist also makes a devil's pact with the Cicerone, who displays clear satanic characteristics.

Aldrich continues, is "a young man from a different milieu, a working-class boy, a foreigner or someone encountered outside the hero's usual circles" (9). Mimiddu, the object of his attraction, is of a different milieu; he is an Italian boy with a social "rank" certainly no higher than working-class, whom the protagonist encounters outside his usual social setting.[48] "Italy" promises the ideal relationship, one "between man and boy", which is "a replication of the Greek model", with the relationship "more attuned to the ancient model" (Aldrich 9). This textual link to antiquity is not coincidental. As Aldrich puts it, the

> ancient world provides a particularly significant domain for such studies, since Antiquity is considered the fount of Western civilisation and because of the permutations of sexual and affectational relationships which were the norm in classical Athens and Rome. Among the varieties in sexual behaviour characteristic of classical culture was a widely practised and socially acceptable type of 'homosexuality'. (13)

Andrew Webber argues that in *Mario und der Zauberer* and *Der Tod in Venedig*, "[r]elationships between men become infected with fantasies of power and of death", and of self-destruction (81). Hofmann's narrator draws on this theme, presenting its consequences, in vivid terms, as deadly.

While Mann's and Hofmann's protagonists were both aroused by the Italian boys featuring in the respective final performances, Hofmann distinguishes himself from Mann (much like Koeppen did in *Der Tod in Rom*) by finding a more direct and shocking aesthetic that interweaves sexual and satanic undertones. In Hofmann's case, the deadly performance occurs at the (phallic) tower. As Ackermann directly states, the "beautiful boy named Mimiddu, arouses the narrator erotically" (455). This becomes particularly apparent when the protagonist comments:

> Und bei dem Wort Turm, ich weiß nicht warum, vielleicht wegen des gleichzeitigen Anblicks der halbnackten, übrigens—doch das sagte ich schon—sehr schönen, sehr dunklen, nur eben ein wenig blutbespritzten Knaben nun vielleicht doch ein wenig erregt. Sollte sich die Erregung über die Knaben in eine Erregung über den Turm…? […] Die Idee des Turmes erregt mich plötzlich. (*AdT* 22)

The tower and the young Italian men are linked and frequently presented in sexual terms, as a phallic symbol; the narrator remembers

> [d]aß Ihr Turm nämlich möglicherweise der Turm ist, den ich vor, stellen Sie sich vor, rufe ich, vor ungefähr zwanzig Jahren zusammen mit einem jungen italienischen Freund schon einmal gesehen habe […]. Ich erinnere mich, wie ich damals, Arm in Arm, in einer südlichen Landschaft—aber welche war es?—ein paarmal bei großer Hitze mit ihm um einen Turm herum-

48 For a further discussion of platonic love and pederasty in the works of Thomas Mann, see Andrew Webber, *Mann's Man's World: Gender and Sexuality*.

> gegangen bin. Ein romanisches Bauwerk aus der Normannenzeit, etwas Bulliges, Festes, Rundes [...]. Ja, sage ich, fest und rund. (*AdT* 69)

The erotic undertones to the "tower" elicit the common theme of succumbing to the supposedly irrational and sexual influence of the South. Commonly, this sexualised, emotional "South" is presented as both alluring and threatening. The protagonist's sexual arousal leads him to participate in the Cicerone's tour, which culminates in the deadly performance and condemns the narrator, as a passive bystander. The sexualised South poses a particularly large threat to the otherwise supposedly rational German protagonists.

As sex and death merge within the protagonist's mind, his behaviour becomes indefensible. As Brode comments, "[s]exuelle und Todesmotive verschränken sich unausgesetzt, mit 'Todesgeschmack im Mund' wird sich der Erzähler seiner Tötungswünsche gegenüber der Partnerin bewußt" (148). Despite the protagonist's wish to kill his wife and their unborn child, he will not honestly answer his wife's question, "ob ich sie noch liebe" (*AdT* 70). Instead, he blames her for concluding, apparently unreasonably, "[d]a liebst du mich also nicht mehr" (*AdT* 71). He blames her for her lack of rationality, commenting, "[i]ch schüttele den Kopf. Nein, sage ich, das ist es nicht. Und durch ein Handzeichen gebe ich ihr zu verstehen, daß sie zu diesem Schluß viel zu hastig, viel zu kopflos kommt" (*AdT* 71). Although the protagonist dismisses his wife for being too hasty and emotional in her conclusions, it is she who reaches and articulates a reasonable conclusion; it is she who repeatedly expresses her desire to leave the Cicerone's deadly performance. The narrator therefore exposes his own lack of personal insight.

Finally, the narrator admits that he and his wife knew, "daß der Junge nicht gefallen, sondern, aus einer unbegreiflichen Perversität heraus gezwungen oder überredet, absichtlich und für unsere Augen von dem Turm gesprungen ist" (*AdT* 186). The final performance in *Auf dem Turm* shares with *Mario und der Zauberer* a warning that the supposedly rational, German protagonist may succumb to his corporeal and irrational nature. But the consequences of Hofmann's protagonist's behaviour are more explicitly disturbing, as the action leads to the inevitable death, as well as the end of this experience upon the protagonist's return to Germany and to the supposedly rational and perpetual northern routine. The narrator comments:

> Und ich denke, daß sowohl *Die auf der Stange* wie Marias Schwangerschaft wie auch Mimiddus Todesnummer und dieses Bein aus Holz, das Herr Hans unter seiner Hose trägt, eben Dinge sind, an die man eine Weile denkt, die man aber, wenn man zu Hause ist, auch rasch wieder vergißt. (*AdT* 211)

Although the shocking performance—and the shocking novel itself—reveals the German tourists' complicity in perpetuating a highly dangerous power-imbalance, the narrator expects this insight to be short-lived in the 1980s context, in which the protagonist is consumed by his own personal worries about his "Partnerschaftskrise" (Brode 148). Having briefly been taken out

of his *Alltag* while on a modern *Bildungsreise* in *Dikaiarchaeia*, the narrator indicates the inevitability of forgetting. Like Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*, *Auf dem Turm* expresses a pessimism regarding the societal influence of literature. But whereas Koeppen's novel expresses an artistic and moral paralysis, *Auf dem Turm* revels to some extent in this paralysis by creating a suspenseful, dark, and entertaining parody.

Hofmann's critique of his contemporary society fits within a broader literary and social context. In particular, *Auf dem Turm* criticises its own social environment in a style characteristic of what in the 20th century became colloquially known as *Nestbeschmutzung* (the more positively-associated equivalent term being whistle-blower) (see for instance Manfred Jurgensen). Writing at a similar time to Gert Hofmann, including in the 1980s during the late phase of the so-called Bonn Republic in West Germany, both Thomas Bernhard and Elfriede Jelinek have been described as *Nestbeschmutzer*. Reflecting the shared concerns of the time, the issues raised in *Auf dem Turm* are, interestingly, very similar to the main concerns in Jelinek's works, including in particular the commodification of people and relationships due to the consumerism encouraged by capitalism; the (Austrian) failure to address its legacy of fascism; and the mistreatment of women in her contemporary society, all concerns evident in *Auf dem Turm*, written in a similar socio-political environment. Although *Mario und der Zauberer* hovers above *Auf dem Turm* like the archetype of the 20th century topos "Italy", which Hofmann's novel cannot ignore, Hofmann, like Bernhard and Jelinek, finds some freedom through his technique of *Nestbeschmutzung* that he achieves by increasingly presenting the protagonist's sheer monstrosity. At the thematic level, Hofmann's novel can distinguish itself and resist the power of its literary precursors by re-working, further developing, and parodying Mann's "Italy". And, as I will now discuss, *Auf dem Turm* distinguishes itself from the power of past literature through its metafictional focus on the production of literature. *Auf dem Turm* reflects on what can be learnt from the changing significance of the literary Italy. It reflects on its own aesthetic in the shadow of earlier literature, and on its ability to explore the paradox of narrating the chaos of modernity. It explores whether literature that reflects broader, culturally held truths can alter these truths, thereby perhaps shifting the emphasis in the contemporary topos.

2.3.2 *Auf dem Turm* scrutinises *Mario und der Zauberer*'s engagement with "Italy"

Although the narrators of both *Mario und der Zauberer* and *Auf dem Turm* expose their own unreliability, they do so for different reasons and to different effect. Mann's engagement with "Italy" represents a re-evaluation of the Enlightenment values underpinning the model of aesthetic *Bildung* he held

dear. In *Mario und der Zauberer*, "Italy" functions as a literary space in which to re-evaluate the *bildungsbürgerlichen* faith in achieving aesthetic *Bildung* with reference to "Italy". In *Mario und der Zauberer*, the topos is therefore *utilised*. By contrast, *Auf dem Turm* goes beyond utilising the topos to focus explicitly and self-consciously on the topos itself. The novel concentrates on the cultural role that Italy-narratives (including Mann's "Italy") play. In the process, Hofmann evaluates the role of the 20th century German author. By shifting to this metafictional focus, *Auf dem Turm* distinguishes itself somewhat from *Mario und der Zauberer* and generates an aesthetic variant of the "Italy" narrative.

Although many texts considered here are examples par excellence of metafiction, it is worth briefly acknowledging metafiction's much longer and broader history. Already, most famously, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605–1615) and Laurence Sterne's famous *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman* (1759–1767) embody elements of the modern novel that can be labelled metafictional. This long history reveals, as Linda Hutcheon points out, that "[w]riting—and reading—had always been as much a part of "reality" as any empirical object described in realist fiction ever had been" (xi). In Sterne's humorous and playful style, he integrated himself into the narrative, commenting on how the reader ought to understand the events he narrates. In this way the reader's participation in the reading process was integrated into the text itself, as was Sterne's own voice, including his self-conscious discussion of his own choice of words. Cervantes and Sterne continue to have great literary influence, with many having praised their work, including Goethe in his discussion of *Tristram Shandy* in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. As Hutcheon outlines in the blurb to her text *Narcissistic Narrative The Metafictional Paradox*,

> contemporary self-reflexive novels demand that the reader participate in the fictional process as imaginative co-creator. At the same time, they distance the reader by their textual self-consciousness. Like Narcissus in the Greek myth, the novel of today is intensely aware of its own existence, continuously drawing attention to its own storytelling processes and linguistic structures.

While a "self-reflexive fiction about fiction-making [...] washed over the literary shores of Europe and the Americas in the 1960s" (Hutcheon ix), we can see that this trend exists across different historical, geographical, and linguistic contexts including English, North American, and European texts such as French, Italian, and German. The conundrums presented by metafictional writing are therefore by no means confined to texts set in Italy with German characters. Rather, the texts considered here expand the metafictional exploration in unique and interesting ways.

With metafictional flair, Hofmann scrutinises the cultural assumptions that underpin Italy-narratives. Specifically, *Auf dem Turm* offers insights into the

power imbalances underpinning narratives of German *Bildung* with reference to "Italy". Firstly, *Auf dem Turm* presents the social and economic effects of (German) tourism in the small Italian town of *Dikaiarchaeia*. Secondly, *Auf dem Turm* presents the power imbalance between North and South (Germany and Southern Italy) as being perpetuated by the traditional *Bildungs*-narrative, which *Mario und der Zauberer* here represents. From the protagonist's perspective, the North represents the narrator's rational, German superiority, and the South represents an Italian, feminine irrationality, as embodied by his wife and by the local Italians. However, *Auf dem Turm* undermines the protagonist's perspective, thereby criticising this superficial distinction between "North" and "South". The novel reveals the socio-economic effects of Mann's well-known distinction between the Apollonian, Romantic North, and the Dionysian, Classical South. In *Auf dem Turm* the promise—at the heart of many literary *Bildungsreisen* to Italy—of finding a balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian attributes, perpetuates a deadly tourism industry in *Dikaiarchaeia*.

From the opening passages of the novel the narrator mocks his past sense of *Sehnsucht*; his desire to see Italy in the glorious terms in which past travellers viewed Southern Italy: "Und wenn ich es auch nicht gesehen habe, so habe ich doch, durch meine halbgeschlossenen Lider hindurch, das Bild einer vollkommen schönen klassischen Landschaft erraten" (*AdT* 6). As if, with an ironic wink to the reader, the narrator immediately anticipates the protagonist's disappointment in his search for this image of classical Italy and the process of aesthetic *Bildung* it supposedly promises him. The novel begins with the narrator recalling how he stepped out of the car in *Dikaiarchaeia*, oblivious:

> [Ich] ahne nicht, daß damit unser Geschick eigentlich schon besiegelt ist. Unsere Trennung, die kurz darauf aber nur zum Schein, wieder rückgängig gemacht werden soll, ist sozusagen schon vollzogen, die Ortbesichtigung schon angetreten, der Turm schon ins Auge gefaßt, die Leiche auf den Rücken gewendet. (*AdT* 5)

This sense of foreboding penetrates the Italian landscape and the novel, as do examples of Hofmann's dark irony, with which the narrator informs the reader of the protagonist's imminent doom (of which he is unaware) and the unattainability of the classical "Italy" of *Bildung* that he desires.

In contrast to Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*—in which the protagonist's ignorance exposes his susceptibility to fascism—Hofmann's protagonist's obliviousness exposes his own role in perpetuating the devastating social effects of (German) tourism in the southern Italian town. The narrator presents himself, the protagonist, as having been caught in a deadly power dynamic, in which the vulnerable boy Mimiddu is sacrificed for the tourists' entertainment, as he is manipulated by the desperately poor Cicerone to leap to his death from the tower. The nature of the evil that Mann's Cipolla and

Hofmann's Cicerone represent, differs, and so too does the evil in which the protagonist is complicit. Whereas Cipolla is commonly considered to represent the fascist dictator Mussolini, Hofmann's Cicerone represents an evil caused by the financial desperation in *Dikaiarchaeia*. This renders him the product, rather than simply the embodiment of evil. Although the protagonist considers himself a mere outside observer, the narrator reveals his complicity in perpetuating this power imbalance, simply by being present in the audience, for whose entertainment Mimiddu jumps. Hofmann adapts Mann's Italy to present his protagonist's complicity not in fascism, but in perpetuating global inequalities. Consumed by his marital problems, he excuses himself from taking any responsibility for Mimiddu's death, thinking: "[Ich] bitte sie [seine Frau], sich endlich zu beruhigen und auch nicht immerzu an den gräßlichen Unfall zu denken, der uns Gott sei Dank nicht persönlich betrifft und uns eigentlich gar nichts angeht" (*AdT* 167). But it does concern the protagonist, because Mimiddu's death is caused by the Cicerone's desperation to entertain the German tourists and to fulfill their hopes of experiencing something new, something that frees them from the shackles of their marital problems and the mundanity of their *Alltag*; something that fulfills their desire for a *Bildungsreise*, a desire common to so many "Italy" narratives.

When the narrator reveals that the Cicerone has a "Bein aus Holz" (*AdT* 211), due to also, like Mimiddu, having had "[e]in[en] Sturz von einem hohen Gebäude herab" (*AdT* 207), he exposes the longstanding effects of the German tradition of *Bildungs*-tourism. This parallel between the Cicerone's "Sturz" (*AdT* 207) and Mimiddu's *Sturz* to death, establish a longer-term pattern of the southerners "performing" to the northern tourists, selling their lives for money. The Cicerone is not—as the protagonist saw him—simply a one-dimensional embodiment of evil who manipulates Mimiddu. Rather, like Mimiddu, he is a victim of the power imbalance between North and South. As Hofmann later commented,

> zuerst traut man ihm einen Mord zu, und dann stellt er sich als eine hilflose, geradezu lächerliche Figur heraus. Überhaupt langweilen mich Gestalten, die entweder oder sind. Ich bevorzuge die ratenweise und perspektivische Darstellung. Manchmal erfährt man bei mir erst am Ende, wie eine Person genauer aussieht. (Hofmann qtd. in Kosler 46 f.)

The previously evil Cicerone now becomes a pitiable, desperate pawn within the tourism industry. As Hofmann further commented, "[i]ch lade den Leser zum Mitgefühl ein, überlasse ihn aber nicht der Freude an seinen Tränen, sondern tue etwas dagegen, indem ich den Gegenstand, in den er sich eingeführt hat, auch kritisiere" (Hofmann qtd. in Kosler 49). Hofmann focusses on

> die Verelendung des Menschen im psychischen und moralischen Sinn [...]. Die in seinen Büchern dargestellte Welt zerfällt [...], ohne daß sie in Gut und Böse aufzuteilen wäre. Seine Figuren stehen am Rande des Wahnsinns, sie sind fragwürdig, gefährlich und lächerlich, sie sind positive ebensowe-

> nig wie sie negative Helden sind. Selten laden sie zur Identifikation ein, aber fast immer kann der Leser in ihnen einen Teil seines eigenen Wesens erkennen. (Kosler 7)

Hofmann blurs the divide between good and evil, not only in relation to the supposedly evil Cicerone but also the supposedly innocent protagonist.

No longer does the Cicerone pose a threat to the protagonist, on the contrary, the protagonist's presence triggers and perpetuates the Cicerone's behaviour. The "traditional" cultural practices that the Cicerone shows the protagonist during the tour of *Dikaiarchaeia* are inventions, performed for financial survival. The protagonist's self-absorption and his obsession with how his time in Italy affects his self-development and his relationship, become indefensible. Thereby, the *Bildungsreise* to Italy is politicised; *Auf dem Turm* narrates the inequalities perpetuated by the notion of a rational "North" and an emotional, animalistic "South". The narrator comments ironically: "Dabei heißt *Dikaiarchaeia* ja 'Stadt der Gerechten', man stelle sich das vor!" (*AdT* 6). The choice of the town's name, *Dikaiarchaeia*, communicates a bitter irony that highlights the injustices not only within the fictional tourist industry, but also perpetuated by the cultural assumptions underpinning many literary *Bildungsreisen*.

With his cameras always at his side, the protagonist's behaviour caricatures the tourist, complicit in the power dynamics of inequality between North and South. The narrator describes himself as having gone "[l]angsam und bedächtig, mit der Frau am Arm, die Linke an den Kameras" (*AdT* 58), with his arm having "bis jetzt die Kameras geschützt" (*AdT* 61). He keeps his valuables, his symbol of wealth, on him at all times:

> Und habe daraus, im Bewußtsein der Gefahr für unsere angehäufte Habe, sofort das Wertvollste, also die Gelenktasche mit dem Geld, den Schecks und den Papieren, sowie meine beiden Kameras, an mich genommen und umgehängt und von nun an den ganzen Tag und die halbe Nacht und, der Länge nach, die ganze Ortschaft D. hindurch bis zum Turm und auf den Turm hinauf einfach mit mir herumgeschleppt, einfach bei mir getragen. (*AdT* 8)

While he rather blindly obsesses over "unseren Besitz, zum Beispiel das offenstehende Auto und die Kameras" (*AdT* 209), rather ironically, he comments on how "alles an mir, also meine Kameras, aber auch die Münzen in meiner Hose, vor lauter Lachen klappert" (*AdT* 70). Even his money is "laughing" at this caricature of the tourist. The Cicerone, by contrast, is desperate: "[A]ber in D., ruft er plötzlich ziemlich laut, muß ja auch jemand leben, und D., obwohl es auf den ersten Blick nur wenig bietet, muß ja auch besichtigt werden!" (*AdT* 20). The Cicerone's desperation contrasts greatly to the complacency and self-absorption of the supposedly rational, northern protagonist.

Auf dem Turm critiques the narrative, common within literary *Bildungsreisen* to Italy, of a "rational" North and "emotional" South, as well as the power imbalance that underpins such binary thinking. The novel executes this critique by focussing on the couple's unhealthy relationship. In *Auf dem Turm*, the male protagonist sees himself as a rational German male, in contrast to his wife, who represents the traits ordinarily ascribed to "Italy".[49] From the protagonist's perspective, she is an irrational, emotional woman. In Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer* the voicelessness of the protagonist's wife was neither focussed on nor commented on. *Auf dem Turm*, by contrast, draws attention to the issue of "female" representation by exaggerating the wife's powerlessness to new extremes, when the protagonist actively disregards her wishes.

In Mann's novella, the protagonist's wife appears only in the form of a knee on which the children can rest their heads: "Sie schliefen auf unseren Knien, die Kleine auf den meinen, der Junge auf denen der Mutter" (*MdZ* 253). Grammatically, she is included through the narrator's occasional use of the personal pronoun *wir* rather than *ich*.[50] But in *Auf dem Turm*, the protagonist actively disrespects his wife and ignores her wishes. She says

> [i]ch will nach Haus. Wohin will die Signora, fragt der Kustode. Nach Hause, sage ich, ins Hotel. Aber das ist unmöglich, ruft er, wir gehen ja zum Turm, hat sie das denn vergessen? Kommen Sie, sagt er und faßt mich beim Ärmel, gehen wir zum Turm! Keine Angst, wir gehen schon zum Turm, da brauchen Sie mich nicht am Ärmel zu ziehen, sage ich. Und über das, was meine Frau sagt, sollten Sie sich keine Gedanken machen. Sie ist etwas verstimmt, das ist alles. (*AdT* 46)

Reaching the tower—and by extension the protagonist's sexual gratification—comes at a high cost for the wife. After recalling how he reached the tower in *Dikaiarchaeia*, where Mimiddu jumps to his death, the narrator recounts how he forced his wife to perform oral sex, despite her having begged him not to make her. He also forces her to miscarry, despite her (implied) wish to keep the child. The sexual freedom and liberation, often celebrated by male protagonists in narratives of Italy, are in this instance exposed as coming at a high cost for the protagonist's wife, as well as for the Italians who are often treated terribly.

The narrator repeatedly reveals how he precluded his wife's perspective. Even "die Auseinandersetzung mit meiner Frau über die Kinder, *das Kind* zwischen uns, das ich nicht auf der Welt haben will, […] habe ich längst an

49 In German narratives of "Italy", Germany is generally prescribed the role of the rational male, and Italy that of the emotional female. For a further discussion of this, see also Italo Michelle Battafarano and Hildegard Eilert (154 f.).

50 See for instance pages 241, 234, 253 f., and 263 in *Mario und der Zauberer*.

die Innenseite meines Kopfes verlegt"; the discussion does not involve his wife and, as he is the narrator, we are not granted narrative access to her perspective (*AdT* 51). The protagonist forces his wife into a position of subservience, but also disallows her the role of a mother (when he trips her in the hope that she will miscarry (*AdT* 78)) and of a wife (when he wishes for divorce: "Wie Menschen hier nur leben können, habe ich mich gefragt, während Maria, meine Frau, von der ich mich nach siebenjähriger Ehe nun endgültig trennen will, […] zurückbleibt" (*AdT* 6)). In contrast to Mann's protagonist in *Mario und der Zauberer*, who simply ignores his wife, Hofmann's protagonist actively undermines Maria's role as a mother, as a wife, and as an equal interlocutor.

This focus on the more vulnerable is common for Hofmann who often narrated from the perspective of children.[51] In *Auf dem Turm*, the voices of children are notably obliterated by the miscarriage of the unborn child and by Mimiddu's leap to his death. By drawing attention to the voicelessness of women and children[52], the narrator reveals the protagonist's ignorance of the harm caused by his dominating behaviour. Although Hofmann's protagonist—like Mann's—likes to see himself as a rational figure, the narrator reveals his own lack of awareness of his irrational, inconsiderate, violent and disturbing behaviour. The protagonist does not ask Maria whether she wants to keep their unborn child; rather he trips her in the hope that she will miscarry:

> Schau, rufe ich, so, schau! Und mache, ich habe sie fest untergefaßt, mit meinen allerdings viel längeren und kräftigeren Beinen plötzlich einen langen Schritt, fast Sprung und zerre und ziehe und reiße sie mit. […] Da willst du mich also töten jetzt? […] Oder soll ich mich töten für dich? […] Wäre das nicht das bequemste, fragt sie. (*AdT* 78)

When Maria does miscarry—presumably due to the protagonist's efforts—the narrator presents himself having ignored and even perpetuated his wife's suffering.

Not only does he show no concern about her heavy bleeding, but he also exerts pressure on her to sexually pleasure him while she is in the process of miscarrying. The narrator recalls:

> Dann ziehe ich sie näher […]. Ich sage nichts, nehme ihren Kopf, lege ihn mir in den Schoß […]. Ich knöpfe meine Hose auf. Faß mal an, sage ich, greif mal her! Nein, sagt sie, laß mich. Doch ich halte sie fest. Ich zeige auf

51 See for instance Hofmann's *Das Glück*, in which the narrative unfolds from a child's perspective. In *Das Glück*, Hofmann also draws on the works of Thomas Mann.

52 In *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*, Delius also draws attention to this literary tendency when he focusses on his female protagonist's suppressed thoughts, as I will explore in the following chapter.

> ihre Bluse. Knöpf mal auf, sage ich, das da, knöpf mal auf! Bitte, sagt sie, faß mich nicht an [...]. Da halte ich sie dann mit Gewalt fest und ziehe sie mir zurecht und drücke mir ihren Kopf zwischen die Schenkel. Da, sage ich, du weißt, was ich will. Und daß ich bis jetzt immer noch der Stärkere gewesen bin. (*AdT* 163)

While recalling how he physically forced his wife to perform oral sex, the narrator further condemns himself by recalling how he simultaneously told her about his sexual encounters with attractive Italian boys, about twelve years prior, somewhere nearby: "[E]s war auch ein Turm da, weißt du" (*AdT* 164). In this moment, the narrator links his abuse of his wife to the classical tradition of pederasty. *Auf dem Turm* uses the relationship between husband and wife to provide a critical examination on the sexual paradigm underpinning the topos itself.

The narrator has the protagonist explain that he "[die Jungen] dazu gebracht [hat], daß sie mich geküßt haben" and that he touched them, "[a]uf dem Land, sage ich, unter den Ölbäumen" (*AdT* 164). As Aldrich outlines, both in practice and in the literary tradition, pederasty is not uncommon, where "affection and sex are bought, directly or indirectly, with money or gifts. Sexual and social exploitation are sometimes present [...]. There may be much kindness, but frequently there is a measure of brutality" (10). The narrator presents the protagonist as having exploited the boys, and as having shown no concern for his wife—"[h]eul jetzt nicht, sage ich, wenigstens nicht so laut. Man kann ja alles hören. Mach einfach weiter"—caring rather about what others think and his own sexual gratification (*AdT* 165). The wife asks: "Und sie [...], wie hast du sie rumgekriegt? Hast du sie auch bedroht? Hast du sie auch dazu gezwungen? Weil du stärker warst als sie? Nein, sage ich, die nicht. Sondern wie, fragt sie. Für Geld, sage ich. [...] [I]mmer für Geld, das ist doch ganz natürlich" (*AdT* 166). The wealth and power discrepancy between North and South, which led to Mimiddu's death, is also present between the German protagonist and the young Italian boys, between supposedly "rational" (husband) and "emotional" (wife).

The protagonist's escapist behaviour, which, as Aldrich explains[53], is commonplace in such narratives of Italy (although often presented less directly), casts a dark shadow. Just as Wolfgang Koeppen began to radicalise Mann's aesthetic of homosexuality, *Auf dem Turm* takes this one step further with his critical, honest, and comparatively confronting evaluation of these sometimes brutal relationships. Commonly German narratives of a *Bildungsreise*

53 As Aldrich discusses, such relationships are typically presented as an escape from failing relationships and failing models of family; most romantic encounters serve this function, including particularly those homosexual encounters (but also heterosexual encounters) that are presented as "devious" (8).

to Italy present Southern Italy as dangerous and corrupting. *Auf dem Turm* reverses the dynamics of power, by presenting the protagonist as having been inconsiderate and abusive. The southern Italians do not corrupt the protagonist, rather, he exploits them during his sexual and pederastic entanglements.

