Unbecoming:
Klaus Mann, Failure, and the Queer Novel

Robin Crawford

Lincoln College, University of Oxford

Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Hilary Term 2026

Robin Crawford, Lincoln College, University of Oxford
Unbecoming: Klaus Mann, Failure, and the Queer Novel
Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Hilary Term 2026

Short Abstract:

This thesis puts forward a re-examination of Klaus Mann's long-form prose works as an intentional and intensified practice of the queering potential of the novel genre. It reevaluates Mann's work through close readings utilising lenses of genre theory and queer theory. It demonstrates that, in his work, failure as both a formal and thematic principle functions to challenge normativities with a gesture of insistent refusal that expands the potential of living through processes of undoing and unbecoming.

The body of the thesis is divided into three chapters. The first focusses on the novels *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden*, investigating them as Bildungsromane that highlight the inconsistency of the genre overall: that ongoing development and the resolution of an ending are incompatible. By refusing such resolution, Mann demonstrates that failure itself can be generative, sparking ongoing reorientations to access new ways of existing. Chapter Two addresses the biofictional novels *Alexander* and *Symphonie Pathétique*, using ideas of unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires which incite onwards movement within and beyond the text to show the ongoing hope and desire that continuous, constructive failures can allow. In the third chapter, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* and *Der Vulkan* are treated as examples of montage-structured chronicles. Through their patchwork construction, they suggest the individual's dissolution and the limits of representation, emphasising the purpose locatable in communities that outlive individual characters and the hope that failure can intervene in crises as an impetus for change.

I argue that while the novel is a mode inherently open to failure, Klaus Mann's programmatic exploration of different formal frameworks and recurring queer characters that invite outsider perspectives on the systems they live in allows us to resituate his work at a juncture of failure and hope, and sheds light on the queering potentialities of the modernist novel more generally.

Robin Crawford, Lincoln College, University of Oxford
Unbecoming: Klaus Mann, Failure, and the Queer Novel
Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Hilary Term 2026

Long Abstract:

This thesis sets out to reexamine Klaus Mann's prose fiction through lenses of queer theory, genre theory, and the theory of failure. It offers a corrective to limiting critical views on Klaus Mann and his writing, rooted in biographical foci, particularly regarding the retrospectively applied distinction between his 'early' and 'exile' work. Instead, Mann's works are argued to be queer, queering, and failing novels. This intersection allows us to view Mann's texts as actively working against normative standards: thematically, by portraying characters of diverse genders, desires, and identities; formally, by writing texts that trouble expectations of genre and structure; and, overall, by questioning the value of success as any type of straightforwardly positive goal for individuals or for artistic form. As such, his texts expand the potential of individual characters and of the novel. This establishes a new critical framework for assessing Mann's oeuvre, in which his works can be analysed as innovative literary constructs, whose deliberate leaning into the practice of failure intensifies the novel's inherent queering potential.

The originality of the thesis lies in its argument that failure is a central component of Mann's work which has been largely unexplored in previous criticism. It argues that failure manifests in processes of undoing and unbecoming, not just thematically, but also in the forms of Mann's novels, profoundly destabilizing any dichotomy between success and failure, and renegotiating what it might look like to work queerly against and around norms and boundaries, rather than aiming for them. As such, failure becomes a way to expand personal growth, to trouble fixities, to

defamiliarize the unthinkingly accepted, and to encourage hope and purpose without the necessity of resolution. Integral to Mann's version of failing is not only queering as a technique, but also the queer characters and desires featured across his novels. Mann uses these figures, I argue, to expand understandings of how the individual experiences desire, space, time, and their own identity. This thesis contends that Mann's use of failure and queerness is embedded in texts which intentionally interact with, and often trouble, existing templates for literary form under the category of the novel genre. Formally, Mann is as concerned with processes of undoing as he is when it comes to identity constructs, and this manifests in texts which question the usefulness of linearity and unity, and instead posit that by failing and by queering the boundaries of what is expected, the potential of literature as a way of documenting, but also living and surviving, is brought to the fore.

The Introduction to this thesis discusses how Mann sets up success to be interrogated, and failure as productive when decoupled from the polarity in which it is usually viewed. It further explains how failure can be seen to function both thematically and formally in Mann's novels as a 'queering' force that troubles categorisations and boundaries. Failure itself is shown to offer possibilities for learning, growth, and opportunity, and thus to offer a type of hope. The Introduction then presents an assessment of critical views on Klaus Mann and his work, particularly highlighting the reductive insistence on reading Mann's work in terms of his biography and bisecting it according to these external factors. It argues that, by either minimising his failures or reading them solely as weaknesses, critics have failed to consider failure as an intentional aesthetic gesture on Mann's part. Mann's nuanced portrayals of queer characters, alongside his queering of narrative forms, are also discussed as

foreshadowing later queer theoretical concerns with the breakdown of the individual and the opportunities offered by refusing to conform.

The Introduction goes on to discuss the novel as a genre, framing it as essentially malleable, modern, and individualistic, and thus particularly appropriate for queering the fluid pathways taken by fluid characters, especially in its more modernist incarnations. It presents genre as offering formal frameworks which individual works often call into question, and which Mann's work questions openly and insistently. The meanings of 'queer' are also addressed, particularly as a way of representing an undoing of normative ideas of gender and desire, precisely because the term has no single definition. Unbecoming, as a way for the individual to become undone, is presented as a more productive version of 'becoming', one in which there is no expected final form, and this also constitutes the key contention of the term 'queer failure'. The 'queer novel', as I argue we encounter it in Klaus Mann, represents an approach to the genre which intentionally exploits its boundary-troubling nature and reflects this on the level of its themes and characters.

The roles of failure, queerness and genre in Mann's work are investigated through close readings of six novels written by Mann in the 1920s and 1930s, with two novels analysed in each of the three main chapters of the thesis, divided according to their respective formal approaches. Chapter One focusses on the novels *Der fromme Tanz* (1926) and *Flucht in den Norden* (1934), and investigates these as Bildungsromane. It begins by discussing the literary concept of the Bildungsroman, drawing attention to the fact that most historical examples of the genre are already 'failures', because the protagonist's development is cut short by a return to the normative context they typically break free of at the start of the book. The chapter goes on to examine in detail Jack Halberstam's concept of 'queer failure' as offering less

typical, but more productive processes of development, which correspond to the way Mann's characters function. Foucault's understanding of desire and the subject is engaged to show how self-development can be framed as happening through desire for another. *Der fromme Tanz* is analysed as an example of a Bildungsroman that fails to offer development towards a final, finished form for its protagonist, Andreas. Subsections address the novel's presentation of art as inadequate to expression when it strives for a finished product; space as destabilized and destabilizing the possibility of a return home; the self as non-self-same and unknowable in its entirety; and stories as inconclusive and intentionally resistant to resolution. In this text, I argue, failure is present in Mann's framing of it from the start as a confused novel reflecting the confusion of his generation. The protagonist, Andreas, 'fails' in traditional Bildungsroman terms by reaching no resolution, but succeeds, when we break down the success/failure polarity, because his growth continues unbounded, as reflected by the fluid forms of dance from which the novel takes its title. In the second half of the chapter, *Flucht in den Norden* is assessed as another version of a Bildungsroman, in which the protagonist, Johanna, is caught between love and political commitments, and ultimately opts for the latter, which allows her to continue moving forwards rather than foreclosing her development. Subsections focus on the construction of Johanna as troubling identity categories; on normative, heterosexual romance as a façade, the failure of which drives Johanna forwards; on place as inadequate and psychologically constructed; and on form as delaying the climax of the book and propelling Johanna's development beyond it. Since it was written after Klaus Mann had gone into exile, *Flucht in den Norden*, as a Bildungsroman, presents development on different axes to *Der fromme Tanz*. I argue that the text shows Johanna attempting to reconcile desires that pull her in opposing directions, and choosing in the end the path that allows her to

maintain a sense of purpose and the possibility of growth and change within herself: the choice not to marry and thereby withdraw from political awareness. Positioning this choice at the very end of the novel, Mann makes clear that the true development is only just beginning. Ultimately, this chapter of the thesis argues that, in his use of the Bildungsroman, failure to develop normatively operates as a generative process for Mann. There can be no completed, final form for the individual to reach. Instead, desire propels the protagonists forward, and development takes place through the routing of desire through others and through the self viewed specularly.

Chapter Two focusses on the novels *Alexander* (1929) and *Symphonie Pathétique* (1935) as examples of biographical fiction that depict the historical figures Alexander the Great and the composer Tchaikovsky, respectively. The chapter begins with an overview of biographical fiction as a genre related to historical and biographical novels, as well as autobiography, outlining the usefulness of an approach which, in Mann's case, is simultaneously grounded in history and brings history into the present moment as an act of displacing perspective and troubling narration. The analysis of *Alexander* is structured into subsections which investigate the idea of utopia, as named in the novel's subtitle, as a way to conceive of unachievable desires that provide forward motion precisely because they remain unfulfilled; the construction of fragmented identities that further displace the experience of the story; and endings which cannot be reached but whose draw is constitutive of future-oriented hope. In this novel, I argue that failure is embedded in the construction of a character attempting to reach for what is fundamentally beyond, reflected in Mann's approach to a historical figure which dislocates him from his context while retaining distance to the present. Pulled onwards by desires for knowledge, territory, and men, Alexander's ultimate longing for boundlessness means no fulfilment is possible, and the hope, rather than the

achievement, is the propulsion for the character's onward movement, within the text and beyond it. Addressing *Symphonie Pathétique*, subsections of the chapter look at 'elsewhere' as a spatial concept that cannot be attained, the pursuit of which is an ongoing process echoing Alexander's chasing of boundlessness; at experiences which elude location in time and space through both their thematization and narrativization; at the impermanence of music as a symbol for transience, identity and memory; at desires as blurred and blurring of identity and temporal and spatial orientation; and at closure as irresolute and an actively avoided opportunity for reductive clarity. In this text, Tchaikovsky is taken out of his context while at the same time being grounded in it, troubling the lines between past and present, history and fiction. Time and space are fluid entities that exist, along with his other desires, always outside of what the protagonist can grasp. In each of Mann's biofictional novels, I argue, failure operates in the ways that desire pulls the characters beyond themselves. Displacement is inherent to this desire, to this failure, and the historical figures are displaced into the readers' present as well.

Chapter Three of the thesis analyses *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1932) and *Der Vulkan* (1939), the latter of which was the final novel published in Mann's lifetime, as examples of montage-structured texts aimed at chronicling moments in time. Initially, montage is explored in the context of modernist literary approaches more generally, but also, in Mann's specific usage, as motivated by a desire to represent particularly disordered and multiply experienced points in history. As such, it becomes a way to document, or chronicle, historical crises and experiences of transience and emigration. Additionally, ideas of queer survival are connected to Mann's literary project, with both his montage chronicles and queer survival demonstrating that the individual lives on in the pieces left behind, in others and in texts. In analysing *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*,

subsections focus on constructions of simultaneity that undermine linear chronology; on space as fragmented and fragmentary; on writer figures who demonstrate the value of writing as documentation and also trouble the boundary between fact and fiction; on the dissolution of the individual, which creates the potential to live in new ways; and on accessing the infinite through giving up the primacy of the self. This novel shows, I argue, moments in the lives of individuals caught in the processes of dissolution and dispersal, in collapses which also break down the boundaries separating them from each other. Identities are reconstituted in new ways, held together in the framework of narration that both binds and loosens the ties between the constituent parts of the story in an ongoing process. In addressing *Der Vulkan*, Mann's conceptualisation of the text and the use of epigraphs are discussed. Subsections then analyse processes of writing as a way of accessing dimensions of time and space beyond one's own, and offering hope as a result; the chronicle that exists within the book, and as which the book itself functions, which aims to document, and consequently keep alive, a world in pieces; remembrance of the dead as a way to highlight survival in collectivity; the loss of home and orientation that in turn creates constant reorientations; the position of an angel figure bordering the events of the text and holding together the disparate parts, in reflection of the narrative itself; and purpose beyond the limits of the self as the novel's ultimate concern, located in political responsibility and community that underlines the possibility of hope and survival for the characters, even if these concepts transcend what the individual is capable of reaching. In *Der Vulkan*, I argue, none of the norms which might once have measured success hold up, and so, more explicitly than in any other of Mann's novels, the entire concept of success and failure must be rethought and reworked. There is no winning, no resolution to reach, but continued striving for a better life, in a better world, as a better self. The pieces the characters of the novel, and the

novel itself, exist in, and are held together by narrative and by the community that allows each piece to be more, and to matter more, than it would alone. There is survival in others, survival in words, and purpose that embraces failure and keeps on carrying on. In both of Mann's montage chronicles, the failure that, in his Bildungsromane, enabled growth, and that, in his biofictional works, functioned as ongoing, hopeful, but unfulfilled desire, becomes a way of surviving in pieces and through crisis. It allows the reconstitution of what seems broken, repairing without ever obscuring the damage. History is portrayed in its fragmented, experienced reality, heterochronic and scattered, both geographically and between characters and perspectives.

The thesis concludes that Klaus Mann's novels resituate failure as a site for rethinking growth, identity, desire, purpose, hope, and survival, and in doing so bring to the fore the novel's inherent inclination towards the queering of success and completion. Across his oeuvre, he presents variations of writing the undoing and unbecoming of everything: the individual, the novel, times, and places. Mann's version of the queer novel brings forward the non-normative desires and identities of his characters, which are defined by, and in turn define, queer failure as it exists in his work, and he does this by resisting formal norms. Reworking success and failure means that there can be no simple, outside judgment of what a good life, or a good person, or a good text looks like. Through showing how all things can be undone, Mann shows that anything is possible. Potential is inherent to dissolution, and failing is also an active gesture of refusal towards standards that Mann, and his characters, reject.

Table of Contents

Short Abstract i
Long Abstract iii

Acknowledgements 3

List of Abbreviations 4

Introduction 5
I. 'The Essence of Nonsuccess' 8
II. Undoing Genre: Form and Queerness 23
III. Out of the Undoing 35

Chapter 1: Going Wrong: *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden* 42

Der fromme Tanz. Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend 63
Failures of Art 64
Failures of Space 69
Failures of Self 77
Failures of Stories 82

Flucht in den Norden 88
The Failing Self 92
The Failing Romance 97
The Failing Place 105
The Failing Form 114

Conclusion 117

Chapter 2: Going Elsewhere: *Alexander* and *Symphonie Pathétique* 119

Alexander. Roman der Utopie 133
Unachievable Desires 137
Unfinishable Selves 154
Unreachable Endings 156

Symphonie Pathétique. Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman 160
Unattainable Space 163
Unlocatable Experiences 166
Impermanent Art 175
Inseparable Longings 177

Uncertain Closure 185

Conclusion 187

Chapter 3: Coming Together: *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* and *Der Vulkan* **190**

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen 202
Enacting Time 205
Decentring Space 208
Rewriting the Author 214
Dissolving the Self 220
Forming the Infinite 226

Der Vulkan. Roman unter Emigranten 229
Writing (for) Hope 236
Documenting Pieces 240
Remembering the Dead 245
Losing Position 249
Observing the Homeless 253
Creating Purpose 258

Conclusion 265

Conclusion: Turning and Re-Turning **268**

Bibliography **275**
(i) Primary Sources 275
(ii) Secondary Sources 277

Acknowledgements

My gratitude is owed firstly to the funders of my doctorate: the AHRC, the Open-Oxford-Cambridge Doctoral Training Partnership, the Clarendon Fund, and All Souls College, Oxford. Without their generosity, this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Kirstin Gwyer, whose endless patience, encouragement, and advice have been invaluable over the years.

Above all, thank you to my friends, felines, and family, especially my parents, Sandra and Martin, for their unwavering support in this and all my other endeavours.

List of Abbreviations

A	Klaus Mann, *Alexander: Roman der Utopie* (1929) (Rowohlt, 1989)
FidN	Klaus Mann, *Flucht in den Norden* (1934) (Anaconda Verlag, 2020)
DfT	Klaus Mann, *Der fromme Tanz: Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend* (1926) (Bruno Gmünder, 1982)
KdZ	Klaus Mann, *Kind dieser Zeit* (1932) (Rowohlt, 2005)
SP	Klaus Mann, *Symphonie Pathétique: Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman* (1935) (Rowohlt, 2019)
TP	Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in this Century* (1942) (Serpent's Tail, 1987)
TiU	Klaus Mann, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1932) (Anaconda Verlag, 2020)
DV	Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (1939) (e-artnow, 2021)
WP	Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht* (1952) (Rowohlt, 2019)

Introduction

Mephisto: Roman einer Karriere, Klaus Mann's most famous work by some distance, is a novel about success. Over the course of several years, the central character Hendrik Höfgen, an actor, moves up from the provincial stage to become the flagship performer of Berlin's National Socialist elite by the mid-1930s.[1] He embodies a form of success that prioritizes the end-product above all, insists on the most direct linear path to achieve it, and is willing to compromise any moral stance that would stand in his way. Put another way: in the most commercially and critically successful of Mann's novels, the very worth of goal-oriented success, as instantiated most perniciously where the norm underpinning this definition is embodied by a totalitatian regime, is fundamentally called into question. At the same time, Höfgen's insistence on linearity is undermined formally in KM's novel by its refusal to adhere to any single, straightforward approach to narrative structure and technique or categorical genre boundaries. Accordingly, although *Mephisto* is labelled a 'Roman' in its subtitle, exactly what type of novel it is has defied critical consensus.[2] Critics have referred to it as a Künstlerroman,[3] an Entwicklungsroman[4] or (satirical) Bildungsroman,[5] and a biographical,[6]

---

[1] Cf. Wayne Kvam, 'Gründgens, Mann, and Mephisto', *Theatre Research International*, 15.2 (1990), pp. 141–50 (p. 142), doi:10.1017/S0307883300009238.
[2] Cf. Peter T. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann* (Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 96.
[3] Luca Zenobi, 'Sadomasochism and Identity Narratives in the Weimar Republic: Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*', *Whatever*, 3 (2020), pp. 5–24 (p. 5), doi:10.13131/2611-657X.whatever.v3i0.66.
[4] Cf. Lutz Winckler, '"ein richtig gemeines Buch, voll von Tücken": Klaus Manns Roman *Mephisto*', in *Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bouvier, 1984), pp. 46–80 (p. 54).
[5] Cf. Martin Halliwell, *Transatlantic Modernism: Moral Dilemmas in Modernist Fiction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 183, doi:10.1515/9781474497121; Joachim Riesthuis, 'Blacks and Exiles: African American and German Exiled Authors, 1933-1952' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 2004), p. 97 <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/blacks-exiles-african-american-german-exiled/docview/305098549/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026].
[6] Harriett Virginia-Ann Jernigan, 'The Descending March of Humanity: Masochism and the Modernist Imaginary' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1998), p. 150

autobiographical,[7] documentary,[8] or historical novel.[9] Structurally, it is composed as a montage, comprised of vignettes focussing on, and focalized through, several other characters besides Höfgen. In terms of textual cohesion, then, again from a perspective that values quantifiable outcome above all else, the text is a failure.

In *Mephisto*, the tension between the novel's form and its content is designed to suggest that the protagonist's success is surface-level only. It works to reinforce the book's function as a political satire. Mann's other six novels are similarly formally fluid, but since none is conceived entirely as satire, the failing form does not undermine the characters, but rather reflects and is reflected by characters who are themselves fluid, anti-categorical, and, in a sense, failing. In contrast to *Mephisto*'s Höfgen, each of Mann's other six novels features main characters who are queer or queer-presenting, who are same-sex desiring, gender non-conforming, or both. These characters, like the novels in which they exist, question the value of strict categorization and any normatively-accepted classification of identities, desires, and what successful and failing lives might look like. As such, throughout his novels, Mann is concerned with troubling the polarity of success and failure, asking if some forms of success might not in fact be thinly-veiled failures, and if, conversely, greater opportunities for living beyond strict normativities may be opened up in failing.

While the disintegration of linearity is common practice within the context of the modernist novel, Klaus Mann deliberately and programmatically embeds this formal approach within a broader gesture of productive failing which is specifically concerned

---

<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/descending-march-humanity-masochism-modernist/docview/304457251/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026].

[7] Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, *Nazi Characters in German Propaganda and Literature* (Brill, 2018), p. 87, doi:10.1163/9789004365261.

[8] Rolf Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', *Aufbau*, 12.12 (December 1956), pp. 1105–19 (p. 1114).

[9] Cf. Emanuela Barasch-Rubinstein, *Mephisto in the Third Reich: Literary Representations of Evil in Nazi Germany* (De Gruyter, 2015), p. 26; Lorenz, *Nazi Characters*, p. 87.

with the queer and queering. Mann's work operates queerly, on both thematic and formal levels, when we understand 'queer' as a term which 'acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm'.[10] For Mann, this opposition is never constitutive of a dichotomy with the norm, but involves an ongoing renegotiation of positionality in relation to it, and a troubling of it as a concept. The troubling occurs through his characters and at the level of genre and structure. The three rough generic groupings from which *Mephisto* takes elements – the Bildungsroman (including the Künstlerroman as the document of an artist's development, and the Entwicklungsroman); biographical fiction (comprising also autobiography, documentary and historical fiction); and something resembling literary montage or multifocality – are the groupings Mann explores separately throughout his other novels, of which two can be loosely classed as Bildungsromane, two as biographical fiction, and two as montage projects. In *Mephisto*, he uses parts of all of these frameworks at the same time, creating an even more distinct formal disorder to contrast with the 'success' of his protagonist. In his other novels, the different generic approaches manifest in distinct structures and in contrasting relationships to the stories they represent, though in each case any appearance of neat categorical distinction is comprehensively dissolved. The queer works against norms, much as failure does, and the same anti-normative attitude is apparent in Mann's use of genre to interrogate and reformulate inherited literary forms.