Within a metafictional framework, *Auf dem Turm* reflects on the production of, and societal role played by, Italy-narratives (represented, for the novel's purposes, by *Mario und der Zauberer*). Hofmann's narrator plays a role typical of such Italy-narratives. Given that his behaviour was harmful, the topos itself comes to represent a harmful cultural force in the novel. *Auf dem Turm* therefore draws attention to the way in which a power imbalance between North and South (Germany and Southern Italy) can be perpetuated through the act of contributing further Italy-narratives within the existing paradigm which (for Hofmann's purposes) *Mario und der Zauberer* represents. Just as the protagonist is invited to "consume" *Dikaiarchaeia* with his tourist eyes, the narrator makes visible the protagonist's, the narrator's, and the reader's consumption of "Italy" and its harmful stereotypes. Through this act of *Nestbeschmutzung*, *Auf dem Turm* suggests that narratives of "Italy"—like the protagonist's behaviour—require a more critical self-evaluation.

The narrator revises the classical image of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy, including the hope it evokes of finding greater meaning and balance in Italy. He refers to it as the hope of finding "ein[en] Grund, [...] einen Gott" to believe in (*AdT* 67). But the narrator weakens this promise when he recounts how the hope lasted only "einen Augenblick" (*AdT* 67):

> Und was waren das für Gründe, frage ich und hoffe einen Augenblick, es könnte ein Grund darunter sein, der womöglich auch heute noch gültig ist und mir einen Gott tatsächlich nachweist, was unsere Lage, und nicht nur hier in D., vielleicht verbessern könnte. (*AdT* 67)

The narrator mocks his past self for having believed, rather gullibly, in the topos' promise—constructed by the Cicerone—of a *Bildung*, leading to a reason to believe, "der womöglich *auch heute noch* gültig ist" (*AdT* 67). While the protagonist is seduced by the Cicerone's stories, the narrator reveals that the Cicerone's stories are fabricated (due to financial desperation) to please the tourists. The Cicerone makes a mockery of the protagonist's desire to believe in Italy's ability to offer a meaningful contemporary process of aesthetic *Bildung*.

The narrator presents the Cicerone and his promises of a transformative experience in *Dikaiarchaeia* as deceptive, delusional, and dangerous. The Cicerone simply invents stories that align with the protagonist's wish for a *Bildungsreise* that is full of mystery and promises a greater meaning, sexual liberation, and freedom from the shackles of marital and familial life. In the process of making these unfounded promises, the Cicerone—like Mann's

Cipolla—seduces the protagonist. He seduces him with the promise of the *Turm*, which represents two aspects central to the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy: sexual temptation and the promise of a mysterious, greater meaning. The Cicerone ironically summarises the role of "Italy" in the German literary imagination, commenting that it is nothing "das man *besichtigen und anfassen* könne, sondern [...] etwas sozusagen historisch Verblaßtes, das, wenn selbst auch nicht mehr sichtbar, so doch in den Geist des Ortes..." (*AdT* 74). The Cicerone utilises the promise of *Bildung* for his own purposes. The stories he tells about *Dikaiarchaeia* thrive on the protagonist's vulnerability and on his desire to find greater meaning in Italy, tempting the protagonist with stories, such as:

> Hier sei früher [...] unter anderem auch einmal der Markt von D. gewesen. [...] [D]iese Stelle im Universum stehe nun sozusagen leer. Bis auf das in ihren Köpfen stehe bei ihnen, sagt er, alles leer. So daß das hier, trotz seiner Leere—als Fremde wüßten wir das bloß nicht—, eine historische Stätte sei, die historischste von allen. (*AdT* 74)

The Cicerone's stories make a mockery of the protagonist for having wished to believe in the promise of *Bildung* that Italy represents. And in this way, *Auf dem Turm* further parodies the topos.

The narrator does not afford the reader the pleasure of locating a greater meaning in "Italy". Rather he mocks the idea of an alluring, mysterious South, presenting it as a "myth", generated by the Cicerone in order to give the protagonist the feeling that he can see himself anew. The narrator exaggerates to absurdity the image of Italians as an exotic, irrational "other", describing the Cicerone in animalistic terms: he "hält sich die Hand, *die Pfote*, vor den Mund, *vors Maul*, wie ich mir sage" (*AdT* 61). His hand is repeatedly described in animalistic terms: he "legt seine Pfote auf sein Geschlechtsorgan" (*AdT* 70). The Cicerone later even comments "Sie denken vielleicht, daß ich übertreibe, weil ich Sizilianer bin, doch ich übertreibe nicht" (*AdT* 148). But the narrator has presented him as a caricature of the "Italian" who very much exaggerates. In so doing, he exposes the regular treatment of Italians as an exaggerating, larger-than-life "other", and undermines his own narrative, thereby encouraging an unpacking of the power dynamics that underpin the clichés of Italy-narratives and the tourist industry more broadly. By presenting the Cicerone as exaggerating to absurdity the stories he tells, the narrator exposes the Cicerone's desperation. The Cicerone admits, "der Turm, sagt er bloß, ist meine Idee, geht auf meine Idee zurück" (*AdT* 67). The tourist destination (and the deadly performance at the tower) are the Cicerone's narrative invention. The constructed nature of the tourist industry mirrors the constructed nature of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy, and the hope that the protagonist had of being able to align himself with a God or a greater meaning of some sort, becomes laughable.

Having exaggerated, and thereby critically examined these narrative stereotypes, Hofmann performs an alternative way to engage with "Italy". *Auf dem Turm* resists interpretation by generating ambiguity and by obscuring any clear "message". By writing in a particularly ambiguous way, Hofmann offers a counter-model to the literary "othering" of Italy. Kosler similarly observes:

> Frag- und denkwürdig, vielschichtig und hintergründig bleiben Hofmanns Erzählungen selbst nach der strengsten Analyse, die angesichts der schwer dechiffrierbaren Mischung aus Vergnügung und Erschrecken, die diese Literatur bietet, meist nur ihre Ohnmacht eingestehen kann. (8)

Like Kosler, Ackermann similarly suggests that "if the story has a parabolic intent, it is not easily discernible" (455). By frustrating any endeavour to generate a coherent reading of the text, and by severely undermining his own reliability, the narrator encourages a critical exploration of the effects of the literary narratives (and literary tourism) on our perceptions of Italy and of ourselves.

Like both Mann's and Koeppen's protagonists, Hofmann's protagonist is complicit in the dynamics of evil in *Dikaiarchaeia*, and the reader is also encouraged to identify themself in this complicity. But in contrast to Mann's unreliable narrator, Hofmann's unreliable narrator heads in a metafictional direction, encouraging reflection upon the societal impact of literary presentations of "Italy". Whereas Mann presents Italians as irrational in order to convince the German readership that the Germans are *also* irrational, Hofmann challenges this common presentation of Italians as an irrational "other" against which Germans can compare themselves. *Auf dem Turm* encourages reflection on the potentially corrupting and harmful societal impact, beyond literature, of using "Italy" in this way.

2.3.3 Conclusion

Taking Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer* as its reference point for the literary "Italy" in the 20th century, Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* evaluates the social values that underpin these narratives and the societal contributions they make. By parodying such narratives, *Auf dem Turm* reclaims the topos "Italy" so that it speaks to its own contemporary context. In *Mario und der Zauberer*, the unreliability of the narrator reveals the susceptibility of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* to fascism in the 1930s. But in *Auf dem Turm*, the unreliability of the narrator reveals troubling cultural values and assumptions. The novel makes a mockery of the contemporary desire to locate, in "Italy", a meaningful *Bildungs*-narrative that would have validity "*auch heute noch*" (*AdT* 67). Rather than present the protagonist's travels as leading to a harmonious position in the world, *Auf dem Turm* frustrates interpretive efforts and exposes, with a clear-sighted, dark irony, the dangerous shadow cast by many Italy-narratives.

Auf dem Turm engages in a defined intertextual dialogue with the works by Mann and Koeppen, as they each examine the 20th century relevance of the literary "Italy". Whereas Mann begins to question his understanding of the artist's role in society, Koeppen completely undermines the artist's search for harmony. Hofmann's literary parody distinguishes him from Mann and Koeppen. Hofmann parodies "Italy's" promise of a literary *Bildungsreise* and the artist's ability to articulate a meaningful role for themself. He undermines Italy's perceived promise of sexual liberation and the hope of clearly articulating a self-understanding. Hofmann's novel does not promise a clear articulation of self, but rather revels in its inability to do so. In an act of *Nestbeschmutzung* he, unlike Koeppen, *enjoys* drawing attention to his own aesthetic impotence and parodying the topos to which his novel belongs.

In *Mario und der Zauberer*, the narrator exposes his own (and the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s) lack of self-awareness, including about his susceptibility to fascism. In *Auf dem Turm*, the protagonist's sense of superiority also blinds him to the effects of his own behaviour as a tourist in the southern Italian town. Whereas Mann's narrator presents his protagonist as a victim of Cipolla's manipulation, Hofmann reverses this dynamic. Hofmann's protagonist is implicated in the harm caused to the Italians. His sense of superiority causes him to perpetuate the devastating social effects of (German) tourism (and narratives of tourism) on the southern Italian town. In his desperation to entertain the tourists, Hofmann's Cicerone fictionalises the town's history and causes the death of a child. The constructed nature of the Cicerone's tourist industry mirrors the constructed nature of the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. The implication: the literary narratives of travel to Italy can be just as harmful as the Cicerone's narratives. And the protagonist's hope of a harmonious alignment with a God or a greater meaning of some sort, appears just as fictional and laughable. Hofmann's Italy exposes the potential power that narrative has beyond the page, and the danger of the common literary assumption of male, rational, and cultural superiority.

In contrast to *Mario und der Zauberer*, *Auf dem Turm* finds a metafictional voice by addressing the production of literature within the narrative itself. The novel investigates the changing significance of the literary Italy and finds that the novel's influence is diminished to a parody of its literary forebears and a reflection on the paradox of narrating its own aesthetic impotence. Italy becomes a space in which to inspect literature. Hofmann's 1980s "Italy" is a common ground for exploring the paradox of narrating the chaos of modernity and the limited—yet significant—role that literature can play in exploring these shifting relationships between the world and its narrative representations.

3. Memoria, Gender, Imagination

The first section of this study discussed how Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer* and his *Der Tod in Venedig* serve as literary fulcra, or pivot points, in the early 20th century narration of Italy. Since their publication, many texts, including Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* and Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*, have focussed directly on the legacy of Mann's literary *Bildungsreisen* to Italy. Having studied these close intertextual engagements with the shifting role that "Italy" plays in relation to the literary *Bildungsreise*, it is now worth giving attention to three texts that shift their foci away from this close intertextual dialogue. This second section is dedicated to three different iterations of "Italy" that focus on what role "Italy" can play in our understanding of *memoria*, gender, and imagination.

3.1 Rome as a topos of *memoria*: Friedrich Christian Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*

When analysed together, the works by Thomas Mann, Wolfgang Koeppen, and Gert Hofmann—discussed in the first three chapters—form a close relationship and reveal shifts in the intertext surrounding "Italy". In the three texts, intertextuality serves as literature's memory (in the manner of Renate Lachmann, discussed below). While the intertextual aspects of Friedrich Christian Delius' works could also be interesting[54], I shift my focus here to *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*'s particularly interesting treatment of Rome as a topos for *memoria*.

Friedrich Christian Delius is not the only author to explore the way material artefacts can facilitate remembrance when integrated into the textual Rome. Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke* shares this focus. Like Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* and Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke* (1979) does not receive its own chapter. Studying Brinkmann's text would open up the genre of the diary and would lead this research in a different direction, compelling me to consider a whole range of texts beyond the scope of this study including images, diaries and

54 To pursue questions of intertextuality in relation to Delius' work, his text *Spaziergang von Rostock nach Syrakus* would be better suited. In the text, Delius engages directly with Johann Gottfried Seume's (1763–1810) *Spaziergang nach Syrakus im Jahre 1802*, with his protagonist following Seume's tracks. Seume's text, which recounts a trip he undertook to Italy largely by foot in 1802, forms a counter-narrative to Goethe's Italy. As such, Delius' *Spaziergang von Rostock nach Syrakus* engages in a direct, intertextual manner with Seume's counter-narrative to Goethe's Italy and, by extension, with Goethe's Italy.

scrapbook techniques. Besides, together, the selected texts offer varied and perhaps more subtle attempts to grapple with the apparent prison of Goethe's episteme. Before turning to Delius' novella, Brinkmann's work is however worth exploring briefly, given that *Rom, Blicke* represents the most vehement opposition to the topos that Goethe came to represent and, along with Delius, offers an interesting examination of the role that material artefacts can play within the literary text. In *Rom, Blicke*, Brinkmann explores the role of material artefacts within the fictional text. But unlike Delius, his focus remains largely intertextual, making this brief discussion of his work a nice transition from my focus on intertextuality to my discussion of Delius' exploration of materiality.

Brinkmann's rejection of Goethe's presentation of Italy appears radical. Yet his radical rejection remains positioned in relation to Goethe. Precisely due to his anti-classical stance, he is destined to revolve around Goethe's classical sun. But what does Brinkmann's radical rejection of Goethe's Italy look like? As Thomas Beebee puts it, "no more deliberate repeal of Goethe can be found than Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke*" (323). While Goethe's *Italienische Reise* was reactionary against both rationalism and romanticism, Brinkmann reacts to Goethe's presentation of Italy. *Rom, Blicke* acts "as counter-narrative[] to the *Italienische Reise* by deconstructing the idea of nation" (Beebee 338). In contrast to Goethe's emphasis on a national culture, Brinkmann emphasises "the disappearance of all individuality under the triumph of international capitalism and its *Massenkultur*" (Beebee 338). In response to Goethe's claims of uniqueness, Brinkmann observes, mockingly, "[d]ie [italienische] Grenze, jetzt kommt was Neues, das mich überwältigt, haha, geschissen. Es geht bloß weiter" (Brinkmann 164). Brinkmann does not see Italy as having become more global, but rather as always having been globalised. Brinkmann sees Goethe's fashioning of a compartmentalised, distinctly German nation as an act of fiction.

Brinkmann's aesthetic approach also differs greatly from that of Goethe and Mann. With a cut-up technique, he uses postcards, letters, photographs, diary entries, maps, excerpts from literature, and restaurant bills to turn the text into what resembles a scrapbook. In an effort to dislodge the intent to communicate a "message" often implicit in narrative, this approach allows Brinkmann to encourage language and images to speak "for themselves" rather than for the "writing self" (although Brinkmann's perceptions and emotions remain the focus of our attention). In contrast to Goethe's conscious fashioning of his own *Bildungs*-narrative, here, there is no process of *Bildung* insofar as the text evokes a "subjectivity concerned only with the present, occupied fully by aesthetic feelings", which is "of course not a product of *Bildung* and falls outside [the] classical idea of the subject, approaching instead the deconstructive psychoanalytic views of Jacques Lacan" (Beebee

339). The tone of the 18th century subject is far removed from Brinkmann's. As Beebee puts it,

> [t]he lack of a central consciousness in favour of, in Adler's reading, an aesthesis that always operates in the present, negates the Goethean linking of past and present. [...] Rome is not the 'eternal city', but a jumble of images in which ancient and modern are juxtaposed, without history. (399)

Brinkmann's aesthetic approach differs fundamentally to Goethe's integration of history and fashioning of a future German nation seen in *Italienische Reise*. Whereas Goethe provides mental maps that guide the expectations—and even the travel routes—of many future travellers and writers, Brinkmann fights these foregone conclusions by imposing cut outs of visual maps that, although seemingly concrete, in fact provide no guidance for how to engage with Italy. The maps simply remain uncommented on within the text.

Brinkmann further undermines Goethe's emphasis on a rebirth (and on *Bildung*), by re-characterising Goethe's epigraph "Auch ich in Arkadien". While Goethe uses the epigraph to emphasise a rebirth, Brinkmann (re)aligns the quote to death, by treating the epigraph more in line with the classical sources—the paintings by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri and Nicolas Poussin—in which some suggest the line is spoken by death. Brinkmann speaks of a "Vorhölle", a "death-in-life or a living hell" (Beebee 340). Brinkmann's rearticulation of the epigraph, that plays such a key role in Goethe's text, reveals his desperation to escape Goethe's Italy, and his anxiety about the inescapability of past influences.

On the other hand, we see similarities between the two authors' approaches. Interestingly, Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke*, like Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, remains within the intimate genres of the private letter and the diary. For Goethe, Italy facilitates "die Etablierung des klassischen Kunstideals" (Amodeo 10). For Brinkmann, who became a representative of the "Kölner Schule des Neuen Realismus" (Amodeo 12), Italy facilitated "Schreiben [als] Selbsttherapie, er propagierte und praktizierte die extreme Selbst-Entäußerung, die manische Bestandsaufnahme des Trivialen und die detailbesessene Situationsbeschreibung des Alltäglichen" (Amodeo 11). As Immacolata Amodeo suggests,

> [e]ine genauere Betrachtung zeigt, daß Brinkmann seinen Anspruch, eine Gegenposition zu dem von ihm verachteten Dichterfürsten wie auch zur literarischen Tradition insgesamt einzunehmen, nicht verwirklichen konnte. *Rom, Blicke* ist, wenn man es gegen die erklärten Intentionen Brinkmanns liest, keinesfalls ein innovativer Text, sondern bleibt Traditionen des 18. und des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts, die sogar scheinbar widersprüchlich sind, verhaftet. Als wütender Antipode erweist Brinkmann nicht nur dem Meister Goethe so manche Reverenz. (4)

In apparent opposition to Brinkmann's intentions, Amodeo declares that "[d]ie vorklassischen, klassischen und romantischen Formen [...] von Brinkmann nicht parodiert, sondern unreflektiert übernommen [wurden]. Der traditionelle Inhalt wurde [...] an der Gegenwart überprüft" (15). Amodeo is not alone in her scepticism about Brinkmann's "escape".

Despite Brinkmann's apparent dismissiveness of Goethe, Eckhard Schumacher identifies a continued line of concern stretching from Goethe to Brinkmann:

> Brinkmann schreibt mit *Rom, Blicke* aber dennoch nicht einfach ein Buch, das sich gegen das Vorbild Goethe wendet oder dieses ignoriert. Es zeigt sich, dass Brinkmann durchaus direkt an Goethe anschließt und in einigen signifikanten Hinsichten auf seine Weise auch ein Projekt fortsetzt, das sich schon bei Goethe findet: die Fokussierung auf das Sehen, auf das Auge bzw. auf die bei Brinkmann schon im Buchtitel hervorgehobenen Blicke. (61 f.)

Like Goethe, Brinkmann attempts to see what is there to see, rather than what he might wish to see. Despite this similarity in their projects, the positions of their narrating subjects differ, rendering their aesthetics quite distinct. While they both wish to present what they see, for Brinkmann

> [soll] [d]ie Gegenwart [...] zwar [...] zum Sprechen kommen, als Sprecher soll aber der Dichter hörbar bleiben. Paradox formuliert: Je weniger der Dichter in seinen Texten tatsächlich zu Wort kommt, desto stärker soll er darin als Dichter vorkommen. (Niefanger 75)

While Goethe fashioned a personal and national process of *Bildung*, contingent on a tradition linking past, present and future, Brinkmann lays himself bare in a text that focusses on present experiences, resisting the formation of a narrative that would coherently stretch across time in the form of an "eternal" Roman city. Whereas Goethe's aesthetic aimed at nation-building, Brinkmann aimed to disrupt.

In light of Brinkmann's similarities to Goethe and his overt opposition to him, scholars have reached different conclusions. Some, including Gunter E. Grimm, consider Brinkmann's text a departure from the Goethean Italy, reading it as "ein[en] Anti-Goethe und ein[en] Endpunkt deutscher Italienreisen" (292). Others suggest that Brinkmann's escape from Goethe can only be valid in relation to Goethe, ultimately rendering it a continuation, or a reworking, of Goethe's Italy. Insofar as Brinkmann positions himself in opposition to Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, he remains within its universe. As Amodeo puts it, "[e]s definiert sich in Opposition zur Tradition der deutschen Klassik und stellt gleichzeitig eine unfreiwillige Verbeugung von ihrem Erbe dar" (19). Undermining Brinkmann's radicality, Sorg suggests that

> [d]er Menschenhass des Misanthropen [...] enttäuschte, naive Liebe [ist]. Von jetzt an gibt es für den Menschenhasser keine Grautöne mehr, nur noch

> weiß oder schwarz, gut oder böse. Und nur Er ist gut, ein weißer Rächer wider die Mächte der Finsternis. (241)

Brinkmann's text, and Sorg's reading of it, reveal the challenges inherent in subverting the dominant intertext. Brinkmann's narrative—and all those studied here—are destined to exist in the "web of reactions, allusions, references, and interconnections" that comprise the topos "Italy". Brinkmann's strength lies in his ability, "die kulturelle Verderbnis wenn nicht zu bekämpfen so doch schreibend zu demaskieren" (Sorg 241).[55] In light of Brinkmann's direct critique, the texts analysed in this book are not alone in their critical engagement with the cultural imagination of Italy. Like Brinkmann, they often draw on the texts that precede them. But they take different approaches to Brinkmann as they too evaluate their positions in relation to the literary intertext surrounding Italy.

Like Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke*, Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* focusses on the role of the material city Rome within the literary text. Unlike Brinkmann's text, Delius' novella does not revolve around Goethe's, or even Mann's "Italy", nor does it primarily focus on intertextuality. Rather, wartime Rome serves as a parchment to explore *memoria* as a principle for *Bildung*.[56] In Delius' novella, Rome during the Second World War functions as a space in which to explore how remembrance informs self-formation. The protagonist's and perhaps the reader's understanding of themselves shifts as they "walk" through Rome. Rome is perceived by the protagonist, a German, protestant woman, 21 years-of-age and heavily pregnant with a fictional Delius, the author of the text. While the protagonist observes Rome as she walks through the city, the foetus symbolises the future (Delius) and indicates the text's concern with how wartime Rome is remembered in this future. It is as if Delius peers over his mother's shoulder as he narrates a day in her life in 1943, presenting her thoughts in one long sentence, or stream of consciousness, as she wanders through Rome.

While exploring Rome as a parchment for remembrance, Delius narrates from his mother's personal perspective, although her memory reflects a range of contemporary perspectives, here mirrored in "the" mother. By narrating from the protagonist's perspective, Delius gains access to the war,

55 Interestingly, Andersch's *Aus einem römischen Winter* represents a similar attempt, as Roberta Bargelli explains: "[F]ür den desillusionierten Schriftsteller [wird Rom] zum 'Symbol der gescheiterten abendländischen Zivilisation', zum Abbild einer entarteten Welt" (156).

56 As discussed in the introduction, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke* would also be an interesting text to enquire into questions of material remembrance, since it integrates images into his diary. As a diary it would however introduce the large topic of the *Tagebuch*, which is beyond the scope of this book and worthy of a further study of its own.

which is a central German—even a transnational—event. In an interview with Keith Bullivant, Delius goes so far as to suggest that "[es] [o]hne die sehr persönliche Sprache [...] keine offene, keine öffentliche Wahrheit [gibt]" (qtd. in Bullivant 239). Why, however, does Delius explore questions of literary remembrance in the setting of Rome, the Italian capital? And what does his portrayal of Rome tell us about the shifting literary function of "Italy", or "Rome", in the 21st century? Italy and Rome, as narrated within the German literary tradition, are imaginative reconstructions of a memory, be that the memory of a time spent there, or the memory of a literary or other artistic account of the southern destination. As such, narrative reconstructions of Italy tend to reveal less about the place itself than they do about the reasons for writing about and remembering it, and about the significance of Italy within German literature and culture. In Delius' case, *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* contrasts the imaginative function of Italy in 1943 and in 2006. The protagonist largely parrots a process of her self-formation—her thoughts barely straying beyond contemporary political dogma—the reader, by contrast, is encouraged to identify her limited ability to historicise her perspective and to instead trace the shifting remembrance of the war across the textual parchment of Rome. Specifically, the reader is invited to experience a more "successful" process of *Bildung* than the protagonist, by contextualising the "eternal" city of Rome, thereby identifying that the city's ever-shifting nature is determined by (to quote Eickmeyer again) each reader's "geistesgeschichtliche[] und persönliche[] Position[]" (Eickmeyer 125). The reader's position "in" the text is not static, and its fluidity is "embedded" in the text itself. Recognising this, while traversing the textual Rome, constitutes the implied reader's aesthetic *Bildung*, which is inferred within the text. While Delius primarily explores Rome as a parchment for remembrance, embedded in the novella is therefore the potential for *Bildung* to continue to be an important aspect of the novella.

In his exploration of Rome as a parchment for remembrance, Delius imaginatively reproduces wartime Rome in his 2006 narrated memory of the city. And in his exploration of this *memoria* as a principle for self-formation, the reader is invited to recreate an image of 1943 Rome in the present process of reading. Delius' text guides the reader's reconstruction of Rome, drawing their attention to the function that the literary Rome plays in shaping culture's memory. Delius' Rome functions as a "common ground" or reservoir for remembrance. His novella encourages self-consciousness about this reconstruction, which takes place through the act of reading.

Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau provides itself as an ideal case study to probe questions belonging to the field of cultural memory studies (a field that has been reinvigorated since the 1980s, but was originally begun by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s with his *mémoire collective* (1950) (Erll 8)). For heuristic purposes, I will draw on the field to discuss Delius' text. The

field spans disciplines, as well as layers of remembering, from individual through to social, group, national, and even transnational remembrance. Within the field of cultural memory studies, the understanding of the term *cultural* stems from *Kulturwissenschaft* and from "anthropology, where culture is defined as a community's specific way of life, led within its self-spun webs of meaning" (Erll 4). In this anthropological and semiotic tradition, culture is broken into three dimensions: "social [...], material [...], and mental aspects", where *social memory* refers to "people, social relations, institutions", *material memory* to "artifacts and media", and *mental memory* to "culturally defined ways of thinking, mentalities" (Erll 4). I will use, heuristically, the categories of mental and material remembrance to analyse Delius' text. I do not wish to use these terms to prescribe the dynamics at play in Delius' text. Rather, as suitable labels, they will help to clearly discuss the complex dynamics of perception and remembrance in the text.

Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau explores memory at the mental level by presenting the protagonist's thoughts; she observes Rome and the war in particularly religious terms and through the lens of her role as a woman, as dictated to her by Christian doctrine and Nazi ideology. Yet Delius' narration of this personal, mental remembrance rather allows him to explore the many views and demands that are imposed upon "the" contemporary mother. Delius also engages with material memory, by having his protagonist walk through the streets of Rome, passing sites of remembrance as she goes. By narrating the protagonist's *Spaziergang* through the streets of Rome, Delius generates a material link between the protagonist's "reality" and Delius' remembrance of this "reality" (Delius may also have physically been in Rome at the time of writing, having spent many years living in Rome[57]), as well as the reader's experience of the text. With this narrated mental and material remembrance, Delius alters the intertext (literature's memory) of Rome. After briefly exploring how remembrance functions specifically within literature, I will discuss in more detail the *mental memory* of the protagonist, as well as the significance of the material city as a form of *material memory*. This will reveal how Delius adapts "Italy" as a parchment for remembrance, and *memoria*. And, by inviting the reader to reflect upon their shifting understanding of *memoria* as they "walk" through the text, Delius implies, within his text, a potential process of *Bildung* for the reader.

How remembrance can function specifically within literary texts has been addressed by Renate Lachmann, a representative of the culture as text para-

57 In 1971 and 1972, for instance, he lived "als Stipendiat in der Villa Massimo [... in] dem 'Traumort deutscher Künstler'" and he now divides his time between Berlin and Rome (Lumachi, "Konversation" 73).

digm[58], who contends that intertextuality constitutes literature's memory, and "[l]iterature is culture's memory, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions that include the knowledge stored by a culture, and virtually all texts a culture has produced and by which a culture is constituted" (301). Lachmann defines intertextuality as the term used in

> literary scholarship to capture this interchange and contact, formal and semantic, between texts—literary and non-literary. Intertextuality demonstrates the process by which a culture, where 'culture' is a book culture, continually rewrites and retranscribes itself, constantly redefining itself through its signs (301).

Lachmann indicates how cultural memory and intertextuality are inextricably linked, as is the case in Delius' text: "Cultural memory remains the source of an intertextual play that cannot be deceived; any interaction with it, including that which is skeptical about memory, becomes a product that repeatedly attests to a cultural space" (304). Lachmann suggests it is inevitable that "[a]ll texts participate, repeat, and constitute acts of memory; all are products of their distancing and surpassing of precursor texts" (305). Literary texts mediate between the individual and the culture in which remembrance takes place. By participating, they keep cultural remembrance alive and active. As Lachmann argues,

> [t]he act of writing prevents that which has been gathered in memory and in remembering from acquiring a definite identity [...]. Memory enshrined in writing is directed against the destruction of cultural experience. The locus of this transindividual, noninheritable memory is the text. (308)

In this way, Delius' text keeps the topos "Rome" alive as a parchment of remembrance. The novella, not unlike Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*, reforms the literary role of Rome (and by extension Italy), to overcome narratives of Rome, immediately after the war, which drew on Goethe as a way to avoid cultural feelings of German guilt associated with the Second World War.[59] Delius guides the reader through the text of Rome as a space[60] of remem-

58 For more on this paradigm, see for instance Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann, "Das Gestern im Heute. Medien und soziales Gedächtnis".

59 I am referring here to texts written immediately after the Second World War, prior to Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom*, as I further discuss on page 106 (for more on this, see Laurien, page 97).

60 Here, the term *space* seems more appropriate than *place*, given that space is associated with "freedom" and movement, whereas place is associated with "security" and belonging (Yi-Fu Tuan 3). The protagonist moves through the space of Rome, the reader moves through the spaces created by the narrative, and Rome is actively remembered in a mental space. Even the cultural understanding of Rome during the Second World War is in a state of transit.

brance, and this walk of remembrance through the text indicates the reader's potential process of self-formation.

3.1.1 Mental remembrance: Rome exposes "the" mother's complicity in the war

At the most "basic" level of textual evidence, Delius adapts "Rome" as a parchment for remembrance by presenting Rome from the protagonist's perspective, in which the city is loaded with symbols of fascism and war. From her perspective Germany and Rome are linked, as allies in the war, by their fascist dictators. This helps to explain why Delius sets his narrative in Rome, the capital of Italian fascism, rather than in any other Italian city or European country, given Rome shares a key role in the German remembrance of the war. In the text, the role of Rome in German cultural memory stretches back much further, when Delius evokes not only the Second World War but also the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, the founding myth of Germany, where the Germanic tribes defeated the Roman Legions: "[H]eute standen Römer und Germanen in einer Achse fest verbündet zusammen gegen die übrige feindliche Welt" (*BdM* 89).[61] The protagonist's experience of the city is however dictated by her fascist education; "seit sie zwölf war, hatte der Führer das Deutsche Reich von einem Triumph zum andern geführt, es war, solange sie denken konnte" (*BdM* 47). As she walks through Rome, she observes many examples of fascism, including a tour of school children who "den Duce nachmachten und mit dem Hitlergruß, dem römischen Gruß vom Pincio-Balkon auf den Platz hinunter die eingebildete Menge grüßten" (*BdM* 40). From the protagonist's perspective, the Roman greeting is the fascist German greeting—they are one and the same.

As the protagonist perceives Rome, classical and fascist iconography merge. The long literary history of Germans drawing on Italy to fashion their self-image now continues from antiquity and classicism right through to fascism. The long-standing German love of Rome mixes with fascism in her mind:

> [S]elbst glühenden Nationalsozialisten traute niemand zu, das unantastbare Rom zu beschädigen, auch bei schlimmster Kriegslage nicht, Augustus, der Papst und Goethe, sagte Frau Bruhns, werden dafür sorgen, dass Rom heil bleibt und wir hier überleben können. (*BdM* 69)

Monica Lumachi agrees that fascism looms large in the protagonist's observations of Rome, commenting: "[von] Mussolini-Italien ist hier also auch die Rede, von Hitler-Deutschland, Antisemitismus und natürlich Krieg, auch wenn dies alles aus dem Blickwinkel der jungen, politisch ungebildeten Frau betrachtet wird" (Lumachi, "Topographien" 231). Through the text's im-

61 *BdM* for *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*.

agery, Rome becomes a symbol of the war. By extension, the protagonist's interactions with Rome are indicative of her engagement with the war. By presenting examples of fascism in 1943 Rome from the protagonist's politically limited perspective, Delius adapts the so-called eternal city of *Bildung* into a topos of *memoria*.

The protagonist's limited interest in the city reveals her tendency to also turn a blind eye to the "reality" of the war around her. The mother does not form a perspective of her own, rather receiving the doctrines of the male figures of authority in her world: her husband, her father, Martin Luther and, to a lesser extent, Hitler, and Mussolini. As the mother attempts to avoid any mental dissonance that she feels in response to fascism, she precludes a nuanced perception of herself in Rome from developing; she precludes a process of *Bildung*. She attempts to follow the perspectives of the men in her world, but as their perspectives differ, and at times contradict one another, she is often left perplexed and retreats to the familiar territory of her religion and the trusted perspective of her husband. Lacking a personal perspective, as "the" mother her perspective rather serves to reflect the conflicting views that surround her.

In her maternal role, she is expected to be obedient and display little agency. Her gender—she has been taught that her role as a German woman during the war is to bare Aryan children for the fascist cause—takes precedence over her personal perspective. As a member of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, she follows the female gender role prescribed to her by fascism; she believes "sie hatte das Kind auszutragen, zu behüten und zu nähren, das war ihre Aufgabe, die schönste Aufgabe der Frau" (*BdM* 94). As a devout Lutheran, there are many textual examples in which the protagonist's observations of Rome are determined by the religious authority of Luther and his teachings. Indeed, a certain link can also be drawn between Luther and fascism, insofar as Luther was both authoritarian and antisemitic.[62] The protagonist builds courage when she parrots the bible, thinking, "aber wo Furcht ist, hilft der Glaube, auf diese Erfahrung konnte sie bauen, denn auch gegen das undurchschaubare, unheimliche Meer namens Rom half die Bibel" (*BdM* 14). The rigidity with which she follows Luther isolates her from her Roman surroundings. She wishes not to engage with the city, thinking,

> sie konnte da nicht mitreden, sie wollte da nicht mitreden, sie hielt sich an den Glauben, in Gottes gütiger Hand zu sein und ihre Liebsten und Nächsten ebenfalls in seiner Hand zu wissen, das war das Einzige, was sicher und selbstverständlich blieb. (*BdM* 23 f.)

62 During the Peasants' War from 1524–1525, he sided with the authorities, condemning the rebels as deserving to be killed. And his extreme antisemitism is evident in his 1543 publication *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*, with his anti-Jewish teachings likely used as a justification in Nazi publications.

When she reaches the famous Piazza del Popolo, she focusses only on her religion and is pleased, "dass sie auf diesem Platz wenigstens das Kreuz verstand und sich an das Kreuz halten konnte und an die Kirchen, auch wenn es katholische waren" (*BdM* 27). She palimpsests, overlaying Rome with her religious German gaze, rewriting the parchment of Rome with her memory, showing little interest in Rome itself:

> [W]ährend ihre Sehnsucht südwärts nach Afrika flog, tauchte die Wartburg vor ihren Augen auf, als ähnelten die Hügel und Täler Roms den Hügeln und Tälern des Thüringer Walds rund um die Wartburg und die römischen Dächer den Thüringer Baumwipfeln und die Villen auf dem Gianicolo den Eisenacher Villen. (*BdM* 47 f.)

This reminds her of Luther and the "von Luther geheiligten Boden der Burg" (*BdM* 48). She even thinks, "ohne das lutherische Evangelium" and "[ohne] die ganze Wartburg im Kopf durch Rom zu tragen, […] hätte sie Rom nicht ertragen […] können" (*BdM* 100). The protagonist repeatedly imposes her Lutheran values and thoughts onto the city. As Lumachi comments,

> [d]abei spaziert die Mutter an den musealen Denkmälern der Klassizität vorbei: Sie scheint das heidnische antike Rom zu ignorieren, schaut hingegen mit einer lutherschen Brille auf das beeindruckende, imposante katholisch-barocke Bild, dessen Prunk und Pomp sie verabscheut. Vor ihren Augen weichen die jeweiligen römischen Architekturen und Aussichten immer wieder vor den heimatlichen preußischen Landschaften (Bad Doberan, Eisenach) zurück. (Lumachi, "Konversation" 75)

The mother clings to the religious authority of Luther so tightly that Rome, and the war it here represents, appear to her through a thick, Lutheran, mental filter.

When the protagonist's religion does at times lead her to question Hitler's fascist doctrines, she then blindly follows the point of view of her husband and father instead. Without her husband, she feels lost in the long tradition of Germans in Rome: "im Grunde war sie erleichtert, bei dem Wettbewerb der Rom-Experten nicht mitmachen zu müssen" (*BdM* 74); she "traute sich nicht allein an die Kunst heran […], sie [merkte], wie sehr sie auf den Mann an ihrer Seite angewiesen war, allein wusste sie sich nicht zu begeistern" (*BdM*, 45). She wonders for instance whether it is "allowed", in Rome, to think about Jakob, since he is the "Stammvater Israels" (*BdM* 64). In this moment, she yearns for the authority of her husband, who can tell her what (not) to think: "über das Jüdische und ihren jüdischen Einfall hätte sie mit Gert reden können […] allein fand sie sich nicht durch […], was man denken und lieber nicht denken sollte und wie man mit seinen zwiespältigen Gefühlen umgehen musste" (*BdM* 65). Any doubts she has about Hitler's antisemitism have been deemed appropriate by her husband and her father:

> [E]inmal hatte Gert gesagt, und so ähnlich sagte es auch ihr Vater, wenn er über christliche Grundsätze sprach, unser Gott, unsere Bibel, unser Glaube

> stehen höher als alle Vernunft, also auch als jede Obrigkeit, die wir in unsere Fürbitte im Gottesdienst einschließen, damit sie zu verantwortlichem Handeln finde, doch wenn der Führer sich über Gott und Gottes Willen erhebt, dann dürfen wir ihm nicht blind gehorchen, und es steht auch nicht in der Bibel, dass wir gegen die Juden sein oder sie bekämpften sollen, unser Glaube ist eng mit ihrem Glauben verbunden, deshalb ist es unrecht, an den Juden alles schlecht zu machen. (*BdM* 66)

The protagonist struggles to reconcile the contradictions that exist between her faith and her fascist dictator. In response, she retreats into the role she has been taught as a Lutheran, a wife, and a mother, thinking, "ohne die Kirche und ihre glaubensfesten Eltern und manchen mutigen Prediger hätte sie die täglichen Konflikte zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz [...] nicht bestehen und die schwierige Balance nicht finden können" (*BdM* 97 f.). By strictly following the authorities around her, the mother does not pursue any doubts that enter her mind about the nature of the war in Rome, thereby also preventing a process of *Bildung* while in Rome.

What the protagonist is allowed to remember has been selected by these figures of authority. Her supposedly personal perspective serves to expose the perspectives and the contradictions of the time. As such, while she forbids herself from pursuing the doubts that enter her mind, her naïve perspective helps to uncover the political views that surround her:

> [A]n größeren Plätzen, an breiteren Straßenecken und in den Schlagzeilen der Wandzeitungen [sprang] täglich das fettgedruckte Wort Vinceremo! oder Vincere! in die Augen [...], trotzdem gab es zu viele Niederlagen [...], was sollte aus dem schönen Deutschland werden ohne Siege, das war gar nicht auszudenken, das war verboten zu denken, sie verbat sich das. (*BdM* 47)

Delius creates a critical, ironic distance to the naïve protagonist.

Delius further makes noticeable the protagonist's avoidance of Rome as it is commonly viewed today, by reversing the *Sehnsucht* inherent in many narratives of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy. In contrast to most Rome narratives, with their German *Sehnsucht* for Italy, here, the protagonist longs for her German home while in Rome. Rome serves to elicit *Sehnsucht* for the *Heimat* (as in Delius' *Spaziergang von Rostock nach Syrakus*). Lumachi observes:

> [B]eide Hauptfiguren in den spezifisch italienischen Erzählungen von Delius [wünschen] sich [...], gerade dort nicht zu sein, wo sie sind, nämlich in Italien oder in Rom. Überhaupt scheint Italien, das traditionelle Land der deutschen Sehnsüchte, nur zu existieren, um die Sehnsucht nach der Heimat auszulösen. ("Konversation" 76)

This reversal becomes noticeable as the protagonist walks through Rome,

> sie [ging] weiter ihren Weg unter Bäumen, die ihr unbekannt waren, was sie jedesmal wieder störte, denn in Deutschland wusste sie jeden Baum oft

> schon von weitem zu klassifizieren bis hin zur Eibe und Esche und Seidenföhre [...] aber hier in Italien noch nicht über Palmen, Zypressen, Steineichen und Pinien hinausgekommen (*BdM* 43).

In Rome she notices "wie etwas in ihr rebellierte dagegen, dass sie mit dem Verstand und dem Glauben immer wieder das Gefühl der Sehnsucht abwürgen musste" (*BdM* 82). Lost in the city (and intertext of) Rome, she longs for the security of her home:

> [W]ie hilflos sie sich in diesen Irrgärten der Vergangenheit fühlte, es waren zu viele Vergangenheiten auf einmal, und deshalb sprang in ihr immer wieder, wie eine zu früh sich öffnende Blüte, die Sehnsucht auf, die stärker war als die Vernunft und die militärischen Gebote, und nicht alles, was das Herz ihr pochend flüsterte, konnte sie sofort, noch in derselben Sekunde mit dem Glauben an Ihn, der alles richtet und recht macht, abwenden und besänftigen. (*BdM* 84)

By reversing the dynamic of *Sehnsucht*, Delius draws attention to Rome's function as a parchment for shifting forms of remembrance.

Delius is not alone in adapting Rome into a topos of remembrance, but his adaptation differs greatly from the literary use of "Italy" immediately post-war. Ingrid Laurien's research shows that it was common, immediately after the war, to draw on Italy as represented by Goethe, in order to shape the cultural remembrance of the Second World War. But in contrast to *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*, they avoided confronting and taking responsibility for the "reality" of fascism. Laurien argues that immediately post-war, these cultural "journals tried to approach the question of guilt in the intellectual categories of the old German educated middle classes, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, trying to restore the values of idealistic philosophy and cultural criticism" (97). In these texts, "Goethe was often seen as moral counterpart to the 'barbarism' of the Nazis, as became obvious in 1949, when Goethe's 200th birthday was celebrated" (Laurien 97). Delius' novella, by contrast, closely aligns Italian-German fascism with the bourgeois engagement with Italy, thereby making this earlier escapism impossible. His narrative interweaves the beloved classical, eternal city of Rome with this very act of escapism; the young protagonist reflects:

> Ilse mochte auch die Rom-Schwärmer nicht, die nur das antike Rom oder nur die Paläste, Altäre, Säulen und Kunstwerke sahen und bei jeder Gelegenheit Goethe oder die Brunnengedichte zitierten, weil diese Schwärmer, wie sie meinte, nichts vom täglichen Hunger wüssten und von den Außenbezirken, wo man Hühner und Kaninchen auf den Balkonen hielt, und die einfachen Leute und die schreckliche Armut nicht kannten. (*BdM* 59)

The protagonist does not like to participate in Ilse's criticism, but by introducing Ilse, *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* does. Although Delius' engagement with the longstanding German love of Italy attests to its continuing importance for German social remembrance, his 2006 narrative, in contrast

to the immediate post-war publications, does not facilitate this escapism. On the contrary, Delius generates an ironic, critical distance to the protagonist's escapism. As if with an ironic wink to the reader—who is likely familiar with the *Sehnsucht* at the heart of the topos and aware that it is being reversed—Delius indicates that he is revising the tradition, such that it makes visible "the" mother's blind longing for her *Heimat* and her avoidance of Germany's role in the war. By generating an ironic distance to "the" mother's mental remembrance, Delius presents her perceptions as implanted by male figures of authority; she cannot take responsibility for her role in Rome and forecloses any deep reflection on her shifting sense of self. While this process of self-formation is precluded for the mother, by creating an ironic distance to his protagonist, Delius invites reflection on subsequent shifts in cultural remembrance. Such reflections, implied within the text, could constitute a process of *Bildung* for the reader. The physical monuments of the city develop a further link between the protagonist's engagement with the city and the reader's engagement with the text, as a textual monument.

3.1.2 Material remembrance: Rome as a bridge between past and present, protagonist and reader

Drawing on a theme in the German literary narration of Italy, Delius narrates the material city as a bridge between past and present, between protagonist and reader.[63] The text begins: "Laufen Sie, junge Frau, laufen Sie" (*BdM* 7). As established in the literary tradition of the *Spaziergang*, the protagonist's walk is linked to the act of writing and, thereby, to the reader's *Spaziergang* through the text.[64] Although the text is rich with examples of this intra- and extra-textual walk of remembrance, only a few emblematic examples will be focussed on to illustrate how Delius offers a material remembrance, revising the function of Rome to be a topos of remembrance, which can also imply, within the text, a process of *Bildung* for the reader.

The monuments that Delius describes from the so-called eternal city—suspended above time—bridge the protagonist's past with the narrator's present. They also bridge the protagonist's past with the city of Rome today, which is located in the reader's imagination and is also physically accessible (the protagonist's walk is described in such detail, that it would be possible to physically trace her footsteps).[65] The city, in its physical and imaginative

63 Interestingly, Simon Ward also reads Wolfgang Koeppen's Italy in *Der Tod in Rom* as a metaphorical bridge.

64 For a discussion of the literary tradition of the *Spaziergang*, see for instance Angelika Wellmann.

65 The Church in the Via Sicilia—the final destination of the protagonist's walk—also physically bridges past and present, with Delius later being baptised

forms, plays a bridging function in the text. The stations of her walk—including its monuments, iconography, churches, and bridges—generate a common ground, or interrelated topoi, that allow Delius to draw a narrative line between the protagonist's use of Rome to bridge the gap between past and present, and the reader's use of the text to do likewise.

Appearing in almost every German-language Rome-narrative, the famous Spanish Steps bridge the protagonist's way to the church, "von unten [...] hinauf mit Windungen, Umwegen [...] hinauf in den Himmel, auf den Obelisken zu und in die hochgelegene Kirche" (*BdM* 63 f.). Yet she perceives them as a "Himmelsleiter", and thereby the narrator indicates that they play a more metaphorical function, bridging her earthly present with something beyond her grasp (*BdM* 63). She is portrayed as happiest in this liminal space, when on a bridge or an island, in contrast to the rest of Rome, which she perceives as an ocean in which she is lost and overwhelmed. She "suchte in dem gefährlichen Meer der gastlichen und schroffen, der schönen und unheimlichen Stadt ihre kleinen Inseln der Zuversicht wie die Kreuze auf den Obelisken oder die Kirche Santa Maria del Popolo" (*BdM* 29). Living "mitten in Rom auf einer deutschen Insel" (*BdM* 10), she travels "zu der anderen deutschen Insel, zur Kirche in der Via Sicilia [...], denn das übrige, das riesige Rom kam ihr immer noch wie ein Meer vor, das sie zu überqueren hatte" (*BdM* 13). Significantly, the first bridge she crosses, which is described in most detail, carries her name. As she reaches the Ponte Margherita, it is as if she has found her path:

> [D]u musst deinen Weg gehen, hin zum Lungotevere und über den Fluss, und wissen, wohin du gehörst [...], ehe sie die Brücke erreichte, die ihren Namen trug, wie Gert gesagt hatte, Ponte Margherita, das war eine Königin gewesen, und das hatte sie nicht vergessen, Königinnen vergisst man nicht, besonders dann, wenn Königinnen den gleichen Namen haben und wenn der eigene Mann sie mit seinem verliebten Hinweis einer Königin gleichstellt, und das hoch über dem berühmten Tiber. (*BdM* 20 f.)

By emphasising the protagonist's ignorance about Rome—"es schwindelte ihr vor dieser unbegreiflichen Unendlichkeit, es schwindelte ihr, wenn sie nur daran dachte, was sie alles nie lernen und verstehen würde"—the narrator invites the reader to think beyond the limitations of her knowledge and

there and, after receiving the Evangelischen Buchpreis for *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* in 2009, Delius donated the 5,000 Euro prize to the renovation of the church (see Rolf Ziehm. *Ein literarisches Denkmal für die Mutter*. Holsteinischer Courier. 28 May 2009. Web. 14 Oct. 2020). And in yet another extratextual link, Delius' work on the novella "wurde gefördert durch das DaimlerChrysler-Stipendium der Casa di Goethe, Rom, im Frühjahr 2001" (*BdM* flyleaf).

consider the metaphorical significance of her passage across the bridge (*BdM* 27).

As Simon Ward outlines, "the bridge principally denotes the temporary resolution of the paradox of past and present selves through the act of writing" (97). Although he focusses on Wolfgang Koeppen's works, including *Der Tod in Rom*, Ward's research is particularly relevant, because he analyses the literary, metaphorical role of Roman bridges in the construction of memory. Fittingly, in *Spaziergang* narratives, the act of walking is also closely associated with the act of writing. At the Ponte Margherita, the protagonist pauses from her walk, and her mental struggle to connect past and present also pauses. The bridge represents a liminal space where the past is not integrated into remembrance. Ward also understands "the bridge as a liminal space in anthropological terms, as a state between separation and re-aggregation in a society" (97). As the protagonist stands on the bridge between her past and present, she is repeatedly astounded to find herself in Rome, unable to reconcile her previous self-image with her current surroundings. Her thoughts are thrown back to crossing "die Elbe, die Weser, die Spree" (*BdM* 21). While on the bridge, her "search for an identity with the past means an inability to exist productively in the present" (Ward 97). Similarly, Delius' inclusion of the textual, poetic bridge guides the reader through a transition in the role that the past plays in the present reading. He draws the reader's attention to a transition in remembrance. The textual bridge between 1943 Rome and the present reading is being formed through the reader's walk across the poetic bridge. The novella thereby encourages the reader to reflect on the shifting cultural understandings of wartime Rome.

Similarly, the protagonist's naivety invites the reader to fill in the blanks and ponder the significance of her sharing her name with the Italian queen Margherita of Savoy (1851–1926). Like the protagonist, queen Margherita was nationalistic, conservative, and deeply religious. Just as the protagonist follows the male authorities in her life, including Hitler and Mussolini, the queen, too, supported the rise of fascism under Mussolini. And just as Delius' German protagonist finds herself in Rome, queen Margherita also links Germany and Italy, having been a half German, half Italian princess. The two characters bridge the two countries in the war and in the text. Whereas the protagonist is merely pleased that her husband compared her to a princess, the post-war reader could rather wish that the protagonist would show more discernment. Stuart Taberner argues that this wish, that the protagonist might think more critically, is central to the text, which

> derives its narrative tension from its precarious anticipation [...] of the moment in which its protagonist, in the extra-territorial space of Rome, the 'eternal city' outside of time, might dare to look beyond her limited horizons and glimpse her indoctrination. (392)

Delius particularly raises this hope when the protagonist passes statues and churches that remind her of her courageous and politically bold religious role models. As she passes the walls of the Villa Medici, she envisages for instance the "evangelisch vorbildliche[] Elisabeth, die gegen das höfische Treiben rebelliert und in freiwilliger Armut den Kranken und Kindern gedient hatte" (*BdM* 53). Even her namesake, Margherita, might have been a relative of the protagonist's comparatively courageous role-model, Elisabeth von Thüringen (Elizabeth of Hungary).[66]

With this gap in knowledge, Delius creates an ironic divide between the protagonist's walk through Rome and the reader's walk through the text. This shift in how Rome is "read" echoes the historic shifts in the remembrance of the war, which Delius draws attention to through his revised parchment of the city. Rather than encouraging judgement of the protagonist or a sense of superiority to her, the narration of "the" mother's indoctrinated thinking and ignorance encourages the reader to reflect on their own shifting reading of wartime Rome. The protagonist's ignorance of the city's sculptures invites an enquiry beyond the limitations of her knowledge. When she passes the statue of Neptune, for instance, she does not remember his name, rather seeing him as a naked man holding a giant folk:

> [D]en Blick auf die Ziegelsteinmauer vor der Piazza und die Rückseite des hoch über die Mauer ragenden Denkmals für irgendwelche Meeresgötter gerichtet, eine mächtige Mannsfigur flankiert von zwei Halbmenschhalbfischgestalten, auch von hinten gaben die fast nackten Männer ein komisches Bild ab, und der in der Mitte trug eine Art riesiger Gabel [...]. (*BdM* 24)

This reminds the reader that the sculpture can be read in many ways and invites them to draw connections between this sculpture of Neptune, the God of freshwater and the sea, and the protagonist's presentation of Rome as a "Meer" in which she feels lost (*BdM* 13). Lost in the city's culture and symbolism, she is unaware that the fork is Neptune's trident, which is also associated with war, Neptune having struck the earth with it to create the first war-horse, according to Roman mythology. Just as the city's bridges connect the past and present in the text, Neptune and his brothers reside over heaven, earth, and underworld, bridging all three. Whereas the statues and the bridges represent a solid reality, the protagonist's knowledge of the city is fragile, like the liminal, shifting space of the bridge. Delius' reconstruction of the past, and its reconstruction in the mind of the reader, is also shifting, as the narrative follows the protagonist's footsteps through the textual Rome. The protagonist's limitations aid the reader to make new connections.

66 For a brief biographical entry on Queen Margherita of Savoy, see for instance Anne Commire, *Women in World History*, vol. 10, page 277.

In this way, the novella implies the reader's growing awareness of Rome's shifting parchment of remembrance.

The narrator also draws attention to this shifting nature of remembrance as the protagonist passes the "Peterskirche" (*BdM* 17). She remembers attending a ceremony with the Pope in the Vatikan:

> [W]ie der als heilig verehrte Vater auf einem prächtigen Stuhl sitzend durch die Kirche getragen und von der Menge mit stürmischem Beifall begrüßt wurde wie ein Sieger im Olympiafilm oder der Führer in der Wochenschau, und wie die Kardinäle singend hin- und hergingen und vor lauter Getöse kein Singen und Beten zu hören war [...] und wenn [ihr die] Peterskirche in den Blick rückte, bedauerte sie die Katholiken, die von dieser Steinlast eingeschüchtert, in dieser marmornen Festung zu Statisten, zu Ameisen gemacht wurden und einem angeblich unfehlbaren Papst unterworfen waren. (*BdM* 17 f.)

In a naïve but revealing way, she distances herself somewhat from the pomp and circumstance of National Socialism. The protagonist's quiet, subtle critique of National Socialism invites the reader, along with the narrator, to go further than the protagonist dares; with the benefits of hindsight and the post-war condemnation of Hitler, a clear parallel can be drawn between her description of the Roman Catholics and the way she is also "unterworfen" to an "angeblich unfehlbaren" Hitler (*BdM* 17 f.). The places she passes expose historic shifts in remembrance, and the cultural fluidity of readings of "Rome" is thereby embedded in the text.