Drawing together the strands of formal and thematic non-normativity thus far identified, my reading of Klaus Mann asserts that failing, as he understands it, is not the opposite of success, but rather a way of collapsing the success/failure binary and exploring what opportunities might be offered, formal and thematic, if conventions are

[10] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62.

deliberately called into question. *Mephisto* is concerned with undermining the usefulness of a concept of success that insists on a simple teleology and ignores moral responsibility. Mann's other novels come at the same problem from a different direction, in asking instead what success might look like if failure is taken to be an integral part of it, if its underlying assumptions are queered, and if no final achievement is even possible. *Mephisto*, Mann's only political satire,[11] and the only one of his novels without an identifiably queer central character,[12] represents an outlier in its approach to undoing the success/failure dichotomy. While I began with *Mephisto*, it is therefore the other six of Mann's novels that this study goes on to analyse, addressing their concern with the possibilities enabled by failure, and the specific value they place on the queer and queering, instead of centring the downfalls of success. Across these six novels, failure, and queering, allow Mann to take apart inherited literary forms and expected life trajectories, which affords new ways of living and self-constructing, and opens up the expansion of the individual beyond any boundaries attempting to contain them.

I. 'The Essence of Nonsuccess'

In highlighting the potentialities of the non-normative, uncategorical, and non-dichotomous, Mann approaches the representation of queerness and failure in a fundamentally analogous way. For Mann, failure is oriented towards growth, hope, and survival. In this he anticipates by a century a development discernible in recent discussions of failure as a lens to interpret the world, as suggested by publications such

[11] Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 96.
[12] Jernigan, 'The Descending March', p. 151.

as the *Routledge International Handbook of Failure* in 2023. The introduction to that volume claims that

> Contemporary society is built on admitting failure and on acknowledging its transformative power as a trigger of social dynamics and individual destiny change. We are becoming more and more skilled in coming to terms with failure, in being grateful for the knowledge failure yields and for its emancipatory power.[13]

In an additional sign of failure's relevance to the Zeitgeist, a *Guardian* article from December 2025 heralds an upcoming travelling exhibition, the *Museum of Failure*, founded by a Dr Samuel West. This museum is conceived to be 'not about ridicule but about understanding ambition, risk, and the lessons embedded in collapse'.[14] Certainly this is a judgment made from a position of privilege, that is, from within a context in which failure can be processed as an enriching experience rather than an insurmountable downfall. Nevertheless, it points towards an increasing recognition that failure opens up opportunities, rather than – or at least in addition to – closing them off, as limited and limiting interpretations and impositions of 'success' tend to do.

Failure represents opportunity by expanding beyond what is offered by the 'norm', the culturally-held idea of what acceptable success looks like, and thus also embodies an attitude of resistance to or refusal of it. However, this opposition never forms a straightforward dichotomy, and the resistance in question is always entangled with what it opposes as it seeks not just to reverse but to reframe the terms of the polarity. Ideas of 'queer failure' that rely on a contrast to the 'normative figurations of

[13] Adriana Mica and others, 'FAIL! Are We Headed towards Critical Failure Studies?', in *Routledge International Handbook of Failure*, ed. by Adriana Mica and others (Routledge, 2023), pp. 3–22 (p. 3), doi:10.4324/9780429355950-2.
[14] Amelia Hill, 'The Titanic, Sinclair C5 and Brexit: the Museum of Failure is coming to the UK', *Guardian*, 25 December 2025 <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/dec/25/titanic-sinclair-c5-brexit-museum-of-failure-coming-uk> [accessed 24 March 2026].

success' which 'imply that queer subjects and queer experience in general are set for failure' are therefore only seeing part of the picture.[15] Thomas Mercier argues that:

> as soon as theory attempts to define failure, to describe what constitutes a *proper* failure, it must presuppose the norm's success and cannot avoid reproducing, by the same token, a success/failure dichotomy itself attached to a queer/unqueer binary. In investing failure *as opposed to success* – which thus remains failure's point of reference – one always risks espousing a dialectical onto-teleology and being ventriloquized by success and its powerful, seductive narrative – while this narrative is itself phantasmic, spectral, marked by incompleteness and fallibility.[16]

Success and failure are both limited concepts, relying on a specific perspective in relation to given norms, and which can and should therefore only be understood relationally. Dubbing failure as some sort of 'new success' thus endorses the very dichotomy that the aim of queering attempts to resist. What we see in Klaus Mann's work is queering queer failure, as it were, by not framing it as the new success but as non-success, unbecoming, undoing, a constant process without an arrival, a trigger for change, expansion, and dislocation, but not necessarily 'improvement' when seen from the outside. Failing resists the norm, but also undoes it. In this undoing, it opens up new possibilities that do not rely on an external validation of success. These possibilities, created by failing and queering, constitute a kind of hope for those the norm suppresses.

As a version of hope in this sense, failure becomes a way to drive us onwards, rather than foreclosing forward motion in the way that the achievement of outcome-oriented success can. In his late teens, Klaus Mann performed a routine in a Berlin cabaret. His performance was not well received. In an autobiography, he later wrote: 'it was a flop with a vengeance; it was the essence of nonsuccess, the complete lack of

[15] Thomas Clément Mercier, 'Beyond Failure: Queer Theory's Fallibilities', in *Routledge International Handbook of Failure*, ed. by Adriana Mica and others (Routledge, 2023), pp.446–67 (p. 452), doi:10.4324/9780429355950.
[16] Ibid., pp. 458–9. Original emphasis.

response, the washout in its nightmarish extreme' (*TP*, 90). This experience of early failure sets up an understanding of non-success as a creative motivator, since Mann writes almost exactly this same cabaret scenario for the protagonist of his first novel, Andreas.[17] Andreas fails, he learns, and he creates something new from the experience, but, crucially, this does not suspend or undo the failing. Mann's anecdote also indicates what would become the standard relationship between Mann and his critics, which was then – and often continues to be – one in which he rarely measures up to expectations.

Critical views of Klaus Mann do take failure into account, but usually only as a posthumous judgment on his short life and largely unsuccessful (at least in his lifetime) literary production. The shortcomings attributed to Klaus Mann are typically based on features of his biography, where much published criticism of him has begun and ended. Born in November 1906 in Munich, Klaus Mann secured a job in Berlin as a theatre critic at the age of 18 via his uncle Klaus Pringsheim,[18] where the cabaret episode would then take place. He travelled extensively from his youth onwards, and was openly gay since the 1920s.[19] Subsequently, Mann went into voluntary exile in March 1933, initially decamping to Paris.[20] His exile can be seen as an act of making permanent what was already Mann's approach to, and experience of, his life, comprising frequent travel and a lack of any identifiable home base.[21] In fact, Mann's life as a whole has been described as a 'Hotelzimmer-Existenz'.[22] With exile, Mann's political views were also

[17] Cf. Klaus Mann, *Der fromme Tanz: Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend* (1926) (Bruno Gmünder, 1982), pp. 59-61.
[18] Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', p. 1106.
[19] Cf. C. von Maltzan, *Masochismus und Macht: Eine kritische Untersuchung am Beispiel von Klaus Manns "Mephisto, Roman einer Karriere"* (Heinz, 2001), p. 11, and Thomas Medicus, *Klaus Mann: Ein Leben* (Rowohlt Berlin, 2024), p. 9, where Medicus suggests that Mann effectively 'outed' himself with the publication of his first novel.
[20] See chronology in Katrin Höcherl, *Ein Leben im Dazwischen: Klaus Mann nach 1945: Das Scheitern eines literarisch-politischen Intellektuellen* (Bolz, 2003), pp. 165–70.
[21] Cf. Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', p. 1111.
[22] Hans Jürgen Baden, *Literatur und Selbstmord: Cesare Pavese, Klaus Mann, Ernest Hemingway* (Klett, 1965), p. 91.

solidified, and he became a committed anti-fascist,[23] emigrating to the US in 1936,[24] where he later became an American citizen and joined the US army in 1943. He died a few years later in May 1949 in Cannes from an overdose of sleeping pills, at the age of 42. His suicide is sometimes read as an acknowledgement of a failed life, while the fact that he never achieved recognition equivalent to that of his father Thomas Mann, or uncle, Heinrich Mann, further paints him as having fallen short.[25] Both views position Klaus Mann firmly in opposition to success, rather than recognizing his constant renegotiations of what success and failure signify.

Klaus Mann led a busy life, if not a celebrated one, and his writing career was no exception. He published seven novels in his lifetime: *Der fromme Tanz. Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend* (1926); *Alexander. Roman der Utopie* (1929); *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1932); *Flucht in den Norden* (1934); *Symphonie Pathétique. Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman* (1935); *Mephisto. Roman einer Karriere* (1936); and *Der Vulkan. Roman unter Emigranten* (1939). Mann also wrote and published plays and short stories, including the 1925 collection *Vor dem Leben*, in addition to three autobiographies: *Kind dieser Zeit* (1932), *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in this Century* (1942), and its German translation, *Der Wendepunkt. Ein Lebensbericht* (1952; published posthumously).[26] He was the editor of the exile journal *Die Sammlung* from 1933-35, and of *Decision* from 1941-42, and released a biography of André Gide – *André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought* – in 1943. Additionally, Mann co-authored two travel books and two books on German culture in exile with his sister

[23] Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', p. 1111.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Cf. Höcherl, *Ein Leben im Dazwischen*; Frederic Spott, *Cursed Legacy: The Tragic Life of Klaus Mann* (Yale University Press, 2016), doi:10.12987/9780300220971.
[26] *The Turning Point* was originally written in English; '1947 begann Klaus Mann, den autobiographischen Text für den deutschsprachigen Markt zu übersetzen' (Susanne Utsch, *Sprachwechsel im Exil: Die* '*linguistische Metamorphose*' *von Klaus Mann* (Böhlau, 2007), p. 343). As this was unpublished at the time of his death, I choose to refer to the earlier, English version throughout this study, except when referring to passages added only in the German translation.

Erika Mann (*Das Buch von der Riviera*, 1931; *Rundherum. Abenteuer einer Weltreise*, 1929; *Escape to Life. Deutsche Kultur im Exil*, 1939; *The Other Germany*, 1940), and wrote numerous critical essays, including the 1931 collection *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg*. Further essay collections, in addition to his surviving diaries and letters, have been published in the decades since Mann's death.

When dealing with Klaus Mann's extensive body of work, critics display a tendency to apply the very norms to his work that he seeks to undo through it, utilizing categorizations and normative standards of what counts as success, which results in a bisection of Mann's work that oversimplifies and frequently introduces misleading and limiting biases. Research on Klaus Mann tends to fall into a specific set of clearly delineated fields, particularly addressing Mann as a political representation of exile; his sexuality, to a lesser extent; and, above all, his biography and family relationships.[27] The disproportionate focus on *Mephisto* within this approach testifies to its far greater popularity, but it also points to broader patterns within the reception of Mann's works which routinely draw on posthumous judgements based more on Mann's perceived political development, read in terms of a maturation towards more 'successful' engagement, than on his works themselves. Accordingly, books written before Mann's exile are vastly less discussed in criticism, and, where they are, are usually treated in isolation from Mann's later works.[28] While his early works already display an ongoing questioning of thematic and formal bounds, critics have tended to view them as 'geprägt von schwachen, sehnsüchtigen, suchenden Figuren, die ihr Selbst im Konflikt mit der

[27] Cf. Veit Johannes Schmidinger, *Klaus Mann und Frankreich: Eine Untersuchung dieser Beziehung* (Tectum Verlag, 2005), pp. 13-16.
[28] For example: Gabriele Engelhardt, *Die Zeit in Klaus Manns früher Prosa: Untersuchungen zur Geistes- und Ideengeschichte seines Werks* (München: Dissertations- und Fotodruck Frank, 1982); Alison Ford, 'Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic: Literary Tradition and Experimentation in His Prose, 1924–1933' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-weimar-republic-literary-tradition/docview/301557040/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]; Samuel Clowes Huneke, 'The Reception of Homosexuality in Klaus Mann's Weimar Era Works', *Monatshefte*, 105.1 (2013), pp. 86–100, doi:10.1353/mon.2013.0027.

Vätergeneration, aber auch mit der Außenwelt, der Gesellschaft, den Konventionen der Zeit finden'.[29] The supposed weakness of his characters in his early works, read through a lens that moreover projects from Mann's perceived own generational conflict with the literary authority figures in his personal life, is reflected, apparently, in the weakness of the works themselves, which are generally accused of 'ästhetizistische Überspanntheit und moralische Unverbindlichkeit'.[30] From this perspective, his work is seen as riddled with shortcomings due primarily to a supposed lack of ability, and his thematic preoccupation with 'failed' characters as a reflection of this. In this respect, critics are bisecting Mann's oeuvre in order to establish a failure/success dichotomy in comparison to his later works, rather than exploring queerer understandings of his writing as questioning the very validity of that polarity.

According to this division of his work, Mann's exile functions as the defining event not only in the course of his life, but in the course of his literary output, which is retrospectively assessed as far more successful following this change in the author's circumstances.[31] This corresponds to a view that Mann became political only in exile, resulting in 'ein fast gänzlich neuer Ton in Manns Werk' as he supposedly shifts from dreamy disengagedness to realistic engagement.[32] It is also argued that Mann recognised that his belief in the collective of the youth, a tenet of his earlier works, lined up uncomfortably with Nazi rhetoric, leading to a reorientation in his work.[33] The shift – its visibility aided by Mann's later use of the term 'Turning Point' for his autobiography's title – is viewed in the context of a 'linear progression' formed on either side of this

[29] Karina von Lindeiner-Stráský, '"... der harte Glanz des Hasses": Satire und Humanismus im Exilwerk Klaus Manns', *Oxford German Studies*, 46.1 (2017), pp. 106–20 (p. 107), doi:10.1080/00787191.2017.1282662.
[30] Wilfried Dirschauer, *Klaus Mann und das Exil* (Heintz, 1973), p. 91.
[31] Cf. Dirschauer, *Klaus Mann und das Exil*, p. 34.
[32] von Lindeiner-Stráský, '"... der harte Glanz des Hasses"', p. 107.
[33] Cf. Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre: Untersuchungen zu Klaus Manns Emigrationsromanen* Flucht in den Norden *und* Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten (Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 22–23.

fulcrum, moving 'from juvenile disinterest to mature engagement, from apolitical fiction to committed prose and essayistic writing'.[34] Consequently, the exile works *Symphonie Pathétique*, *Mephisto* and *Der Vulkan* have been hailed as the 'drei großen Romane Klaus Manns', while his other works remain sidelined.[35]

Rather fewer critics have also pointed out the less explicit but very much present political engagement in Mann's earlier work, and that there are notable elements of continuity that bridge, and consequently call into question, the supposed shift.[36] Peter Hoffer, for example, notes that 'most of Klaus Mann's characters assumed the roles and characteristics of emigrants and displaced persons long before 1933', pointing towards a personal rather than historical justification for Mann's choice of figures.[37] Klaus Mann himself noted, in a diary entry reflecting on the year 1933, a 'stärkeres Hervortreten des Politischen' on his part, suggesting that the political was always there, and current events have merely drawn it out further.[38] Beyond the political, Nicole Schaenzler has argued that there is a clear 'innere Beziehung der beiden Schaffensperioden', consisting of the principle of 'Selbstfindung'.[39] Schaenzler rightly notes that Klaus Mann writes similarly-motivated characters throughout his career, but evidently still believes there are two separate periods of production, eliding the expansiveness she has just noted. Similarly, while 'Selbstfindung' may be a concern of Mann's characters, Schaenzler does not recognize that this is a process doomed to failure, because in fact, in Mann's novels, there is no preexisting self to find. Rather, identity is formed from the inside out,

[34] Francesco Albé, 'Queer (Dis)locations: Klaus Mann's Early Works and Weimar Homosexual Culture (1919–1933)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2023), p. 7, doi:10.17863/CAM.107266.
[35] Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', p. 1112.
[36] Cf. Albé, 'Queer (Dis)locations'.
[37] Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, pp. 77–78.
[38] Diary entry dated 27 December 1933 in Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. I: 1931–33, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 185.
[39] Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler: Studien zu seinen Romanen 'Der fromme Tanz' und 'Der Vulkan'* (Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p. 12.

at the intersection of a variety of experiences and desires. Thus, even where the continuity of aspects of Mann's work is recognized, there remains an inability to escape misleadingly categorical assessments of his oeuvre. Ultimately, the popular view of a shift in his work prevails, with the vast majority of critics insisting on setting boundaries and imposing genre categories and biographical and historical periodization on Mann's output. This approach measures success on a trajectory of formation, evolution, and progression towards artistic, personal, and political maturation, and, in remaining focussed on relative degrees of thematic or biographical evolution, has failed to take into account the formal coherence and consistency (even in inconsistency) of Mann's literary project overall. In all of the above, then, the critics of Klaus Mann apply the same benchmarks of success to his work that Mann in fact dismisses via the figure of Hendrik Höfgen in *Mephisto*. Mann himself, by contrast, breaks down the neat dichotomy of success and failure, and the premise of this study is that we can only fully do justice to his works by reading them through this lens.

The biographical is always at work in critical readings of Klaus Mann's work, but, as I have argued, this often results in limiting arguments. Klaus Mann did frequently portray elements of real life in his fiction, but critics again use this to assign his novels to one category or another, rather than emphasizing the undoing of all categories towards which Klaus Mann, as I will argue, is constantly working. Approaches treating his novels first and foremost as *romans à cléf*, rather than embracing the fluidity of forms that dissolve the boundary of the text to open it to the extra-textual, tend to overlook both the forms and the wider themes of Mann's work. Attempting to match up characters with Mann's real-life family and friends means that, in the process, critics often lose sight of his works as literary constructs. In particular, his novels often contain characters later read to be 'Selbstdarstellungen' of the author

himself.[40] On the one hand, Mann has been judged harshly 'wegen seines Hangs zur Selbstanalyse'.[41] On the other, 'gerade durch Manns Neigung zur Literarisierung der eigenen Existenz wird sein Werk zum eindrucksvollen Zeugnis für den Überlebenskampf eines Künstlers in einer krisenerschütterten, inhumanen Zeit'.[42] The (auto)biographical features of his books may suggest, on some level, a lack of imagination – but they also point to a relationship to reality with an increased sense of immediacy and urgency. However, a one-sided focus on these features obscures the constructed, literary nature of his texts, instead viewing them merely as biographical documents and *Zeitzeugnisse*.

Comparisons to his father Thomas Mann, and, to a lesser extent, his uncle Heinrich Mann, offer further examples of reductive binaries enforced in critical approaches to Klaus Mann.[43] Klaus Mann typically comes off worse in these comparisons. His relationship to his father was tense, not least because Thomas Mann's 'Existenz von vorn herein einen Schatten auf die seine warf'.[44] Consequently,

> Klaus Mann mußte sich klar von seinem Vater abgrenzen, um seinen eigenen Weg zu finden. So führte er sein Leben vollkommen antithetisch zu dem seines Vaters: Während Thomas Mann in einem geregelten Tagesablauf seine literarischen Werke verfaßte, folgte Klaus Manns Leben keinerlei Rhythmus. Er

[40] Eberhard Spangenberg, *Karriere eines Romans: Mephisto, Klaus Mann und Gustaf Gründgens: Ein dokumentarischer Bericht aus Deutschland und dem Exil 1925-1981* (Edition Spangenberg, 1982), p. 34.
[41] Dirschauer, *Klaus Mann und das Exil*, p. 15.
[42] Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler*, p. 159.
[43] E.g. Francesco Albé, 'Choreographies of (Dis)order: Dance and Same-Sex Desire in Thomas Mann's *Unordnung und Frühes Leid* (1925) and Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz* (1926)', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 90.3 (2021), pp. 214–28, doi:10.1080/09593683.2021.1999604; Rick Chamberlin, 'Coming Out of His Father's Closet: Klaus Mann's "Der Fromme Tanz" as an Anti-"Tod in Venedig"', *Monatshefte*, 97.4 (2005), pp. 615–627, doi:10.3368/m.XCVII.4.615; Osman Durrani, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Klaus Mann's Input into Doctor Faustus', *Oxford German Studies*, 34.2 (2005), pp. 173–179, doi:10.1179/174592105x84996; Gerhard Härle, *Männerweiblichkeit: Zur Homosexualität bei Klaus und Thomas Mann* (Athenäum, 1988); Fiona Malcolm, 'The Literary Relationship between Klaus and Thomas Mann' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 2003), doi:10.22024/UniKent/01.02.86427; Friedhelm Marx, 'Väter und Söhne: Literarische Familienentwürfe in Thomas Manns "Unordnung und frühes Leid" und Klaus Manns "Kindernovelle"', *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch*, 17 (2004), pp. 83–103 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24744319> [accessed 24 March 2026].
[44] Thomas Mann, letter to Hermann Hesse, 6 July 1949, in Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1948-1955 und Nachlese*, ed. by Erika Mann (S. Fischer, 1965), pp. 91–92 (p. 91).

> hatte in seinem ganzen Leben nie eine eigene Wohnung bezogen. Stattdessen lebte er in unzähligen Hotelzimmern aus dem Koffer.[45]

Positioning oneself in opposition to a Nobel laureate father implies already an embrace of failure, but this is not a full renunciation of the standard of success: after all, Klaus Mann becomes a writer, too. The disparity between their lives and work sets up a critical landscape in which Klaus always falls short of the standards set by, or at least attributed to, his father. In this comparison, there is no space for Mann to be viewed as failing for his own reasons, and in his own ways.

Although the ways in which Klaus Mann's own life influences and is reflected in his work are discussed in my treatment of his novels, I am not interested here in exploring in detail his familial relationships. Nor do I subscribe to a strict separation between his early and exile work. Rather, by pairing his novels together across his output – 'early works' with 'exile works' – my analysis demonstrates that his exploration of queering and the potential of form stretches across his novelistic output, even if his political resolution solidified somewhere in the middle. Previous critics have insisted on the biographical and the biographically-grounded shifts in his work, and have tended either to minimize his failures, or react to them solely as a flaw. Only by looking at his work in its entirety, and as pieces of literature above all, can we appreciate Mann's commitment to the project of resistance and progress, though never arrival, through failure, a concept which opens up the possibilities of undoing and redoing, of collapse and of remaking.

In his lack of concern with conforming to expectations, Mann was a pioneer: 'he dared to write the first gay play, the first gay novel and the first gay autobiography in

[45] Höcherl, *Ein Leben im Dazwischen*, p. 61.