The narrator uses a similar ironic technique, describing the protagonist's observations of the sculptures of eagles she sees during her walk. As above, with the Pope and Hitler, the narrator uses the eagle to associate the German National Socialist regime with Rome. The protagonist ponders,

> einmal aufmerksam geworden, hatte sie in Rom einen Adler nach dem anderen entdeckt, auf Fassaden, Denkmälern, Sockeln, Brunnen, Brücken, und sich gewundert, weil sie den Adler immer für ein deutsches Wappentier, eine deutsche Besonderheit gehalten hatte und zuerst gar nicht damit einverstanden war, dass der bei den Italienern so oft auftauchte. (*BdM* 33)

In this instance, the narrator makes noticeable the protagonist's ignorance that the German eagle was in fact taken from the Roman tradition, in which the eagle exists since approximately 100 BCE. Although the protagonist does not know, the eagle of course continues to be a symbol in the German parliament, but in de-Nazified form. The protagonist's memory and understanding of the "Adler" (*BdM* 33) are indiscernibly linked to those around her, leading, as she admits, to confusion, "es wollte ihr nicht gelingen, die Verwirrung darüber aufzulösen" (*BdM* 108). But Delius indicates that the reader, not unlike the protagonist, cannot accurately recount the facts of history, rather, as we read *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*, we are active players in reading and interpreting the text, and in generating memory and his-

tory.[67] Delius invites the reader to alter their view of remembrance, just as the protagonist somewhat alters her perception as she walks through Rome:

> [D]ie deutschen Adler zeigten mehr Strenge, standen stramm bis in die letzte Feder, streckten auf militärische Art die Flügel oder krallten sich am Hakenkreuz fest, während die italienischen eher wie wirkliche Adler dargestellt wurden, fast wie Haustiere, mit weicherem, natürlicher geformten Federkleid, auch streng, aber eher wartend und beobachtend, eher väterlich streng und schützend als militärisch korrekt, und sie musste sich eingestehen, das ihr die italienischen Adler besser gefielen. (*BdM* 33)

Similarly, the reader has the opportunity to alter their memory of the period (and their understanding of remembrance) by "walking" through the text.

In the long tradition of the literary *Spaziergang*, the protagonist often carries an explanatory text, which aids in the appreciation and understanding of the city. While Delius' protagonist carries a travel guide, the Baedeker, she is unable to participate in this tradition and is unaware of the intertext that underpins it, thinking, "der Baedeker schrieb etwas von Rokoko oder Barock, damit konnte sie nichts anfangen, aber mit der Bibelstelle konnte sie etwas anfangen" (*BdM* 64). Delius rather generates these intertextual links for the benefit of the reader. If intertextuality is literature's memory—as Lachmann convincingly argues—then Delius' interaction with other literary portraits of Rome indicates his concern to revise the memory of Rome. In contrast to the protagonist—who largely ignores Rome, rather drawing on the city's monuments in order to remember her German home, her religion, and her role as a woman under National Socialism—the shifting role that Rome plays in the text encourages the reader to reflect on their understanding of *memoria*. Delius thereby transforms the topos "Rome" into a parchment that prompts reflection on *memoria*. Perhaps the reader's understanding of remembrance shifts as they read the novella, thereby facilitating a process of *Bildung*—common to the literary *Italienreise*—that the protagonist lacks. Delius weaves an intertextual tapestry for the reader to reflect on, but which the protagonist remains unaware of. Battafarano describes Delius' literary work as "durch eine beachtenswerte Verarbeitung deutscher Literatur gekennzeichnet" (271). Perhaps the most obvious textual reference is James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Delius' title seems to reference Joyce's work and in so doing, likely indicates the narrator's shared concern to escape strict religiosity and nationalism, which Delius' protagonist follows unquestioningly and which Joyce's protagonist, Stephen, comes to escape (albeit in the Catholic, Irish context). Other texts, which Delius' title brings to

67 For more on Friedrich Nietzsche and the modern idea of memory as a constructive process, rather than an accurate representation of a fixed past, see for instance Vanessa Lemm, "History, Life, and Justice in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*".

mind, include Heinrich Böll's *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971), which also tells of a German woman during the war years, and Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). James' portrait is also set partly in Rome and narrates a young woman's search for freedom and independence; it forms rather an ironic counter-figure to Delius' protagonist, who shies away from freedom and independence.[68]

The protagonist neither draws such links, nor questions the political presentation of Rome during the war; she lacks a differentiated perspective of the city. But the monuments she passes on foot encourage the reader, by contrast, to ponder the roaming nature of remembrance. Delius draws an ironic link between the past (1943) and the present literary role of Rome, thereby revealing the way history is largely "controlled" by narrative as it actively constructs memory. Delius' Rome invites the reader to reflect on their own power to determine how the past is remembered. Unlike the protagonist, who receives the past as given from the authorities in her world, the reader is invited to revise their understanding of remembrance—in what could be understood as a process of *Bildung*—as they read Delius' "Rome", now a topos of *memoria*.

3.1.3 Conclusion

Delius' main concern in *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* is therefore not Goethe's "Italy". It is not even Mann's "Italy". Instead, *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau* uses the Second World War as a reference point to explore Rome as a topos of remembrance. To return to the categories from cultural memory studies, here used heuristically, Delius explores examples of mental and material remembrance. At the mental level, the narrator views Rome through the young protagonist's eyes. But her perception of the city is dictated to her by the male figures of authority in her world. As such, the protagonist's memory exposes the numerous and often conflicting perspectives that surround her. Delius contrasts the mother's mental remembrance to that of De-

68 Another possible intertextual link can be made with the Aeneid, book eight, lines 307–369, in which a similar narrative strategy is used in a much earlier literary "walk" through Rome (written 29–19 BCE). The "king Evander, the founder of Rome's citadel" walks through the city with his sons and Aeneas (Virgil 233). As they walk, the monuments and ruins trigger his memory of the past and of the woodlands that predate the city. In a further similarity, the narrator knows more than the protagonist, commenting "cattle were everywhere, lowing / In what is now the Forum of Rome and the elegant Ship-Place" (Virgil 233). As with Delius, this walk through Rome connects the past, present, and the future in the form of the protagonist's present, the narrator's present, and the reader's present, which, like the narrator's, contains greater knowledge of how the history of Rome continued.

lius and the reader, using the material city to bridge all three. Delius' poetics of walking bridges Rome as narrated in 1943, with the reader's walk through the text. The fictional Delius is also "physically" present in the narrative, in foetal form. This powerful imagery indicates that the author could not have a memory of the day he recounts, despite having participated in it (albeit very passively). For him, memory is a construction, and the physical parchment of Rome offers him props.

Likewise, Delius' text is the reader's parchment. It invites the reader to observe how their understanding of remembrance shifts as they read. The mother's memory is constructed externally, by the dogma she has internalised. The novella invites the reader to witness the protagonist's lack of *Bildung* and encourages the reader, as they "walk" through the textual Rome, to become aware of the shifting historical and socio-political influences on their own remembrance. This awareness signals the positive qualities of a more successful process of *Bildung*. By narrating the shifts in remembrance, Delius exposes the dynamic nature of a *memoria* that shifts between the protagonist, narrator, author, and implied reader.

The texts considered in the previous chapters define the topos "Italy" by its intertextuality. Delius shifts the focus away from questions of intertextuality. His engagement with Italy is also further removed from Goethe's famous *Italienische Reise*. Philosophically, Delius' emphasis on the historical represents a marked departure from Goethe's search for the universal; for an artistic expression that facilitates a perfect harmony between the subject and the world. Delius, by contrast, focusses on historical shifts in the *memoria* facilitated by Rome and is the first to imply, in his text, the *Bildung* of the reader "beyond" the text. By implying the reader's active participation in the process of remembrance, Delius integrates the reader into the topos itself.

3.2 The feminine as "other": Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis*

In Bodo Kirchhoff's 2016 novella *Widerfahrnis*, we see a further aspect of the topos "Italy" worth exploring: the narrated roles of men and women. In 2016, Bodo Kirchhoff won the *Deutscher Buchpreis* for *Widerfahrnis*, which is the most recent literary narrative of travel to Italy considered in this book. Kirchhoff's protagonist, Reither, spontaneously travels South to Italy with his neighbour, Leonie Palm, whom he meets in his small retirement village in the Bavarian Alps and with whom he falls ever more in love. His travels in the southern setting liberate him by "opening" him up to the world. This liberation is caused neither by travel to Italy as a "bildungsbürgerliche[r] Sehnsuchtsort" (Theele 59) nor by artworks from antiquity, but rather by his uneasy encounters with refugees arriving at the peripheries of Europe. Nonetheless, Kirchhoff's novella is nostalgic for the *bildungsbürgerliche* promise of aesthetic self-formation. As Bozena Badura similarly notes, *Widerfahrnis* represents

> die Perspektive eines älteren, gut gebildeten Repräsentanten des deutschen Bildungsbürgertums [...]. Eine solche Figur kann einerseits als Autoritätsperson und andererseits als Leuchtturm der 'guten alten Werte' fungieren und somit gleichermaßen eine idealisierte wie kritische Weltanschauung vertreten. (47)

Daniela Roth and Michael Braun both have a similar reading, suggesting that *Widerfahrnis* draws on the genres of the *Bildungsroman* and the novella "and by emphasizing tropes and clichés, ironically reflect[s] upon the role of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the current discourse on the refugee crisis" (Roth 101). While positioning his engagement with the so-called "refugee crisis"[69] within the context of the *italienische Reise*, Kirchhoff has Reither represent established, *bildungsbürgerliche* values. Daniela Roth makes the interesting point that one response to Angela Merkel's 2015 decision to let more refugees into Germany was to emphasise "aspects of education in the sense of *Bildungsbürgertum*" (102). Defending German culture, or *Leitkultur*, became part of the "refugee debate" and was steeped in the terms of the *bildungsbürgerlichen* definition of "Germanness". As Roth points out, "Germany's self-perception as the 'Land der Dichter und Denker' doubtlessly builds on ideas of a moral, cultural, artistic—and national—education" (102). By engaging with the "refugee crisis" in the context of Italy, Kirchhoff attempts to link these

69 As Patrick Kingsley points out, "the refugee crisis is something of a misnomer. There is a crisis, but it's one caused largely by our response to the refugees, rather than by the refugees themselves", with refugees making up "only about 0.2 per cent of the EU's total population [...], an influx that the world's richest continent can feasibly absorb, if [...] it's handled properly" (6). Although this chapter uses the term "refugee crisis", it also wishes to acknowledge this ambiguity in the term.

established values to this contemporary moment in European history. As Roth observes, Reither's "journey to Italy raises associations with Goethe's *Italienreise* and the importance of Italy, its art, and culture for Weimar classicism" (114). The choice of Southern Italy as the setting in which Reither and Palm meet and decide to care for a refugee girl is therefore not coincidental. The narrative also draws on the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, with Braun suggesting that "[d]er Ablauf der Ereignisse [...] dem Muster eines verspäteten Bildungsromans [folgt]" (284). Following their venture to smuggle the young refugee back to Germany in order to offer her a "new life", Reither is presented as having overcome the isolating self-absorption of his pensioner lifestyle in the North. Badura suggests that the text ends "mit einem utopisch anmutenden Bild des friedlichen Zusammenlebens" (45). In line with the genre of the *Bildungsroman* Reither (albeit at retirement age) finds new meaning in his somewhat utopian, newfound image of himself as a man of compassion and action.

The genre of the novella, as Roth reminds us, aims "to have something happen *to* us" (113). Traditionally, a novella focusses on an important event that impacts on the protagonist, often representing a turning point in their life. The novella is also the prominent genre of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Kirchhoff's choice of the novella indicates *Widerfahrnis*' nostalgia for this period and its desire to present the protagonist as experiencing a turning point in his life while in Italy during the "refugee crisis". The choice of the setting (Italy), the form of the novella, and the term *Widerfahrnis* indicate Kirchhoff's aim to confront the reader, as does his focus on the *Bildungsreise*. As Roth further observes, the *Bildungsroman* "creates a potential to resist the normative idea of consistency and closure" (113). This interest in resisting normativity, consistency and closure unites the recent literary engagements with Italy, discussed in this book. In *Widerfahrnis*, this resistance is embodied in Italy as a space of transits and liminality. Here, a parallel can be drawn with Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* and with Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm*, in which the protagonists also search for a greater meaning that can relieve them of an emptiness. Just as Hofmann's protagonist searches for a "Grund [...], der womöglich *auch heute noch* gültig ist und mir einen Gott tatsächlich nachweist", *Widerfahrnis* is "about flight, but the focus is on two people fleeing from the emptiness in their lives" (Roth 118). And in relation to *Widerfahrnis*, as Roth puts it, "the spontaneity and playfulness that he [Reither] enjoys with [Palm] can only exist because they do not have a fixed destination" (116). This new form of belonging, which Reither longs for in his retirement, can only be found in transit.

Reither's process of transformation is preceded, at the beginning of the novella, by a description of his isolation. Newly retired, he is both mentally and physically isolated, living surrounded by fellow retirees in a Bavarian resort near the Austrian border. Like Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* (discussed

above), and Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* (the focus of the following, final chapter), the novella shares metafictional concerns; the narrator continuously generates a self-consciousness about Reither's narrating mind and about the constructed nature of his own narrative. The production of literature, and its political implications, are addressed within the narrative itself (I will return to the political dimension later, which belongs to the metafictional debate). By narrating Reither's self-consciousness about his own actions and thoughts, the narrator generates a closeness to the protagonist. Reither sees himself as being in control of his narrative of himself; he sees his language use as determining "who he is". But this longing for control comes at a cost; he is isolated and lacks reference to the outside world. Increasingly, "Italy" comes to symbolise the promise of reconnecting with this outside "reality" and "finding himself" through encounters in the southern destination. Reither draws on the common tropes of the South as emotional, exotic, warm, and feminine, a foreign environment in which he can see himself differently, confront the "refugee crisis" firsthand, and experiment with new ways of seeing himself. Reither's trip South represents his endeavour to open himself up to the world and to allow it to affect how he sees himself and behaves. In the 21st century, *Widerfahrnis* appears intent on returning to and investing in the 18th century promise of *Bildung*. At the end of the novella, Reither is shown returning North, this time with a refugee family in the car, symbolically allowing the refugees into Germany. By returning North, Reither is able to apply what he learnt while in Italy; he assesses and pays witness to the changes in the way he sees his "newfound" self. From Reither's perspective, his *Bildungsreise* to Italy is a success, his process of self-formation complete.

The jury of the *Deutscher Buchpreis* argued that Kirchhoff wrestles with the "political existential questions" relating to the protagonist's identity and to the contemporary "refugee crisis", before "release[ing] the reader out into the open" ("Bodo Kirchhoff", *PR Newswire*).[70] This chapter examines what can be read from Kirchhoff's presentation of the refugees and of Italy, as the emotional, exotic, warm and feminine South, and what these portrayals might reveal about the status of the contemporary *Bildungs*-narrative. Does *Widerfahrnis* find a way for Reither to experience a complete process of *Bildung* by transcending a solipsistic engagement with "Italy"? And is he able to successfully interrogate the "political existential questions" of today and to release the reader "out into the open", as the jury suggests? Let us firstly

70 The scholarship on Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* is still relatively limited, Christiane Steckenbiller's article being one of the earliest examples. Much of the existing scholarship reads the novella as defining Europe by imagining the Mediterranean in the context of the so-called refugee crisis. Michael Braun's article, "Europas Kompass. Fluchtdiskurse und Mediterranismus in der Gegenwartsliteratur", is one such example.

consider the credentials of a response in the affirmative, before raising some critical questions.

"Italy", as presented from Reither's perspective, fulfills the stereotype of a warm, exotic, feminine and emotional travel destination. With his new lover, his neighbour Leonie Palm, Reither spontaneously travels South, through Northern Italy, down the Adriatic Coast, stopping in Bari and Catania, before eventually reaching Sicily. As they travel further South, he observes how he "sich streckt und es kaum fassen kann, wie warm es ist" (*W* 72).[71] He notices how "sich einzelne Palmen [bogen], ihre Wedel im Wind, einem so warmen salzigen Wind" (*W* 94). This contrasts greatly to the cold setting of Reither's retirement home, which has snow outside its window (*W* 23), and where it is almost too cold to start Palm's snow-covered car (*W* 29). The Italian warmth contrasts not only to the German winter, but also to the cold and troubled pasts of both German characters, Reither and Palm; Palm's daughter had "sich in einer Winternacht betrunken an einen See [ge]legt, um zu vergessen, nicht um zu erfrieren, aber das war dann ein und dasselbe" (*W* 24). Reither also recalls his troubled past, when he and his former girlfriend "beschlossen [hatten], das Kind nicht zu wollen", choosing to have their unborn child aborted, which resulted in the end of their relationship (*W* 23). The culture in Germany is presented as cold; in his retirement home he is isolated and wishes to avoid speaking to others. Finding a book to read, he is then "damit gleich in seine Wohnung gegangen, um keinem zu begegnen, schon gar nicht jemandem vom Lesekreis der Wallberg-Apartments, wie der ganze Komplex so hieß" (*W* 8). Reither describes himself as "der Alleinstehende" who "ja immer ins Auge [sticht], wie ein einzelner Baum auf dem Feld" (*W* 32); self-conscious of his relationship status, he comments on his "Einpersonenküche" (*W* 32). The South, by contrast, represents the promise of a warm, liberating alternative.

In a way reminiscent of many texts that are captivated by "Italy", Kirchhoff's narrator presents the South as emotional and irrational. In *Mario und der Zauberer* for instance (as discussed in chapter one), Thomas Mann's narrator presents the Southerners as emotionally manipulable in the context of fascism, and as less rational than he and his German family. In *Auf dem Turm*, Gert Hofmann also draws on this trope, having his narrator present an emotionally manipulative and bizarre Italian performance, which the German protagonist considers concerningly irrational. And, most famously, in his *Italienische Reise* Johann Wolfgang Goethe repeatedly presents the Italians as emotional, loud, chaotic, and lacking discipline. *Widerfahrnis* follows in this literary tradition. Reither hopes that by encountering this "otherness" in "Italy", he might escape his isolating solipsism. The further South Palm and Reither travel, the more he is taken out of his comfort zone, and the

71 *W* for *Widerfahrnis*.

more they make decisions that Reither considers irrational. Yet he interprets this positively, as liberating. Initially, he and Palm have the spontaneous idea to drive in the middle of the night to Achensee to watch the sunrise over the lake (*W* 29). By the time they reach the lake, they decide to continue driving in the direction of Italy, with no final destination in mind. The further South they go, the more Reither falls in love with Palm, which causes him to act emotionally and irrationally. He cannot control his "pochende[s] Herz[]", the "Herz[], das seit Jahr und Tag nur für ihn selbst schlug" (*W* 62). And by the time they reach Catania, they encounter a refugee girl, whom they initially offer food, then a place to sleep. They buy her clothes (*W* 162) and eventually they attempt to smuggle her across the border, although Reither is uncomfortable with the irrational and illegal nature of the activity. At that moment, he becomes overwhelmed by the situation:

> Hast du gehört? Er drehte sich wieder um, er machte vor dem Mädchen Gebärden: das Fenster zu schließen, sofort und ganz, und sich flach auf die Sitze zu legen. Bitte, sagte er, du bringst dich und uns sonst in Schwierigkeiten […]. Was soll das, was willst du? Soll die Polizei dich sehen und mitnehmen, willst du das, in irgendeine Zelle kommen bis die Polizei dich sonst wem übergibt? (*W* 183 f.)

Widerfahrnis, as is conventional for the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy, presents Italy not as a *place*, but rather as a *space* that is evocative of movement, freedom, and insecurity. As Yi-Fu Tuan has argued, "[p]lace is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (3). Kirchhoff longs to escape the stasis of his place in Germany and to travel through the liberating space of Italy on their road trip. Here Kirchhoff draws on an established literary presentation of "Italy" as a space through which to travel in order to be liberated from restrictive German customs and to open oneself up, not only to the *dolce vita* and to love, but also to new experiences, including those that are considered more irrational, corporeal and inexplicable. *Widerfahrnis* interprets positively the apparent irrationality that Mann warned against in *Mario und der Zauberer*. As Michael Braun puts it, Kirchhoff presents Italy and "das Mittelmeer [als] ein[en] heterotopische[n] Ort" in Michel Foucault's sense of the word, as a "'Lagerungsraum' […], ein[en] teilnahmslose[n] Raum", a space of transit (286). At least initially, Kirchhoff's Italy takes the form, as Braun suggests, of "eines fragmentierten, ja hilflosen, verspäteten Bildungsromans, in dem die 'Suche nach Identität' ersetzt worden ist durch die 'Identität der Suche'" (287 f.).

By presenting the South as feminine, emotional, and irrational, the narrator also portrays it as exotic and "other". It is Palm—whom Reither idealises for her femininity—who suggests they travel South; Reither sees her as belonging in this southern, feminine environment. From their first meeting, Reither focusses on her femininity, commenting on her hair: "[S]ie beugte sich an ihm vorbei zur Spüle, er konnte ihr Haar riechen oder glaubte, es riechen zu

können" (*W* 32). Her feminised hair features again and again. In one moment "stellte [sie] den Kragen auf, dass ihr Haar darüberfiel"; later, he narrates "das Haar wippend auf dem Kragen" (*W* 34), or in the car, "sah [er] zur Seite, auf den Kragen seiner Lederjacke mit dem so fremden Haar und fremden Ohr darüber" (*W* 43 f.). Later, "das Haar der Palm kitzelte ihn am Ohr, wenn es aufwehte" (*W* 94). When Reither sees the refugee girl combing her hair, he ponders, "wo Frauen unterwegs ihre kleinen Toilettendinge verwahren, den Lippenstift, das Taschentuch, ihren Notspiegel—Frauen, auf einmal lief sie unter diesem Wort" (*W* 165 f.). Even Palm's feet are feminised and summery; Reither is placed "im Bann ihrer auch sommerlichen Schuhe" (*W* 11), which reappear in the diminutive, as the "so sommerlichen Schühchen" (*W* 12). Palm is later also cast as a tiny bird who, as they inspect an Italian holiday home, "schon die Zusage machte, was so klang wie der Laut eines winzigen Vogels, sisi" (*W* 120). Reither sees Palm within his terms of the "ideal", the stereotypical woman, who has a faint, high-pitched voice and loves shopping and decorations, who "sich mit jedem Schritt etwas mehr in eine Wohnung verliebt" (*W* 120). Reither is even shown to draw a comparison between Palm and the female archetype Mary Magdalene: "Sie hatte den Kopf im Nacken, die Augen auf und doch zu, als träumte sie vor sich hin, und ein Bild aus dem spanischen Barock fiel ihm ein [...], ein Bildnis der Maria Magdalena" (*W* 88). Her beauty has "etwas Bestürzendes" (*W* 11). From Reither's perspective, Palm belongs in this feminine South; he sees her femininity as mysterious, and he believes that this mystery draws him out of his solipsism. Reither sees Palm for instance as having "noch etwas zusätzlich Schönes [...], ein schwebendes Geheimnis" (*W* 88). She captures something "für das ihm ein Wort fehlte, ein besseres als schwebendes Geheimnis, als läge genau in diesem Fehlen der Schlüssel zu dem Gesicht" (*W* 88). From Reither's perspective, Palm embodies *Widerfahrnis*, a word that Heidegger uses to represent "eine[n] der Schlüssel zum Geheimnis" (Böttiger).

The southern environment and the proximity of the "mysterious" Palm offer a form of *Bildung* that draws Reither out of his self-conscious mind and into his body. He describes the first moment when he believes that he finally, momentarily, escapes the confines of his perpetually self-narrating mind and (for a liberating moment) lacks the narrative powers to articulate the moments of physical intimacy and love with Palm: "Es gab kein Rezept [...] überhaupt gab es keine Regeln für solche Stunden und Nächte" (*W* 147). In her proximity, "spürte [er] sein Herz, das nicht mehr so schlug, wie es in den letzten zwanzig Jahren geschlagen hatte" (*W* 178). Palm is presented as someone who "ihn hätte erlösen können" (*W* 199). The further South they go, the more Reither presents himself as embedded in an "irrational", "emotional" and "corporeal" environment. Reither's contact with the refugee girl is also presented as causing him an intense, transformative pain that shifts the centre of his experience from his mind into his body.

By holding on to a chain around the refugee girl's neck in an attempt to prevent her from running away due, presumably, to fear of police, Reither cuts his hand; this leaves "ein Klaffen darin entlang der Lebenslinie, als hätte sie jemand zur Gänze aufgeschnitten, um so das Geheimnis des Lebens freizulegen" (*W* 189). This causes an inarticulable corporeal experience. Reither sees his inability to articulate himself as the key to the "Geheimnis des Lebens" (*W* 189), insofar as he believes that it frees him from his self-conscious, internal narrative and brings him beyond himself, into the physical world. Reither describes how "ihm [...] der Hals wie zugeschnürt [war]—ja dieses kleine Wie hätte er sogar gestrichen" (*W* 193); "er sah sich da also, wie aufgelöst, und sah sich auch nicht: war aufgelöst" (*W* 198). His language transitions from self-consciously descriptive, to one of physically *being*. He feels liberated from his self-consciousness of his own language production. The corporeal experiences of the South leave Reither in a state for which words escape him, as he wishes to do "alles, um von der Schneide des Augenblicks herunterzukommen" (*W* 194). This "otherness" of the intense corporeal experience is presented as freeing Reither from his emotionless, self-consciously narrating mind. As Daniela Roth argues, Reither searches for "new reference points" that are "no longer rooted in [his] self-conception as [a] member[] of the bourgeoisie" (105), and that his focus on his "own perceived precariousness, i.e. [his] identity crises, [...] become[s] visible through interaction with the 'other' (105). As this escape from self-consciousness is central to Reither's process of *Bildung*, the narrated self-consciousness requires greater attention; it raises interesting metafictional questions.

As is common in metafictional texts, the narrator self-consciously draws attention to his own language use. The narrator articulates a paradox: Reither wishes to escape his self-narrating mind but, paradoxically, language is his gateway to the world and to "alterity". Language is both necessary and a trap. The narrator's perspective aligns with metafiction more broadly (as discussed in more detail earlier on page 87). As Patricia Waugh puts it,

> [i]f he or she sets out to 'represent' the world, he or she realises fairly soon that the world, as such, cannot be 'represented'. In literary fiction it is, in fact, possible only to 'represent' the discourses of that world. Yet, if one attempts to analyse a set of linguistic relationships using those same relationships as the instruments of analysis, language soon becomes a 'prison-house' from which the possibility of escape is remote. Metafiction sets out to explore this dilemma. (4)

The narrator continuously draws attention to his self-conscious language and, by implication, this issue. He comments for instance: "Und mit der Zigarette im Mund holte Reither—genau an der Stelle hätte er den Namen eingeführt—eine Flasche von dem apulischen Roten aus einem Karton im Flur" (*W* 5). By interrupting his own narrative, the narrator communicates a self-

consciousness about narrating Reither's internal thoughts. This generates a closeness between Reither and the narrator and, as Roth likewise observes, creates "the impression that the narrator is editing the story while telling it" (114). Similarly, the narrator later comments, "Reither lag auf dem Rücken und weinte—und hätte das in einem Buch wohl auch so stehengelassen—, er weinte um sich, und Punkt" (*W* 200). He is also shown to be highly self-conscious of his choice of labels, commenting on "diese Allesundnichtswörter", such as "ein Jude, ein Christ, ein Fischer aus Lagos, […] er hatte sie nie geduldet" (*W* 207). Here, the narrator blurs the line between the narrated and narrating characters, generating an image of Reither as continuously self-conscious of his own narrating mind. This self-consciousness "entfernt [ihn] von der Welt" (*W* 5).

The narrator makes clear that Reither is dependent upon language, yet it also restricts him to the confines of his self-conscious, self-narrating mind. Reither searches for a process of *Bildung* that will free him from his solipsism, thereby granting him agency. Kirchhoff is well aware of this paradox, commenting: "'In der Sprache bin ich eingeschlossen, und mit der Sprache kann ich mich über die Existenzform scheinbar hinwegsetzen […], die Sprache unter-redet mich; was ich auch weiß über die Sprache, ich kann sie damit nicht beherrschen'" (qtd. in Pätzold 159 f.). Rather than try to control ("beherrschen") his language, the narrator tries to gain some freedom by unpicking the nature of his own narrative. Reither, by contrast, hopes to escape through a process of *Bildung* experienced in Italy. He hopes that in Italy, he will be able to free himself from the confines of language. Reither sees the "otherness" that he encounters in Italy as leading him beyond his own language. "Italy" offers Reither the promise of locating the "real world" that exists beyond the prison-house of his language, beyond his mundane, isolated, retired life, and beyond his mental and cultural bubble.

In the southern space he is able to be more spontaneous and fall in love with Palm. This new openness means he entertains the possibility of offering a refugee family a new home. Reither is presented as changed by his experiences in the South with Palm, who helps him to overcome his hesitance and accept the refugee girl. These events give him faith in a process of *Bildung* that can liberate him. In a sense, Reither is a refugee travelling in the opposite direction. As "ein Flüchtling vor dem Leben", his trip to Italy enables him to escape this mentality and to realise that "er allein zu wenig ist, […] [d]ass er Veränderung und somit das Leben endlich zulassen muss" (Kirchhoff qtd. in Hennig von Lange). As Bozena Badura points out, "seine Fahrtrichtung [ist] eine umgekehrte als bei den in der Novelle dargestellten Geflüchteten […, aber,] ähnlich wie die Geflüchteten, reisen Reither und Leonie zu einem Sehnsuchtsort, hier dem imaginierten 'Arkadien', als das in der deutschen Geschichte lange Zeit Italien galt" (49). David Coury similarly observes that "[w]hereas many Europeans are fearful of the number of migrants heading

north from the global South, Reither has taken a journey in the opposite direction", and the roles of care are reversed (62). By the end of the novella, when Reither has contact with the refugee Taylor and his family, Taylor helps him with his wounded hand and Reither even offers in return to smuggle the refugee family across the German border to give them a new home. Referring to the political situation beyond the novel, Kirchhoff explains in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "[d]as ist gleichbedeutend mit: 'Lass sie in Unser Land'" (Kirchhoff qtd. in Hennig von Lange 2). Just as the cut in his hand exposes the "Lebenslinie" (*W* 189) and physically and metaphorically opens him to the world, Taylor mends him with his stitches, apparently rendering Reither's process of *Bildung* complete. He is "mended"; no longer isolated, he is transformed into a man with a purpose, who is now able to act politically, advocating for the acceptance of refugees in Germany. *Widerfahrnis* strives to communicate this political message to a German audience, couched within the cultural terms of the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy.

To further appeal to his audience, the narrator has Reither see Taylor and his family in Christian rather than Islamic terms, thereby making them more relatable for many German readers. Badura reads the novella as an attempt, "die Integration voranzutreiben" (45). Badura suggests that migration texts often achieve this goal

> u. a. dadurch, dass sie die Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den Deutschen und den Zugewanderten betonen oder die Neuangekommenen nach und nach in ein positives Licht rücken respektive sogar ihre Überlegenheit gegenüber den eigenen Mitbürgern zum Ausdruck bringen. (44 f.)

Kirchhoff uses this technique when he presents Taylor's family as representing a purer form of Christian values. Badura agrees, arguing that Kirchhoff tries to convince the reader through "(scheinbar) logischen Bezügen zur Bibel und Mythologie [...], die für die europäische Identität konstitutiv sind" (60). Kirchhoff presents Taylor's family as "authentically" Christian, like "ein bibliches Bild aus Kinderzeiten" that connotes innocence and purity (*W* 208). Reither sees him as a "Familienvater"; this generates further associations of care and trustworthiness (*W* 207). The family is presented as even more "authentic" than other young German families:

> [S]eine Bekannten mit Ehe und Kinderglück, die Kleinen dumpf vor dem Smartphone am Esstisch, da hatte sich nichts gerührt in ihm, aber diesen jungen Mann auf der Flucht, den beneidete er um sein Leben ohne Dach und ohne Bett, ohne Konto und ohne Fürsprache, mit nichts in der Hand außer Frau und Tochter und dem eigenen Mut. (*W* 108)

Here, the narrator appeals to the values of Christianity as the enforcer of the traditional family model, in juxtaposition to the apparently corrupting influence of modern technology. By presenting the refugees as embodying these Christian values, Reither presents them as worthy of help. Taylor also gives

Reither a purpose, when he asks "[c]an you help us, rider?" (*W* 109), which triggers Reither, "den Kofferraum auf[zumachen], und Taylor legte den Rucksack hinein, dann öffnete er die Fahrertür und klappte die Sitzlehne vor, damit die Frau mit dem Kind einsteigen konnte, und so geschah eins nach dem anderen" (*W* 212). By giving Reither a purpose, Taylor helps Reither beyond his isolation (an isolation reminiscent of the family "dumpf vor dem Smartphone" (*W* 108)), thereby re-integrating him into a community with a sense of belonging and purpose. In this moment, Reither is portrayed as a role model who leads by example, demonstrating how one might engage more openly with the refugees and let them into the country. Like Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* examines the role of the author in the face of a contemporary political crisis. But according to *Widerfahrnis*, it would seem that Thomas Mann's crisis of aesthetic *Bildung* has here been overcome by Reither, who has reinterpreted "irrationality" positively and who now considers himself a man of empathy and action, transformed by his travels through Italy.

3.2.1 A critical evaluation of *Widerfahrnis*' "Italy"

If Reither's narrated perspective is to be believed, then "Italy" still has the potential, identified by Goethe and many others, to liberate the German protagonist and—due to the irrationality the southern location provokes—even afford them freedom from what metafictional theorists might label the prison-house of language. Reither's escape is however predicated on the instrumentalisation of Italy as an "other". In an interview with Alexa Hennig von Lange, Bodo Kirchhoff elaborates on how he understands this process of encountering an "other" and "opening" oneself to the world. This tradition of "othering" is, however, questionable. As Daniela Roth persuasively comments, in relation to Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, Ging, Gegangen*,

> [b]oth protagonists are white bourgeois men who have an identity crisis and the refugee characters help them to overcome this crisis. When interacting with the refugees the protagonists display strategies that are symptomatic of the Western perspective on the 'other' that has been criticized by post-colonial scholars. (105)

Despite his constant self-consciousness about his own language use, Reither's perspective lacks awareness of his "othering". Although Reither is lauded as a role model, who advocates for the acceptance of refugees and articulates a new role for himself in Italy, the assumptions underpinning his behaviour require further unpacking.

Even though Reither likes Taylor, seeing him in familial and biblical terms, it becomes clear that Reither is not interested in engaging with Taylor's perspectives, beliefs, or customs. In this respect, my argument differs to David

Coury's reading, that "with Taylor, the Nigerian man, Reither can engage and learn about his past and family" (62). While Reither lauds Taylor and his family as the Christian ideal to which German families should aspire, he fails to consider any national or cultural identity that Taylor may have, and this rather risks further marginalising him and his family. Roth rightly points out that

> referencing and emphasizing a shared national and cultural identity can create stability for one group and also serves as a tool to exclude and marginalize outsiders as a means of protection. […] [T]he 'refugee crisis' in these texts is inscribed in a crisis of the Bildungsbürgertum, demonstrating a concerning continuance to approach, read, and re-colonize the sorrows and experiences of the 'other' through Western cultural codes. (105, 118)

Like Mann's protagonist in *Mario und der Zauberer*, Reither has double-standards but—unlike Mann's protagonist—he neither dwells on nor shows an awareness of this.

The narrator has Reither claim to dislike what he calls "Allesundnichtswörter" (*W* 207), which place people into simplistic categories. But Reither uses his own "Allesundnichtswörter", by presenting Taylor as "der Familienvater" (*W* 202) and "[d]er Afrikaner" (*W* 206), before painting a picture of Taylor as the head of a "typical refugee family", thereby placing Taylor into exactly the sort of simplistic category that he dislikes (*W* 207). Reither shows no interest in understanding Taylor's decisions and behaviour, thinking it is better to get on with his own life, "als warum zu fragen" (*W* 107). This means however that Reither does not engage with Taylor's perspective, values, or self-understanding, focussing rather on his appearance as "refugee" and subsuming him and his family under Christian German cultural categories. Reither also describes

> [e]in[e] Masse gedrängt neben einem Zug mit wohl verschlossenen Türen, eine trotz des Lichts dunkle Schlange, aber mit Farbpunkten, von unzähligen Bündeln und Rucksäcken, von Decken, Mützen und farbigen Kopftüchern, von allem, was man nur tragen konnte. (*W* 61)

As Christiane Steckenbiller observes, this reveals the "protagonist's suspicious and detached attitude towards refugees" (75); how he "perceives the travellers primarily in terms of numbers, blending in with each other and forming an anonymous mass" (78). Bozena Badura recognises the similarity to mainstream media, commenting, "[e]s sind Bilder, die den meisten LeserInnen aus den Medien wohl bekannt sind" (63 f.). Although it remains unclear whether, as Badura suggests, Kirchhoff's use of "der medial vermittelten Bilder" (45) makes the migrants more appealing to the destination culture. The refugee girl also remains anonymous, and notably voiceless; she is described as an archetypal refugee. As Richard Kämmerlings notes, Reither and Palm "missbrauchen das Flüchtlingskind als Projektionsfläche für ihre Träume vom späten Familienglück, das ihr Unglück ungeschehen machen

könnte" (Kämmerlings *Eine Reise ins Herz unserer Gegenwart*, no page). Bozena Badura agrees: "[S]ie [entschließen] sich eher aus egoistischen Gründen [...] ihm doch zu helfen" (55). Rather than making any real attempt to understand her perspective and her needs, Reither uses the refugee girl for his own psychological benefit. She remains nameless and voiceless and Reither sees no reason to distinguish between the countries from which she might originate:

> Das Kind [...], das keins war und irgendwo herkam, wo die Haut schon wie unter dem Namen des Landes verdunkelt erschien, Marokko, Libyen, Albanien und was es sonst noch mit einer Küste gab, um ein Boot zu besteigen in der Hoffnung, dass es nicht untergeht und paradiesische Ufer erreicht. (*W* 127)

Although Reither is portrayed as a model of Christian empathy, opening himself up to refugees and letting them into Germany, his presentation of the refugees he encounters is similar to their presentation in the mainstream media, as numbers or a homogenous mass, arguably making it harder for the reader to experience any meaningful empathy.

The refugees serve as examples of alterity that are there to meet Reither's desire for a *Bildungsreise* that facilitates a new understanding of himself, as a man of political action. But Reither remains unaware of the problems inherent in his engagement with the refugees; unaware that the refugees are only a hollow "other" because he does not consider their perspectives, preferring to project his own needs onto them instead. Reither's relationship with the refugee girl is not, as David Coury suggests (61), a straightforward one of reciprocity. Does this critical reading of Reither's "othering" mean that Reither's escape from metafiction's "prison house" of language is also unconvincing?

I suggest it does: Reither's belief that he has escaped his own narrating mind and his cultural solipsism by engaging with the "real world" is fanciful at best, if not absurd. Each of the texts discussed in this book are captivated by the "prison house" of language and use "Italy" as a way to inspect the prison's walls. But Reither (in a style reminiscent of Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, in which he also fashioned himself as having a "rebirth") is the only protagonist of these 20th and 21st century texts to think that he has escaped. Reither believes that Palm, the South, and the refugees have enabled him to be transformed into a man of action, who, due to his "rebirth", has completed the process of *Bildung* evoked by Goethe's *Italienische Reise*. As Coury observes, "as a novella, [*Widerfahrnis*] is in line with Goethe's classic definition of the genre, whereby these encounters with the Other present a 'startling event that suddenly occurs'" (63). Kirchhoff fashions Reither as a bourgeois representative of Goethe's tradition, a "tugendhafte, gesellschaftlich angesehene und gebildete Figur[]" (Badura 60). It is as if Kirchhoff's answer to the far-right xenophobia that arose in response to the "refugee crisis", is to re-

turn to particularly German national, as well as European ideals. Even Palm, "as part of her dying wish, wants to explore the beauty of Italy and its neoclassical heritage as a way to discover truth and beauty, the values of humanism and the European Enlightenment, something that the jaded Reither also comes to rediscover" (Coury 64). But this narrative (whether intentionally or not) undercuts itself.

Reither fails to place into context his fascination with the *Bildungsreise* to Italy. The novella fits within a broader trend to emphasise space, in a move away from grand theory and towards "location, boundaries, depth, and mapping"; towards a focus on the "cultural production invested in textuality and print that yet is premised on the spatial" (359). Reither emphasises the particular importance of Italy as a space that facilitates his openness to changes in the way that he sees himself and makes meaning. But insofar as he subsumes those whom he encounters in the southern setting under the cognitive category of "other", he fixes them into the sort of static category of *place* that he, on his travels, had hoped to escape through his emphasis on *space*.[72]

Broadening the context further, Chute observes that such a lack of self-awareness is common: "Postmodernism has expanded the range of objects of analysis, and the way we talk about them, so successfully that it has enacted its own critical disappearance" (365). In other words, its ubiquity has caused a blindness; a lack of recognition that postmodernism is *one* perspective that exists within an historic context. Goethe's "Italy" is similarly ubiquitous, such that when Reither employs the category of "other" as his means of escape from his self-consciousness, he adopts Goethe's technique, but does not recognise that in doing so, he projects himself onto the "other" and reintroduces the essentialism and essence he believes he has overcome. In this sense, *Widerfahrnis* (insofar as Reither's perspective can be equated with that of the novella) runs counter to the "postmodern" attempt to seek a "cognitive map" of "the unrepresentable totality" (Fredric Jameson 51).[73] (Alternatively, if Chute is correct that postmodernism has become so ubiquitous that it has "enacted its own critical disappearance" (365), then perhaps, ironically, *Widerfahrnis* is an example of postmodernism par excellence.) Reither is unaware that his focus on his mind, and his attempt to undermine all essence, are themselves aspects of a broader cultural narrative; the category of "other" reinstates the notion of essence, only in negative form in opposition to the concept of self. Reither is unaware that his primary mech-

72 For a further discussion of spatial theory, see for instance: Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, or Dara Downey et al (eds.), *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place*.

73 See also Hillary Chute, and Jean-François Lyotard for further conceptual perspectives on the contentious label "postmodern".

anism of escape, the "other", reinstates the original confines of his "prison house".

When Reither sees the "other" as freeing him from his "self", he exposes his lack of awareness that he simply remains within the category of his modernist thought. The unease that Reither feels is reminiscent of that which Albrecht Koschorke describes, when he suggests that modernity sees itself as having "Halt verloren, Auflösung verbindlicher Normen und Werte, Orientierungslosigkeit, Sinn- und Identitätskrise, soziale Desintegration usw." (264). But modernity, Korschorke continues, fails to see, "dass das Narrativ einer auf vollständige Verweltlichung zustrebenden Moderne *als Narrativ* unsichtbar wurde" (265). Koschorke also criticises the use of an "other"—which is present in *Widerfahrnis*—when he recognises that

> [w]er von Identität auf Alterität umstellt, bleibt [...] im Bannkreis einer negativen Fixierung auf Identität. Dies setzt der Dekonstruktion eine Schranke, die nur dort wirklich stark ist, wo sie sich in den Machtbereich starker Gegner begibt: der Logozentrik, Phallokraten, Essentialisten, Naturalisten [etc.]. (117)

Following both Koschorke (117; 263) and Chute, Reither's (narrated) mental behaviour is symptomatic of (post)modernism, because he does not realise that his self-narrative forms a self-fulfilling feedback loop.

Reither's supposedly unrepresentable "other"—referenced by the title itself—is a category of narrative presentation, rather than some unrepresentable "other" as such. The title, *Widerfahrnis*, points towards Reither's hope to be liberated from his self-conscious solipsism by engaging with something mysterious, inarticulable and other. Michael Braun elaborates: "'Widerfahrnis' ist ein ursprünglich religiöser Begriff, den Heideggers Philosophie aufgenommen hat. Gemeint ist damit etwas, das einem ohne aktives Zutun zustößt, ein passiv erfahrenes Ereignis in der Nähe zur Gefahr" (284). As Braun further points out, this aligns with Goethe's understanding of the genre of the novella,

> [w]enn man Goethes Definition der 'Novelle'—eine Erzählung von einer 'sich ereigneten und unerhörten Begebenheit'—narratologisch als Ereignishaftigkeit beschreibt, so ist mit dem Titelwort 'Widerfahrnis' schon die Erzählbarkeit der Geschichte gesichert. (284)

Widerfahrnis strives to narrate that which cannot actively be found, but rather mysteriously occurs, in a process that resists representation. He attempts to put forward the "unpresentable in presentation itself" (Lyotard qtd. in Fischer 29) which, as Jean-François Lyotard very briefly summarises, stems from "*postmodern[ity's]* [...] incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). From Reither's perspective, the "others" he encounters are "unrepresentable". However, the tension present in his "Identität der Suche" (288)—which poignantly communicates the emptiness of Reither's life and his strug-

gle for connection—is collapsed when these "others" facilitate, at the novella's conclusion, Reither's process of *Bildung* to be "completed", when he returns to Germany with his car filled with a young refugee family. Although Reither wishes to embody a more fluid engagement with "the world" as he travels through the southern space, *Widerfahrnis* rather nostalgically clings to Goethe's promise of *Bildung* with reference to "Italy".

From Reither's narrated perspective, the *Bildungsreise* to Italy has changed; it now reaches beyond a *bildungsbürgerlichen Sehnsuchtsort* for Italy (and the *dolce vita*), and has new contemporary political relevance, having enabled Reither's self-formation and led to him engaging with the "refugee crisis". However, Reither does not engage meaningfully with the changed state of Southern Italy as a "place of precarious arrivals, uneasy encounters, and personal crises" (Steckenbiller 76). Instead, as Steckenbiller points out, Reither has a "detached attitude toward refugees" (75); "the topic of migration is rendered secondary, an inconvenient subject matter perhaps that Reither does not like to discuss […], the migrant travellers […] are introduced at the margins" (77). In this respect, David Coury's argument appears unconvincing, when he suggests that "[t]hese encounters compel us to acknowledge […] the humanism of the Other, in which face-to-face encounters help the protagonists—and ideally the reader—to overcome the abstract idea of the nameless stranger" (55). Although Taylor is given a name, Kirchhoff's refugee girl remains a "nameless stranger" (Coury 55). Reither's superficial interest in the topic of migration and refugees is perhaps unsurprising; Pätzold identifies this superficiality in much of Kirchhoff's work, drawing attention to "[d]ie Fahndung nach Körpern und Körperlichkeit, die sich auf den äußerlichen Schein eines Individuums beschränkt" (160). This leads Kirchhoff to a

> Konzept der Oberflächenästhetik […]. Seine Oberflächenästhetik beschränkt sich mit ihrer Selbst- und Fremdbespiegelung stets auf Äußeres […]. Er konzipiert keine Helden, die nach der 'Tiefe' des anderen suchen, sondern nur auf Äußerlichkeiten fixiert sind: Die Oberfläche im wörtlichen Sinn, die weibliche Erscheinung, die Haut oder körperliche Auffälligkeiten dienen den männlichen Helden als Zeichen der Begierde. Diese Oberflächenfixiertheit […] dominiert] seine schriftstellerische Arbeit. (Pätzold 160 f.)

Badura rather favourably reads this extreme focalisation as showing Kirchhoff's sensitivity, as he does not wish to assume to speak for the refugees (70). But Daniela Roth's argument, by contrast, appears more convincing, when she suggests that "the depicted fugitives are functionalised for the personal development of the protagonist[]" (101), with such a functionalisation being "inherent in the Western concept of *Bildung*" (106).

Palm and the refugees are frequently precluded a narrative perspective. When Palm and the refugee girl disappear, for instance, the narrator has Reither focus on their hats—a symbol of their appearances, rather than the

thought-filled heads beneath them—presenting what, in another context, could be a poignant image but here is symptomatic of his "Oberflächenfixiertheit" (Pätzold 161):

> Die Palm schlug mit ihrer Tasche nach ihm, auch sie verlor den Hut, und er sah für einen Moment zur Seite, das Kettchen in der Hand, den Moment, um alles noch irgendwie zu retten, auch seine Mitreisende vom Aussteigen abzuhalten, ihre Tür war schon auf […]. Drei Hüte lagen vorn im Auto, ein kurzer Halt für die Augen […]. Er, Reither, saß ganz allein im Wagen. (*W* 188 f.)

Important to Reither is their feminine "otherness" rather than their perspectives, or "'Tiefe'" (Pätzold 160). The women are defined solely in relation to Reither's process of transformation.

Even Reither's first narrated contact with a refugee while still in Germany was already indicative of this attitude. When Reither and Palm begin their trip South, they talk to Aster, the Eritrean refugee working at the reception of their apartment building. Reither romanticises Aster as exotic and envies her experience of everything as new: "Manchmal beneide ich unsere Eritreerin. Sie kommt selbst in diesem Tal hier aus dem Staunen kaum heraus" (*W* 21). However, by seeing her as exotic, he precludes her experiences and perspective. This causes him to make absurd comparisons between their struggle to start a car in winter in Germany, and Aster's experiences of sexual assault and her flight for life during her trip to Germany via Kassala, Khartoum, Sudan, and Libya (*W* 39). The narrator even precludes Aster's voice, by having her colleague Marina tell her story. While Marina's actions—telling someone else's story—annoy Reither, he declines to ask Aster about her past and dismisses Marina, commenting, "[w]ie gesagt, sie redet zu viel. Und die Batterie ist zu schwach, was nun?" (*W* 40). Similarly, Reither lacks interest in the refugee girl's perspective. For instance, when Reither wishes to capture a photo of his new "family" with Palm and the refugee girl, the girl rather focusses on the "weggeworfene Bierdosen zwischen staubigen Kakteen am Straßenrand" (*W* 177). This renders his desire for the photo "ein[en] irrigen Glauben" (*W* 177) and reveals his lack of insight into and interest in the girl's perspective; he rather projects his desires for a family upon her. Roth similarly argues that Reither "does not really try to understand the precarious situation of the refugees and distances himself from their sorrows" (105). Rather than engage with the contemporary spatial reality of the South, Reither prefers his own familial narrative.

Reither is self-conscious of his own narrating mind, yet he remains unaware that narratives—his included—constitute the "Italy" he knows. If he, or the narrator, were to acknowledge his "Italy" as narrative, then he might also acknowledge modernity "*als Narrativ*", as Koschorke considers necessary (265). Unlike Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* (which I will discuss in the next and final chapter), *Widerfahrnis* does not show an awareness of this,

despite its metafictional characteristics. Instead, Reither's narrated engagement with "Italy" is primarily limited to a perpetuation of the tropes of the voiceless, "emotional" women, refugees, and southern Italians.

3.2.2 Conclusion

While the texts discussed above increasingly depart from the ideals articulated in Goethe's famous *Italienische Reise*, Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* represents a surprising return. Kirchhoff's novel fits within the (predominantly) 20th and 21st century metafictional context, with the narrator portraying Reither's attempt to escape this metafictional self-reflectivity. But in the process, he has him interact with "Italy" in a way that is reminiscent of Goethe's narration of "Italy". Italy is the "real world" that can release Reither from his solipsism and allow him—through his process of *Bildung*—to "find himself" in the new, southern setting. In contrast to each of the other narrators discussed so far—who articulate a crisis of self-understanding—Reither is presented as having found a way beyond his solipsism (a solution to the metafictional conundrum) and is reborn, able to meaningfully act in the contemporary political environment.

Although *Widerfahrnis* could be read as a bold new 21st century rearticulation of "Italy" that places the topos in the context of the "refugee crisis", I rather suggest that it articulates a sense of nostalgia for the hope of *Bildung* that Goethe articulated in his 19th century *Italienische Reise*. It might be easy to somewhat dismissively conclude that no author can achieve an escape like Goethe apparently did (as explored for instance by Immacolata Amodeo and Bernhard Sorg), but perhaps the opposite is true. The 21st century *Widerfahrnis* rather serves as a reminder that a convincing "escape" today must differ to Goethe's approach of "othering", and that Goethe's "escape" was perhaps not as convincing as it might seem.[74]

When compared to the other texts considered here, *Widerfahrnis* is the exception that proves the rule. Characteristically metafictional, the other texts examine the "'prisonhouse' [of language] from which the possibility of escape is remote" (Waugh 4). Rather than try to escape the prison, they ponder the nature of its walls. And, as we shall see in the next and final chapter, Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* uniquely weaponises this insight by having her protagonist *imaginatively* travel to "Italy" in order to shift and rebuild the prison house of Italy's intertext. She inhabits it, transforming the prison into a home. *Widerfahrnis*' Reither, by contrast, tries to escape, and

74 John Zilcosky and Peter Gendolla have for instance begun a critical evaluation of Goethe's "escape". They critique the way Goethe ignores the criminal side of Italy, suggesting that Italy basically remains "im Kontext des arkadischen Ichideals" (Gendolla 59).

believes that he has succeeded. His escape is dependent upon him being liberated by a mysterious "other". But the "others" with whom he interacts—the feminised Palm, the refugee girl, Taylor and his refugee family, and the Italian setting—are only "other" insofar as Reither neither engages with their perspective nor empathises with their situation. He ensures that they remain mysterious so that they can meet his needs. Reither's "Italy" (with all the tropes that represent it) is rendered a "mysterious" but hollow inverse of the 21st century German *bildungsbürgerliche* male, represented by Reither.

The jury of the *Deutschen Buchpreis* praised Kirchhoff for his examination of the "political existential questions" ("Bodo Kirchhoff", *PR Newswire*, no page) of today, with the "refugee crisis" and the question of how the protagonist might find a new way to open himself up to and more meaningfully participate in the world. Even if I were to offer a more charitable reading and suggest that perhaps the novella does deal with these "political existential questions", then it is not by way of dealing with the questions raised by the "refugee crisis", but rather by having the narrator expose a common crisis of self-referentiality and the risks associated with an unproductive approach of "othering".

As we will see in the next and final chapter, Bettina Blumenberg's novella *Vor Spiegeln* reverses Kirchhoff's focus to look specifically at how to amplify the marginalised "female voice". Her novella takes a different approach altogether as she explores how the literary "Italy" can facilitate greater self-understanding. *Widerfahrnis*' Reither attempts to engage with the "real world" in order to escape from the "narrative world". *Vor Spiegeln*'s Barbara, by contrast, takes the "narrative world" as the "real world" and, in a unique technique, studies the power of imaginative travel.

3.3 The imagined female self: Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln*

In her novella *Vor Spiegeln* (1983), Bettina Blumenberg uses figurative language to narrate the powerful influence of pre-existing Italy-narratives on her protagonist's self-understanding. The protagonist can never be free from these narratives, which lead her to the questions she asks and the theories she develops about the "Italy" she encounters in the novella. But by drawing attention to the act of narrating, and thereby blurring the line between a "real" and a narrated Italy, the novella considers whether the influence of these pre-existing narratives can be subverted. Blumenberg asks whether it is possible to resist any pressure to be "accurate" and instead give authority to a purely imagined, or "constructed" trip to Italy. As the reader eventually discovers, the protagonist Barbara travels to Italy only in her imagination. During her imagined travels, Barbara becomes increasingly aware of the intellectual potency of the pre-existing male narratives, which stifle her, and begins to confront and respond to these narratives in her search for a "female" narrative voice that can exist with reference to the established male chorus.[75] At the heart of the novella lies the question: is it possible for the protagonist Barbara to expose the cognitive and epistemological barriers that stifle her and articulate a new, imaginative, and "female" narrative of *Bildung* with reference to Italy?