Germany'.[46] Apart from *Mephisto*, all of his novels have at least one queer or queer-presenting protagonist, but assessments of his queer representation vary widely, and often view it in parallel to his political development. This oversimplifying perspective, as Francesco Albé aptly summarizes, 'reads the author's approach to homosexuality as a straightforward progression from a positive and naïvely aesthetic affirmation in the Weimar years to a more politically realistic and negative outlook in his exile'.[47] The linearity inherent in such a view oversimplifies the diversity of Mann's portrayals of queerness, and has resulted in critical views which tend to fall into a binary, according to which Mann is either affirmative of queer life and identities – usually in his early works – or deeply pessimistic, typically in his exile works.

Assessments which view Mann's early work as more positive in regard to queer representation tend to ignore the political implications already present in the very act of writing such representations. Accordingly, Mann's first novel, *Der fromme Tanz*, has been called 'an affirmation of queer life', in which the author 'demonstrates that same-sex desiring men can handle life and all its suffering. There is a future for them'.[48] Samuel Huneke has similarly argued that Mann's work:

> provided a mirror in which Germany's gay population found a welcomingly positive and real reflection, and acted as a template for gay men and women to see themselves in an increasingly even handed and affirmative way. For this, its uniquely affirmative depictions of gay men and women, Klaus Mann's literature was recognized, driving into the public sphere the principal questions of homosexuality.[49]

[46] Frederic Spotts, *Cursed Legacy*, p. 2.
[47] Albé, 'Queer (Dis)locations', p. 7.
[48] Javier Samper Vendrell, 'Queer Utopia in Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz*', *The German Quarterly*, 94.1 (2021), pp. 83–98 (p. 84), doi:10.1111/gequ.12157.
[49] Huneke, 'The Reception of Homosexuality', p. 86.

This supposed positivity may have been misplaced, even in the golden years of the Weimar Republic: 'Klaus Mann mußte sich nicht verstellen und tat es auch nicht. Ein Umstand, der dazu führte, daß er die Situation Homosexueller im allgemeinen als unrealistisch und zu positiv beurteilte'.[50] His own privilege as a born member of the literary elite and their relatively progressive circles may have obscured his understanding of a 'normal' queer experience at the time. This common consensus on Mann's earlier work overstates, and oversimplifies, the positivity of his representations, and understates the more complex and more political forces at play.

Those who view Mann's attitude to queerness more negatively – and this also often results in oversimplifications of a different nature – have tended to focus more on his later works, while making generalizations about his oeuvre as a whole, thus reinforcing a binary view of Mann's writing and once again ignoring the complexities of his portrayals. For example, Alexa-Désirée Casaretto argues: 'Wie der Autor selber, so bleiben die homosexuellen Helden seiner Erzählungen und Romane – ebenfalls meist Künstler und Intellektuelle – einsame Heimatlose', referencing specific characters in *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, *Der Vulkan*, and *Symphonie Pathétique*.[51] Casaretto further discerns a connection in Mann's works between homelessness, 'Todessehnsucht' and homosexuality.[52] The extent to which this apparent negativity is intentional is also a matter of debate. As Axel Plathe has argued,

> Trotz Klaus Manns Wunsch, die Homosexualität als lebendbejahende Liebe darzustellen, entwickelt sich seine Sicht dieser Liebe in seinem Werk gerade so, wie der Vater sie schildert: Es ist den Figuren Klaus Manns nicht möglich, glücklich zu werden; sie scheitern an ihrer Homosexualität.[53]

[50] Höcherl, *Ein Leben im Dazwischen*, pp. 68–9.
[51] Alexa-Désirée Casaretto, *Heimatsuche, Todessehnsucht und Narzissmus in Leben und Werk Klaus Manns* (Peter Lang, 2002), p. 43.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Axel Plathe, *Klaus Mann und André Gide: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte französischer Literatur in Deutschland* (Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1987), p. 127.

Plathe links failure, understood purely thematically, to homosexuality, suggesting that Mann does not in fact portray a possible future for queer characters but rather creates a situation in which there is no way to survive and be happy. This is a truth about Mann's work, but not a whole one. His characters are happy and sad, they die and they survive, they fail and they begin again.

Other critics have rightly viewed Mann's queer representation as more complex than a simple positive/negative dichotomy allows. Albé points out that Mann's early works are already 'concerned with the place of the queer subject within different forms of displaced community',[54] embracing 'a dislocation after which there is no clear relocation, but an open-ended directionality'.[55] This view allows Mann's later, seemingly more negative portrayals of queer characters to be seen as a continuation of a representation that was never straightforwardly positive. In a similar vein, Christina Wegel writes:

> Certainly, it has to be noted that in Mann's fiction a frighteningly high number of homosexuals end their life by their own hands. Mann, however, also gave life and death to a number of his heterosexual characters engaged in either self-destructive behavior or downright suicidal actions. He was, I claim, concerned with depicting the attempts at survival of his suicidal characters, who were, in the end, abandoned by their fellow human beings.[56]

These more complex views can be read as an acknowledgment that failure is an inherent component to Mann's version of queer stories. The causal, thematic connection these critics draw, however – in which homosexuality does not necessarily lead to one's

[54] Albé, 'Queer (Dis)locations', p. 29.
[55] Ibid., p. 192.
[56] Christina Jessica Wegel, 'Klaus Mann and Suicide in a Larger Historical Context' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2004), pp. 14–15 <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-suicide-larger-historical-context/docview/305215209/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026].

undoing, but certainly sometimes comes close to being presented as doing so – differs from my approach, which frames failure as an intentional strategy that instead draws a connection between the queer and the formal act of queering-to-undo. It is precisely because of Mann's understanding of failure that his characters are displaced and fall short of the lives they are trying to make for themselves. In my analysis, queerness acts as a way of experiencing failure that nevertheless facilitates a certain freedom and an ongoing struggle to survive.

Regardless of the positivity or negativity – or more complex positions – assigned to Mann's portrayal of queer characters, attention always remains on his thematic use of queerness, and ignores its formal presence in his texts. However, Mann goes beyond queer content: he also undertakes multiple queerings of the literary norms he comes up against. In his use of genre, Mann tends to follow the threads outlined above in relation to *Mephisto*, which comprise the Bildungsroman (*Der fromme Tanz*, *Flucht in den Norden*), biographical fiction (*Alexander*, *Symphonie Pathétique*), and literary montage (*Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, *Der Vulkan*). In all cases, he uses form as a standard against which queer contrasts can purposefully be highlighted, in a way that exposes inherent non-normative possibilities. In using generic standards and exposing their unavoidable failures to create newer, more obviously non-normative shapes, Mann combines the queer with the literary to reshape our understanding of the way literary forms work. This generic aspect of his literary approach remains largely unaddressed in criticism, precisely because his works are never taken into account collectively.

Klaus Mann's work features queer characters of a wide variety, representing non-normative embodiments of both gender and sexuality that are often far more interesting than critics set on biographical readings and neat 'gay male' labels seem to believe. His use of form is also a project of queering. The six novels I look at in detail in

this study do all feature queer characters and themes. In *Der fromme Tanz*, the protagonist Andreas falls in love with another young man, and is situated in a city milieu full of gender non-conforming and same-sex desiring characters. In *Alexander*, the eponymous protagonist is portrayed in a complicated love triangle with his two male friends, Hephaistion and Kleitos. *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* has no one discernible protagonist, but main characters include Richard Darmstädter, a gay man, and Froschele, a lesbian. In *Flucht in den Norden*, the protagonist is Johanna, apparently bisexual as well as gender non-conforming. *Symphonie Pathétique* presents Tchaikovsky as gay and in love with his nephew. Finally, in *Der Vulkan*, there is again no one protagonist, but characters such as gay lovers Martin and Kikjou and queer schoolboy Peti, along with several gender non-conforming characters, ensure that queer representation is a large part of the book. Beyond the thematic component, which is where previous critics have so often been content to remain, Mann's novels are queer in a formal sense – by dissolving structures, chronologies, and perspectives – and in a generic sense – by exploiting the full queerness of the novel. By reading Mann as intentionally writing failure, and reading his oeuvre as one queer and queering body, enacted thematically but above all formally and structurally and through a dismantling of the established boundaries of generic categories, we can begin to appreciate the true significance of his work as a sustained project of undoing.

II. Undoing Genre: Form and Queerness

The novel as genre is ideally suited for Klaus Mann's undertaking of failing, because it is in itself an uncategorizable and, arguably, 'failing' mode of literature. Genre is a tool for measuring thematic and formal normativities and deviations from them, imposing a

'line of demarcation' around and between aesthetic forms,[57] usually based on both 'outer form (specific metre or structure)' and 'inner form (attitude, tone, purpose […])'.[58] A perceived genre conditions a reader's expectations of a text. As Martin Swales explains:

> When we read a novel, we do so (whether we realize it or not) with certain expectations in mind. These expectations, these predispositions to a certain kind of reading, help to condition, and are in their turn conditioned by, the specific work before us. Hence, our understanding of the individual text is a constant movement between generality and specificity, between notional genre and given work.[59]

In Swales's formulation, genre – here exemplified in the novel – functions as a hermeneutic circle between the specific text and the wider generic concept in which we place it. It tells us what to expect, and then plays with those expectations. We see a microcosmic representation of this process in Klaus Mann's use of generic subtitles, largely of his own invention, such as 'Roman der Utopie', which aim to colour the lens through which a reader goes on to read the text.

Genre is always already about boundaries and the troubling of them. Under this umbrella, the novel specifically straddles fiction and non-fiction, representing a way of shaping the world in which the world also has a voice. In the history of literary genres, the novel is a relatively recent form, coming into being along with the printing technology that facilitates its necessarily physical existence. As such, it arises from material conditions rather than as a purely theoretical concept, and so is troublesome from the beginning. Its impurity as a form can be attributed to the fact that the novel

[57] Cf. Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. by Avital Ronell, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge, trans. by various (Routledge, 1992), pp. 221–252 (pp. 224–25).
[58] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature,* 1st edn (Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. 231.
[59] Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 10.

> develops from the lineage of non-fictitious narrative forms – the letter, the journal, the memoir or biography, the chronicle or history; it develops, so to speak, out of documents; stylistically, it stresses representative detail, 'mimesis' in its narrow sense.[60]

The novel is tied to the representation of history from the start, given a 'truth' value not immediately associated with other textual forms. However, it remains a literary form, and thus imposes a shape on what it represents. Frank Kermode asks the question: 'how far is it inevitable that a novel give a novel-shaped account of the world?' – and the answer must be that there is no other shape it could impart, although to imply that the novel has a single shape is, in itself, misleading.[61] The novel's 'truthfulness' remains precarious, given that the novel is 'assembled from the flotsam and jetsam of various literary forms'.[62] Caught between literary ancestors and awkwardly positioned between fact and fiction, the novel seems an unlikely candidate for success. This inherent fluidity means that there has been a non-normative potentiality in the novel genre all along, one that we see Klaus Mann consciously taking advantage of in his explicitly queer and actively failing books.

The fluidity of the novel and its relative youth as a genre mean that it intersects productively with concepts of modernity. Its youth leads Mikhail Bakhtin to explain that

> Of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book: it alone is organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is, to reading. […] Studying other genres is analogous to studying dead languages;

[60] Wellek and Warren, p. 216.
[61] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 143.
[62] Joseph Allen Boone, *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 3.

> studying the novel, on the other hand, is like studying languages that are not only alive, but still young.[63]

As such, the novel retains a mutability that older, more culturally ingrained genres may not. Equally, the novel bends to the demands of the individual that become more apparent with modernity. Indeed,

> if there is any one genre of literature whose development can be linked to this 'modern age', and in particular to the ethos of bourgeois individualism that emerged in the Enlightenment era, it is that of the novel, whose focus on the changing relationship between the individual and the social world equips it to play a vital role in these modernising societies' discourses about themselves and in their imaginings of their futures.[64]

The novel as a form is experienced individually by reading, rather than collectively by listening. It is written by, and for, individuals. Its reception occurs, therefore, in the individual members of its readership, rather than as a whole. It is a fragmented experience, and thus, in its non-self-sameness, a genre suited to express, and to call to, the queer.

The novel is a form based around the individual, but is also consistently dissolving that individual. This reaches a height in literary modernism, where the novel's concern with the individual means that it is an apt form for illustrating the collapse of the individual as once conceived. Innovations made by modernist authors – possible only in the relatively lax confines of a genre like the novel – include:

> the use of multiple perspectives, fragmented structures, nonlinear chronology, paratactic juxtaposition, associative rather than logical sequences of thought,

[63] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. and intro. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 2011), pp. 3–40 (p. 3).
[64] Graham Bartram, 'The German novel in the long twentieth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–14 (p. 2), doi:10.1017/CCOL0521482534.001.

> superimposed images or events to achieve the sensation of temporal and spatial simultaneity, narrative indirection, incompleteness, and self-reflexive commentary.[65]

Many of these innovations are utilized in Mann's work. Because the only unbreakable conventions of the novel are that it be a book and have some kind of narrative, there is a formal freedom that allows and even encourages experimentation and an openness which resists notions of achievement. It therefore can be seen to offer a particularly fitting form for unfinished and experimental subjects in analogue to its generic (non-)identity. For Klaus Mann, it opens up the possibility of writing in a way that eschews the standard markers of convention or success.

Modernism's concerns with outsider positionalities and with formal fragmentation and non-linearity mean that it fundamentally has to do with the queer: whether the individual existing on the margins, or the form that breaks from 'standard' modes of expression, its focus is on the possibilities offered by the non-normative. Heather Love notes that

> Since the term *queer* is so closely linked to the concept of the margin, the prominence of exile and alienation in even dominant modernism resonates with the outsider glamour of *queer*.[66]

Thus, if a novel is a product of modernism, it may also always already be queer. 'For what', asks Love, 'does the *queer* in *queer modernism* refer to? Everything? Or nothing at all?'[67] Klaus Mann's queer novels, then, may equally be referred to as modernist novels; the use of the designator 'queer novel' reflects an intentional reading of his texts in relation to queer forms and subjects. Klaus Mann is not so much queering the novel –

[65] Boone, *Libidinal Currents*, p. 5.
[66] Heather Love, 'Introduction: Modernism at Night', *PMLA* , 124.3 (2009), pp. 744–48 (p. 745), doi:10.1632/pmla.2009.124.3.744. Original emphases.
[67] Ibid., original emphases.

which hardly exists as a solid entity, anyway – as he is revealing the inherent queerness of 'the' novel and exploiting it in a demonstration of failure in and of his writing, laying bare in the process what other novelists, even other modernists, may be at pains to gloss over. While 'modernist' is not an inaccurate descriptor for Mann's work, it does assign him to a literary movement, albeit a distinctly fluid one, which comes with implied norms and limits, however loose. As such, it is a term I largely avoid beyond contextualizing the landscape in which Mann was writing.

Suited to portrayals of the individual as fluid and unfinished, the novel as a genre is also in a sense unfinished and incomplete. Georg Lukács claims that, in contrast to the 'in der fertigen Form ruhenden Sein anderer Gattungen', the novel appears 'als etwas Werdendes, als ein Prozeß'.[68] The process it demonstrates is 'die Wanderung des problematischen Individuums zu sich selbst'.[69] The novel, then, as a genre still developing, represents by necessity the developing individual that is its subject. This process of becoming, however, can be seen simultaneously as a process of unbecoming, when we take into account Bakhtin's assertion that 'the epic wholeness of an individual disintegrates in a novel'.[70] What could once be a complete figure is complicated and unravelled by a mode of representation in which things are constantly changing, and in which reality intrudes on the sacred grounds of myth. The novel, altogether, is a form rooted in experimentation, in which failure is at least as central a component as success: it is a form tied to mimesis, to history as well as imagination, to the unruliness of modernity and modernism, and to the individual in their increasing complexity, participating in ongoing processes of composition and decomposition over outcome and

[68] Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik* (Aisthesis Verlag, 2009), p. 56.
[69] Ibid., p. 62.
[70] Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', p. 37.

end product. When we think of the novel in these terms, we reveal it for what it has always been: a document of, and as, failure.

As something always troubling norms and limits, the novel is inherently a queer entity. The queer, for Klaus Mann, represents a way of renegotiating the normative limits set out across identity, desire, and the body; the novel offers the form to enact and embody these renegotiations, and failing provides the perspective to highlight the potential at the heart of refusing to work towards given standards. The force of the idea of 'queer', like the entity of the 'novel', lies in its non-specificity, but this means it is almost impossible to adequately define. Thomas Mercier points out that

> one of the strengths of queer is to challenge identities, definitions, and the univocity of meaning; so that, if you define what 'queer' supposedly 'is,' the 'being' of queer, if you assign it a one-and-only meaning, you have probably lost what is 'queer' about it.[71]

Nevertheless, we must have some idea of what it means if 'queer' is to be a usable term at all. David Halperin argues that:

> Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.* It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer,' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative.[72]

Halperin's (non-)definition rides on the *ex negativo* positioning of 'queer' as the anti-norm, but this leaves open a more positive reframing of 'queer' as the gaps around and in between the already explicated norm. This is captured in Halperin's use of the term 'positionality', rather than position, allowing for fluidity and a process of motion, not a

[71] Mercier, 'Beyond Failure', p. 451.
[72] Halperin, *Saint Foucault*, p. 62, original emphases.

stable dialectic. His framing is therefore less oppositional than it is relational and disruptive of the very notion of dichotomous opposition: the queer is not to be found in one thing or another, but in the spaces and the crossovers. This viewpoint is underlined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's statement:

> That's one of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.[73]

Again, queer consists in the inconsistencies, in the processes that cannot be confined to a position. Sedgwick's use of the term resonance suggests that part of what 'queer' means is located in its 'resonance' with the person using or applying that label, an unquantifiable feeling that it represents something both specific and non-specific all at once. In Klaus Mann's work, the lack of identity labels – his narrators do not refer to his characters, within the novels, as 'gay', rather suggesting their queerness through their attributes and actions – means that the queer similarly functions as a product of ambiguity, a tracing of desire and the body that never quite delineates a subject.

Because it describes a relationship of relationality, to queer things is not only to make them other to the norm, but also to deconstruct that norm itself, to undo assumptions, and, by showing that everything can be picked apart, to prove that everything is constructed. Whilst its adjectival usage is inevitably full of holes, the verbal use of '(to) queer' has clearer, if multiple, meanings. Susan Lanser discerns 'three academic uses' of the verb 'to queer':

[73] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8, doi:10.1515/9780822381860. Original emphasis.

> (1) to make a claim for the non-heteronormative sex, gender, or sexuality of someone or something; (2) to disrupt or deconstruct binary categories of sex, gender, and/or sexuality; and (3) to disrupt or deconstruct any entity by rejecting its categories, binaries, or norms.[74]

For Lanser, then, 'to queer' can mean identifying somebody or something as, essentially, gender non-conforming or same-sex desiring; it can be a way of disputing gender and desire as they are routinely categorized; and it can be a way of disputing binaries in general, disrupting both 'sides' of any given polarity. This final meaning is taken up by poststructuralists, where the concept of 'queering' can refer to 'deconstructing or 'making strange' what appears as 'normal' or the 'natural order of things''.[75] Defamiliarization is a key component of queering, as expounded by Helen Palmer in her monograph *Queer Defamiliarisation*. Palmer notes that 'recognition accepts without question preconceived categories of being, whereas seeing requires singular perception and therefore more labour. Defamiliarization allows each individual subject or object to be experienced anew.'[76] She underlines her point with the assertion that 'when you queer something you defamiliarise it'.[77] At the same time, 'to queer something is to breathe new life into it'.[78] Once again, by loosening bonds of meaning, new but always provisional ones are able to be created. Lanser's and Palmer's perspectives can be applied to the formal queering undertaken by Mann beyond his use of queer characters, where, while certainly disrupting ideas of desire and gender, he also disrupts established generic patterns with the result of their defamiliarization, a productive undoing that allows his novels to move in unexpected directions.

---

[74] Susan S. Lanser, 'Queering Narrative Voice', *Textual Practice*, 32.6 (2018), pp. 923–37 (p. 924), doi:10.1080/0950236X.2018.1486540.
[75] V. Spike Peterson, 'Towards Queering the Globally Intimate', *Political Geography*, 56 (2017), pp. 114–16 (p. 114), doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.01.001.
[76] Helen Palmer, *Queer Defamiliarisation: Writing, Mattering, Making Strange* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), p. 15.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 16.

The image of undoing and redoing is where the queer, the failing, and the novel meet. Judith Butler has argued that:

> the experience of a normative restriction becoming undone can undo a prior conception of who one is only to inaugurate a relatively newer one that has greater livability as its aim.[79]

Butler suggests that there is no escaping from normative restrictions entirely, but an ongoing questioning of them creates space for different modes of living. This undoing results in an unbecoming, as the limits defining an identity loosen. Unbecoming means that the individual is comprised also of parts located outside of ourselves, such that there is something left when identity dissolves. Butler affirms this in their argument that 'what is one's own is always from the start dependent upon what is not one's own, the social conditions by which autonomy is, strangely, dispossessed and undone'.[80] We define ourselves by what we exist in contrast and comparison to, and so we always exist partially beyond ourselves and relationally. Although this has the effect of limiting the organic power of the individual, it points to an understanding that the boundaries of personhood are always more complex and permeable than straightforward outlines allow. The undoing, the failing, allows for new freedoms, even if they are not entirely within our reach. The novel, undoing the limits it sits within, operates in much the same way.

Unbecoming is not the same as dying. In fact, in many ways, it merely names what becoming should be about, but often is not, in the same way that failing names

---

[79] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), p. 1, doi:10.4324/9780203499627.
[80] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 100. Butler has used 'they' pronouns for several years (cf. Kathryn Fischer, 'Das Pronomen ist frei vom Körper – aber es ist nicht frei vom Geschlecht,' *Tagesspiegel*, 13 May 2020 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/queerspiegel/das-pronomen-ist-frei-vom-korper-aber-es-ist-nicht-frei-vom-geschlecht-4149826.html> [accessed 24 March 2026]).

what success should embody, but often does not. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen note that,

> If queer theorists have agreed on anything, it is that, for queer thought to have any specificity at all, it must be characterized by becoming, the constant breaking of habits.[81]

This is a becoming free of any externally imposed goal to reach. Too often, becoming is followed by a noun, describing a process of attainment that assigns a linearity and a resolution to the individual that forecloses the possibility of future growth or change. McCallum and Tuhkanen explain their use of the term 'becoming' by drawing on Butler's work again, referring to the earlier *Gender Trouble*. In this text, they argue,

> becoming is figured not so much as a narrative of self-development, a bildungsroman, but embraced as a constant challenge to the limits, norms, and constraints on intelligibility that hem in and define a subject. […] Butler opens up the space to think queer becoming as *unbecoming*.[82]

To become, in Butler's queer sense, involves unbecoming, undoing limits, renegotiating the terms of our existence, and relocating ourselves above and beyond our own boundaries without a strictly oppositional position to them. Klaus Mann's version of queerness always works towards this mode of unbecoming, just as his use of genre is always an undoing, and failure always a tool that enables these processes to take place without ending. At the same time, 'unbecoming,' as synonymous with unseemly and unfitting, suggests Mann's reevaluation of the very idea of a binary appropriate/inappropriate dichotomy in his choice of subjects, so the embedding of

[81] E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, 'Introduction: Becoming Unbecoming: Untimely Mediations', in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. by E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (State University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 1–21 (p. 10), doi:10.1515/9781438437743.
[82] McCallum and Tuhkanen, 'Introduction', p. 10.

processes of unbecoming in his work also calls into question the vantage point that informs such critical verdicts based on dichotomous value judgements.

Because the queer, for Mann, is always about unbecoming and about undoing things, the 'queer novel' as a category can only ever be a provisional term, inherently being undone and renegotiated by the texts we preliminarily assign to it. To my knowledge, there have been no detailed studies of the 'queer novel', as a theoretical concept or in practice. Terms like 'gay novel' and 'homosexual literature', however, have been used. James Wilper, in a study on the 'gay novel' in German and English literature, states:

> I use a broad definition of the gay novel: it is the genre composed of novels in which men who recognized their same-sex desire (regardless of whether they would ascribe to this or a similar term) gave voice to that desire.[83]

Wilper's definition is somewhat reductive, limiting him to books written by men who are – openly gay or bisexual? Or for whom that can be strongly inferred from autobiographical documents? This ambiguity complicates the drawing of any sort of boundary around a corpus and reveals the reductiveness of the very attempt to draw such boundaries. Furthermore, does it count as a 'gay novel' if the author is gay, but none of the characters is? What about if the characters are gay, but the author cannot be said to be? As Leo Bersani notes in a discussion of cinema,

> In speaking of gay film – or, more generally, gay art today – we tend to mean films or novels with gay topics, most often made or written by gay and lesbian filmmakers or novelists. That is, for all the anti-identitarian rhetoric of current queer theory, what we mean by gay and lesbian art would seem to be inseparable from notions of gay authorship, gay audiences, and gay subjects.[84]

---

[83] James P. Wilper, *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German* (Purdue University Press, 2016), p. 2.
[84] Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 31.

Rather than committing to a debate that necessitates scouring both authors and their works for signs of gayness, as it were, according to criteria that would make me the authority, I instead posit that the 'queer novel' is merely a critical lens to investigate the way a text may be – but above all may do – queer. By its very nature, it cannot be an investigation with clear findings. The queer novel may involve queer characters and themes, but it is also a way of highlighting the queerness that has been part of the messy, inconsistent and fluid genre that the novel, as far as we can speak of it as a pre-determined entity, has always been. By calling Klaus Mann's works 'queer novels', I highlight the way he intentionally utilizes the existing queer potential of a form and, with characters that similarly resist normativity, and an overall attitude of failure, creates works that are not queer by chance, but on purpose.

III. Out of the Undoing

Throughout this study, my main contention is that Klaus Mann uses failure, and specifically a queering kind of failure, to renegotiate literary forms and to present a version of hope for the future as something existing not in spite of, but precisely because of, the functions failure can perform for us. In the first instance, I will argue that failure can be a generative process. This perspective rests on Jack Halberstam's theory of queer failure, where he claims that 'under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'.[85] For

[85] Judith [now Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 2–3, doi:10.1515/9780822394358. The author has used the forename 'Jack' and the pronoun 'he' since 2012. (Cf. Sinclair Sexsmith, 'Jack Halberstam: Queers Create Better Models of Success', *Lambda Literary*, 1

Halberstam, failure is a process that involves opening up new pathways, a process of reconstruction (although never to a finished form) through disintegration. Its importance is as a process, not as a final result – not failure as such, perhaps, but fail*ing*.

In order to see failure as constituting a positionality in itself, rather than an inadequacy opposed to the norm's success, it is also crucial to recognize it as a gesture of refusal. José Esteban Muñoz argues that

> The politics of failure are about doing something else, that is, doing something else in relation to a something that is missing in straight time's always already flawed temporal mapping practice.[86]

Failing is still doing something; while the 'else' inevitably refers back to a norm, it also designates a space in line with the gaps that 'queer' refers to. It offers new ways of existing, where unravelling is the prerequisite for knitting together something altogether new, even if from existing threads. This knitting never results in a finished product: reading failure as a non-linear process of expansion means it will always eschew achievement. There is only the process, the continuance of doing and being, which may be directional but which can never arrive.

Secondly, I will bring ideas of failure into connection with hope, drawing specifically upon the concept of utopia. Muñoz explains that

> Utopia can never be prescriptive and is always destined to fail. Despite this seeming negativity, a generative politics can be potentially distilled from the aesthetics of queer failure. Within failure we can locate a kernel of potentiality. [...] Queer failure, as I argue, is more nearly about escape and a certain kind of virtuosity.[87]

February 2012 <https://lambdaliterary.org/2012/02/jack-halberstam-queers-create-better-models-of-success/> [accessed 24 March 2026].)

[86] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2019), p. 174, doi:10.18574/9781479868780.

[87] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 173.

For Muñoz, this escape 'need not be a surrender but, instead, may be more like a refusal of a dominant order and its systemic violence'.[88] It is a recognition that success would be a kind of failure in which the individual loses all agency: as the author Joyce Carol Oates notes, in a pragmatic view, '"success" itself is but a form of "failure," a compromise between what is desired and what is attained'.[89] In order not to compromise on desires, these desires may have to remain unfulfilled – but they do remain desires, not obliterated by the norms set out by societal institutions. Utopia, the non-place, is always a failure, because it can never materialize; if it did, it would not be utopia. In the striving for it, however – in the hope – there exists and blossoms potential for growth and escape. As Oates questions,

> Isn't there, perhaps, a very literal advantage, now and then, to failure? – a way of turning even the most melancholy of experiences inside-out, until they resemble experiences of *value*, of *growth*, of *profound significance*?[90]

Failure offers more enrichment than success, an opportunity to redo, to remake, to learn, and to grow – all of which may be ungoverned by the demands of what success looks like and unencumbered by an achievable final goal.

Ideas of queer utopia as discussed by Muñoz necessarily destabilize – which is to say, queer – time and space. Hope is a future-oriented gesture, and so is utopia: it is always located somewhere out of reach via either, or both, spatial or temporal measures. Utopia, like hope, like desire, ceases to exist once it is achieved, so it exists only in the

[88] Ibid., p. 172.
[89] Joyce Carol Oates, 'Notes on Failure', *The Hudson Review*, 35.2 (1982), pp. 231–45 (p. 232), doi:10.2307/3850783.
[90] Oates, 'Notes on Failure', p. 240, original emphases.

dimension of its potentiality. As Alexis Lothian states, since the publication of Lee Edelman's seminal work of queer theory, *No Future*, in 2004,

> something of a consensus on the relationship between queerness and the future has emerged. Queer time signifies breaking with straight and narrow paths toward the future laid out for the reproductive family, the law-abiding citizen, the believer in markets. Instead it lingers or refuses, flashing up in moments of ephemeral utopia or doubling back to reanimate the pleasurable and/or painful past.[91]

Queer time is necessarily non-linear and exists in the gaps around norms, in the between-times that cannot be normatively marked. The most unmarked time remains the future. Therefore, 'the history of queer scholarship is a history of futures. [...] How could attempts to envisage possibilities outside heteronormative structures not involve a certain futurity?'[92] The destabilizing of time and space enables a hopeful futurity accessible through failure as a deliberate gesture.

Finally, I will argue that, in the context of crisis, by associating hope with constructive failure, failing is itself a version of hoping and, by extension, of surviving. Crisis, in this context, functions simultaneously as incitement, process, and result. In crises – such as those Mann lived through in the global turmoil of the late 1920s and 1930s – constructive failure is not a privilege, but a necessity – it is, in fact, hope. Failing opens up new ways of being, and, as Judith Butler states, 'possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread'.[93]

In crisis, the individual seems to dissolve. Butler explores this extensively in relation to grief, a crisis on a personal scale. They state:

---

[91] Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York University Press, 2019), p. 3, doi:10.18574/9781479854585.
[92] Ibid., p. 5.
[93] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 29.

> Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. And so when we speak about *my* sexuality or *my* gender, as we do (and as we must) we mean something complicated by it. Neither of these is precisely a possession, but both are to be understood as *modes of being dispossessed*, ways of being for another or, indeed, by virtue of another.[94]

Crisis undoes us, and illuminates the ways our identities depend on others. In the most intense moments of experience, the experiencing individual seemingly fades out: there is only the other, and the other is also us ourselves.

The dissolution of the individual being is not antithetical to survival, but this survival has to be framed in queer terms. In a study of queer modernist writing, Benjamin Bateman argues that

> Queer survival for these authors, I will show, means not the extension of an individual life into the future but the distension of life, and feelings of aliveness, across personal, species, imperial, and generational boundaries. The individual does not disappear entirely in this reconceptualization, but it loses its status as the privileged locus of drama, animation, intention, and uniqueness. The 'more' of life is to be found not in more of (and more time for) one's own self but in the lives of others. Getting closer to these lives – physically, intellectually, affectively – produces a different kind of aliveness that is at one and the same time swelling and shrinking, enlarging and miniaturizing, invigorating and enervating. It is a survival in which the self expands by losing and lives by dying.[95]

This argument posits that the individual survives in others; by becoming other to ourselves, becoming, therefore, defamiliarized – queered – we access the ability to survive beyond the individual lifetime. There is survival in the dissolution, hope in the failure, and life in the dying.

---

[94] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 19, original emphases.
[95] Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 4, doi:10.1093/oso/9780190676537.001.0001.

Precisely because the individual is a constructed identity and consequently capable of deconstruction, too, there is a freedom in this fallibility. In the world of Foucault, for example,

> everyone can be anything […], not because they are free, self-possessed, and self-transforming, but because at the core of our being there is nothing identifiable, nothing solid or immutable, nothing that can be known for sure.[96]

This argument invites us to consider the possibilities opened up by lacking, by radically unbecoming whatever we are believed to be. In dissolving, in failing to consist, we are free to be anything, because we are nothing. Or rather, we are something, but it is not (only) ourselves. A collective takes shape from individuals, a collective which turns us towards the future again, to what possibilities are opened to us by failing, collapsing, undoing, and remaking. In Butler's words, 'to live is to live a life politically, in relation to power, in relation to others, in the act of assuming responsibility for a collective future'.[97] To live involves, on some level, the death of the individual.

***

In line with my argument, each of the following three sections is concerned with a specific pair of Klaus Mann's novels, analysed alongside one another owing to similarities in novelistic subforms and their undoing. In Chapter One, I look at *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden* in relation to the Bildungsroman, demonstrating that they reflect a failure inherent in the genre at large where ongoing development and a neat ending cannot be brought into alignment, and showing that failure is in fact a key

[96] Carolyn J. Dean, 'The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender, and the History of Sexuality,' *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 33.3 (1994), pp. 271–96 (p. 290), doi:10.2307/2505475.
[97] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 39.

component of any 'Bildung' that occurs. In Chapter Two, I investigate *Alexander* and *Symphonie Pathétique* as examples of biographical fiction, and further explore the concept of utopia in its spatial and temporal destabilizations as a way of reorienting failure towards hope. Finally, Chapter Three addresses *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* and *Der Vulkan* as literary montages conceived as chronicles of their times, in which crisis is ever-present for the characters and where failure offers possibility and the hope of some sort of survival beyond the individual.

Across these three chapters, it becomes clear that rather than a straightforward evolution of his writing over the course of his career, there are relationships between non-chronological pairings of Mann's novels within the genre categories in which they may, loosely and provisionally, be thought. What we see is three different versions of, fundamentally, the same undertaking: writing the undoing of everything – the individual, the novel, politics, nations, times, and places. Although distinct, all of Mann's novels are ultimately concerned with what can be enabled if boundaries collapse. In the constellations of queerness, failure, and the novel, we can discern a rewriting of failure as a way of being other, doing other, and writing other. If all things can be undone, all things are possible.

Chapter 1: Going Wrong
Der fromme Tanz and *Flucht in den Norden*

If processes of undoing, and unbecoming, are as central to Klaus Mann's works as I contend, the fact that he wrote two novels of development may seem incongruous. His 1926 debut novel *Der fromme Tanz* largely follows events in the life of a single fictional protagonist – Andreas Magnus – in chronological order, covering the time period of late adolescence into early adulthood. Mann's work *Flucht in den Norden* (1934), his fourth novel, follows a similar blueprint based on its protagonist Johanna. Both are engaged with their protagonist's development as they attempt to negotiate their place within or relative to society. Consequently, both novels superficially meet the criteria usually assumed to grant admission to the genre of 'Bildungsroman', unlike Mann's more overtly innovative works that veer openly into montage techniques and the reinterpretation of prominent historical figures as openly queer and openly failing. However, Mann's use of the generic hallmarks never amounts to an unquestioned belonging to the type, and instead we see processes of 'formation' that deliberately look to unsettle linearity and normativity. By reading the Bildungsroman through this pair of Mann's novels, I argue that Klaus Mann's treatment of the genre brings out the extent to which it is already inherently transgressive of the normative characteristics generally assigned to it: it more commonly portrays a failure of 'successful' development than its achievement at the novel's end. Exploring the nature of the Bildungsroman, particularly in its development leading up to the period in which Klaus Mann was writing, allows us to make sense of Mann's deliberate interventions in a literary tradition already quietly open to non-normative interpretations. By the same token, reading the Bildungsroman through the lens offered by Klaus Mann's texts adds to our understanding of the queer

novel, and indeed of the novel as a queer(ing) genre. Especially in its modernist form, queerer readings of the Bildungsroman allow us to see it as a type of novel that exploits formal and thematic possibilities inherent in 'traditional' genres and structures. It asks us if 'going wrong' might, in the end, enable a version of growing as expanding beyond a single direction.

A look at existing definitions of the Bildungsroman through this lens will allow us to start unpicking a genre supposedly based on content when the content does not live up to the claims critics have made about it. This analysis makes strange – makes queer – what otherwise masquerades as a highly traditional genre. Following this, the discussion moves on to encompass queer(ing) theories which intersect usefully with both Mann's *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden* and with our understanding of the Bildungsroman more generally, specifically looking at the concept of queer failure expounded by Jack Halberstam and the centring of the desiring subject undertaken by both Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. After a brief investigation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, widely considered to be the archetypal Bildungsroman and which Mann alludes to in *Der fromme Tanz,* I will work my analysis of first *Der fromme Tanz* and subsequently *Flucht in den Norden* through the various threads of genre and queer theories in which Klaus Mann and his work are, from a retrospective vantage point, tied up, investigating the intersecting failures that each novel both presents and embodies. I argue that by queering the Bildungsroman – that is, by demonstrating how queer theories and Bildungsroman theory and practice intersect, and taking Klaus Mann's novels as points of access to this intersection – we bring to the fore the ways in which the Bildungsroman has in fact, more or less secretly, been a queer(ing) genre all along. Failure is always already inscribed in the project, but this is only widely made visible in the modernist period, and this act of 'making visible' in particular is a queer

renegotiation of what failures of form, desire and identity can offer us in a process of unbecoming that continually turns out to be generative.

Rethinking the Bildungsroman

Debates around the nature of the *Bildungsroman* have filled numerous articles and books, and indeed entire academic careers. Its agreed-upon, central characteristic is the narrativization of a protagonist's journey from youth to maturity, 'die erfolgreiche Suche eines jugendlichen Protagonisten nach existenzsichernden Orientierungsmustern, nach Bestimmung seines gesellschaftlichen Standortes'.[98] This protagonist is typically gendered as male.[99]

In lectures that constitute the first known use of the term 'Bildungsroman' in the 1810s, Karl Morgenstern suggested the name based on a novel's portrayal of 'des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang und Fortgang bis zu einer gewissen Stufe der Vollendung'.[100] However, using this criterion as the sole requirement for a text's belonging to the category can result in a corpus so large as to render 'Bildungsroman' meaningless as a designation. On the other hand, narrower approaches to defining what counts as a 'Bildungsroman' have consistently failed to delineate a single, usable set of criteria. One camp argues strongly that the term can only apply to German literature and specifically to novels 'of the era of Goethe and Wieland',[101] contemporaneous with

[98] Gerhart Mayer, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (Metzler, 1992), p. 19.
[99] Cf. John H. Smith, 'Cultivating Gender: Sexual Difference, *Bildung*, and the *Bildungsroman*', *Michigan Germanic Studies*, 13.2 (1987), pp. 206–25.
[100] Karl Morgenstern, 'Ueber das Wesen des Bildungsromans', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 55–72 (p. 64). Date of original lecture given as 12 December 1819.
[101] Sarah Graham, 'Introduction,' in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1–9 (p. 3), doi:10.1017/9781316479926.001.

Weimar Classicist, 'Humanitätsideal'[102] notions of 'Bildung' as 'a distinctively Germanic pursuit of harmonious self-development'.[103] Even Thomas Mann argued for the existence of 'eine Spielart des Romans, die allerdings deutsch, typisch-deutsch, legitim-national ist, und dies ist eben der autobiographisch erfüllte Bildungs- und Entwicklungsroman'.[104] This assignment of a national character to the genre means the 'Bildung' supposedly happening is framed within a defined context, limiting the potential for truly organic growth. Klaus Mann's engagement with the genre is therefore inherently political, not just in terms of its queering of identity formation, gender, sexuality, and desire, and its rejection of normative constructions of belonging and success, but also in undoing a great national(ist) treasure.

One of the central problems encountered by attempts to define the 'genre' of Bildungsroman is the 'Vollendung' that, from Morgenstern onwards, writers and critics alike have treated as the aspired-to culmination of the Bildungsroman's narrative. Its supposed 'Tendenz zum ausgleichenden Schluß'[105] – the 'acculturation'[106] of the hero into his context – represents, according to the ideal, the completion of individual development. Jeffrey Sammons famously argued in 1981 that almost none of the novels historically treated as archetypes of the Bildungsroman actually meet this crucial criterion.[107] Concurring, Tobias Boes notes:

---

[102] Cf. Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 14, doi:10.1515/9781400871315.
[103] Michael Beddow, *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 2.
[104] Thomas Mann, 'Der Entwicklungsroman', in *Essays II: 1914-1926*, ed. by Hermann Kurzke and others (S. Fischer, 2002), pp. 173–76 (p. 174).
[105] Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Wilhelm Fink, 1972), p. 271.
[106] Cf. Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the* '*Bildungsroman*' (Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 38, doi:10.7591/9781501723179.
[107] See Jeffrey L. Sammons, 'The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?', *Genre*, 14.2 (1981), pp. 229–46.

> It is surprisingly hard to discover novels that fulfil the strictures of totality, teleology, and normativity demanded by the idealist understanding of *Bildung*, even if one consults works that were written in immediate temporal vicinity to *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.*[108]

Arguably, all novels, consisting as they must of long-form prose, are beholden to some degree of teleology; however, the totality required by the normative, circular resolution of the 'typical' Bildungsroman (even if such a novel exists only theoretically), in which the protagonist returns home with a new sense of his place and purpose in the society he left behind, works against the idea of forward-facing progress.[109] In a remark often invoked in discussions of Bildungsroman normativity, Hegel described the novelistic hero of his time as a new version of the courtly knight, who fights to make a difference in the world. This hero ultimately wins

> meistens doch sein Mädchen und irgendeine Stellung, heiratet und wird ein Philister so gut wie die anderen auch; die Frau steht der Haushaltung vor, Kinder bleiben nicht aus, das angebetete Weib, das erst die Einzige, ein Engel war, nimmt sich ungefähr ebenso aus wie alle anderen, das Amt gibt Arbeit und Verdrießlichkeiten, die Ehe Hauskreuz, und so ist der ganze Katzenjammer der übrigen da. – Wir sehen hier den gleichen Charakter der Abenteuerlichkeit, nur daß dieselbe ihre rechte Bedeutung findet und das Phantastische daran die nötige Korrektion erfahren muß.[110]

As Hegel sees it, all the struggles for change and glory that we find echoed in the Bildungsroman are ultimately futile, in that they lead only to the same expected life as lived by everyone else. If we accept that such a conclusion necessarily applies 'die nötige Korrektion' to the preceding adventures, then such adventures – which make up the bulk of the Bildungsroman's content – are shown to be detached from the

[108] Tobias Boes, *Formative Fictions: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the* '*Bildungsroman*' (Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 24, doi:10.7591/9780801465659. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is widely considered to be the archetypal Bildungsroman.
[109] Cf. Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1–4.
[110] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II* (Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 220.

pedagogical purpose usually assigned to them. Any individuality attained is sublimated to the norms of the societal context at the conclusion of the journey of maturation. Consequently, we can say that a central characteristic of the Bildungsroman from its earliest conception onwards is the paradoxical failure to meet its own generic criteria. This insight remains understated in scholarship; in fact,

> the reality of failure is generally acknowledged in principle, but is rarely granted full citizenship as a truly consequential structural element of the bildungsroman. […] At best, it is seen as a part of the ideological mechanism that crushes the hero precisely in order to reinforce the integrative impulses at the heart of the bildungsroman. Consequently, the impossibility of self-realization is simultaneously one of genre's most persistent features and something like an open secret: we know that it is there, but we don't quite know what to do with it, as it seems to elude our analytical models.[111]

Failure is not just thematic; despite the genre of Bildungsroman appearing to be largely concerned with themes and plot, it also carries an implicit structure for the novel, and this structure is, ultimately, inseparable from a sense of failure.