When thinking of female authors who have explored questions of female voice in the context of the literary Italy, it is probably not Bettina Blumenberg but rather Ingeborg Bachmann who comes to mind. While I have chosen to focus on Blumenberg instead—for reasons I will outline—it is worth firstly discussing Bachmann's writing about Italy and her explorations of "female voice". Bachmann's works have triggered discussions about female voice including how to narrate the experience of womanhood in post-war Europe and the suppression and absence of a female voice. In her personal life, and in a number of her literary works, Bachmann also had a close relationship with Italy. It is somewhat surprisingly, then, that her seminal literary engagements with such gender-questions, on the one hand, and with Italy, on the other, do not tend to intersect. When she does engage directly with Italy, it is often within genres that go beyond the scope of this study, including poetry (for instance *An die Sonne* and *In Apulien*) and in essays (*Was ich in*

75 Here, I consider the idea of "male" and "female" as developed within the terms of the literary topos "Italy", rather than in abstract terms. Specifically within these terms, Blumenberg attempts to articulate a narrative that resists the male tropes embedded in the literary topos. This attempt has not been made often, one example being Alfred Andersch's *Die Rote*. As Battafarano and Eilert discuss, Andersch "dreht in seinem Roman *Die Rote* die traditionelle Rollenverteilung um" (155).

Rom sah und hörte). Ariane Huml has a plausible explanation for this lack of intersection between questions of female voice and explorations of Italy. The increasing amount of time that Bachmann spent in Italy correlated with her "fortschreitenden Entfernung des Gegenstandes Italien"; Bachmann turned her attention "zu den österreichischen Schauplätzen im *'Todesarten'-Projekt*" (Huml 317). While many German-language authors are intrigued by the distant Italy, Bachmann, while in Italy, gained distance from her country of birth, and her artistic engagement with Austria grew. Given this, my interest in the literary exploration of a "female voice" within this particularly male topos of the *italienischen Reise*, led me not to Ingeborg Bachmann, but to Bettina Blumenberg. Besides, there has been a "Strom" of "Studien zum Werk der österreichischen Dichterin", making a further study of her work less fruitful than the uncovering of the lesser-known, yet thought-provoking work of Blumenberg (Jagow 377). But Bachmann's Italy and her exploration of a "female" narrative voice provide an interesting context for Blumenberg's work, a context that I will now briefly explore.

While not her most famous work, Bachmann's *Das dreißigste Jahr* (in a collection by the same name) is set largely in Italy, making it interesting for this study. As Bachmann's protagonist approaches 30, he struggles to reconcile his place in society and decides to travel from Vienna to Rome and, finally, back to Vienna. The parallels between the protagonist and author are hard to miss. Like the author herself, the protagonist has his 30th birthday in June and the narrative takes place across the twelve months that lead to the birthday. Vienna and Rome—the main settings of the narrative—are also the most significant locations in Bachmann's life. As Svandrlik suggests, the narrative "kann als Porträt des Autors als junger Mann gelesen werden, und wenn man den Hinweisen im Text folgt, auch als die 'geistige, imaginäre Autobiographie' der Autorin" (270). As the protagonist travels from Vienna to Rome, he has a dream of a train accident and begins a "dichterische Anrufung der Stadt [Wien]" (Svandrlik 270). In this moment he is not only the protagonist, but also becomes the narrator and, as narrator, reveals that his character, like Bachmann, is an author. With this metafictional technique "erzählt die Titelerzählung die Geschichte ihrer Entstehung" (Svandrlik 270). This search for a narrative voice is the protagonist's process of *Bildung*. Peppered with a series of accidents, the narrative concludes with the protagonist's symbolic death in a car accident. He now knows that it is possible to "[s]teh auf und geh! Es ist dir kein Knochen gebrochen" (Bachmann 71). The protagonist-narrator reaches a decision, that "von nun an Leben und Denken und Schreiben zusammengehören" (Svandrlik 274). Emerging from his process of *Bildung*, the protagonist-narrator takes the form of author.

Scholars have debated whether Bachmann's *Das dreißigste Jahr* is an autobiographical text. Either way, in the process of narrating the protagonist's discovery of a narrative voice, Bachmann finds a narrative voice as a (fe-

male) author. For the narrator, and arguably for Bachmann, finding a narrative voice involved accessing a fictional world that supersedes logic. The narrator admits that he no longer believes that he "alles schon zu Ende denken [kann]" and he overcomes his presumptuous belief in his logical abilities (Svandrlik 275). This liberation from logic enables access to the fictional world and represents not only the protagonist's process of *Bildung*, but also Bachmann's discovery of a narrative voice. The protagonist's transition to narrator is "ein Bild [...] für das Erzählen selbst" (Svandrlik 274). In other words, his discovery of a narrative voice—his process of *Bildung*—reflects Bachmann's discovery of a metafictional narrative voice. Italy offers Bachmann the ability to narrate herself into existence, as author. Bachmann's Italy is a land in which the author "real erlebter Trauer durch erschriebene Poesie [substituieren kann]" (Jagow 378). The "Italienbild" promises "die Wiederherstellung einer verlorenen Ganzheit in der Kunst", a *Ganzheit* that predates *Trauer* (Jagow 378).[76] At the text's conclusion, the protagonist can return to Vienna *gebildet* insofar as he now has a formed narrative voice. Reflected in the protagonist's narrative growth, is Bachmann's exploration of her own narrative voice.

Ingeborg Bachmann's exploration of female voice and female authorship is seen not only in *Das dreißigste Jahr*, but also, and most famously, in *Malina*. While *Malina* is set in Vienna, not Italy, it is possible to observe similarities between both texts' codified engagements with the experiences of women. Alexandra Kurmann suggests that rather than seek out the identity of the male protagonist in *Malina*, it is fruitful to read *Malina*—both the novel and the term—as a private code that enables Bachmann "to articulate the unspeakable", including a female experience, "through a furtive poetics of secrecy" (76). Making room for the unspeakable allows the voicelessness of the female character to be noticed: "*Ich* may only ever be present under the sign of an absence" (Kurmann 84). Her silence resonates.

In *Malina*, this female voicelessness is evoked by the term *malina*, which translates to "forest berries" and was used by Ashkenazi Jews to denote the secret hiding places they used to "evade deportation by Nazi authorities during World War II" (Kurmann 76). This safe house serves not only to explore Austria's fascist history, but also to metaphorically expose "the experience of womanhood in postwar Europe" (Kurmann 76). Bachmann draws attention to this experience by having the unnamed female character's voice suppressed by the dominating voices of two men, "an emotionally distant lover and a live-in companion named Malina" (Kurmann 76). The *Ich* in *Malina* can be read as representing "women within the Symbolic order, who, in order to be heard, must take on the subjective position of a male other" (Kurmann

76 Others who have read Bachmann's work in a similar way include Stephan Braese, Holger Gehle, Gerhard Botz and Karen Remmler.

79). As Bachmann wrote, the "Ich" "[muß] versteckt werden, um sich besser preisgeben zu können" (qtd. in. Svandrlik 289). This description resonates also with Bachmann's *Das dreißigste Jahr*. In both *Malina* and *Das dreißigste Jahr*, Bachmann implies an autobiographical aspect to her works by narrating the two cities most central to her life, Rome and Vienna. Like her female characters, Bachmann hides in plain sight. Her characters' desires to reveal their hidden voices reflects her own desire to do so.

The use of a male protagonist (and the absence of an overtly female perspective) in both *Malina* and *Das Dreißigste Jahr* invites a reading of the latter text as also indirectly, furtively articulating a female experience. The echo of a female voice can be heard in its implied absence. The female characters in *Das dreißigste Jahr* remain "klischeehafte[] [austauschbare] Frauenbilder" who originate from the male fantasy of the young protagonist (Svandrlik 275 f.). The protagonist's self-absorption during his crisis precludes other narrative perspectives, particularly those of the female characters whose language represents "eine aus Phrasen und gängingen Redens-arten montierte Sprache, die keine neuen Erfahrungen zulässt und nichts Offenes kennt" (Svandrlik 276). The female characters remain symbolic, empty vessels; their names are all derived from the common name Helena: Helene, Elena, Leni. These characters "entspringen der Männerphantasie des jungen Helden" (Svandrlik 276).[77] *Das dreißigste Jahr* presents not only the lack, but also the explicit exclusion of female voices, as the narrator reveals the brutality with which the protagonist distances himself from the female character Leni. Until the protagonist's process of *Bildung* is "complete", and Bachmann finds her narrative voice, the exclusion and betrayal of the female characters remains unseen.

In her exploration of narrative voice, the young female author Ingeborg Bachmann was compelled (unlike Bettina Blumenberg) to write from the perspective of a male protagonist, even in the seemingly auto-biographical text *Das dreißigste Jahr*. As I will now discuss, Blumenberg, with her female protagonist, takes a different approach.

Interestingly, while exploring what constitutes a "female voice" and how to make room for one with reference to Italy, Bettina Blumenberg engages (within the literary context) with similar ideas to those examined within the philosophical context, including by her father, the eminent theorist of metaphor, Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996). Bettina Blumenberg's literary exploration of the constructive powers of figurative language shares similarities with Hans Blumenberg's philosophical enquiry into truth-finding, although

77 The voicelessness of these characters can also be read as a broader symptom of the "nach 1945 etablierte manipulative Konsumgesellschaft und den lückenlosen Zusammenhang von Manipulation und Konformismus" (Svandrlik 276).

as a literary work her novella is distinct from philosophical considerations of similar questions.[78] Hans Blumenberg was both "an interpreter of literary fiction" and a "professional philosopher", who was concerned with the relationship between literature and philosophy (Nicholls, "Myth" 7). In *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* (1960), one of Blumenberg's best known works, he considers the epistemic and societal role of metaphors. He is not so much interested in what "hides" behind the metaphors, but rather more in their societal function and in the human self-understanding, and understanding about the world, that they inform. In Blumenberg's view, metaphors are "Hilfsmittel für den Menschen, mit sich und der Welt zurechtzukommen" (Wetz 16). Blumenberg understands the "Seefahrt", for instance, "als Metapher für den menschlichen Lebensgang, die Uhr und die Maschine als Metaphern für die Wirklichkeit" (Wetz 16 f.); light and nakedness as metaphors for truth.

Bettina Blumenberg and Hans Blumenberg both probe the tropological dimension of language, from a literary and philosophical perspective respectively. For Hans Blumenberg, "the mode of expression and the content expressed are of equal and even inseparable importance" (Nicholls, "Myth" 28). He believed that "rhetoric is the very means of arriving at […] a position in the first place", and this involves making up stories (and inhabiting a world in which stories have always already existed) (Nicholls, "Myth" 29).[79] Blumenberg makes this point stylistically; "his anecdotes and philosophical vignettes […] aspire to *be* the philosophical argument" (Koerner 5). This gives his work a "self-consciously literary nature" (Koerner 7). Like Curtius, Hans Blumenberg was interested in "shifting attention from the contents of knowledge to knowledge's forms and structures" (Koerner 7). Due to this,

> [h]is texts are always, quintessentially, metatexts. Always becoming the very thing they describe, they are frames enframing frames, until the frame becomes the thing itself […], his philosophy demonstrates what he says in the how of his style. On another level, inhabiting that heady domain of the 'meta', Blumenberg avails himself of that old German trope of power: self-reflexivity. (Koerner 9)

78 Many others, including most notably Friedrich Nietzsche, also focus on this "modern return[] to rhetoric", "from Ernst Robert Curtius and Walter Benjamin to Kenneth Burke, Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida" (Koerner 6). For a discussion of de Man, for instance, see Karl Heinz Bohrer; Luc Herman et al.

79 It is interesting to note that in this regard, Blumenberg stands in opposition to Plato's rhetorical tradition. In this tradition, rhetoric is "either an amoral means of persuasion that is deployed regardless of truth content, or—and this is the best case scenario under the Platonic schema—as an ethical means of convincing an audience when one is already in possession of the truth" (Nicholls, "Myth" 29).

Koerner's discussion of Hans Blumenberg's work brings Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln* to mind. This German trope of self-reflectivity is expressed also in Bettina Blumenberg's many narrative layers of "Italy", which perform her ideas about the role of narrative. Hans Blumenberg's thought therefore provides an interesting and fruitful context in which one can view Bettina Blumenberg's novella, even if any potential hidden analogies between their works remain speculative, given I have no definitive evidence that Bettina Blumenberg intentionally engaged with Hans Blumenberg.

Bettina Blumenberg's work perhaps embodies, as a literary piece, the ideas explored philosophically by Hans Blumenberg. Bridging anthropology, philosophy, and literary fiction, Hans Blumenberg programmatically addresses "the history of concepts" (Nicholls, "Myth" 14). For him, philosophical concepts arise out of literary metaphor. In the words of Angus Nicholls, "the so-called literary device of metaphor is seen as conditioning the existence of philosophical concepts"; philosophy and literature are inseparable ("Myth" 7). Hans Blumenberg therefore disputes the idea that "[a]lle mehrdeutigen Metaphern [...] sich in eindeutige Begriffe umformen [ließen]" (Wetz 18). Rather, he sees the "Metapher als irreduzible[] Denkform" (Wetz 18). For him, an absolute metaphor is one that possesses "einen aussagenerweiternden, unbegrifflichen Eigensinn" (Wetz 19). In short, Blumenberg challenges the assumed progression of the "Übergänge von der Metapher zum Begriff", which can be understood as "analog dem Übergang 'vom Mythos zum Logos'" (Wetz 18).

Instead, for Hans Blumenberg, "myth" continues to have relevance. It has not been and cannot be substituted by rationality (as Blumenberg believes Ernst Cassirer falsely claims). On the contrary, for Blumenberg, the opposition between "*mythos* and *logos*, is a false opposition" (Nicholls, "Myth" 19). Blumenberg believes that myth is something that humans can always draw on. In Blumenberg's view, while myths change and develop, they provide the conditions for thought. A "myth's capacity for survival and constancy is [... also] dependent upon change—upon processes of cultural adaptation" (Nicholls, "Myth" 21). I suggest that Bettina Blumenberg's adaptation of "Italy" is a fitting example of such cultural adaptation. In this regard, Hans Blumenberg's understanding of myth resonates with the texts analysed in this book:

> Human freedom is admittedly always restricted by the historical questions and cultural forms that humans inherit from previous epochs. But the human ability to reformulate or provide new approaches to these questions, and in so doing to reshape culture, is attested to by the very process that Blumenberg refers to as the 'work on myth'. If humans were entirely fixed in their essence and possibilities, there would literally be no 'work on myth' to be done. (Nicholls, "Myth" 23)

Although the texts I consider in this book may not explicitly study this issue in the terms that philosophers such as Hans Blumenberg do, they, like Bettina Blumenberg with *Vor Spiegeln*, explore and even exemplify these questions through the concept of the topos. The topos is, after all, where language meets knowledge, making it attractive for such authors as Bettina Blumenberg. Through her narrative, Bettina Blumenberg transforms the knowledge and meaning associated with the literary Italy.

In *Vor Spiegeln*, we see the interplay between language and knowledge; Bettina Blumenberg's style embodies a philosophical understanding of the power of narrative. Before focussing on the role of visual and cognitive reflection in *Vor Spiegeln*, it is worth considering this style in detail. She approaches literature by engaging with metafictional considerations and raises a somewhat political question in the context of "Italy" narratives: is it possible to *reshape* the topos and thereby *shift* the cultural episteme underpinning it, in order to make room for a "female voice"? Bettina Blumenberg's metafictional approach, in which the political implications of narrative are reflected upon in the novella itself, indicates the novella's interest in the power of narrative. In *Vor Spiegeln*, the protagonist Barbara considers the performative power of narrative, performative being a "kind of utterance that performs with language the deed to which it refers" (Baldick 252). The narrator draws attention to, and perhaps alters, assumptions of masculinity within the literary tradition. To do so, she presents a microcosmic example of male dominance; she narrates her protagonist Barbara's attempt to emancipate herself from her former partner's narrative dominance.

Barbara is presented as having largely remained silent in her relationship with Pe. As Blumenberg explains in an interview,

> Pe übt mit seinen Verbalisierungszwängen sehr viel Macht aus, mit seiner intellektuellen Potenz, und das finde ich bedrohlich. Barbara ist dadurch infiziert, und sie benutzt ihm gegenüber z. B. Novalis als Argument, um schweigen zu dürfen, [u]m sich zu rechtfertigen vor sich selbst. (qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 48)

Textual examples include their first meeting, where Pe speaks at Barbara, rather than with her: "Darf ich Ihnen eine Frage stellen. Und ohne eine Antwort abzuwarten: Trinken Sie Kaffee mit mir" (*VS* 21).[80] Although she "den Kopf [...] schüttelte, [...] scheute [er] dann keine Anstrengung, über den Umweg ihrer Autonummer die Telefonnummer zu erfahren" (*VS* 21). Pe's narrated style, as someone whose questions do not include question marks and, as such, are more demands than they are questions, is something the narrator comments on directly:

80 *VS* for *Vor Spiegeln*.

> In der Frauenliteratur, in der von Frauen geschriebenen, wird besonders viel gereist, hatte sie neulich gelesen. Als Vorwurf und Befund auf der Suche nach dem Spezifischen des weiblichen Schreibens. Ein weiteres Indiz für die unsicheren Standorte sollte die häufige Verwendung des Fragezeichens sein. Nach Warumsätzen. Fragen stellte sie wenig, sie gab lieber Antworten. Formulierte die Fragen wie Aussagesätze, um die Lösungen nicht durch das Fragezeichen zu verhindern. Fließend mußte ein Satz in den anderen übergehen, ohne Pause, in der man sich aus der Pflicht zur Beantwortung hätte entlassen können. Entlassen. Mit dem Reisen entließ man sich nicht. Und wenn Frauen besonders viel reisten, warum nur in Büchern. (*VS* 37)

The female narrator ironically plays with these expectations of the "female voice" by reproducing these female stereotypes that Barbara recently read about. In Blumenberg's novella "wird [auch] viel gereist" and here also "nur" in a book and, within the fictional world, "nur" in Barbara's imagination (*VS* 37). In this way the narrator generates a self-consciousness about the issue of a "female voice". She counteracts the expectation that she, as a female author, will use question marks. But she does generate a distinct "female" narrative voice because, in this instance, the lack of a question mark has a different effect in the narrative voices of Pe and Barbara. In Pe's case, the lack of a question mark articulates a demanding, male self-assuredness, whereas in Barbara's case, it creates an openness—"in der man sich aus der Pflicht zur Beantwortung hätte entlassen können" (*VS* 37)—that is indicative of her search for her narrative voice.[81]

Pe's controlling pattern of communication continues, when he "mir Blumen und andere Angebinde [schickt] und meint, sich das Recht auf weitere Zugriffe zu erkaufen. Er soll mich verstanden haben […]. Er hatte ihr geschmeichelt" (*VS* 97). Pe is described as having "immer für alles […] Erklärungen" (*VS* 57), but "[e]r hörte sich ihre Sätze niemals zuende an" (*VS* 98), leaving Barbara with the desire, "[sich] von Wörtern zu trennen" (*VS* 61), because Pe's use of words "verhindert […] das Leben" (*VS* 12). They leave her unable to act: "ich begrabe mich unter dem Laub [seiner Wörter] und stopfe die Ohren zu" (*VS* 26). Pe's controlling behaviour is also presented as having ultimately prevented her from undertaking imaginative travel to Italy: "Mit Pe hatte sie solch [imaginierte] Ausflüge nie unternommen. Der fand es lachhaft, sich mitten in der Landschaft ins Gras zu legen" (*VS* 55 f.). The narrator has Barbara ponder that Pe "alles mit seiner Toleranz [zudeckt]. Mit diesem Klischeebegriff für verhinderte Ehrlichkeit, für verweigerte. Solche Toleranz ist Selbstbetrug" (*VS* 77). He "hatte ihr gesagt, mehr als einmal und eher streng, Barbara, ich liebe dich so, wie du noch nie geliebt worden bist. Dem ließ sich nichts erwidern" (*VS* 18). With Pe "ließ [Barbara] sich die Worte

81 Interestingly, Pe's tendency to speak for Barbara is reminiscent of Malina's behaviour in Bachmann's *Malina*, as Kurmann points out: "Rather than facilitate her speech, […] he appears to speak for her, in her place" (78).

abschneiden und war enttäuscht […]. Er hörte ihrer Stimme nichts an […], da er sie nicht aussprechen ließ. Sie stellte sich vor, wie er zurückgelehnt in seinem Sessel saß, selbstzufrieden" (*VS* 98). His language about their relationship is presented as having left no room for her perspective:

> Er machte ihr klar, daß Liebe etwas sein mußte, das zwischen Glauben und Wünschen lag. Daß es auch für ihre Verneinung keine letzte Sicherheit geben konnte. Sie sagte ihm eines Morgens, ich glaube, ich liebe dich nicht. Er schien nicht betroffen, antwortete, ich liebe dich, nur das zählt für mich. Betroffen war jetzt sie und sie mußte ihn bitten zu gehen, denn lieben könne er sie auch anderswo, überall. (*VS* 19)

Pe does not require his love for Barbara to be reciprocated, because the logic of his statement is more important to him: "Er ging gleich, noch am selben Tag, um seinen Satz wahr zu machen" (*VS* 19). The narrator, by contrast, is less interested in the logic of statements than in revealing the cultural assumptions underpinning them (in a way reminiscent of Hans Blumenberg, whose interest was also focussed less on the meaning of metaphors than on the broader societal function they play). Barbara undertakes her imagined trip to Italy to regain distance from Pe's logic. Whether coincidental or not, a speculative parallel can be drawn here between Blumenberg's act of writing a literary *italienische Reise* to find her own authorial "voice", and Barbara's imagined trip to Italy serving to free her from Pe's narrative dominance.[82]

Barbara finds room for reflection in the imagined Italian setting, where she "verstand […], welche Projektion sich damals hinter der Frage verborgen hatte […]. Jetzt erst schoß ihr die wahre Erklärung in den Kopf" (*VS* 23). But Blumenberg also presents Barbara's complicity in having reached a voiceless position in her relationship, a relationship that can be read as a microcosmic

82 While it is not possible to draw definitive biographical conclusions from such textual evidence, these descriptions of Barbara's relationship with Pe appear reminiscent of Bettina Blumenberg's relationship with her father, if one considers his intellectual dominance in her professional and personal life and his patterns of communication, which emphasised his authority and, at times, Bettina's dependence upon him for success. This is something Bettina Blumenberg acknowledged when she recalled her father commenting that she had nothing to fear from her school teachers, because they had all been dependent upon Hans Blumenberg for the success of their careers as teachers: "Als ich ihm [Hans Blumenberg] den Namen meines als besonders streng geltenden Erdkundelehrers nannte, sagte er: der hat bei mir studiert, von dem hast du nichts zu befürchten, ich habe dafür gesorgt, dass er das Philosophicum bestanden hat […]. Offenbar hat mein Vater, als wäre es in weiser Voraussicht gewesen, im Philosophicum nie einen von denen durchfallen lassen, die später meine Lehrer hätten werden können oder es geworden sind" (Blumenberg, *Hauptsache Philosophie*, no page).

example of the near voicelessness of female protagonists and authors within many Italy travel narratives more broadly. Barbara justifies her silence, thinking that she "lieber dem Schweigen vertrauen [wollte], ehe sie sich auf eine Redeweise verlegte, die ihr nicht gemäß war, nicht eigentlich" (*VS* 21). She uses others to justify her silence: "[W]ie es ihr häufig passierte, daß sie im rechten Augenblick auf Aussagen von anderen stieß, die ihr recht gaben, die sie sich zu ihren Gunsten auszulegen wußte, hatte sie in ihrer Nachtlektüre eine Bestätigung gefunden" (*VS* 21). As Blumenberg commented in an interview, Barbara "rechtfertig[t] [sich] vor sich selbst [...], um schweigen zu dürfen" (qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 48). The narrator presents Barbara's situation as caused both by Pe (the figure of male narrative dominance), who "sie in ein mutwilliges Schweigen gedrängt [hat]" (Blumenberg qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 46), and by her, for not speaking up. While Barbara is not held responsible for Pe's coercively controlling behaviour, she is also expected to exercise her own powers of narration. Of interest here is Blumenberg's narrative use of an imagined trip to Italy in order to find a narrative voice for her protagonist and for herself as a female author writing (like Barbara the character) within the cacophony of male narratives (and arguably in the intellectual shadow of her father). The role of "Italy" is at least twofold in the novella. Firstly, as an imagined setting it has a liberating effect on Barbara's thoughts. Secondly, the relationship between Barbara and Pe can also be read as a microcosmic example of the novella's relationship with the intertext more broadly, as it makes space for a "female" narrative voice.

To this end, *Vor Spiegeln* plays in particular with the metaphor of reflection. The title—a pun on *vorspiegeln* (to pretend or deceive) and *vor Spiegeln* (in front of mirrors) hints at this double function: to *reflect* (on) the tradition, but also to displace, fracture, and rupture its foundations. By challenging the expectations raised by the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy, Bettina Blumenberg disrupts the topos' foundations. Here, another anecdotal parallel can be drawn to Hans Blumenberg who, as Axel Fliethmann explains, was also interested in "disclosing logical embarrassments" (Fliethmann, "Blumen Berg" 64). But in contrast to Hans Blumenberg's philosophical approach, which focusses on language to the exclusion of the visual arts, Bettina Blumenberg utilises the flexibility of the literary medium to generate her own unique voice, by creating particularly visual metaphors of reflection that utilise the subversive powers of figurative language in the context of "Italy".

The first section of this chapter will focus on the metaphor of visual reflection, which appears in the fictional space of Italy. Here, the protagonist sees herself visually reflected in other characters, tropes, and artworks associated with "Italy". Secondly, this chapter will focus on the theme of cognitive reflection and the constructed nature of Barbara's experience in "Italy". Because the protagonist reflects on the role of Italy *in her imagination*, the novella draws attention to the constructed nature of "Italy", raising the ques-

tion whether a "constructed Italy" is the only "real" Italy, given that "reality" is always and inevitably dependent upon and grounded in narrative. If "reality" is a shared narrative, can Blumenberg dislocate the existing narrative to make room for a female protagonist in the "reality" of Italy?

3.3.1 Visual reflection

By narrating the metaphor of the mirror, *Vor Spiegeln* brings the female "subject" into focus and interacts with a long and rich literary history. As Ralf Konersmann explains,

> [w]enn in der Verbalisierung auch von Erkenntnisrelationen hartnäckig der Spiegel auftaucht, so liegt das daran, daß der Spiegel dem Subjekt, dem er als dem Bespiegelten seinen Platz zuweist, eine konsolidierte Position zusichert und es derart zuverlässig ins Spiel bringt. (31)

Erik Peez agrees:

> Das Spiegelmotiv wurde im Zeitalter von Klassik und Romantik zum Ausdruck einer Subjektivität [...] nicht mehr spiegelt das Bewußtsein Natur oder Gott, sondern Subjektivität drückt sich als Welt aus. Das Spiegelmotiv wird zum Ausdruck der Selbstbewegung des Subjekts, sowohl seiner Selbstermächtigung als auch seiner Selbstentmächtigung. (367)

The mirror metaphor has played a role from antiquity through modernity, although its function has of course varied greatly, as seen for instance in the differences between its use by Heinrich von Kleist and Johann Wolfgang Goethe: "Während Kleist die destabilisierenden Wirkungen des Spiegels notiert, erklärt ihn Goethe geradezu zur Norm" (Konersmann 236). Particularly since the beginning of the Romantic period, it has played a key role in re-evaluating the relationship between the subject and their "world(s)": "Noch einmal wächst dem Spiegel die Aufgabe zu, Ich und Welt zu relationieren und das Terrain zu bereiten, auf dem sich nun auch das Subjekt der im Sinne Goethes zu verstehenden Moderne zurechtzufinden hat" (Konersmann 189). Goethe articulates the mirror as a metaphor that brings the subject into focus, but which also cannot be relied upon for "accuracy". Although the mirror promises an accurate reflection of the self, this promise is deceptive. Blumenberg's novella considers this paradox, as indicated by the title *Vor Spiegeln*. The double-function of Blumenberg's metaphor serves in the novella to reveal the nature of language more broadly, as the protagonist seeks to understand herself. She must use language, but language deceives her and leads her in curious directions. The literary metaphor of the *Spiegel* captures the "Forderung nach Selbstbeschreibung", as well as the inability to accurately do so, because it always reflects back a "provisorische[s] und prekäre[s] Bild[] vom Selbst" (Konersmann 31). These paradoxes are treated in particularly visual terms in the novella.