In modernism and its wake, the Bildungsroman, along with the novel in general, loosens many of the restrictions on form and content that literary tradition had previously encouraged. The revelation in the later decades of the twentieth century that almost all examples of Bildungsromane are, by traditional measures, failures, represents a disruptive incision into literary criticism addressing the genre. This disruption becomes especially clear when the retroactive stamp of 'failure' is applied to texts of the modernist period, where literature – the Bildungsroman included – adapts better to formally and openly reflect and express fragmentation, uncertainness, and outsider experiences. From the time when the term 'Bildungsroman' first began to circulate

[111] Aleksandar Stević, *Falling Short: The Bildungsroman and the Crisis of Self-Fashioning* (University of Virginia Press, 2020), pp. 2–3, doi:10.2307/j.ctvzgb7sk.

onwards, it had been applied primarily to novels written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As forms become more fluid with the onset of the twentieth century, retrospective criticism has so struggled to renegotiate what 'Bildungsroman' might denote in works no longer exhibiting the specific formal constructions of the past that many critics have declared it to be a type of novel that no longer is – or no longer can be – written at all. James Hardin, for example, describes how

> In general, the modern novel is open-ended, noncommittal, relativistic. Yet most traditional definitions of the Bildungsroman consider an accommodation between the individual and society an essential characteristic of the genre.[112]

Hardin seems to suggest that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of the Bildungsroman, with older examples standing in stark contrast to their modern counterparts. If it was thinkable, before modernity, to integrate into a 'society' as a cohesive entity, then, with the upsets of modernism, that entity begins to lose its defined shape. However, this attempt to historicize meanings of the Bildungsroman overlooks that 'accommodation' between the individual and society has never been a given, at any point in the genre's lifetime. We might have less – or no – expectation of the individual and society being brought into alignment now, but that is not to say that such expectations were ever guaranteed. Even *Wilhelm Meister* ends without all its loose ends tied up, and the situation in which Wilhelm finds himself at the novel's conclusion – as the father of an illegitimate child and with imminent plans of emigrating to Italy – is hardly a once-and-for-all resolution and homecoming. Not just in modernism, then, but throughout the history of the Bildungsroman,

[112] James N. Hardin, 'Introduction,' in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James N. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. ix–xxvii (p. xxi).

> what the major novels of the tradition show is not achieved goals, not comfortable solutions, but at best directions, implications, intimations of the possible, which are shown to be no more than that.[113]

The 'intimations of the possible' that the Bildungsroman has always offered mean that there is already a queering element to the genre, an ability to indicate a meaning and a reality beyond its own actual boundaries. Modernism draws attention to the fluidity of the subject as they are constituted and dissolved, and therefore makes obvious the falling short that has always been one of the Bildungsroman's many versions of indefinitely unfulfilled potentiality.

Gregory Castle recognizes that one of the possibilities highlighted (but not invented) by the modernist Bildungsroman is that success is not a realistic goal, because what constitutes success is reevaluated. These texts

> present a broad range of outcomes, which cannot be locked into the binomial opposition success/failure, because the social conditions in which success and failure make sense are themselves foreclosed – or, to put my point another way, the binomial categories collapse, and failure becomes an index of successful alternative representations of social and cultural subjectivities.[114]

Where, for Castle, the classical Bildungsroman form is cursed to be a 'broken promise', the heroes of modernist Bildungsromane are able to access 'new narrative possibilities for representing self-formation and the temporality of inner life that organises and sustains it'.[115] In my view, all this really means is that failure was written into the genre from its outset, but in modernist examples it is no longer concealed, and no longer automatically corresponds to a negative concept of failure. Instead, in a time period

[113] Martin Swales, 'Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman', in *Reflection and Action*, ed. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 46–68 (p. 52).
[114] Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (University Press of Florida, 2006), p. 71.
[115] Gregory Castle, 'The Modernist Bildungsroman,' in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. Graham, pp. 143–73 (p. 144), doi:10.1017/9781316479926.007.

where failure begins to be reassessed as a nexus of opportunities, the Bildungsroman hero's failure can be analysed not as the Bildungsroman-gone-wrong, but as the Bildungsroman's contribution to an understanding that going wrong is sometimes a pathway to alternative forms of progress – that falling short is still falling forwards.

Accordingly, criticism in the last few decades of the twentieth century has shifted towards an understanding of the individual in the Bildungsroman *as an individual*, rather than insisting upon the acculturation into society that critics expected – but arguably never got – from the Bildungsroman in its 'classical' form. Sammons proposes that, in a Bildungsroman,

> There must be a sense of evolutionary change within the self, a teleology of individuality, even if the novel, as many do, comes to doubt or deny the possibility of achieving a gratifying result.[116]

The internalization of the development we expect to see in a Bildungsroman, its shift of focus towards the hero as a character rather than his outward-facing achievements, radically alters the way we understand Bildungsroman narratives. It becomes a narrative of self-expansion without the implicit expectation that the process will meet predetermined specifications and lead the hero to return home and take up the shackles of everyday life from which he originally broke. When we move to focus on the hero's development of his own identity, we can set aside debates on the nature of the Bildungsroman that attempt to draw all narratives back to the time of Goethe, instead addressing the revolutionary – and queer – idea that the self is not a given, and therefore not a prefabricated entity that can be 'discovered,' but rather something to be constructed over time and space, in the face of both inner and outer forces of change

[116] Jeffrey L. Sammons, 'The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification,' in *Reflection and Action*, ed. Hardin, pp. 26–45 (p. 41).

and influence, and always experienced from within. Actual, inner development is marked by ongoing non-self-sameness and change, so is inherently disruptive and works against resolution. If development is valued for its own sake, then it should never be finished, its subject never complete. As such, we can begin to reframe the shape of the Bildungsroman into one outlined by desire, that self-motivated forward motion which exists only as long as it remains unfulfilled.

In an essay on the Bildungsroman, Mikhail Bakhtin suggests using the development of characters' identity as the crucial feature of the genre. He proposes a classification of the various subcategories of the novel 'according to how the image of the main hero is constructed' by its creator, and consequently how it is reconstructed in the mind of the reader.[117] Bakhtin notes that, in the majority of novels, 'events change his [the hero's] destiny, change his position in life and society, but he himself remains unchanged and adequate to himself'; the hero remains 'that immobile and fixed point around which all movement in the novel takes place'.[118] By contrast, in the Bildungsroman, we see 'an image of man in the process of becoming':[119]

> As opposed to a static unity, here one finds a dynamic unity in the hero's image. The hero himself, his character, becomes a variable in the formula of this type of novel. Changes in the hero himself acquire *plot* significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed.[120]

The hero's 'dynamic unity' offers an image of a self that is always changing, but always still the possession of the individual; it allows for change precisely by conceiving of the self as an entity of fluidity. In contrast to a non-Bildungsroman novel, in which the hero

---

[117] M. M. Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel),' in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays,* ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern W. McGee (University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 10–59 (p. 10).
[118] Ibid., p. 20.
[119] Ibid., p. 21.
[120] Ibid., original emphasis.

is ‘adequate to himself,’ we might, in the Bildungsroman form Bakhtin places in the opposing position, say that the hero is (correspondingly-oppositely) inadequate to himself, which is to say that the self presents an ongoing project of self-production, driven by the individual’s own forward-propelling desire, that can never reach completion.

In this discussion, it is clear that there have been queer elements inscribed in the Bildungsroman genre from the start. It is a type of novel entirely about the experience of non-self-sameness, the displacements of time and space, and the individual constituted in opposition to their social context. It becomes queerer when we dispense with what was always only really an unsatisfactory ‘resolution’ at the end, allowing us to reframe what progress and development might look like within a less aggressively normalizing framework than the one often (incorrectly) assigned to the Bildungsroman. As Jed Esty posits:

> If we combine [Neville] Hoad’s analysis of arrested development and Heather Love’s account of historical backwardness with Michael Warner’s challenge to ‘repro-narrativity’ and Lee Edelman’s brief for a queer (non)futurity, we can adduce a composite model of the queer figure who holds a position outside dominant discourses of progress at the level of individual self-formation and of social reproduction.[121]

To be outside dominant discourses of progress is not to be outside progress entirely, but rather to recognise that progress takes many shapes, and true individual development cannot be powered only by the outside force of societal norms. A queer Bildungsroman knows that there is no neat ending, and does not want one; messiness, unfinishedness, is what allows the individual to continue developing in no single direction, and certainly

[121] Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 23, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199857968.001.0001.

no ‘correct’ one, but moving forwards nonetheless. Development, or expansion, in this sense correlates with desire, a force that pulls us onwards and beyond ourselves and persists as desire in that shape only as long as there is no resolution to it. With this generic context as a background, Klaus Mann’s novels deliberately intervene into the Bildungsroman, bringing failing to the fore and asking if, after all, this might result in a more truly generative process of development.

The Queer Art of Failure

By focalizing the failure of the Bildungsroman as illuminated by its changes in the face of modernism through a queer lens, the subversive implications of unending and disruptive self-changeability and construction are brought to the fore. The modernist tendency to focus on untetheredness is always in relation to a societal context, with a queering of societal institutions appearing as one strand of this, so that the modernist theme of open-endedness infiltrates failure as a queer phenomenon as well as a literary one. Jack Halberstam’s definition of queer failure rests on the idea of lives lived ‘in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction’.[122] This is not to say that queer people do not, or do not want to, partake in these institutions, but merely that the other(ed)ness experienced by queer individuals means these institutions cannot be taken for granted as available pillars upon which to construct a lifetime, and not dismissed with the freedom of choice possessed by those not directly alienated (or worse) by those institutions. Halberstam’s groundbreaking contribution to queer theory, *The Queer Art of Failure*, is a long-form exploration of the queer possibilities offered by failure. There is a sense in which a queer life is a failed life, though failed only when

[122] Judith [now Jack] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press, 2005), p. 1, doi:10.18574/nyu/9780814790892.

held to the standards of 'success' established by those normatively deemed successful. In fact, failure can be decoupled from the negativity it normally accompanies: as I mentioned already in the introduction to this study, Halberstam posits the process of failing as one of 'losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing', processes which 'may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'.[123] There is normally a limited range of 'successful'-labelled lives; the opportunities of failure are limitless. Halberstam poses the question:

> What kinds of reward can failure offer us? Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods.[124]

Failure in these terms can be mapped directly onto the Bildungsroman, with the journey from childhood to adulthood being the typical backdrop of its events. The progression from 'unruly' to 'predictable' is exactly what the traditionally-conceived, normative Bildungsroman supposedly does, at least in the eyes of critics – exactly what Hegel calls becoming a 'philistine'. In reality, the queer possibilities of failure are present throughout Bildungsroman history. Failure to be tamed allows us to renegotiate adulthood: to renegotiate what we consider to be our grown-up, filled-out forms.

The ambiguity of the word 'Bildung' is relevant here: with its various associations of formation, education, emergence, training, and growth, whether the changing person has any agency in the process is always ambiguous in the terminology. Halberstam draws on the work of Kathryn Bond Stockton, who

[123] Judith [now Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 2–3, doi:10.1515/9780822394358.
[124] Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, p. 3.

> proposes that childhood is an essentially queer experience in a society that acknowledges through its extensive training programs for children that heterosexuality is not born but made. If we were all already normative and heterosexual to begin with in our desires, orientations, and modes of being, then presumably we would not need such strict parental guidance to deliver us all to our common destinies of marriage, child rearing, and hetero-reproduction. If you believe that children need training, you assume and allow for the fact that they are always already anarchic and rebellious, out of order and out of time.[125]

I would argue that it is this sort of 'training' and 'guidance' that masquerades as 'Bildung' in the classical, normatively-perceived Bildungsroman, the training that cannot be admitted, for to do so would denaturalize all the things it aims to embed. 'Bildung' in this sense might actually be able to achieve 'Vollendung', because it is a process judged from the outside, by the 'trainers', as it were. Self-propelled development can set no such standard.

Halberstam suggests that, in order to fully interrogate ourselves and our development, 'in some sense we have to untrain ourselves so that we can read the struggles and debates back into questions that seem settled and resolved'.[126] This raises the question: what if we saw the process of 'Bildung' as one of untraining, of unlearning, of going wrong? It would allow self-construction to be framed as a project of undoing the selves we are 'given' by our societies and producing new understandings of ourselves grounded on our internal developments. This is different to what is sometimes labelled the 'Anti-Bildungsroman' as a variety of the Bildungsroman in which Bildung fails, a critical approach which does not recognize the lack of success demonstrated throughout the genre to which it claims to stand opposed: instead, Bildung is reclaimed as an opportunity for queer self-identity, in which failure becomes an escape to freedom of a sort. This inherent possibility of the genre becomes increasingly

[125] Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, p. 27.
[126] Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, p. 11.

visible in both texts and criticism from the modernist period onwards, when ideas of malleable identities composed of more than the shadow cast by society at large onto an individual become more prominent.

Halberstam's dismantling of our largely positive assumptions about what turns out to be a strictly conformative process under the guise of 'growing up' extends to a commentary on 'generational logic'. 'De-linking the process of generation from the force of historical process', Halberstam argues,

> is a queer kind of project: queer lives seek to uncouple change from the supposedly organic and immutable forms of family and inheritance; queer lives exploit some potential for a *difference in form* that lies dormant in queer collectivity not as an essential attribute of sexual otherness but as a possibility embedded in the break from heterosexual life narratives.[127]

If we transpose the 'difference in form' offered by queer collectivities uncoupled from what masquerades as a 'successful' life onto the Bildungsroman, we create a new cartography of the queer novel of emergence as a formal construction of failing potentially well, and failing *productively*. This is not to say that failure and queerness were unknown to the 'classical' Bildungsroman pre-modernism and the criticism addressing it, but merely that they went largely unrecognized. Klaus Mann's novels, with their queer desires, aim to begin such a recognition.

Subject and Desire

When we talk about the Bildungsroman hero with the retrospective insight that an accord between individual and society is almost never the result of the hero's progress, and in view of the modernist Bildungsromane that make this 'failure' increasingly

[127] Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, p. 70. Original emphasis.

visible, we are framing the individual's pathway as motivated by desire. As we have seen, the nature of a true Bildungsroman means that the desire can never, and indeed should not, be fulfilled. Centring the subject's desire as the teleological basis for the Bildungsroman is transgressive in itself, both because desire always reaches beyond the boundaries of the self to the desired object and because, as Foucault notes, historically, desiring has been painted as a sinful form of expression denoting an 'excess' of bodily pleasure.[128] In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault summarizes how, within the discourses of sex surrounding desire,

> the project of a science of the subject has gravitated, in ever narrowing circles, around the question of sex. Causality in the subject, the unconscious of the subject, the truth of the subject in the other who knows, the knowledge he holds unbeknown to him, all this found an opportunity to deploy itself in the discourse of sex. Not, however, by reason of some natural property inherent in sex itself, but by virtue of the tactics of power immanent in this discourse.[129]

The power immanent in the discourse of sex has made the 'truth of the subject in the other' a part of their make-up, and this strikes me as a key component of self-knowledge, which helps enable us to consciously self-construct. This is what we see reflected in the Bildungsroman when viewed through a queer(ing) lens. To some extent, we are what we are recognized as, and sex and sexuality play their parts in that process of recognition. Foucault describes sexuality as 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of power', with the first example of this given as 'between men and women'.[130] When we start re-casting the sexual encounter with queer actors, the transfer of power might reasonably be said to have been 'queered': made strange, and, in the

[128] Cf. Margaret A. McLaren, 'Desire', in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. by Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 99–101, doi:10.1017/CBO9781139022309.021.
[129] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: The Will to Knowledge,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2020), p. 70.
[130] Foucault, *The History […], Vol. I*, p. 103.

process, made visible in a way that the currents of power underlying heterosexuality usually evade. A similar note is struck when Foucault argues that sexuality 'has been linked from the outset with an intensification of the body – with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power'.[131] Through recognition by the other 'who knows', then, we might conclude that the queer individual is constructed, made strange, made visible, made intense. These concurrent processes are clearly applicable to the Bildungsroman, too: when the hero is queer, the whole process of Bildung is made other to what we expect if we see the genre as limited to normativity; instead, when the queerness of a Bildungsroman is highlighted, the hero can be made to fail, while succeeding in the various shades of failure.

When Foucault talks about the experience of working on the *History of Sexuality* project, he claims that he set out to

> analyze the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen.[132]

What he sees in the construction of sexuality as a historical phenomenon is desire becoming increasingly necessary for self-understanding. As a subject of desire, the individual comes to know what they are by what they lack, and are thus formed partially beyond themselves; equally, as the object of desire, the individual comes to know what they are by the recognition and desire of the other. To discover one's true being in desire suggests that in recognizing the other through the lens of desire, we recognize ourselves. In a project of self-construction, then, as initiated by the Bildungsroman, and most

[131] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, p. 107.
[132] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2020), p. 5.

visibly in its queer and modernist forms, desire is a key angle from which to observe the ways a self comes to be, and comes to be recognized – and perhaps those are two sides of the same process.

Judith Butler, whose work draws extensively on Foucault's, speaks of the subject specifically in terms of gender and sexuality in their seminal work *Gender Trouble*. Butler notes that

> Gender can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender – where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self – and desire – where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality.[133]

Butler's choice of the term 'unity' reminds us once again of Bakhtin's insistence that the hero of the Bildungsroman is composed of a 'dynamic unity'. In Butler's model, if we take away heterosexuality, the whole model of a unified gender falls apart; if we are not held in opposition to the desired object, how can we differentiate ourselves? We might respond by returning to the queer collectivity advocated by Halberstam: we do not have to recognize the other *as* an other in order to understand ourselves; the failure to extract individuality is a failure of normativity that opens up new unities, made dynamic, which can be pushed and pulled into shapes to be labelled 'successful', to be labelled real – queer – lives, by some other judgement. Characters such as those of Klaus Mann's novels are propelled by desire, and constituted by the relationships it creates between them and others, but there is never a fulfilment to speak of, and never a person to possess.

---

[133] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 30–31. Original emphasis.

On Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre

Before moving on to analysis of Mann's *Der fromme Tanz*, I would like to address briefly Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the novel that, as critics have broadly agreed ever since Morgenstern, comes the closest to being a 'perfect' Bildungsroman, and indeed provides many of the landmarks that are used to determine whether later novels 'count' as part of the tradition it inaugurates. The *Lehrjahre* share many surface-level characteristics with Mann's debut novel. In each, a young man sets out from a provincial, comfortably bourgeois family home in pursuit of a different life which appears to revolve around arts of performance, the experience of being on-stage in front of an audience, accompanied by various romantic liaisons with characters who share this shadowy, backstage world. A close reading of *Der fromme Tanz* suggests that Klaus Mann self-consciously drew on Goethe,[134] enlisting landmarks of the archetypal Bildungsroman in order to insert his own novel into the tradition, while experimenting in queer ways with what it means to grow (into) oneself.

One of the most important, and often overlooked, contributions made by the *Lehrjahre* to our understanding of self-development in the Bildungsroman are the recurring instances of the hero seeing himself from outside of himself, in the way that when we look at ourselves in a mirror, we see our own faces from the opposite perspective. It is a similar phenomenon to seeing 'the truth of the subject in the other who knows', as Foucault wrote: by becoming other to ourselves, we can know

[134] Cf. this passage from Mann's *The Turning Point*, referring to the period of Klaus Mann's life from 1920 to 1922: 'I did not content myself with reading one book by a particular author: as soon as my interest was aroused in a certain poet or story teller, I greedily consumed his complete works – ten volumes by Henrik Ibsen, twelve volumes by Gotthold Efraim [*sic*] Lessing or Friedrich Schiller. Neither the stringent gravity of Friedrich Hebbel nor the mighty dimensions of Goethe's versatile amplitude could frighten me away' (Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in this Century* (1942) (Serpent's Tail, 1987), p. 58).

ourselves. When the titular protagonist, Wilhelm, in a fit of embarrassment – itself a sign of self-change and self-distance – burns his old writings, we are told:

> Wenn wir einen Brief, den wir unter gewissen Umständen geschrieben und gesiegelt haben, der aber den Freund, an den er gerichtet war, nicht antrifft, sondern wieder zu uns zurückgebracht wird, nach einiger Zeit eröffnen, überfällt uns eine sonderbare Empfindung, indem wir unser eignes Siegel erbrechen und uns mit unserm veränderten Selbst wie mit einer dritten Person unterhalten. Ein ähnliches Gefühl ergriff mit Heftigkeit unsern Freund, als er das erste Paket eröffnete und die zerteilten Hefte ins Feuer warf.[135]

The intervention of time makes the first-person into a third-person. As Bakhtin recognized, the insertion of time into the hero's construction makes it dependent on the experience of the subject, allowing it to provoke a sense of sudden self-otherness which puts pressure on the self-as-known to renegotiate its boundaries.

Eventually Wilhelm is made aware of the existence of the Tower Society, who have monitored him on his journey of Bildung, and who have documented this in a 'Lehrbrief' for him – a document created for each member of the society. When Wilhelm reads the account of his own life,

> Er fand die umständliche Geschichte seines Lebens in großen, scharfen Zügen geschildert; weder einzelne Begebenheiten, noch beschränkte Empfindungen verwirrten seinen Blick, allgemeine liebevolle Betrachtungen gaben ihm Fingerzeige, ohne ihn zu beschämen, und er sah zum erstenmal sein Bild außer sich, zwar nicht, wie im Spiegel, ein zweites Selbst, sondern wie im Porträt ein anderes Selbst: man bekennt sich zwar nicht zu allen Zügen, aber man freut sich, daß ein denkender Geist uns so hat fassen, ein großes Talent uns so hat darstellen wollen, daß ein Bild von dem, was wir waren, noch besteht, und daß es länger als wir selbst dauern kann.[136]

[135] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96) (Holzinger, 2016), p. 64.
[136] Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, p. 426.

He recognizes the written reflection of himself not as a double – a Doppelgänger – but as himself, othered and immortalized by the perspective of the outsider in a way that the impermanence and self-inadequacy of the identities we construct for ourselves can never achieve. If we do not measure up to our image, perhaps, we have failed: but our failures are all part of the process of self-construction, the recognition of the other being incorporated into the dynamic unity of selfhood that would cease to be dynamic if entirely known. At the same time, in Bildungsromane like those of Klaus Mann, which follow *Wilhelm Meister*, the fact that it is impossible to entirely know oneself does not indicate that there is some true self to be discovered, but that our identities are always dependent on others to some extent, and mutable with time, so that there can only be an open-ended project of construction that never results in a completed subject.

Der fromme Tanz. Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend

Der fromme Tanz, Klaus Mann's first novel, was published in 1926 and has been described as 'einer der ersten Homosexuellen-Romane der deutschen Literatur'.[137] Its subtitle, 'Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend', already evokes the Bildungsroman the book will turn out to be – a book of adventures, of youth. After a 'Vorwort' written by Mann in July 1925 – at which point he himself was just eighteen years old – and an enigmatic prologue featuring a young man writing a letter in a Southern European hotel room, the plot of the novel opens with the protagonist, Andreas Magnus, an eighteen-year-old residing in his father's home in what appears to be a comfortably bourgeois living situation in the countryside. Disappointed with his artistic talents, and told by a Marian dream-figure that he has nothing to offer her yet when he tries to hand her a rosary, because he has not suffered enough, Andreas initially thinks to throw himself into a river. At the last moment he reconsiders, instead choosing to leave behind his family and his childhood friend Ursula and travel to Berlin to begin a new life. There, Andreas meets an eclectic group of friends including Franziska, his mentor, and Paulchen, who develops unrequited feelings for him, and he begins to perform in a cabaret. Eventually, his pursuit of his love interest Niels leads him to other European cities, but the two have no happy ending. The novel ends with Andreas determined to continue on his unplanned journey with a sense of hope.

By failing to reach a neat resolution, *Der fromme Tanz* both breaks from the standards of the Bildungsroman and meets them, paradoxically, through that very failing. Processes that, according to Halberstam, hold affinities to failure, including

[137] Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre: Untersuchungen zu Klaus Manns Emigrationsromanen* Flucht in den Norden *und* Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten (Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p. 19.

those of losing, unmaking, and unbecoming, saturate the content of the novel as well as its form. Mann makes failure a factor in his treatment of art, of space, self, and stories; tracing these concurrently running lines of (un)progress allows us to see the opportunities inherent in failure, in a novel where becoming un-done is perhaps the ultimate achievement of self-identity.[138]

Failures of Art

In the 'Vorwort' to the book, Klaus Mann already frames *Der fromme Tanz* in terms of failure, centring this failure as being essential to accurately documenting the reality of the time. He writes:

> Kein Buch vielleicht hat es nötiger, am Anfang gleich um Entschuldigung zu bitten, um seiner Wirrnis willen, als eines, das aus unserer Jugend kommt, von unserer Jugend handelt, und nichts sein, nichts bedeuten möchte, als Ausdruck, Darstellung und Geständnis dieser Jugend, ihrer Not, ihrer Verwirrung—und ihrer hohen Hoffnung vielleicht. (*DfT*, p. 5)

According to this statement, any confusion we attribute to the book is intentional, and in fact unavoidable in attempting an accurate portrayal of the youth of the time, to which Mann himself belongs. The emphasis on 'Wirrnis' as a means to illustrating 'Verwirrung' suggests that confusion and disarray will be an enduring formal and thematic concern of the text, already suggesting a juxtaposition with the Bildung-

[138] In a deeply flawed new translation of *Der fromme Tanz*, one of the appended essays by editor Arthur C. Rauscher offers one of the few real insights the edition contains: 'The novel's ambiguous ending, with Andreas leaving Berlin without achieving either artistic or romantic fulfilment, might seem to contradict utopian readings. However, viewed through Muñoz's theory of queer failure as a form of virtuosity, these "failures" become productive spaces of possibility. The very incompleteness of Andreas's journey embodies what Bloch calls "concrete utopia" – not an impossible ideal but a real potential inherent in the present.' (Arthur C. Rauscher, 'Dancing Toward Tomorrow: Queer Utopian Longing in Klaus Mann's 'The Pious Dance'', in Klaus Mann, *The Pious Dance: A Classic Coming-of-Age Gay Romance Novel*, ed. by Arthur C. Rauscher (Ovid Publishing Group, 2024), pp. 264–266 (p. 266)). The fact that this edition labels Mann's work a 'romance' – a novel where there is not even requited desire between the protagonist and his love interest – is testament to the project's flawed understanding of its source material.

centred portrayals of youth that seek to impose a more ordered representation on the changes of adolescence. Even contemporary critics, however, insisted that Mann was a bad writer on grounds of his disorderly writing (and, implicitly or otherwise, his 'disorderly' life), with one likening this novel to 'ein geplatztes Kloakenrohr'.[139] Such opinions, as well as the continuing positioning of Mann as an inferior writer in comparison to his father and uncle, might be challenged by Mann himself via this argument: how can we expect cohesive representation of something that is not itself cohesive? In fact, Mann claims: 'Nichts auf der Welt könnte unwichtiger für uns sein, als die "zahlreichen Vorwürfe" abzuwehren, oder sie gar zu widerlegen, denen wir uns "aussetzen"' (*DfT*, p. 5). He also associates failure with positivity – the 'Hoffnung vielleicht' that can be expressed by unresolvable confusion; hope, which is a correlate of desire, is always maybe-present.

Mann's own description of his novel's shortcomings pinpoints the problem in one particular area. He writes:

> Ich bin sicher, daß die meisten Mängel dieses Buches im Künstlerischen und Artistischen damit eben zusammenhängen: wie oft wurde geredet, angeklagt, diskutiert, wo nur Bild, nur Gestalt hätten stehen dürfen. (*DfT*, p. 5)

The formlessness of open-ended, unresolved wordiness is contrasted here with the formal coherence of a clearly drawn picture or defined shape in a way that presents this formlessness as failure. However, to return to my earlier point, this wordy failure is also an intentional means of reflecting the formlessness and disarray of his generation. The 'Gestalt' that should have been disintegrates through words designed to un-shape, to unravel (to commit, Halberstam might say, a queer act of failure) in their portrayal of an

[139] Werner Deubel, as quoted in Issue 7 of 'Die schöne Literatur' on the back cover of Mann's *Der fromme Tanz. Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend* (1926) (Bruno Gmünder, 1982).

apparent generational unravelling. Mann asks the reader to have 'Nachsicht' with 'unserer Bemühung, die sich immer bewußt ist, kein Werk sein zu können' (*DfT*, p. 5). This 'Bemühung' is directed at bringing 'diese "anderen" buchfeindlichen Dinge' (*DfT*, p. 6) – the various manifestations of the 'Verwirrung' of the times – to paper with any sense of clarity. His book is itself 'buchfeindlich': in his own terms, his writing is caught in a struggle with the unwritable matter he seeks to portray, resulting in a 'Bemühung' that can never achieve, and indeed which actively resists, 'Vollendung'.

More than just apology or disclaimer, the 'Vorwort' is steeped in Mann's self-reflection and he threads himself through its pages emotionally, rather than using it to establish detachment between author and novelistic content. This is evident in his recognition that

> All dieser Fragestellungen, all dieser Gedanken ist mein 'Abenteuerbuch' voll, viel zu unmittelbar sind sie oft ausgesprochen, viel zu direkt und geständnishaft. Für das 'Werk' dieser Jugend, für ihre 'Gestaltung' darf ich also auch dieses Buch nicht halten. Als ein Dokument kann es vielleicht bestehen, finden doch die 'Verwirrungen, die diese außerordentliche Zeit für uns mit sich brachte', einen nur zu deutlichen Spiegel in ihm. (*DfT*, p. 6)

Mann recognizes that his novel raises questions, but refuses to allude to the possibility of answers. This passage can again be read as a comment on form as well as content, describing a book that is itself as 'abenteuerlich' in its questing for (ungiven) answers as the material to which it gives (non-)shape, no 'Gestalt'. He pre-empts critics who would accuse him of unclear and unremarkable writing by foregrounding the ways in which his novel strays outside the boundaries associated with a work of fiction: he labels it confessional,[140] and offers it up as a document and a mirror. Any accusation of

[140] This, as an aside, harks back to the religious confessional literature some see as a key predecessor of the development of the Bildungsroman.

confusion is neutralized with the anticipatory response that such confusion is merely an accurate reflection of the reality the book purports to mirror, a short-fall indicative of the limits imposed on representation by the demands of coherence or ultimate completion.

***

One of the reflections Mann incorporates into the body of novel is his characterization of his protagonist Andreas as a kind of artistic failure himself, in keeping with the blueprint laid out by the 'Vorwort' for the novel as a whole. Andreas is simultaneously preoccupied with processes of creation and unable to complete anything (which would of course put an end to the processes, and thus, as the happy ending does to the Bildungsroman, would negate their own being). The painting of God he works on in his childhood rooms, the daydream he constructs of the man he loves, Niels, in a hotel room – and we might even say his project of self-creation – are fated never to assume a recognizably final form. In his early attempts at painting while still a boy in his father's house, his thoughts are already preoccupied with the knowledge that his desire to create, to bring his heart to expression, is doomed to remain open-ended forever:

> In seinem Kopf, in seinem ganzen Leib wie eine ständige, nagende, unerträgliche Qual nur der eine Gedanke: So viele haben ihren Ausdruck gefunden und haben's gebildet, was ihres Herzens Qual und Freude war. Ich werde es nicht können. Ich weiß nicht was fehlt, aber ich werde es nicht können. […] Wie grausam, ja wie unverständlich grausam von diesem Gott, einem Menschen, die nicht zu unterdrückende Sehnsucht danach mitzugeben, ein Kunstwerk zu schaffen, ihn aber unter so unentwirrbar schwierigen Umständen aufwachsen und leben zu lassen, daß er die Kraft nicht findet, aus ihnen heraus etwas zu vollenden. (*DfT*, p. 20)

At this early stage in his development of self-expression, Andreas already recognizes himself as a failure. Yet while he here seems to lament his inability to make the 'unentwirrbar' into a clear picture reaching a sense of completion – echoing Mann's claims in the 'Vorwort' – he later comes to accept, or even embrace, his falling short of the standards he once hoped to meet. Despite clearly viewing it as a negative here, a 'grausam' imposition, Andreas is already able to locate in himself an irrepressible and yet unfulfillable 'Sehnsucht'. This sets the stage for the desire that drives him onwards throughout the Bildungsroman's progression, making the project of self-construction synonymous with self-expression. Perhaps identity is only what we are able to express; the fact that expression is always an unending, ongoing performance, never 'vollendet', is a nod towards the contingency of our self-understanding and, correspondingly, of identity. As we know, Andreas goes on to finally work out that desire is its own form of expression, of art, that dancing and loving are pious enough as they are, regardless of any unfulfilment, and indeed because they are unfulfilled. By the end of the novel, he has made himself into someone who values the transient, the incompletable, and has reconstituted his desires into his own version of an offering to God.

The uncertainties that make Andreas feel so vulnerable at the start of the novel are transformed into sites of power by the end of it, mutability and incompleteness themselves becoming key ways in which Andreas constructs and understands himself. In the letter to Ursula that serves as the novel's final passage, Andreas muses, from Paris:

> Wohin dies alles führen soll, dieser große Tanz, wissen wir wohl am wenigsten. […] Aber je größer und je heftiger die Unruhe war, um so seliger wird nachher die Stille sein. Bewegung ist reif werden zur Ruhe. Leben ist reif werden zum Tod. Sind wir so ziellose Tänzer, da wir also das Leben wie ein frommes Fest feiern und nicht bedenken, wie wir es zum Guten, Richtigen, Tüchtigen führen könnten? (*DfT*, p. 158)

At this stage, Andreas has gained a new understanding that the non-linear dance of desire that is life can have no certainties. Movement's end is rest, but the movement is inextricable from 'werden', to which only death can put a stop. 'Reif werden' comes with no guarantee of 'reif sein'. The dream of 'ausruhen' that has always called to Andreas is immediately linked to the 'Tod' that is the end of life: though these ends exist, we never truly get to experience them; death marks a departure, arguably experienced only by the living, but rarely functions as a resolution. No one knows where any of it really ends, but this not knowing allows for infinite possibilities, not just despair. Maybe Andreas and his generation are aimless dancers, but they are still committed followers of desire in all its innocence, longing, holiness, unfulfilment and possibility: desire recast as a pathway to what is good, right, and vigorous – and eternally incomplete.

Failures of Space

The transitory, hollow and wanting qualities that Mann associates with the youth of the time in general, and Andreas in particular, are reflected on a spatial level by a story that, like a typical Bildungsroman, begins at the parental home, but, atypically, does not end with the protagonist either returning home or establishing a new one for himself. The book ends as it begins, with Andreas alone in a hotel room, an inversion of the circular 'returning-home' expected of a traditional Bildungsroman into a 'returning-to-not-home' that resists resolution. Hotel rooms are temporally layered spaces, imbued with the traces of countless temporary residents, so that a guest is simultaneously aware of their position in a long succession of occupants and completely cut off from knowing anything about that succession, past or future, by virtue of being a stranger, playing a

part in a story that they can never know. As Wayne Koestenbaum reflects in his theoretical text/novel *Hotel Theory*, 'a hotel, intimate as a subway car, is an assembly of unrelated beings, separated by walls, but gathered together in a nearness'.[141] In temporal terms, 'hotels permit insensible prolongation, temporal engorgement, hours stretched out on the rack'.[142] A world of its own, decoupled from the framework of time and space that requires a point marked 'home' in order to measure spatial distance, and a point marked 'the present' in order to measure temporal gaps, the hotel fittingly re-sets the Bildungsroman narrative into a scene where time and space can only be gauged by and through the hero himself; as Bakhtin argued, the hero has time implanted into himself.

Hotels also function as what Marc Augé terms 'non-places':

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.[143]

A hotel room exists as an isolated, impersonal space, and so that space can never quite measure up to *place.* Augé further distinguishes 'two complementary but distinct realities' designated by the term 'non-place': 'spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces'.[144] The hotel is made for certain ends: it offers leisure, at a price. The non-place constituted by the individual's relationship to the space is, for the occupier of the hotel room, the illusion of 'my' hotel room, of a space existing in definite terms which is actually removed from all context. In fact, 'since non-places are there to be passed

[141] Wayne Koestenbaum, *Hotel Theory* (Soft Skull Press, 2007), p. 20.
[142] Ibid., p. 90.
[143] Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, trans. by John Howe (Verso, 2000), pp. 77–78.
[144] Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 94.

through, they are measured in units of time'.[145] This temporal rather than spatial existence – the hotel room that exists for its occupier only for a limited period – returns us to the Bildungsroman hero who is decontextualized in and by this non-place, existing as constituted by time, and unable to lay claim to a space that, on some level, is not ever really there.

The prologue of *Der fromme Tanz* opens with the description: 'Ich sehe ein Hotelzimmer in irgendeiner fremden südländischen kleinen Stadt und in diesem Hotelzimmer sitzt ein junger Mensch und schreibt einen Brief – ich weiß aber noch nicht an wen' (*DfT*, p. 7). This openly first-person phrasing is another way Mann sets up his novel to fall short of reader expectations: after the prologue, the narrator's 'I' almost entirely disappears from the pages, retreating into a perspective that largely shares access to the protagonist's thoughts and dreams but speaks in the third-person. The fact that the 'I' of these opening phrases does not know to whom the letter is written bars it from the omniscience one might associate with a viewpoint that seems to survey the scene from above. In fact, this 'I' extends its limitations to the reader: it knows only what it tells us, and tells us only what it sees from an apparently limited frame. Even to the narrative 'I', the hotel room youth remains fundamentally inaccessible. In fact, a hotel room is almost synonymous with youth as a space of transience. And a hotel room youth is perhaps a fitting overall description for Andreas, hopping from place to place, never settling, and never in possession of spatial or temporal permanence.

Hotel rooms underlie the events of almost the entire novel. In Berlin, a week after he has moved into the Pension Meyerstein where his new friend Franziska resides amongst a cast of other eccentric, youthful characters, Andreas has not established a new sense of home. In fact,

[145] Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 104.

> Jeden Morgen war es ihm wieder, als wenn er in einem Hotelzimmer erwachte, in dem er erst eine einzige dumpfe und traumlose Nacht hatte zubringen müssen und das ihm beim Erwachen fremd war – fremd durchaus mit billigem Teppich, mit Waschtisch und kleinem Bücherregal. (*DfT*, p. 56)

He feels *as if* he were in a hotel room, which, in a sense, he is: he rents a room from a stranger, knowing it is a temporary arrangement. The only meaningful difference from a hotel is that he knows and spends time with his fellow residents. In a space where impermanence allows no sense of place from which to orient the trajectory of his new life, Andreas's process of self-construction begins on a basis of nothing solid at all – and ends there too, in an ongoing project of (self-)assemblage which is also always disassemblage, the 'unbecoming' that Halberstam recognizes as a mark of queer failure that is somehow still a constructive process.

In Andreas's Cologne period – one of the cities he stays in briefly in his quest to discover where Niels has gone after Berlin – Paulchen, also a Pension Meyerstein resident, visits to declare his romantic feelings for Andreas, who rejects him. Paulchen then fatally shoots himself with a revolver in the hotel corridor outside Andreas's room. Later, still in the hotel, Andreas seems detached from this traumatic event: 'Er war der verlorene Sohn, der allein verloren zwischen Büchern in einem Hotelzimmer sitzt und vom Ausruhen träumt' (*DfT*, p. 131). The hotel is primed for failure; indeed, in Koestenbaum's words: 'Hotels ideally extend welcome to those who fail, who haunt margins, who inch toward impiety'.[146] Hotels are transient spaces, 'non-places', and success, in the terms we are used to, is usually tied to permanence: legacy, tradition, establishment. Andreas is the 'verlorene Sohn', not just away from 'home', but completely severed from it; the lost son as Bildungsroman hero asks us to consider the

[146] Koestenbaum, *Hotel Theory*, p. 97.

possibilities that being lost opens up to us, reorienting the journey of Bildung to one completely unaided by outside points of reference or direction. Instead, Andreas's direction is suggested by his longing – dreaming – for 'Ausruhen'. Despite the hotel room's supposed *raison d'être* consisting in the offering of a bed for the weary traveller, rest is still presented as something out of reach, which suggests that it is not the relief of sleep he wants, but a deeper, soul-level chance for rest and recuperation. Its being unattainable can be attributed to the demands of the Bildungsroman form as determined by the rules of Mann's story: if he were given the opportunity to rest, not only would the teleology of the narrative suddenly give up the development on which the genre is predicated, but Andreas would be (literally or otherwise) unconscious, and unconscious people cannot really develop at all – certainly not in terms of knowing self-construction.

In Paris – the novel's final city – Andreas lodges, again, at a hotel, while he visits and spends time with the finally-located Niels. The passage in question offers up the observation: 'Wie weiß und fahl das kleine Hotelzimmer im Morgenlicht lag! Die Betten waren breit hierzulande, für viel schwere Unzucht berechnet' (*DfT*, p. 156). This final room in the succession of hotels is, like all of them, not a hotel of luxury: not the sort of place one would want to stay long-term. Its characteristic transience aside, at the end of the novel, Andreas seems aware of the sexuality of the hotel-room space in a way never mentioned before. Hotel rooms are saturated with desire, and in fact often associated with illicit desires – the sexual liaisons that cannot be brought home. The hotel room is where hidden desires go to be expressed; it offers its guest – here Andreas – a spatial and temporal dimension where desire is centred and isolated, allowing the experience to happen on neutral ground, the Bildungsroman taking a diversion through the experiences of longing and loneliness that seem so central to Andreas's queer experiences.

***

Andreas's spatial dimensions are always framed as transient, offering possibilities but never certainties. A motif that contributes further to the sense that space is fluid around the character is that of water. Rushing water acts as an externalization of his own uncertainties, an embodiment that rejects the resolution that an unmoving body would offer. This motif is set up from the prologue, where the as-yet unknown young man writes a letter in a hotel room, the position of which is described in outwards-moving concentric circles, the largest being the sea, which makes the hotel room appear as an island. From the perspective of the letter-writer, 'draußen lag eine fremde südliche Stadt ganz warm im Abend und rauschte mit ihren Brunnen. Und dann kam das Meer' (*DfT*, p. 8). Within the hotel room, within the fountained-city, within the evening, beyond which the sea: dark water creeps everywhere around his hotel room. The water's instability reflects the instability and fluidity of the hotel room itself. Later – though earlier chronologically – in the novel's first chapter, when Andreas dreams of a Mary figure who refuses his offer of a rosary, she says:

> Noch nicht. Du hast dir's noch nicht verdient. Du hast dir's noch nicht erlitten. Du hast mich noch niemals begriffen. Du bist noch jung und voll Hochmut. Du mußt erst das Große erlebt haben, daß ich mich deiner Huldigung neige. Hast du mich jemals begriffen? – Noch nicht – – . (*DfT*, pp. 10–11)

After this ominous and, frankly, unconstructive rejection, the woman fades away. In the aftermath (still within the dream), 'Nur die Stadt rauschte, mahnend, befehlshaberisch fast, wie ein Wasser, das steigt und immer näher kommt' (*DfT*, p. 11). City and water are linked again, both entities rushing around the dreamer and threatening to come ever

closer. The rush of the city like the rushing of water is the backdrop of Andreas's dream, suggesting a sense of constant movement; no wonder, perhaps, that 'Ausruhen' is what he longs for later on.