The novella's setting, Venice, is well suited for this purpose, as the city sees itself reflected in the mirror of water above which it is built. In the fictional space of Italy, the protagonist Barbara also sees herself reflected in other narratives and artworks. During her time in Venice, Barbara comes into contact with various artworks and prompts that remind her of famous German narratives of travel in Italy. Blumenberg explains, "[i]m Buch sind etwa 60

Fig. 1: Tiziano Vecellio, *Pesaro Madonna*

Zitate und Anspielungen enthalten, kleine Versatzstücke, wobei die Autoren meist nicht genannt sind" (qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 48). Most notably, in Venice Barbara sees the painting *Pesaro Madonna*, by the 16th century Venetian artist Tiziano Vecellio, or Titian (1488–1576).

Barbara sees the painting as "eingebunden in ein verwirrendes, unauflösliches System von Perspektiven" (*VS* 75). Just as the narrator has Barbara focus on "nur etwa 20 Centimeter [...], die einzige Figur [...], die aus dem Bild blickt, die einzige Figur mit der man als Zuschauer Kontakt aufnehmen kann", Blumenberg also has the reader do so when she includes that segment of the painting on the cover of the novella (Blumenberg, "Der Autor im Ge-

spräch"). Blumenberg asks, "wer ist im Bild, wer ist vor dem Bild", has the figure stepped out of the picture (Blumenberg, "Der Autor im Gespräch")? Compared to the other figures in Titian's painting, who actively participate in the depicted scene, the girl featured on the cover of *Vor Spiegeln* is the only painted figure to look out of the picture directly at the viewer, actively inviting the viewer to reciprocate her gaze. And she, the only figure to engage with the viewer and the world beyond the painting, is a young woman. It is as if she, like Barbara amongst male protagonists, wishes to step out of the depicted scene to find her place beyond the painting's episteme. Titian's girl invites the viewer to relate to her, and perhaps to help her to find her own voice through a reciprocated gaze or reflective dialogue. In an interview with Hans-Joachim Müller, in which she discusses *Vor Spiegeln*, Blumenberg makes a similar comment, suggesting that the 20 centimetre large Titian girl "[das Bild] für sich allein [beanspruchte], [sie] [w]ollte [...] sich nichts wegnehmen lassen" (qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 75). This girl asserts her own gaze and her own perspective in amongst the other figures. She invites the viewer not only to physically reflect oneself in her, as if in front of a mirror (*vor Spiegeln*), but also to imaginatively reflect on the significance of her gazing longingly beyond her contemporary frame. Likewise, the observer also uses the girl as an invitation into the painting, and Barbara can also be conceived as part of the *Bildraum*. As the reader views Titian's *Pesaro Madonna* on the front cover of *Vor Spiegeln*, they could also see Barbara imaginatively inhabiting the painting.

This visual exchange of gazes portrays Blumenberg's idea of multiple perspectives coexisting. As Ralf Konersmann points out, in such paintings where the figure looks out of the frame at the viewer, the figure could be simultaneously looking multiple viewers in the eye at the one time. Konersmann makes this point in his discussion of Cusanus:

> Das Vorstellungsvermögen (imaginatio) vermag die Multiperspektivität nicht zu fassen, mit der jener ruhende Blick sich mit einem anderen, einer gerade entgegengesetzten Richtung folgenden Betrachter mitbewegt. Die Summe der aus der Bewegung vor dem Bild entstehenden Standpunkte ist unendlich. (103)

In the novella even more perspectives are potentially added, because the shared gaze is also imagined by any number of readers. In this scene "[assoziiert] [d]ie Spiegelmetapher einen Begriff von Wahrheit" (Konersmann 103). In the novella this "Wahrheit" is fragmented and distinctions are blurred, but a reciprocity is established: "Die im Blick aus dem Bild veranschaulichte göttliche Anrufung läßt den Betrachter sich selbst nicht nur als Empfänger eines Appells definieren, sondern auch und zugleich als Subjekt" (Konersmann 103). Perhaps a new cognitive "reality", or episteme, can be triggered through this imaginative visual dialogue, in much the same way that Barbara participates in her imaginative dialogue with other literary

Bildungsreisen to "Italy". A certain "female solidarity", or understanding, is implied by the narrated exchange of gazes between Titian's girl and Barbara. As this exchange of gazes indicates, Barbara's visual communication with those around her helps her to find her own voice as she increasingly liberates herself from Pe's narrative dominance. Barbara's narrated interaction with this girl in Titian's painting is emblematic for Barbara's engagement more broadly with the other authors and artists who also preoccupy themselves with Italy.

Blumenberg's use of this specifically visual metaphor is perhaps unsurprising, considering she is a trained art historian and translator, most notably of Henry James.[83] She translated for instance Anthony Bailey's publication *Vermeer*, about the Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), whose girl with the pearl earring gazes out of the picture and into the viewer's eyes in much the same way that Titian's painted girl does. Blumenberg's treatment of the visual medium is significant. By engaging with the *Spiegelmotiv*, *Vor Spiegeln*'s search for a "female voice" within the context of the literary *Bildungsreise* to "Italy" occurs in particularly visual terms. By narrating in such visual terms, Bettina Blumenberg's narrative voice is distinct from that of Hans Blumenberg, who seemed mostly uninterested in engaging with the visual arts.[84] By engaging with images and metaphorical layers of reflection, Bettina Blumenberg reformulates a female *Bildungsreise* to Italy, giving images a new and different significance.

Blumenberg also engages with the 18th century Venetian artist Canaletto (1697–1768). The protagonist finds herself unable to distinguish between multiple layers of reflection when she imagines his painting:

83 Due to her work in translation, she is also familiar with the French tradition, with which her novel shares characteristics, as explained in the Literaturportal Bayern: "Erzählerische Konventionen werden in diesem Sinne aufgelöst, philosophische Kategorien wie Raum und Zeit analog zum französischen Nouveau roman übergangen" (www.literaturportal-bayern.de/autorenlexikon?task=lpbauthor.default&pnd=1017004951).

84 This is something that Bettina Blumenberg discusses in her article from the 13 July 2015 for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, written for the event of what would have been Hans Blumenberg's 95th birthday. She recalls her father's description of his father as "'ein Photograph von grosser Leidenschaft und mässigen Erfolgen'" ("Eine Frage der Belichtung", no page). But, as Bettina Blumenberg further explains, "[w]elche Art 'optischer Beute' bei den Exkursionen eingeholt wurde und was an den Fotos 'mässig' war, wird nicht mitgeteilt, denn der Autor [Hans Blumenberg] interessiert sich nicht für das ästhetische Produkt, sondern für das Verfahren seiner Entstehung", an observation that applies to Hans Blumenberg's work more broadly ("Eine Frage der Belichtung", no page).

> Sie wanderte durch ein Bild, von Canaletto vielleicht, und konnte nicht aus dem Rahmen treten. Nicht fallen, um einen wirklichen Schmerz zu verspüren. Die ständige Wachheit, die das Inselbewußtsein erzeugt. Wie prägt die Landschaft den Menschen. Die steingewordene Zweckrationalität der Städte. Pe, der Stadtmensch, ein lebendes Abbild dessen […]. Und in Venedig widerstreiten Wasser und Stadt und bringen alles zum Stillstand. (*VS* 80)

Whereas Titian's girl's gaze out of the frame offers hope, Canaletto's painting by contrast gives voice to the challenge of escaping the cultural, and particularly male, frame. When Barbara imaginatively inhabits Canaletto's painting, "konnte [sie] nicht aus dem Rahmen treten" (*VS* 80), even though she wishes to fall into a different space that she can inhabit, in which it would be possible "einen wirklichen Schmerz zu verspüren", a "Schmerz" that to her "wirklich [ist]" (*VS* 80). Even in the distant landscape of Venice, Barbara struggles to gain cognitive distance from Pe, with the "steingewordene[n] Zweckrationalität der Städte" reminding her of Pe's dominating and rigid rationality (*VS* 80).

While imaginatively inhabiting this Canaletto painting, Barbara's stream of consciousness leads her to think of the romantic Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, as if in an attempt to escape Pe's Enlightenment, rationalist style for a more subtle Romanticism: "Ob dir die Reise lieb, ob sie dir leid sei, das Ziel, zu dem sie führt—dein ernstes Angesicht verschweigt es, sagte Leopardi unbemerkt. Er tauchte nicht auf aus dem Spiegelbild" (*VS* 80). As she struggles to locate Leopardi in the reflections around her ("Er tauchte nicht auf" (*VS* 80)), she is caught between the influences of male dominance (including Pe) and her desire to find her own voice as distinct from Pe's rationality. In her imagination, Leopardi adds subtlety:

> Und so versinken im Unermeßlichen mir die Gedanken, und Schiffbruch ist mir süß in diesem Meer, hatte Leopardi gesagt. Sie verstand jetzt, warum er nie in Venedig gelebt hatte. Hier war es nirgends unermeßlich. Zwar ununterscheidbar in seinen Gerüchen, in seiner Enge, in dem beständigen Wechsel von Wasser und Weg und den überall streunenden Katzen, doch überschaubar aus jedem Winkel. Man konnte sich nicht verirren, sich niemals zu weit vom Ausgangspunkt entfernen, sich nicht im Gehen verlieren und nicht in Gedanken. (*VS* 79 f.)

Incidentally, Bettina Blumenberg's use of the term "Schiffbruch" brings to mind Hans Blumenberg's text *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer*. Hans Blumenberg used the metaphor of the shipwreck to make a distinction between the perspective of the dramatist and of the philosopher. The experience of the drama, when on the ship, differs greatly from the philosopher's experience of it, watching from the beach. Bettina Blumenberg plays with this image. In her narrative, it becomes hard to distinguish between these two perspectives. Leopardi is "in diesem Meer", but on the other hand he comments that

Venice is "doch überschaubar aus jedem Winkel" (*VS* 79). Similarly, during her trip to Italy, Barbara is absorbed in the drama of her trip, but simultaneously she is always observing her trip from the outside, since she is creating it in her imagination. Her description contrasts to the existing male narratives of Venice, in which the disorienting nature of the city is almost always emphasised, as the male protagonists physically lose themselves in Venice. Blumenberg's female protagonist, by contrast, *cannot* imaginatively get lost in Venice, which is already over-populated by narratives of male lostness.[85]

Bettina Blumenberg redefines the visual metaphor of reflection in the context of "Italy". In her imagination, Barbara also reflects herself in Anna, a fellow traveller she meets in Italy and with whom she travels to Genoa. In Italy, Barbara and Anna "trennen [sich] von Gewohnheit, von Vertrautheit" (*VS* 43). Anna is presented as liberated by the Italian setting in contrast to her German home environment; she describes her time in Italy as "eine Zeit ohne jede Alltäglichkeit. Jeder Augenblick ist wie eine Erfindung" (*VS* 78). Barbara sees Anna dye her hair and is intrigued by the way in which she experiments with her self-understanding in this southern environment. Anna comments, "[i]ch tue jetzt manchmal ganz andere Dinge als sonst, unter dem Schutz meiner Schale. Ich handle bewußter mit dem Wissen um meine Auffälligkeit. Ich bin mein Theater und mein Autor, Darsteller und Zuschauer in einem zugleich" (*VS* 78). By seeing herself reflected in Anna, Barbara imagines changing her own behaviour, for instance spontaneously cutting her hair: she "schnitt mit einem Scherenstrich den Zopf ab [...]. Guillotiniert" (*VS* 106). Italy becomes an environment in which it is safe for the female traveller to imagine how she might like to be. Rather than being dictated to by her former partner, she can simultaneously be her own "Autor, Darsteller und Zuschauer" (*VS* 78). The power of reflection, in this (imagined) southern setting, is presented as allowing the female characters to "locate" themselves in those they encounter in Italy, thereby safely experimenting with new roles for themselves.

Blumenberg's associative writing style further evokes this rich intertextual world. She jumps from one image to another, having Barbara think for instance, "[d]ie Hybris war keine Hydra, aber mindestens ebenso vielköpfig wie diese. Mit einem so unheimlichen Tier wollte sie nicht leben. Sie wollte überhaupt keine Haustiere halten" (*VS* 35). She jumps rapidly from one theme to another, as the wandering mind does, pondering how Italy allows her

85 For a further discussion of Goethe's "lost-and-found games" (417), see John Zilcosky, who asserts that Goethe's "re-birth" is suspect, because the "lostness" it involves was planned, or choreographed, rather than a "true" example of being lost.

> [s]ich weg[zu]bewegen aus der begrenzten Zelle [...]. Verreisen. [...] Die Idee des Reisens. Also kein Weltuntergang. Aber Venedig, das von einem anderen Untergang bedroht ist. Das wollte sie für ihre Erinnerung retten. Wer hatte ihr das gesagt: Venedig kann sehr kalt sein. Sie packte sofort einige Pullover. (*VS* 43)

Blumenberg's words "zwingen andere Wörter [...]. Diese Bildassoziationen sind immer von Situationen abhängig [...], sei es in der Erinnerung oder im Augenblick" (Blumenberg, "Der Autor im Gespräch", no page). Blumenberg's narrator weaves an associative, liberating hall of mirrors for her protagonist, the reflective surfaces of which redefine the literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy.

In *Vor Spiegeln* it is no longer convincing to recreate a narrative of (a feminine) Italy as the "other" that affirms the (male) German "self" (as seen in Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis*, discussed in the previous chapter). In Blumenberg's novella, self and other are indistinguishable in the layers of mirrored gazes. Maja Goth identifies this as the narrator's reluctance "[t]o name objects or persons", since this would mean "to make them 'static,' to dehumanise them" (265). The mirror image offers a rich, multifaceted metaphor with a long history to draw on:

> Welt und Geschichte, ja das Bewußtsein selbst werden als Verkehrung lesbar, eben als verkehrte Welt. Die Ordnung der Inversion stellt ein Rätsel, aber [...] ein virtuell lösbares Rätsel. Das avisierte Bild der Erlößung heißt: von Angesicht zu Angesicht, (Konersmann 29)

or in the novella's terms, a "Bild im Bild im Bild" (*VS* flyleaf). Rather than offering Barbara a coherent self-image, the texts and artworks that Barbara comes into contact with in her imagination offer her insights into the fragility of her self-understanding. But in contrast to the long tradition of the *Bildungsroman* with the male protagonist, in which the process of *Bildung* is narrated as being experienced in the "real world", here Blumenberg subverts this tradition by having her protagonist's *Bildung* experienced purely in her imagination. Whereas the "male version" commonly involves a "real world" encounter, the female protagonist here juxtaposes this notion of the physical encounter (with a feminised "Italy"), with her process of a cerebral encounter that occurs imaginatively. In *Vor Spiegeln*, "Italy" and the process of *Bildung* has become a hall of mirrors; Barbara cannot help but see herself and other artists reflected wherever she looks. In this respect, Blumenberg follows in the footsteps of one of the few prominent female authors of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy, Marie Luise Kaschnitz, who wrote in her published diary *Engelsbrücke* "[e]s ist schwer, in Rom [...], sein eigenes Leben zu leben [...]. Beim Aufschreiben zeigt sich das Nebeneinander von Heute und Gestern, auch seine Untrennbarkeit" (7 f.). In this hall of mirrors, Barbara struggles to see beyond the reflections. A naïve belief in the achievability of *Bildung* has been lost, and any attempt to return to it comes with the risk of appear-

ing as Bodo Kirchhoff's protagonist does in *Widerfahrnis* (2016); by trying to find his way out of the prison house, he reveals he never fully appreciated his presence in it all along. By engaging with the mirror motif, *Vor Spiegeln* resists this simplification, because the mirror captures the conflicting elements that the novella simultaneously articulates. Erik Peez elaborates, in his discussion of the long literary history of the mirror:

> Einmal dient der Spiegel zur Illustration der Vorstellung und des Bewußtseins […], aber […] im Spiegelbild wird der Wunsch als erfüllt, als 'da' sichtbar und zugleich als Projektion erkannt, deren reale Erfüllung unmöglich ist ('fort'). (413)

With her use of the mirror metaphor, Blumenberg follows the metafictional principle that there is "as much to be learnt from setting the mirror of art up to its own linguistic or representational structures as from directly setting it up to a hypothetical 'human nature' that somehow exists as an essence outside historical systems of articulation" (Waugh 12). By holding her *imagined* mirror up to the other artworks and characters she (imaginatively) encounters on her trip, she can better understand what Nick Crossley calls "the fabric of our social becoming" (173), that is, how the "world of shared meaning […] transcends individual consciousness" (4). As Blumenberg discusses in an interview with Hans-Joachim Müller, during this process "wird [man] feststellen, daß man auch die anderen nur punktuell wahrnimmt und immer wieder anders, also Bild im Bild im Bild, weil man, wenn man zwei Spiegel voreinander stellt, das unendliche Bild hat und darin suchen kann" (qtd. in Müller 46).

In this respect, *Vor Spiegeln*'s contribution can also be distinguished from Hans Blumenberg's philosophical project. As Joseph Koerner pointed out, Hans Blumenberg's "anecdotes and philosophical vignettes […] aspire to *be* the philosophical argument" (5). *Vor Spiegeln*, by contrast, does not use literary style to embody a philosophical point, but rather, the style serves to conceal logic and to resist conclusions. Bettina Blumenberg's novella breaks down clear boundaries and binaries, rather inhabiting a "hall of mirrors" or, as Titian's girl is described, "ein verwirrendes, unauflösliches System von Perspektiven" (*VS* 75). Barbara's imagined trip to Italy occurs within the larger "Bild" of other travel narratives. But the resulting "Bild im Bild im Bild" does not support, but rather disturbs the larger, framing picture formed by the existing intertext. Her imaginative travel functions in much the same way as the visual metaphor of the "Bild im Bild im Bild" which, as Konersmann's analysis shows, is a motif that has been drawn on for a similar, disruptive purpose in other works:

> Für die Spiegelungsverhältnisse mehrerer Spiegel ist ja bezeichnend, daß sie neben einem bespiegelten Gegenstand auch sich selbst ineinander zu spiegeln vermögen. Dadurch entstehen fiktive Räume, die mit denen außerhalb der Spiegel konkurrieren können, um in einer Art Vexierspiel Realität

> und Fiktion, Original und Kopie füreinander eintreten zu lassen. […] In dieser Spätform […] ist die Orientierungsleistung, die von der Metapher erwartet worden war, entschieden gefährdet. (Konersmann 34)

By threatening the potential of the mirror metaphor to offer "Orientierungsleistung" (Konersmann 34), the novella draws attention to both the constructive and deconstructive potential of figurative language. *Vor Spiegeln* functions as a mirror for the intertext, yet the mirror no longer reflects Goethe's understanding of the metaphor. Blumenberg disturbs Goethe's understanding of the "subject" and rearticulates its position for her own purposes, engaging in the "*Streit um das rechte Verständnis von 'Subjektivität'*", which is embodied in the "*Streit um die Metapher des Spiegels*" (188). Goethe was "[g]egen die von den Romantikern geltend gemachten Krisensymptome und gegen den 'Taumel des Wahnsinns', den [er] bereits 1788, am Vorabend der Revolution, mit den Forderungen nach 'Freiheit und Gleichheit' heraufziehen sieht"; he attempted, "unversehrte[] Subjektivität auf[zu]richte[n]" (Konersmann 234). Bettina Blumenberg's figurative language disrupts Goethe's *Spiegelordnung* and the intact subjectivity that accompanied it, thereby carving out room for her protagonist to reconstruct Goethe's metaphorical landscape on *her* own terms.

Barbara finds herself reflected in Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, yet Blumenberg distorts the reflection. Just as Goethe presented himself in his *Italienische Reise* as being lost in Venice, when Barbara was in Venice, she "verlor jede Orientierung, besinnungslos" (*VS* 71). The attractive male adolescents—who populate most narratives of Italy—are also found here in statue form. Like Mann's Aschenbach, Barbara also finds "ein[en] […] Jüngling" and she "betrachtete ihn wie eine Statue. Wie eine Vorstellung. Sie verlor sich in der Zeit" (*VS* 69). She gives way to the sensual desires that Aschenbach and the narrated Goethe experienced in Venice, letting herself be pulled by the young Italian man: "Er küßte ihr Haar, ihre Stirn, ihren Mund" (*VS* 71) and they "knöpften ihre Kleider auf, rissen, fetzten sie vom Leib, wühlten sich hinein in das Matratzenlager" (*VS* 69 f.). But by having her own imagined (hetero)sexual encounter with the (typically homosexual) young man commonly found in the literary imagination of Italy, she adapts the trope of pederasty for her own purposes. The sexual encounter represents her liberation, including from Pe's narrative dominance: "Ein orgiastischer Rausch. Und keine Zärtlichkeit"; she leaves as quickly as she came, "[s]agte ciao noch mit offener Bluse […]. Sie rannte […]. Sie blieb stehen und atmete aus: Quickfick wie Schnellimbiß" (*VS* 69 f.). Using this imagined scene, Barbara reformulates a "female" literary *Bildungsreise* to Italy. Traditionally "[wurde] Deutschland die Rolle des Mannes und Italien diejenige der Frau zugesprochen […,] wenn die Beziehung von Deutschland zu Italien ins Geschlechterbild gebracht wurde", with the German protagonist often being male (Battafarano and Eilert 154 f.). Here, Blumenberg reverses these roles.

By engaging with the metaphor of the mirror, reflecting her protagonist in other works and tropes, Blumenberg complicates the binary of "self and other". Here it is interesting to return to the following quote from Albrecht Koschorke, which I earlier considered in relation to Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis*, but can be seen in a new light in the context of Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln*. In contrast to *Widerfahrnis*, *Vor Spiegeln* resists the common simplification that Koschorke criticises:

> Wer von Identität auf Alterität umstellt, bleibt [...] im Bannkreis einer negativen Fixierung auf Identität. Dies setzt der Dekonstruktion eine Schranke, die nur dort wirklich stark ist, wo sie sich in den Machtbereich starker Gegner begibt: der Logozentrik, Phallokraten, Essentialisten, Naturalisten [etc.]. (Koschorke 117)

Rather than focussing on her "identity", Barbara reflects herself in the tradition and studies the consequent "Bild im Bild im Bild" (*VS* flyleaf). In Blumenberg's own words, "[m]ir ist wichtig, im Schreibprozeß diese Oppositionsstrukturen in immer weitere Oppositionen aufzusplittern, so daß nicht mehr zu sagen ist, wo das Positive, wo das Negative ist" (qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 45). As Konersmann observes, the motif of the mirror lends itself to this approach: "Die Welt, wie sie in dieser Darstellungsweise erscheint [with the metaphor of the mirror], ist das Bild des Unsichtbaren, so wie die Metapher das Wort des Unsagbaren ist" (235). By refracting new visual and narrative angles through the metaphor of reflection, Bettina Blumenberg exposes the (illogical) shadow side of *topoi*. This first narrative layer of visual reflection is already powerful, but it is now worth giving thought to the significance of *Vor Spiegeln*'s metaphor of cognitive reflection, as evoked by the theme of imaginative travel to Italy.

3.3.2 Cognitive reflection

Significantly, Barbara's trip to Italy occurs "merely" in her imagination, which indicates that Bettina Blumenberg engages with Italy as an imagined and narrated cultural construct. Blumenberg does not evaluate whether it is possible to make the physical experience of travel to Italy more accessible or inclusive for women. Rather, she considers whether the imaginative space and cultural narratives of Italy can expand, or bend, to make room for her female protagonist. Only at the end of the novella does the narrator reveal that Barbara's trip to Italy did not physically occur. By withholding this information, the imagined trip seems "real"; this helps to communicate the very real significance of imaginative travel.[86] The narrator regularly blurs

86 For a broader discussion of Italy (or, more specifically, Rome) in the imagination, see for instance Gabriella Catalano's article "'Rom ist die Stadt für den Kopf'. Anmerkungen zum Rom-Bild in Thomas Bernhards Roman

the line between the imagined (narrated) world and the physical experience of it, with phrases such as "[j]eder Augenblick ist wie eine Erfindung" (*VS* 78) and "[ich liebe] [d]ie Idee und die Vorstellung von einer Idee. Reisen. Die Reise ist nichts als Idee. Ihr tieferer Sinn. Ihr Ziel" (*VS* 37). Here, "[d]ie Reise" is presented as an "Idee" within the narrative, but *Vor Spiegeln* is itself of course also Blumenberg's "Idee" (*VS* 37). This self-consciousness of the *Bildungsreise* to Italy as merely an imaginative and creative space does not stop Barbara from taking seriously its potential to perform cultural change. On the contrary, Barbara sees the intertext as something to which she can contribute, and which shapes her. By experimenting with notions of (imagined) space, Blumenberg contributes an example of what Adam Engel considers literature's ability to "challenge hierarchies, redraw subjective boundaries and return voices to people who have lost them" (1).[87] She weaponises the insight that Patricia Waugh articulates in her discussion of metafiction:

> [I]f he or she sets out to 'represent' the world, he or she realises fairly soon that the world, as such, cannot be 'represented'. In literary fiction it is, in fact, possible only to 'represent' the discourses of that world. Yet, if one attempts to analyse a set of linguistic relationships using those same relationships as the instruments of analysis, language soon becomes a 'prison-house' from which the possibility of escape is remote. Metafiction sets out to explore this dilemma. (4)[88]

The "real" Italy presented by Winckelmann and Goethe has now become an imaginative reflection on the discourses of "Italy".

For Winckelmann, good art was an accurate *Nachahmung*, or imitation, of nature, which he believed was achieved in exemplary form by the Greeks, the remains of which could be viewed most easily in Italy. In his *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* Winckelmann described "den Weg zum allgemeinen Schönen und zu idealischen Bildern [...] und derselbe ist es, den die Griechen genommen haben" (13). For Winckelmann, nature is true and in art's search for truth, it must try to accurately imitate nature. Konersmann explains this further in his discussion of Diderot: "'Die Natur ist immer wahr, so bestätigt noch

'Auslöschung. Ein Zerfall'". See also Peter Gendolla's *Die Erfindung Italiens: Reiseerfahrung und Imagination*.

87 With Bettina Blumenberg's focus on imagined spaces, the novella could also be read as a contribution to *Raumtheorie*, which was flourishing in the 1980s at the time Blumenberg was writing *Vor Spiegeln*.

88 It is worth re-quoting this passage here—having already quoted it in the Kirchhoff chapter—because it perfectly summarises the metafictional concerns of both texts. For a similar discussion, see also Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*.