The ominous tone of the rushing city, and the rushing water, plays into the scene when Andreas goes to the river near his father's house, intending to drown himself, in the face of not having suffered enough – which he takes to mean not having achieved enough – to be accepted by the ambiguous divine power which apparently rules over his life. He looks down into the water, then

> richtete sich wieder auf, ganz gerade. Er löste den Blick von der schwarzen, fließenden Stille vor sich, die Unschuld war und doch auch Verführung, eine süße Verführung zur Unschuld. Und ganz fest, ganz ohne zu zittern schaute sein Blick, der sich also vom Dunkel getrennt hatte, in eine andere Ferne, die irgendwo, hinter der Nacht, zu liegen schien. Voll Abenteuer war diese, voll Lust und Not und Gefahr. (*DfT*, p. 33)

The rushing constancy of the water in front of him, that will later be paralleled with the city, is a darkness he chooses not to enter; he recognizes it as the seduction to innocence, and he decides not to be seduced. By going to the city, this 'andere Ferne', arguably, he transposes this seduction, a literal '*Ver*-führung', onto a type of rushing environment that is not merely a force of nature, but a man-made arena of business and movement, which allows for all facets of human subjectivity to find their expression 'hinter der Nacht', a seduction not to 'innocence' but to desire. It is in this 'Ferne', the word itself indicating its spatial otherness, that the adventures of the Bildungsroman he finds himself in can be exposed to the full treatment of the modern world, including the subcultures in which queer subjects and subjectivities so often find their freedom. Soon after this, on his first night in Berlin in a bed-bug-ridden boarding house, Andreas reflects on the passers-by:

> Der Nachdenkliche, der vorüberging, würde bei sich überlegen: da schläft einer. – – Und es war doch er, er, Andreas Magnus, der Einzelfall, der ausgezogen war, ohne zu wissen wohin – nur weil er's gelobt hatte in einer Stunde, die jetzt schon, unergründlich wie ein Märchen, als Vergangenheit hinter ihm stand. (*DfT*, p. 40)

His ability to self-consciously evaluate the consequences of his decisions speaks to his careful construction of his new life, and perhaps his new self. The fairytale – which may as well stand for the life of the 'philistine', to quote Hegel again, a normalizing narrative that sees threats neutralized and order restored – is left firmly in the past. Failing to live a fairytale opens up a new world of possible, anti-archetypal lives.

Towards the end of the novel, on the rooftop of the tower building where Niels is staying in Paris – and the sudden appearance of a 'Turm' towards the novel's end may be read as an oblique reference to *Wilhelm Meister* – city and water are amalgamated into one rushing mass again, seemingly occupying the same nearness, in contrast to the narrative's initial positioning of the city's rush as an 'andere Ferne': 'Die Stadt, undeutlich, aufgelöst ins Unermeßliche, lag hell und weit wie ein Wasser zu ihren Füßen' (*DfT*, p. 141). The city is as mutable and immeasurable as water, the two coalescing into a force of both nature and human intervention that heightens the sense that anything is now possible for Andreas, who has escaped the trappings of expectation and rebuilt a life and identity in the underworlds of European cities. Indeed, in the final letter he writes to Ursula from Paris, he says she will not hear from him for a while. Evidently, he will not be coming home, will not be enthralled by the innocence and the despair of the life he left behind; he describes how 'alle Bäume rauschen für mich, alle Meere warten auf mich. Menschen sitzen in ihren Wohnstuben, denen ich nächstens zu begegnen habe. Des Menschen Leib ist schön an allen Orten' (*DfT*, p. 159). The whole world waits for him, which means that it is Andreas himself who sets the time, having

constructed a world for himself that grows and changes alongside him, for 'an endless dance with no destination and no final possession'.[147] Desire – for the unknown bodies of people yet to be met – continues to drive him forwards, into their cities, into their oceans and their forests, which will become his, too, when his story grows to encompass them, and then keeps on growing, chasing desire forever.

Failures of Self

In keeping with the emphasis on a mutually specular relationship between content and form, the spaces of *Der fromme Tanz* – hotel rooms, dressing rooms – tend to be bedecked with mirrors. These serve an important function as opportunities for Andreas to quite literally reflect on himself, in ways that often echo the tale of Wilhelm Meister and which are therefore important landmarks in Mann's self-conscious Bildungsroman. When, at the novel's beginning, Andreas awakens in his father's house on the morning after his dream about a Marian figure,

> Er blickte, den Kopf aufgestützt, im Zimmer umher und sah es sich an – so wie man etwas, was man lange Zeit gesehen hat, aber niemals verstanden, plötzlich, mit einem Male genau und beinahe erschreckt besieht. So war es um ihn – so deutlich, so wunderlich fremd und vertraut. (*DfT*, pp. 11–12)

The familiar has become strange, which allows it to be known again, reconstruction becoming construction in itself. The strangeness of a familiar room plays out in his own face, too; later on, after his first performance at the cabaret, Andreas looks at himself in the dressing room mirror backstage, and

[147] Franccesco Albé, 'Queer (Dis)locations: Klaus Mann's Early Works and Weimar Homosexual Culture (1919–1933)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2023), p. 123, doi:10.17863/CAM.107266.

> ihm war, als sähe er selbst schon Züge eines frühen Welkens um diesen blutrot aufgesetzten Mund, der mit seiner Künstlichkeit alles beflecken mußte, was er berührte, um diese viel zu weiß geschminkten Wangen. (*DfT*, p. 62)

The artificial face he wears makes his own features strange. There is a scene in Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*, in which a clown, speaking about the individuality of clown make-up, states: 'We can invent our own faces! We *make* ourselves'.[148] Likewise, Andreas's heavy cabaret make-up might as well be a clown face; a new face, constructed by his own hand, worn over the top of his real one, which makes his reflection seem distanced, strange, out of sync with who he believes himself to be. Carter's clown's observation that 'I have become this face which is not mine, and yet I chose it freely' highlights the opportunities offered by literal, physical self-crafting, and how the creator and created versions of the subject coalesce and forge new identities in tandem.[149] This further suggests that reconstruction is all there is, without an origin or an end point.

The language of sudden self-strangeness echoes in the scene where Andreas first catches sight of Niels, the youth he falls in love with and pursues in the face of largely absent reciprocation, at the country estate belonging to a friend of Franziska. In this moment,

> Ihm war, als erlebe er irgend etwas zum allerersten Mal, doch was es war wußte er nicht. 'Bäume', sagte er vor sich hin, 'Gras – Gras – –' Noch nie hatte er so den Boden, so die Erde unter seinen Füßen gespürt, ihm war, als müsse er die Wangen gegen die Baumrinde oder das Gesicht gegen die weiche Erde legen. (*DfT*, p. 83)

[148] Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (Vintage, 1994), p. 121. Original emphasis.
[149] Ibid., p. 122.

In the face of desire, everything in his surroundings seemingly shifts into something new; as is the case with time, space is introduced into the hero, and when he changes – which is to say, apparently, that his desire changes – the environment around him is changed too. Andreas's desire for Niels consistently causes the former to confront versions of himself, in an ongoing, Foucauldian project of self-reflection that pulls him forward even as it can only be situated inside of him. Indeed, in *Der fromme Tanz*,

> das transzendierende Moment der Liebeserfahrung [besteht] primär darin, durch die Liebesempfang zum anderen sich selbst zu erkennen und zu bestimmen, doch kann dieses nur als Wunsch, nicht aber als Vollzug erlebt werden.[150]

There is no self-recognition to be had, only the desire for it. There can be no end point of completion, only the ongoing process. In his hotel room in Cologne, on his search for Niels, Andreas looks at his own image: 'vorm Spiegel blieb er stehen, wo zwischen Halbdunkel und grauem Rauch sein Gesicht ihm entgegenschaute – ein Knabengesicht, aber ermüdet schon vom Leben und Reisen' (*DfT*, p. 123). Andreas recognises the face as the face of a boy – but does not lay claim to it. Perhaps because, to him, it half-belongs to Niels. Life and travel have exhausted this face; it reflects a failure of the self to be in-sync with the life it lives and consequently destabilises temporal cohesion.

Dreams (including daydreams) offer a similar, if less directly reality-based, way of accessing ourselves from outside ourselves, and dreams are another recurring feature of Mann's novel. One daydream of Andreas's of particular note is when he dreams 'vor Niels' Photographie' (*DfT*, p. 129) – in a hotel room again – in which

> Ihm war es, als fände er alles was in ihm selber Traum, Ahnung, Sehnsucht und Gedanke gewesen war, wieder in der Ruhe dieses Gesichtes. Ihm war, als sei

[150] Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler: Studien zu seinen Romanen 'Der fromme Tanz' und 'Der Vulkan'* (Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p. 41.

> hier die Traurigkeit und die keusche Glückseligkeit aller Kreatur ein Körper geworden. Und er wußte nicht, daß das ‘lieben’ heißt: die ganze Schöpfung in einem Körper wiedererkennen. (*DfT*, p. 129)

His own desires shape Niels’s face; I would argue that he is not seeing the whole of creation in Niels’s image, but rather the world he has created for himself out of desire. To see your inner world in another is perhaps what ‘lieben’ indicates.

Mann comes the closest to direct political commentary he ever does in the novel – even as the entire undertaking is implicitly political – when discussing this love, in this daydream:

> Andreas gab sich dieser Liebe ganz hin, die er nicht als Verirrung empfand. Ihm kam es nicht in den Sinn, sie vor sich zu leugnen, sie zu bekämpfen als ‘Entartung’ oder als ‘Krankheit’. Diese Worte berührten die Wahrheit so wenig, sie kamen aus anderer Welt. Gut hieß er diese Liebe vielmehr ganz und gar, er lobte sie, wie alles, was Gott gab und verhängte – sei es noch so leicht oder schwierig zu tragen.
> In tiefen Stunden verloren sich seine Augen in dieses Menschengesicht, das ihm fremd war wie keines und vertraut, wie keines. Am Ende war es ihm, als erkenne er sogar sein eigenes Gesicht in diesem wieder. Geheimnisvoll klagte seine eigene Einsamkeit aus der Einsamkeit dieser Augen. (*DfT*, p. 129)

Evidently Andreas has managed to decouple queer desire from any concept of disease or degeneracy, and sees it as a gift (which is simultaneously a curse, as may be perceived by others) from God: he recognizes the perspective of religious bigotry but locates his own faith elsewhere. Andreas’s perception of Niels’s image incorporates him, blends Niels’s face with his own, bringing desire home and reshaping the walls around it. The construction of the self in tandem with the object of desire is presented as a joyful thing:

> Da stieg jenes Lächeln in ihm auf, das ihm als Mitgift gegeben war zu jener Not, das immer kam, immer siegte, wenn es am schlimmsten war, und das es ‘besser wußte’ am Ende.
> Dies Lächeln verstand: Vereinigung mit dem geliebten Körper ist uns niemals gegeben, des Menschen Körper ist alleine für alle Ewigkeit. Blieb aber diese

> Liebe, die also auf des Geliebten Besitz verzichtet hatte, groß genug, so konnte sie vielleicht dem geliebten Körper helfen in seiner Einsamkeit. Das war mehr, als sich sagen ließ.
> […]
> So galt es, einen zu finden, dem man alles gab, ohne ihn zu besitzen, dem man helfend treu blieb bis zum Tod, ohne ihn zu besitzen. (*DfT*, p. 130)

The version of self-construction through desire and love for the other, with devotion but without possession, is precisely what Mann means by 'fromm' in his novel's title. In a 1925 essay that is obviously concurrent with the writing of *Der fromme Tanz*, Mann explains:

> *Fromm* im Leben sein, heißt anmutig sein. Anmutig sein heißt vor allem: Verliebtsein in alle Dinge, in die weiten Landschaften, in die Schlankheit des menschlichen Leibes. Einen Körper anbeten mit all der grenzenlosen Schwermut, all der besinnungslosen Hingegebenheit, mit der man das Geheimnis des bewegten Lebens anbetet. – Nicht den geliebten Leib besitzen wollen, wissen vielmehr, daß man ihn nie besitzen darf, aber ihm doch in jedem Augenblicke danken, daß er da ist und atmet. Nicht das Leben besitzen wollen, fremd bleiben in ihm – aber in jedem Augenblick, jenseits aller Schwermut, Gott danken, daß man doch lebt.[151]

There is a kind of virtue in the conscious non-possession of the other, in the gratefulness simply for the other's proximity. For Mann, to be 'fromm' is a queer renegotiation of the paths of desire, where there is no final fulfilment, and this is something to be thankful for. Andreas recognizes the isolation inherent to the physical boundaries of the body, but recognizes also that the body of a lover helps to blur those boundaries, to renegotiate what it means to be in 'possession' of a body – one's own or that of a lover. To sacrifice without ownership in either direction is his dream, his hope, and illustrates the desire that extends beyond sexuality to ongoing self-formation and progress.

[151] Klaus Mann, 'Fragment von der Jugend' [dated 1925], in *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Aufsätze* (Transmare Verlag, 1931), pp. 1–20 (p. 16). Original emphasis.

At the end of the novel, in his Paris hotel room, Andreas is lying in bed (the bed 'für viel schwere Unzucht berechnet') half-asleep. He has just laid his rosary – purchased in a reality that mirrors the dream at the novel's beginning – around Niels's photograph, when he senses with his eyes closed the proximity of the Marian figure who once dismissed his offering:

> Aber jetzt kam sie zu ihm her. Aber jetzt stand sie ja selbst an seiner Seite, gnadenreich im Faltenwurf ihres Gewands. Er hatte nicht ihr das Opfer dargebracht, hatte den Schmuck, den sie einst zurückgewiesen, heute um eines anderen geliebtes Bild gelegt. – Wenn man also nur liebte: war ihr das Ehrung genug? (*DfT*, p. 157)

Andreas realizes that the act of loving is a sacrifice in itself: the extension of desire outwards reformulates the self from which it emanates, and this in itself allows identity to grow beyond the individual, to open up the space for Bildung in the realm of the interpersonal, which renders it inherently 'unvollendbar', and to become something that is both purely human and of a higher (self-)consciousness. Through desire, the individual experience of Bildung is expanded into collectivity. 'Wenn man also nur liebte', if one only loved: this is the promise of self-construction as it detours through the other, failure making the individual precisely through this unmaking. We are undone by desire, and this undoing (re)constitutes us.

Failures of Stories

Mann's novel is, in his own terms, a project of falling-short, and thus of failure; within the novel, embedded stories continue to reference this failure metatextually. This is most prominently displayed in the 'III. Abschnitt' of Chapter 5, where Andreas is spinning tales for an ill and sleeping Niels with both characters reimagined into figures in his

story-within-the-story. Although Andreas adds a disclaimer early on that 'natürlich bist du nicht Niels und ich nicht dieser Andreas' (*DfT*, p. 98), this is almost immediately negated when he addresses Niels by name, before lapsing into a first-person plural voice, which makes clear that the story remains theirs. Andreas tells Niels:

> Ich weiß viel von uns. Lieber Niels, ich glaube fast, ich weiß alles von uns. Wir sind zwei Kinder, die sich im Wald verlaufen haben und sich auch gegenseitig nicht finden können. […] Ich rufe deinen Namen, du heißt Ugolino. […] Ich heiße Kasper [*sic*]. – Aber unsere Namen finden sich nicht, der Wind treibt Fangball mit ihren Silben, er wirft sie so durcheinander, sie begegnen sich – ach, sie kreuzen sich in der schwarzen Luft. […] Kaspar kann dich nicht sehen, Ugolino, du bist fremd, verspielt, unhaltbar zwischen den Büschen […]. Und doch bist du seine Richtschnur und ohne dich wäre er lange verloren. (*DfT*, p. 99)

He pictures Niels and himself as children lost in the woods, longing to find each other, but unable to. The story he is telling of them is immediately situated in a fairytale template, a kind of 'Hansel and Hansel' where the children do not just lose the way home, but each other, lost within a lostness as the narrative perspective shifts from 'ich' to 'er', a counter-template to the Hegelian fairytale. The wind throws their names back and forth, never conveying one to the other but twisting them in the air: the nature of Andreas's desire means it is always lost in translation. Nevertheless, the desire for Niels is his tether, his only hope of finding orientation and keeping moving forwards. Like the 'verderbt abenteuerlich' generation Mann counts Andreas as part of, the necessity of orientation has to be unlearned; in this story world – another transient space, like a hotel room – impermanence again precludes clear direction. Andreas, the lost son of the Bildungsroman, is lost, but lost together with the object of his desire, that desire alone holding them together. Peter Hoffer has noted the similarities between this scene of *Der*

fromme Tanz and Mann's short story 'Kaspar Hauser und das irre kleine Mädchen',[152] in his collection *Vor dem Leben*, from where Mann seems also to have borrowed Andreas's alias. In the short story, Kaspar Hauser chases an unknown girl through a forest: 'Und, wie so oft schon früher, dachte Kaspar, durch einen dunklen Wald hinter einem fremden, irrsinnigen Kinde herlaufend: Vielleicht – hilft – sie – mir'.[153] As in Andreas's and Niels's constellation, the one running away holds the key to helping the follower in some unspecified manner, drawing them onwards into the unknown.

Mann uses this anti-fairytale to maintain the interplay between the story Andreas is telling and the story the narrator is telling, which, owing to Mann's self-representation in the 'Vorwort', already seems to interact with the story that *Mann* is telling. Here, Andreas maintains a layered interplay between the story he is living, and the story he is telling, continuing to speak to Niels in terms outside of the tale of Kaspar and Ugolino. Indeed,

> Die Stimme des Erzählenden war so leise über ihm, daß sie ihn sicher nicht wecken konnte. 'Du bist größer als ich, denn du bist unschuldiger als ich', sagte die Stimme zum schlafenden Gesicht. 'Also bist du auch frommer als ich. Das weiß ich heute, daß ein atmender Mund mehr ist vorm Herrn als ein sprechender. Und daß ein Frommer mehr ist als ein Erkennender. Und daß ein liebender Körper mehr ist als ein wissender Kopf. Und daß ein Tänzer mehr ist vorm Herrn als einer der schreibt oder malt. […]' (*DfT*, pp. 99–100)

This statement once again suggests that physicality and sincere belief are closer to the divine than intellect or its products; bodily desire is at the root of piety, for Andreas, and we 'know that piety in this world is another word for hope'.[154] Hope, like desire, like worship, pulls the individual forward in some unmappable way, dancing non-linear

[152] Peter T. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann* (Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 51.
[153] Klaus Mann, 'Kaspar Hauser und das irre kleine Mädchen', in *Vor dem Leben* (Gebrüder Enoch, 1925), pp. 173–80 (p. 179).
[154] Javier Samper Vendrell, 'Queer Utopia in Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz*', *The German Quarterly*, 94.1 (2021), pp. 83–98 (p. 96), doi:10.1111/gequ.12157.

choreographies that nevertheless feel like progress. ‘Der fromme Tanz’ becomes, in this light, approximately equivalent to ‘the dance of desire’. With its ‘Abenteuerbuch’ subtitle, this reframes the novel – and the Bildungsroman genre to which it belongs – as one driven by adventures in desire, which, if we are constituted by desire, as Foucault writes, means adventures in self-constitution. Meanwhile, the interplay of stories breaks down the various diegetic ceilings of the novel’s symbolic spaces, contributing to its ‘Wirrnis’ and the impossibility of completion, Halberstam’s queer ‘unmaking’ taking hold on a formal as well as thematic level.

Andreas recognizes the weight of his re-framing of desire, saying:

> Das, Ugolino, ist mein Geheimnis, mein Märchen, mein süßes Lied – das ist das Märchen meiner Jugend und meiner zerrissenen Zeit: daß wir unschuldig sein müssen, nicht klug. Daß wir fromm sein müssen, nicht stolz. Daß wir Liebende sein müssen, nicht Fragende. Die Welt Erschauende, nicht die Welt Begreifende. Und daß der Körper allein uns mit Gott verbindet – der Körper und die Seele, die in ihm wohnt – niemals der wägende Geist. Das ist mein Lied, ich habe es mir am Tage erhorcht, ich habe es in der Nacht erfahren. Ich weiß kein besseres, ich habe kein anderes nötig. Ich weiß nicht, ob ich ein Bild daraus gebären kann, aber wenn die letzte Stunde kommt, kann ich dir sagen: danke, daß du jetzt da bist – ich habe so viel gesehen. Danke, kann ich ihr einst entgegensagen, danke, meine liebe, dunkle Stunde, daß du mich auch nicht vergessen hast. Ich war eingedenk deiner die ganze Zeit. Die Zärtlichkeit, die ich dir immer bewahrte, hat all mein Tun gereinigt. Aber mein Körper, den du mir gabst, mein Leib, den du erfunden, du erzaubert hast, hat mich der Erde schmerzvoll und lustvoll verbunden, denn mit diesem meinem Leib habe ich alle Dinge geliebt und am meisten des anderen, geliebten Menschen geliebten Leib. (*DfT*, p. 100)

The use of the term ‘Märchen’, in comparison to the use of the term discussed earlier as a reference to a quaint and distanced past, indicating a time before the change of heart that leads Andreas to Berlin, here suggests that Andreas has become able to construct and convey his own version of a fairytale – has perhaps queered the traditional enough to have renegotiated what a story based on *his* self-construction might look like. This fairy tale is of a time that has been ‘zerrissen’, which might point to the way that neat

ideas of identity, of growing up and adulthood, have also been torn: temporality is a subjective experience that reflects the subject thinking it. The repetition of the sentence structure of what they – Andreas's and Niels's generation – should be, and what they should not, draws affiliations between the items placed on each side of that equation respectively: innocence, piety, lovers, and observers on the one side, versus smartness, pride, questioners and graspers on the other. These discordant combinations ask us to dramatically reconsider our ideas of what purity might look like, if we take it to be synonymous with lovers, not virginity, and with a kind of naïve mode of observation that perhaps facilitates an easier being-in-the-world. Indeed, the passage frames the body as Godly, with the soul located firmly within it, not as a separate entity. Andreas's odd statement that he has been 'eingedenk deiner'[155] the whole time raises the question: what does it mean to have been mindful of the final hour the whole time? Perhaps by incorporating it into our consciousness, we contain our own temporality in our identities, our own mortality, becoming Bakhtin's Bildungsroman hero in truth. Time, the last hour, conversely, is what apparently gives Andreas a body, which he uses piously to love others, making lust and curiosity holy.