Diderots 'Encyclopédie'-Artikel 'Imitation' das sensualistische Credo; 'die Kunst läuft also nur dann Gefahr, in ihrer *Nachahmung* unwahr zu sein, wenn sie von der Natur abweicht'" (155). These ideas are central to earlier articulations (by Winckelmann and to some extent Goethe) of "Italy" as promising an aesthetic *Bildung* that brings one closer to truth. As Peez explains, "[v]on Aristoteles wurde das Prinzip der Nachahmung übernommen, die allerdings [...] als imitatio naturae rezipiert wurde" (86). But Blumenberg's *Spiegelung* of nature aims to get closer to nature by distorting its reflection. For Blumenberg, distortion is an inseparable part of engaging with nature.[89] Although both Goethe and Blumenberg engage with Italy in order to explore their understanding of the subject's position in the world, in this respect, their understandings differ greatly. Goethe's

> Vorbehalt richtet sich gegen den als bloß 'subjektiv' geschmähten, den introspektiven Blick, der die Welt lediglich als Ort der Selbstbestätigung gelten lassen will. 'In der Geschichte überhaupt, besonders aber der Philosophie, Wissenschaft, Religion, fällt es uns auf, daß die armen beschränkten Menschen ihre dunkelsten subjektiven Gefühle, die Apprehensionen eingeengter Zustände in das Beschauen des Weltalls und dessen hoher Erscheinungen überzutragen nicht unwürdig finden'. Er, so Goethe weiter, erblicke darin 'die Kennzeichen düster-sinnlicher, von den Erscheinungen beherrschter Geschöpfe'. (Konersmann 185 f.)

Bettina Blumenberg's rearticulation of "Italy" differs radically from, and subverts, this earlier iteration.

The narrator distinguishes herself from these earlier narratives of aesthetic *Bildung* by frequently having Barbara consider the representational aspect of her own mind. She blurs the line between imagined and "real" travel, commenting: "Es läuft alles leichter als geträumt, dachte sie" (*VS* 67), and ponders "[w]as man in so kurzer Zeit alles denken kann [...]. Wie die Ebenen miteinander verschmelzen, die Wünsche und die Erinnerungen [...]. Und was weiß ich davon" (*VS* 93). Rather than aiming to represent Italy accurately,

89 In this respect, *Vor Spiegeln* is reminiscent of Friedrich Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, in which he reads culture as a second nature. For Schiller, art becomes a distorted version of nature: "Diese Art des Interesses an der Natur" reveals, "daß die Natur mit der Kunst im Kontraste stehe und sie beschäme" (3 f.). He continues: "Natur, sage ich, ist es auch noch jetzt, in dem künstlichen Zustande der Kultur, wodurch der Dichtergeist mächtig ist; nur steht er jetzt in einem ganz anderen Verhältnis zu derselben [...]. Ist der Mensch in den Stand der Kultur getreten und hat die Kunst ihre Hand an ihn gelegt, so ist jene sinnliche Harmonie in ihm aufgehoben, und er kann nur noch als moralische Einheit, d.h. als nach Einheit strebend sich äußern" (34 f.). In Schiller's view, once the child has been integrated into human culture, it can no longer be in harmony with nature. Culture becomes the adult's second nature, in which one is left to strive for unity with nature.

Barbara sees language as driving her, when she asks "[w]ohin treiben mich die Wörter" (*VS* 72). She questions the mechanism of her own language, arguing that

> [s]ie [...] sich an ihrer Phantasie [berauschen] und [...] die Wahrheit der Lüge [übersehen]. Sie erkennen das Gesagte als das Wahre und geraten im Sprechen zum Stillstand [...]. Man müßte sich selbst auf die Schliche kommen [...]. Mein Kopf und ich, wir müssen uns beeilen. (VS 93)

By blurring this line between the "imagined" and the "real", *Vor Spiegeln* draws attention to the assumptions, or shadows, cast by earlier Italy-narratives. In doing so, the novella reveals (and thereby perhaps unsettles) the topos' inherent boundaries and stability. In this regard, Koschorke's discussion of how *topoi* maintain their stability is interesting. He draws on the ideas of the archaeologist and historian Paul Veyne:

> Man kann in vielen Welten leben, solange man ignoriert, dass man es tut. 'Wenn man nicht sieht, was man nicht sieht', schreibt Veyne, 'sieht man nicht einmal, daß man nicht sieht. Mit noch mehr Grund verkennt man die seltsame Form dieser Begrenzungen: man glaubt, innerhalb natürlicher Grenzen zu wohnen'. (Koschorke 194 f.)

Rather than ignoring the "vielen Welten" of Italy (Koschorke 194), *Vor Spiegeln* draws attention to these "Grenzen", rendering them no longer simply "natürlich[]", but rather visible (Koschorke 194 f.). In the moments when Barbara is narrated to recognise that the cultural narratives of "Italy" do not allow room for a female protagonist, she becomes aware of the apparently natural "Grenzen" of the tradition (Koschorke 195). In that moment, the shadow side of the metaphor is exposed. Veyne argues that cultural narratives and norms do not collapse despite their inconsistencies, the logical progression is rather read into the events post factum.[90] The existing cultural narratives of "Italy" do not collapse, rather, Blumenberg explores the possibility of expanding "Italy" to open a space for the female protagonist. Following Veyne's explanation, when Barbara becomes aware that her self-narrative (and other narratives of Italy) entail(s) contradictions and exclude(s) various perspectives including those of female protagonists, then the cultural narrative is not threatened. As Koschorke explains, Veyne labels this the *Wahrheitsprogramm*, which explains "warum bei der Unzahl von semiotischen Bezügen, die sich nicht miteinander verrechnen lassen und oft ver-

90 It is worth anecdotally noting that Blumenberg, in her second novella *Verführung*, explores this role of memory. Her protagonist draws attention to, and thereby perhaps somewhat resists, memory's control over the past, with the use of a pun: "Und die Nacht, diese Nacht. Und was war am Morgen? Nichts war. Nichts wahr" (107 f.). Here too, she attempts to break down her language: "Ich habe die Unformulierbarkeit als Unformulierbarkeit formuliert" (152).

quer zueinander verhalten, die kulturelle Semiose nicht ständig blockiert wird" (195). The topos will not "collapse", rather, *Vor Spiegeln* helps it to expand.

By narrating a purely imagined trip to Italy, Blumenberg investigates the ability of cultural readings of "Italy" to expand to be inclusive of female protagonists. She uses the example of Barbara's relationship with Pe to expose culturally dominant male-female dynamics. In Italy, Barbara realises that she must defend her process of cognitive self-reflection against Pe's more "external", or empirical approach. Pe thought,

> daß das Kreisen in sich selbst einer sozialen Verantwortung widerspreche und damit Verantwortung überhaupt aufgehoben sei. Er hatte das Argument nicht gelten lassen, daß der Bezug auf sich selbst nicht als Kreis gesehen werden kann, als der pure Narzißmus, die Egomanie. Daß es ein strahlenförmiges Gebilde sei, ein Netzwerk, ein Spinnengewebe, dessen Haltepunkte in der Welt verankert sind. Und im Zentrum stehe ich und in mir Spinnweben. Ich bin die Spinne, eine verantwortungsvolle Baumeisterin, die ihr Verantwortungsbewußtsein auf sich selbst konzentrieren will, um einen sicheren Ausgangspunkt zu schaffen. (*VS* 42)

Barbara cognitively liberates herself from Pe's emphasis on a "real world", or empirical narrative of "Italy", by partaking in imaginative travel to Italy. In contrast to Pe, Barbara thinks that one ought to understand the mechanism by which many narratives interact, as they reflect off one another.

Vor Spiegeln's metaphor of the spider and its web is revealing. As Axel Fliethmann observes in *Stellenlektüre: Stifter – Foucault*, the spider serves as a metaphor for those who overemphasise reason or rationality, as opposed to the metaphor of the bee, which stands for those who combine both the empirical and the rational; they gather pollen, like the empiricist, and process it with their own powers, like the rationalist. As Fliethmann comments, "[a]us sich selbst heraus das Netz spinnen, beansprucht aber gegenüber dem Bienengleichnis die höhere Einschätzung des produktiven Eigenanteils in der imitatio-Lehre" (*Stellenlektüre* 144).[91] The metaphor of the bee functions similarly to the metaphor of the mirror. When engaging with the mirror,

> [i]m Blick auf die Welt sieht der Geist sich selber an [...], so heißt es in Friedrich Schlegels Kölner Vorlesung über die Entwicklung der Philosophie, 'die Untersuchung aller Quellen der Philosophie führt uns auf die Selbstanschauung, als den sichersten Anfangspunkt der Philosophie'. (Konersmann 29)

Goethe, with his neoclassical focus on accurately imitating the natural, "real" world, is evoked by Pe, the representative of the male-dominated cultural

91 For more on the metaphor of the spider and the bee, see Bacon, *Das neue Organon*, page 136. See also Nietzsche, *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne*, pages 882 and 885.

narratives of "Italy". Like the character Pe, "Goethe erläutert den selbstbewußten Spiegelblick der Romantiker als defizitär, als Dokument objektiver und undurchschauter Beschränktheit, ja als Ausdruck einer verbreiteten Verkennungsstruktur" (185 f.). As Goethe famously wrote in 1829, "'[d]as Klassische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke [...]. 'Wenn wir mit solchen Qualitäten Klassisches und Romantisches unterscheiden, so werden wir bald im reinen sein'" (Goethe, *Gespräche* 186).[92] With the central, modern metaphor of the spider's web and mirror-like self-reflection, *Vor Spiegeln* resists and subverts this perspective and lays the foundation for a modern, and "female" literary *Bildungsreise* to "Italy". By only making clear towards the end of the novella that Barbara's travels were purely imagined, Blumenberg invites the reader to return to the novella's beginning to find new and different meanings in light of this realisation, and thereby repeat Barbara's process of introspective reflection.

By travelling to Italy in her imagination, Barbara positions herself within the literary tradition, while drawing attention to its narrated quality. This allows her to self-consciously generate her own voice amongst the other literary voices. In her imagination, Barbara actively chooses to fly to Venice, rather than to catch the train, so as to find her own narrative voice in contrast to the long tradition of male travellers reaching Italy by coach or by train:

> Fliegen. Nicht mit dem Zug fahren. Sich nicht den Abenteuern aussetzen, die in Büchern beschrieben sind: mit der vorbeiziehenden Landschaft schleichen sich Erinnerungen ein [...]. An jedem Bahnhof steigt ein Stück Lebensgeschichte zu, (*VS* 61 f.)

such as the travels by coach presented in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Italienische Reise* or by Johann Joachim Winckelmann or Heinrich Heine. Barbara tries to distance herself from these narratives, commenting, "ich versuche, mich von Wörtern zu trennen" (*VS* 61). As she finds her own voice, she realises that she must leave Venice, the place populated by literary voices: "Venedig ist eine Stadt der Erinnerungen, die man verlassen muß, ehe man selbst zur Erinnerung wird" (*VS* 81). Barbara is aware of other Italy-narratives, but "wollte sich mit ihren Aussagen darstellen, ihre Gedanken vorführen" (*VS* 71). She resists comments that are made by others on the train. One man tells her: "Sie sollten nicht so viel lesen [...]. Sie sollten die wirkliche Welt wahrnehmen, Ihre eigenen Gedanken denken und sich auf sie verlassen" (*VS* 62). But Barbara's "wirkliche Welt" in Italy is itself a narrated, imagined world (*VS* 62). Barbara's imagined world (her "wirkliche Welt") has real implications for how she sees herself (*VS* 62). Her imaginative immer-

92 It should however also be noted that Goethe's position, as Konersmann later points out, cannot be simplified to the opposition of romanticism: "Es ist nicht zu übersehen, wie nahe Goethe dem Selbstverständnis der Frühromantiker eigentlich kommt" (221).

sion in "Italy" allows her "[s]ich [...] von Gewohnheit, von Vertrautheit [zu trennen]. Vom Ich auf die großen Zusammenhänge kommen" (*VS* 43).

In "Italy", as if with fresh eyes, Barbara is able to see how she fell prey to Pe's narrative dominance:

> Die Worte wurden mager. Die Füllwörter zahlreicher. Drei Gramm Sinn in mehreren Kilo Buchstaben und keine Lust am Text. Füllstoff dicht gewebt, mit Leerstellen am laufenden Meter. Wenn du Baum sagst, Pe, dann fallen die Blätter. Und ich begrabe mich unter dem Laub und stopfe die Ohren zu. (*VS* 26)

Pe's words are presented as not having captured her experience—"[d]rei Gramm Sinn in mehreren Kilo Buchstaben" (*VS* 26). By being imaginatively distant in "Italy", she can now see this, and she learns to act confidently and stridently, commenting:

> Ich verlasse meine Behausung, klein genug nur für meine Bücher und mich [...]. Ich öffne die Tür, lasse die Sätze ungeschrieben und die geschriebenen hinter mir. Ich gehe hinaus, ungeschützt auf die Straßen, die mich fortführen aus meiner Festung, aus dem Palast meiner majestätischen Traurigkeit. Im Schreiten bin ich riesengroß und schaue über alle Köpfe. Dann wieder bin ich winzig klein und laufe zwischen allen Beinen durch. Mit Dir ging ich im Gleichschritt. Geborgen in Deiner Achselhöhle, in die ich hineinpasse wie in eine Umarmung. (*VS* 100 f.)

Blumenberg's figurative language and the consciously fictional engagement with Italy emancipates Barbara. As Koschorke comments, "[d]ieselbe Eigenschaft, die Sprache daran hindert, die Welt wie sie 'wirklich ist', zu repräsentieren, macht einen symbolischen Weltzugang allererst möglich" (333). In this realm of Koschorke's "symbolischen Weltzugang[s]", *Vor Spiegeln* weaponises the power of the metaphor of reflection (333). In her metafictional style, the narrator comments on this directly, saying, "daß die Annäherung an die Wahrheit sich zwischen den Zeilen vollzog, im Unbeschreiblichen. Daß die Wörter selbst nur Symbole waren für das Unaussprechliche. Umkreisungen und sogar Verheimlichungen" (*VS* 102). Utilising this insight, the narrator influences the epistemological layer of the topos—the "Unbeschreiblichen"—and adds a new "female" *Bildungs*-narrative to "Italy's" symbolic language (*VS* 102).

Barbara grows more confident in Italy, undertaking ever-braver acts, including the "Quickfick wie Schnellimbiß" discussed above (*VS* 69 f.). When Blumenberg discusses this *Quickfick* with Hans-Joachim Müller, she presents Barbara as liberating herself from Pe's narrative power: "indem sie [Pes Macht] abbaut, wird sie fähig zu so extremen Handlungen wie diesem Quickfick-Erlebnis in Venedig" (*VS* 48). Just as her travel companion Anna dyes her hair to experiment with her image of herself, when in Italy Barbara also sheds her past appearance for a new one. Initially "[z]og [sie] das violette Kleid an, das Pe besonders gern mochte" (*VS* 72). But when she sees her re-

flection, she spontaneously decides to buy a new dress; she "ließ das Alte verpacken [...] und ließ [es] im Vorübergehen fallen. Neben anderen Plastiktüten, Abfall vor einem Hauseingang" (*VS* 73 f.). Both this act and the "Quickfick" are presented as purely imagined acts. The "Quickfick" is a "sprachliche[r] Prozeß" that allows Barbara "sich aus der Sprache des Mannes zu lösen, über das Schweigen in eine eigene Sprache hineinzugehen", which means "in eine neue Erlebniswelt einzutreten" (Blumenberg qtd. in Hans-Joachim Müller 48 f.). By presenting these events as never having physically occurred, Blumenberg's narrator draws attention to the performative power of (her own) narrative. As the protagonist mentally discards the many narratives imposed upon her, *Vor Spiegeln* makes room for a new, "female" *Bildungs*-narrative that occurs in the imagination and purely with reference to the narrative world of "Italy", which, after all, is the protagonist's "real" Italy.

3.3.3 Conclusion

In contrast to the other texts considered above, *Vor Spiegeln* is the only novella to directly weaponise the theme of imagination, thereby making room for a "female" narrative voice. But at the same time, the novella fractures a clear image of what it means to be "female", by having Barbara see herself refracted, or *verspiegelt*, from various different angles. *Vor Spiegeln* does not articulate one, or *the* female narrative voice, but rather *a* female protagonist who finds a shifting voice, as she increasingly liberates herself from her previously voiceless position, surrounded as she was by powerful male intellect. The novella does not present Barbara as a mere victim at the hands of this intellect, but rather as a woman who increasingly learns to recognise the assertion of power behind it, and to articulate herself in a subtle and complex way in response to it. *Vor Spiegeln* exposes, and increasingly unravels the epistemological assumptions that underpin the literary topos "Italy".

This chapter gave voice to the possibility of identifying hidden analogies between Bettina Blumenberg and her famous father, Hans Blumenberg. However, such analogies remain speculative and are of secondary importance. Given Bettina Blumenberg's protagonist asserts her "female" voice, to argue that *Vor Spiegeln* must be read in the context of Hans Blumenberg's work would be to minimise the novella's project. Although Hans Blumenberg's ideas provided a relevant context for the ideas explored in the novella, *Vor Spiegeln* cannot be reduced to the shadow of its author's father, nor be simply seen as an attempt to step out from behind his shadow. Rather, if Hans Blumenberg features in the novella, then he does so as a male voice that belongs amongst the cacophony of other male voices surrounding Barbara. While

similarities between text and biography may well exist[93], Bettina Blumenberg's exploration of figurative language makes its own distinct contribution. Blumenberg's visual metaphors, including her evocative narration of mirrors and artworks (most notably Titian's *Pesaro Madonna*), powerfully reformulate the significance of images in the literary *Bildungsreise* to "Italy", in a way that differs to the identity-forming role that artworks play in Goethe's *Italienische Reise*.

Many of the texts analysed above share *Vor Spiegeln*'s metafictional insight into the so-called "prison house" of language. But *Vor Spiegeln* is the first to locate hope within this "prison", transforming it into a home by using the visual metaphor of imagined reflection. As Konersmann notes, the mirror motif can provide hope:

> Von einer Position aus, die als Lebenserfahrung resümiert, 'daß niemand den andern versteht, daß keiner bei denselben Worten dasselbe was der andere denkt', wird der Spiegel, sofern er ein verläßliches Angebot der Selbstvergewisserung bereithält, zu einem Rettungsmotiv. (229)

But in *Vor Spiegeln*, the mirror is a "Rettungsmotiv" precisely because it does *not* offer a "verläßliches Angebot der Selbstvergewisserung" (Konersmann 229). Rather, it offers multiple, fractured perspectives. The mirror's strength lies, for Bettina Blumenberg, in its fragility and complexity:

> Subjektivität kann klarerweise an sich selbst nicht geklärt werden. Dies mag unbefriedigend scheinen, bringt aber auch eine enorme Entlastung: Es erübrigt sich nämlich die Frage nach der Beschaffenheit des Spiegelbildes, d. h. die Frage, ob das Spiegelbild und damit Subjektivität überhaupt 'etwas' sei oder nicht vielmehr nur Schemen, 'nichts'. Denn mit Gewißheit läßt sich darüber weder dies noch jenes aussagen. (Konersmann 237)

Rather than leaving her protagonist Barbara impotent, due to her inability to communicate one clear (and in line with Goethe, universally valid) "identity" or *Weltbürger*, Bettina Blumenberg instead weaponises the narrative fragility and complexity offered by the mirror metaphor, by moulding it for her own purposes. Through the metaphor of (imagined) reflection, Bettina Blumenberg implies the protagonist's ability to use fiction (imagination) to change her position in "Italy". She expands, rather than defines, notions of a "female voice".

93 It seems plausible that there are similarities between the intellectual dominance of Pe and Hans Blumenberg, as well as the response to this dominance by Barbara and Bettina Blumenberg respectively.

4. Conclusion

While the close connection, seen in the 18th and 19th centuries, between *Bildung* and the literary *italienische Reise* has been well researched, little systematic attention has been given to whether German literature has continued to explore these topics over the last century. Shifting attention away from the well-researched works of Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, I found that interesting literary engagements with Italy continue to this day. Although the 20th and early 21st century textual engagements with Italy differ to texts from earlier centuries, they exhibit significant similarities to one another. Karrin Hanshew contends that most literary scholars' accounts of Italian-German relations "argue for tremendous continuity over time when it comes to Italy's role as the quintessential German 'other'" (70). The texts analysed above have led to quite a different conclusion, because they subvert assumptions that are common in earlier texts. Two scholars who have focussed on the topos' development, Czapla and Fattori, suggest that since humanism, and particularly since Winckelmann and Goethe, all texts engaging with Rome or Italy move between the poles of "Italien-Begeisterung und -Ablehnung" (8). The texts considered in this book tend not to locate themselves at these poles, but rather to maintain a tension and a subtle balance between enthusiasm and rejection. While Czapla and Fattori (11) rightly assert that the post-war authors cannot free themselves from this canon, I find that Goethe no longer simply reigns supreme. Instead, the texts find a freedom, not necessarily by ignoring Goethe and the canonical intertext of "Italy", but by re-evaluating and re-shaping the intertext to meet their own contemporary needs. Furthermore, they tend not to take Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, but rather Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*, and at times his *Mario und der Zauberer*, as paradigmatic texts. I found, like Battafarano and Eilert, that "die klassische deutsche Italiensicht obsolet [ist]" (30); that fascism "das verpflichtete Bildungsprogramm der deutschen Klassik und de[n] es begleitende[n] Humanitäts- und Fortschrittsgedanke[n] [erschüttert]" (100); and that "Diktatur, Krieg und Genozid nach einer radikalen Revision, die Poesie nach einer weniger prätentiösen Ästhetik [verlangen]" (100). The texts considered here tend however to contradict Battafarano and Eilert's argument that even into the early 20th century many authors miss the fact that their "Italy" did not necessarily match the "real" Italy (23). On the contrary, the texts considered above are characteristically self-conscious of their "Italy" as a narrative construct and they reflect directly on the consequences of this solipsistic tendency—a tendency that extends beyond texts about Italy and contributes to a broader literary trend.

Characteristically metafictional, the texts scrutinise their own power and freedom to be agents of cultural change within the world of literature (and potentially, although immeasurably, beyond it). Although Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* articulates a deep sense of pessimism about the inevi-

table circularity of history, and Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* rather unconvincingly attempts to realise Goethe's promise of self-formation, the other texts find a freedom located, ironically, in their own solipsism. They locate their locus of power in their narrativity. Precisely because they can never free themselves from the confines of their own fictionality, nor from the influence of earlier literary engagements with "Italy", they shape the culture within the world of literature, thus facilitating mental and, by extension, cultural change. Goethe, who in *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* described Winckelmann as being unable to observe and represent himself despite being preoccupied with himself (253), aimed to see and represent himself more accurately. He sought to do so with reference to the natural world and artworks in Italy. The texts discussed above continue to engage with art and fiction in the search for greater self-understanding. But they also hope to self-consciously analyse their own influence—the influence of their fictional narratives—on this self-understanding. Rather than search for answers, for harmony, and for universal truths, they try to give definition to their own epistemological shadows. The texts give access to fictional worlds and to explorations of the role that these fictional worlds can play in changing how we see ourselves. They weaponise the unique qualities of fiction to facilitate the search for greater self-awareness. In the process, the texts introduce a new understanding of the *Bildung* that the literary *italienische Reise* can promise. The close connection between *Bildung* and the literary *italienische Reise* has indeed continued into the 20th and early 21st centuries. However, the texts repurpose and rearticulate the concept of *Bildung* to fit their contemporary contexts and concerns. Their literary *Bildungsreisen* to Italy give narrative voice to—and even revel in—a shared experience of their fractured, uncertain place in the world. The "beyond" the text is implied and considered within the texts themselves, as they explore the "prison house" of language, even turning the prison into their home.

While they share a metafictional similarity, the texts of course differ in the specific aspects of the literary "Italy" that they critically evaluate. In relation to their own contemporary contexts, Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, Wolfgang Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* and Gert Hofmann's *Auf dem Turm* re-evaluate the rich literary intertext surrounding Italy. Friedrich Christian Delius' *Bildnis der Mutter als junge Frau*, by contrast, is not concerned with Goethe's, or even Mann's "Italy". Instead, it adapts "Italy" and "Rome" into a canvas for material remembrance, with *memoria* becoming the driving principle for *Bildung*. Rather nostalgically, Bodo Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* returns to Goethe's comparably outward-looking interaction with "Italy". The protagonist Reither believes, rather unconvincingly, that he has escaped the metafictional "prison-house" of language and found a harmonious position in society by engaging with the "mysterious" women and refugees he encounters in the southern setting. Finally, Bettina Blumenberg's *Vor Spiegeln*, by contrast, weaponises the theme of imagination and makes room for a fe-

male protagonist amongst the cacophony of male voices populating "Italy". Despite these different foci, the texts are united by their shared fascination with their literary ability to jointly reshape the epistemic "truths" underpinning the topos "Italy". By engaging with an established, conservative, and predominantly male literary topos, the texts challenge assumptions of male, rational, bourgeois superiority. With Kirchhoff's *Widerfahrnis* as the exception that proves the rule, the texts find a range of narrative voices to articulate their own crises of faith in the 19th century promise of a "perfected humanity" attainable through aesthetic *Bildung*. Analysed together, they contribute to an epistemological shift in the cultural understanding of intertextuality, *memoria*, gender and imagination.

Culturally, the German speaking world continues to define itself in relation to its southern European neighbours. Although the authors redefine themselves, they continue their cultural mapping along a North-South divide, indicating that the intellectual geography of Europe maintains its relevance. This topological study has opened further avenues of enquiry for future research into other aspects of the topos "Italy", including the visual arts and sculpture, migration and cultural integration, and popular travel narratives in film, music, and travel guides. The greater complexity and significant history of the literary topos led me to focus specifically on the literary "Italy" in the 20th and early 21st centuries, which, I have found, has shifted and resists a defined, static epistemology. Characteristically inward looking, it engages with questions that relate specifically to what fiction has to offer. Ironically, the texts' focus on epistemic change *becomes* the new episteme, giving it a sense of coherence and definition. While the texts erode the longstanding hope, associated with Italy, of a process of *Bildung* that leads to harmony, each text offers, or performs, a new form of aesthetic *Bildung* that does not promise a harmonious alignment between oneself and the world, but rather can facilitate a better appreciation of the unique qualities that fiction has for facilitating greater self-understanding. Paradoxically, the texts give the topos' episteme a new lease of life. They are aware that they cannot escape the cultural episteme that came before them, so they focus their efforts on altering this episteme such that it accommodates a shared post-war fractiousness. The selected texts no longer believe in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's balanced, controlled narrative, with its promise of a harmonious unity between oneself and a knowable world. Instead, they often grant Thomas Mann's works a paradigmatic role. Mann's oeuvre acts like a fulcrum in the 20th century shift away from Goethe's neoclassicism, as the texts seek the narrative freedom to articulate a fractured sense of self. The spotlight has shifted onto the subject and onto the role of literature itself, as the selected texts usher in an episteme that places Goethe's neoclassicism on shaky ground and renders the shaky ground the only thing of certainty afoot.

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What has become of the literary topos "Italy"—once so central to German literature—in the 20th and early 21st centuries? Does it still have a role to play in the German self-understanding and in what way has this role changed? To address these questions, this study focusses on six texts. Each text revises, subverts, and radicalises this literary topos such that it gains new contemporary relevance and speaks to the themes of intertextuality, memoria, gender, and imagination. Culturally, the German speaking world continues to define itself in relation to its southern European neighbours: the authors continue their cultural mapping along a North-South divide, with the intellectual geography of Europe maintaining its relevance.

However, the six literary travels to Italy reveal an epistemological map that differs greatly from that which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe famously created in his *Italienische Reise*. As the texts explore (with metafictional flair) their inability to escape the cultural episteme that they inherit, they turn their attention to altering the episteme itself by focussing on their own fictionality. In so doing, they breathe a new lease of life into a reformed literary "Italy" that no longer promises the harmonious alignment of the subject with their world, but increasingly discovers the narrative freedom to articulate a fractured sense of self.

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