The end of the tale of Kaspar and Ugolino, which has steadily dissolved into a less fictional meditation on the nature of Andreas's desire for Niels, and the state of desire in general, coincides with the end of this chapter section in the novel. The final lines are:

> Andreas neigte sich tief über den Schlafenden, so daß sein Mund fast den anderen berührte. 'Aber du – willst du jetzt bei mir bleiben?' fragte er ihn. – Aber das Gesicht atmete nur und antwortete nicht.
> Da richtete Andreas sich wieder auf und saß wieder wie vorher auf seinem Stuhl neben dem Bett im Dunklen. Warum hatte er das gefragt? – Darüber mußte er

[155] This phrasing may also be a reference to Jesus' symbolic offering of his body in the holy sacrament, in keeping with the Godly theme.

> selber lächeln. Wußte er doch so gut, daß es sein Teil und sein Schicksal nicht war, einen anderen Menschen je zu besitzen. Wie sollte dieser da bei ihm bleiben? – aber er wußte nicht, daß das Lächeln auf seinem Gesicht wie ein Weinen zuckte.
> Da erfand er eine letzte Maskerade für sich und ihn, das tiefste Spiel. 'So bin ich ein Dichter', sagte er ins Dunkel hinein, 'und du bist mein Traum.' (*DfT*, p. 102)

Niels's failure to answer Andreas's question (though hardly his fault – he is, after all, unconscious) means this is not quite the moment of finding a place that Andreas would like to believe; his desire remains open and unfulfilled in the final analysis, which is the whole point. He recognizes it himself – that another can never be truly possessed. It is by the grace of the other that we might share their lives; only desire can decide how two (or more) people are tied together, and for how long that tie may last, and it is hardly the sturdiest of ropes with which to do so. The reinvention of the image of them – transposed onto another realm, the poetic – emphasizes the paradigm-defining role of desire by creating an eternalization that stretches inner temporality in tune with desire, making no pretence to be beholden to the 'real' and the structures of 'objectivity' it threatens. With the metatextual claim that Andreas is a writer, and Niels his dream – rather than Niels being a literary product the writer could create – any output of this newly-assumed poet role is called into question. Both are disembodied by this stage, existing as forms of expression only, which is, in Mann's project, the truest version of an identity. Through the other, Andreas provisionally anchors a fundamentally un-anchorable identity, but this anchoring is disembodied, impermanent, and incomplete. There is no guarantee of any permanent creation, any putting to paper of a poem: dreams, like desires, float onwards untamed, unmade, undone. The 'Wirrnis' of the text refuses to be resolved, and the Bildungsroman refuses to reach a final conclusion. The frame is left open, and expansion can continue.

Flucht in den Norden

Flucht in den Norden was the first novel Mann published following his departure from Germany, and in fact it has been called the first German exile novel.[156] Arwed Schmidt argues that the 'Krise des Exils scheint den "linear" fortschreitenden, entwicklungs- und handlungsbestimmten Roman unmöglich zu machen'.[157] However, as we have seen, Mann was already disrupting notions of linear progress well before exile, in Schmidt's reading, brought linear development and progress to a halt from the outside. Despite this dramatic change in the author's circumstances, *Flucht* consistently creates the same spatial and temporal diffusiveness as the background for its protagonists' story that we see already in *Der fromme Tanz*, albeit here with a greater sense of distance and isolation. Like *Der fromme Tanz*, the narrative follows a young person at a pivotal developmental stage as they attempt to find their place and purpose in the world. This attempt, however, comes with greater urgency in *Flucht*: the background is no longer that of the Weimar Republic and all the opportunities it initially seemed to offer for (self-)exploration, but that of Europe after Hitler has risen to power and the novel's protagonist has left Germany to avoid arrest for resisting Nazi control. Where Andreas in *Der fromme Tanz* expands into terms of transience and incompletion, the context of *Flucht* means that there is an enduring sense of being unable to fully detach from the world beyond the individual, for better or worse. The pronounced dissociation from this immediate context, both because the narrative events take place in Scandinavia, and because the very premise of the novel is the idea of escapism, is all the more striking because as a reader, we know (and the main character actually also knows) that the

[156] Cf. Schmidt, *Exilwelten*, p. 45; Frederic Spotts, *Cursed Legacy: The Tragic Life of Klaus Mann* (Yale University Press, 2016), p. 87, doi:10.12987/9780300220971.
[157] Schmidt, *Exilwelten*, p. 116.

world pointedly not being looked at for much of the novel is in a state of seeming collapse. Another immediately apparent difference between the two novels is that, here, the protagonist is female (although continually described in gender-non-conforming terms): Johanna, previously involved in student activism in her native Germany, now at the start of a period of exile in Finland. She has chosen this destination because it is the homeland of a friend she made at university, Karin, whose family members make up much of the novel's supporting cast, particularly Karin's older brother, Ragnar, with whom Johanna begins an unstable and destabilizing romantic and sexual relationship. The couple embark on a north-bound road trip which takes them ever further into remoteness. While this relationship makes up much of the novel's plot, the desire driving Johanna towards Ragnar has to contest with other forces, here, that the protagonist of *Der fromme Tanz* remained blissfully unaware of:

> Like Andreas Magnus and others of his ilk, Johanna is troubled by feelings of guilt over her desire to abandon her ideals and succumb to her natural inclinations. Unlike the former, however, who continues optimistically to pursue his vague and undefinable objective, Johanna makes up her mind to renounce her desires and complete her higher mission, heedless of the consequences.[158]

Ultimately, Johanna leaves Ragnar to return to her political commitments. The relationship is incompatible with maintaining the drive of political hope, a drive which remains vague and untethered to a specific goal beyond 'not this', allowing it to remain a more future-oriented, open-ended desire. This necessary sacrifice in Johanna's personal life sits at the heart of the novel, as Mann himself repeatedly emphasized. He described the book's tension as 'the classical alternative between love and duty' (*TP*, 283) while also declaring:

[158] Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 81.

> Hinter dem Liebesroman steht also ein anderer; hinter der ewigen Problematik des Paares, das sich zugleich unendlich nah und unendlich fern ist, eine andere – die dringlichste, aktuellste Problematik, die von der Pflicht und Forderung der Stunde.[159]

The problem is situated in the fact that the book is a love story, but happily ever after is never a possible ending. Mann later claimed that

> 'Flucht in den Norden' handelt von den Leiden, Seligkeiten und inneren Kämpfen eines jungen Menschen unserer Tage, der es noch nicht gelernt hat – aber es lernen will –, sein individuelles Glück mit dem, was er als seine Pflicht empfindet, zu vereinigen.[160]

His phrasing here is reminiscent of the title of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, further evoking the Weimar Classicism associated with the birth of the Bildungsroman. Additionally, through his conceptualization of the protagonist and naming her 'Johanna', Mann appears to be drawing on Friedrich Schiller's 1801 play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. Early on in Schiller's retelling of the story of Joan of Arc – in the German rendering, named Johanna – she says to herself:

> Nicht Männerliebe darf dein Herz berühren
> Mit sünd'gen Flammen eitler Erdenlust.[161]

This sentiment echoes the tension Mann writes for his own Johanna; love is, ultimately, not to be allowed, and specifically not allowed to distract her with earthly love. Both Schiller's and Mann's Johannas are destined for greater things. Mann's protagonist, as

---

[159] Klaus Mann, 'Selbstanzeige: "Flucht in den Norden"' [dated 1934], in *Zahnärzte und Künstler: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1933–1936*, ed. by Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg (Rowohlt, 1993), p. 254 (p. 254).
[160] Klaus Mann, 'Selbstanzeige: "Mephisto" [dated 1936], in *Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1969), pp. 50–54 (p. 51).
[161] Friedrich Schiller, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans: Eine romantische Tragödie* (Reclam, 1976), p. 17.

he describes her, is attempting to reconcile personal happiness with duty – and this attempt is doomed to failure. The Bildungsroman resolution of a reintegration into society is eschewed in favour of an abandonment of traditional, while gendered expectations – marriage and family – are put aside for the sake of political activism. Johanna deconstructs her life as it was in Germany, compounds this through abandoning the newly-found life in Finland, and yet comes out of it as a stronger, more mature, and more committed character. Despite her eventual determination, the novel ends with open-endedness, and Johanna's growth is similarly open-ended and ongoing.

By labelling *Flucht in den Norden* a Bildungsroman, we come up against the longstanding debate as to whether a 'female Bildungsroman' – one with a female protagonist, as the subject of the Bildung – even exists. This debate arises due in part to the fact that, in the era of the height of the Bildungsroman's popularity, female characters tended not to be afforded the psychological depth required for any sort of meaningful development. At the time of the genre's emergence, the middle-class woman was expected to remain in a domestic role: 'thus the very concept of a female Bildungsroman has sometimes been rejected as a contradiction in terms'.[162] Other critics have built arguments not solely on the basis of a woman's limited opportunities for growth, but rather on the fact that 'Bildung', as it stands, is a (masculine) gendered experience, constituting 'a very specific process of cultivating gender or a gendered "identity" […] within the modern patriarchal social structure'.[163] The necessary navigation of the 'strict gender codification at the basis of *Bildung*, taken in its historical context', suggests that to develop in the sense that *Bildung* recognizes and praises

[162] Todd Curtis Kontje, 'The German Tradition of the Bildungsroman', in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 10–32 (p. 13), doi:10.1017/9781316479926.002.
[163] John H. Smith, 'Cultivating Gender', p. 215.

means specifically to develop into a *man.*[164] In focussing on Klaus Mann, I am largely avoiding the historical context in which this may have been a strict rule. Additionally, as I have argued that *Bildung* was never – and could never be – a successful process, women's and men's *Bildung* are, in a sense, both just versions of failing. Lorna Ellis underlines this parallel when she states:

> Rather than portraying a utopian vision of personal fulfilment, the female *Bildungsroman*, like the male version, adapts the protagonist to a society that seems at first, and often is, hostile to her or his dreams and expectations.[165]

Klaus Mann, in his exposing and embrace of the failings always already inherent to the genre, prevents the expected adaptation from taking place in both *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden*. In the former, the protagonist continues to expand outward in a forward but multiple and uncertain direction; here, Johanna turns down the conventional life on offer to her and commits to a higher cause, a different version of a desire located outside of herself that drives her forward.

The Failing Self

The constitution of the novel's protagonist, Johanna, is both the central embodiment of the *Bildung* of the narrative and an unstable, fluid creation. Because she invites a breakdown of dichotomous perceptions, Johanna questions the validity of a strictly linear and normalizing process of development. In our first introduction to her, the narrator describes how, disembarking from the ferry to Finland,

[164] Ibid., p. 220.
[165] Lorna Ellis, *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750–1850* (Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 29.

> Sie rannte wie ein Junge, der endlich, endlich aus der Schule darf. Ihr Haar, das ihr jetzt in die Stirn wehte, war geschnitten wie das Haar eines Jungen. Man hätte sie, aus einiger Entfernung, für einen Gymnasiasten halten können. Unter dem kurzen Leinenrock hatte sie nackte Knie. Kolossal froh war sie, aus diesem Schiff herauszukommen. Und es war ja nicht nur das Schiff, was sie hinter sich ließ, als sie da so enthusiastisch den Steg hinunterstolperte. In die heftige Freude mischte sich ein wenig Angst, was begann nun? (*FidN*, p. 8)

The sense of escapism that saturates much of the novel's atmosphere is apparent in these early sentences; 'froh' to begin a new journey, despite 'Angst' about its nature, 'endlich' released to freedom. Crucially, Johanna is portrayed from the start as a version of a schoolboy, so is already being described in the terms of the typical, male adolescent Bildungsroman hero. The disembarking establishes that Johanna has travelled away from home, with the mixture of 'Freude' and 'Angst' more suggestive of a sense of adventure than of the purer, darker fear associated with exile in later years. As this adventure begins, the question 'was begann nun?' is both an indicator of the starting point of the story as well as a hint that the narrative voice is vaguely located with access to Johanna's psyche, but is not identical to it, allowing an ongoing tension in Johanna's presentation that sets the stage for continuous growth in light of constant, internal conflicts and a specularity reminiscent of Andreas in *Der fromme Tanz*. The foundation for a novel of development through adventure, by a schoolboy-like protagonist whose growth the reader is positioned to follow, is clearly set out in this early passage. At the same time, Johanna is only '*wie* ein Junge', and thereby already troubles the boundaries of any binary-gendered version of personhood.

The destabilization of gender necessarily destabilizes desire as well, which, as we have seen, is a primary motivator for the Bildungsroman protagonist. On first glance, *Flucht in den Norden* appears to revolve around a heterosexual relationship, that between Johanna and Ragnar. However, it is apparent from the start that this is an oversimplified reading. In Johanna's first appearance in the novel, the description of her

immediately blurs the boundaries of her femininity, perhaps because a stereotypically feminine protagonist in the landscape of the classically-conceived Bildungsroman would require a literary portrayal so normalizing as to more or less exclude the possibility of true personal development or of genuine political convictions. Her boyishness allows her entry into the restricted field of Bildungsroman hero(ine). Johanna's 'boyishness' is emphasized more on a physical than psychological level. Ragnar and Karin's cousine Yvonne notices 'Johannas ungelenke Knabenanmut' (*FidN*, p. 183), and later, after a minor car accident, spectators of the wreck bet amongst themselves 'ob Johanna ein Junge oder ein Mädchen sei' (*FidN*, p. 225). Crucially, her androgyny is not shown to evoke any outright animosity, but rather curiosity, and even attraction. She wears it well; early in their relationship, Ragnar compliments her at breakfast: '"Sie sehen aber nett aus heute Morgen", sagte er plötzlich zu Johanna. "Wirklich ganz wie ein Junge"' (*FidN*, p. 73). His comment suggests that Johanna's boyishness is a part of what attracts Ragnar to her, thus suggesting a certain queerness to even this 'heterosexual' relationship.[166] Arwed Schmidt even describes Johanna as 'ein weiblich maskierter Mann',[167] describing her fluidity, albeit in terms of a binary that Mann is working to dissolve. Johanna continuously avoids and exceeds the boundaries of gender, but this expansiveness is framed as both positive and attractive. There are clear societal expectations of what a man's development would look like, and what a woman's development – or lack of it – would look like, but Johanna, somewhere between the two extremes, can experience a version of growth without a preconceived ending.

[166] In an otherwise very solid work of scholarship, Peter Hoffer makes the peculiar suggestion that 'Johanna's resemblance to a young boy, which is frequently mentioned in the work, is further evidence of the author's bisexual orientation' (Peter Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 80). The characters should not be read as evidence of the author's sexuality, and there is no evidence that Klaus Mann identified as bisexual.
[167] Schmidt, *Exilwelten*, p. 62.

Despite the open-endedness of Johanna's personal growth, and unlike Andreas in *Der fromme Tanz*, Johanna has an idea of what she is looking for as she embarks on her journey away from home, setting up what will turn out to be possible only through additional personal sacrifice. Her hope is

> 'Dass es anders wird', erklärte Johanna. 'Dass es richtig wird. Dass man sich nicht mehr schämen muss für die Menschen. Dass diese Erde endlich ein vernünftiges Gesicht bekommt. Dass das Leben etwas wird, was sich lohnt – sich für alle lohnt, weißt du. Die Sache, das heißt einfach: die Zukunft, und die kann nur der Sozialismus sein' (*FidN*, p. 45).

Johanna is politically engaged, even naming her broad stance ('Sozialismus'), and by mentioning it at this early stage the novel sets up a thread we can try to follow, of what development is intended to take place. By mentioning that life needs to be something that works 'für alle', rather than just for her as an individual, Johanna's characterization of the ideal moves away from the individualistic perspective normally associated with a Bildungsroman hero. Over the course of the novel, however, the development we see unfolding is not that of a society advancing towards socialism, but of Johanna developing as an individual to a point where she is willing to sacrifice some of her individual desires to her political commitments. Her goal is clear, but at the same time, must remain a process: what she wants is 'the future', but the future will always be out of her reach. She is set up, already, for a process that will involve continuing onwards without ever arriving.

Because most of the novel sees Johanna actively ignoring what we know to be her ultimate goal in favour of the romantic distractions presented to her, following detours instead of direct lines, escapism and avoidance are constant factors in her story, and in its most extreme form this materializes as suicidal ideation on the page. This

tendency functions as a way to direct interrogation towards how one can in fact persist in living a meaningful life. One illustrative passage reads:

> 'Es gibt Stunden – da möchte ich so *gern* sterben', sagte unten Johanna, das Gesicht ruhig an seine Knie gelehnt. '[…] Oft ist mir so zumute, dass ich lieber sterben möchte als alles alles andre. […] Was lohnt es sich denn, für irgendetwas im Leben zu kämpfen, wenn doch nicht *irgendetwas* am Leben missraten ist, sondern wenn das Leben selber missraten ist –: So muss ich leider denken in solchen Stunden. […]' (*FidN*, p. 299, original emphases)

If life itself is a failure, Johanna seems to be asking, how can we live? How *are* we living, if this is the case? This sense of an underlying, catastrophic failure of meaning is close to disrupting Johanna's resolve, but these hours are all her hours. The desire for death only exists in life; to cohabitate with failure is the only way to go on living. Johanna is characterized by this uncomfortable cohabitation, by her inability to live in accordance with what society would label acceptable and successful. Even while with Ragnar, avoiding her political convictions, there is an ever-present sense of life not being enough. Counterintuitively, it is precisely because of this that it keeps on going.

Ultimately, Johanna chooses to let the romantic fall away in favour of the political. It is a failure which means a redirection of her personal growth. She and Ragnar part in a hotel room:

> So stehen sie sprachlos sich gegenüber in diesem Hotelzimmer von großer Hässlichkeit. Johanna, das Jünglingsmädchen, das lieber sterben wollte, aber sie muss das akzeptieren, was sie heute noch erhobenen Hauptes ihr Schicksal nennt. (*FidN*, p. 318)

She calls her departure her destiny, but this is clearly a destiny chosen by her rather than imposed by some outside force; the development has taken place within the character. It is a destiny on which she had already embarked before meeting Ragnar, and which she

is now choosing to keep on carrying forward, rather than allowing it to come to a halt. The relative clauses following her name here highlight her inner discrepancies: the boy-girl, the suicidal one. She transgresses boundaries of gender, and hovers close to the boundaries of being alive – and she hovers there with her head held high. Arwed Schmidt writes: 'Johanna, die […] zu Beginn des Romans noch unfertig wirkt, gewinnt in der Tat nach der Begegnung mit Ragnar Reife und emotionelle Intensität'.[168] Certainly she matures, but I disagree that Ragnar is the impetus for her growth or that she progresses towards a finished state. Rather, the increasing isolation their relationship brings as they travel further north pulls her taut between her romance and her 'duty', a thread that is snapped upon news of a comrade's arrest, a snapping that is constitutive of her renewed political resolve. Compounding the sense of ongoing development is the move into the present tense: if the story has not already happened, then it can still change, and Johanna can still grow into the present moment and beyond. In this Bildungsroman, the Bildung – the development – does take place, because it does not end; it is true development *because* it fails to integrate its subject back into expected structures, and at the end of the book, we are only at the start of Johanna's story.

The Failing Romance

Unlike the traditionally viewed Bildungsroman, this is, like *Der fromme Tanz,* a story of something like the opposite of the acculturation of the individual into their society. The individual, Johanna, exists in an ongoing dialogue with her various contexts that is not directed towards harmonious resolution. Hers is also not a story of single-minded rebellion, however; her development consists partly in learning how to overcome her

[168] Schmidt, *Exilwelten*, p. 89.

immediate concerns in order to work towards her ultimate goals. The tension between the two forms much of Johanna's characterization. In the brief summary of her life before the novel's start, the narrator describes how, as a student, Johanna

> trat in eine kommunistische Studentengruppe ein, arbeitete propagandistisch, redete in Versammlungen. Das hing nicht nur mit inneren Entwicklungen und intellektuellen Erkenntnissen zusammen, sondern vor allem mit der neuen und heftigen Beziehung, die sie einem der Freunde ihres älteren Bruders Georg verband. (*FidN*, p. 16)

This passage suggests that a romantic motive, in Johanna's interest in her brother's friend Bruno, is at least as important as a political one as the initial driving force for her. In fact, part of the novel's technique is to undermine this connection, to make clear that it is not romance motivating politics, but that the two can be in conflict with each other. Johanna's early characterization sets up already the arc of her development, in which the conflict of love and duty will prove to be irreconcilable. Both are versions of desire, but only duty will allow Johanna to feel like part of a greater collective and the future associated with it.

The ultimate failure of Johanna and Ragnar's romance is the crux of the novel, but her relationship with his sister, Karin, is also illustrative of the way that interpersonal relationships fall apart around Johanna. The first romantically-tinged relationship we see Johanna have on-page is with Karin, her old friend, before she even meets Ragnar, a liaison which seems to largely have escaped critical notice. Readings of Johanna simply as a 'masked man', and her relationship with Ragnar as latently homosexual as a consequence, skim over the fact that she is first shown intimately with another woman, complicating the picture of gender and desire. Ragnar and Karin's brother Jens comments that Karin and Johanna could be sisters. In response, 'Karin und Johanna sahen sich eine Sekunde lang in die Augen, ganz ernst, prüfend, als suche jede

ihr eigenes Spiegelbild im Blick und im Antlitz der andren' (*FidN*, p. 30). The image of the mirror, once again, becomes a site of self-reckoning, with each character attempting here to see herself from the outside in the other. Jens further sees in the two women's relationship 'eine Art umgedrehter Verwandtschaft', in which the two are both '[einander] entgegengesetzt und verwandt' (*FidN*, p. 31). These descriptions of an inverted, specular relationship, opposed and yet linked, offer a queer-coded picture of the way these two characters are intimate and challenging to conventional interpersonal relations. On Johanna's very first night in Finland, Karin comforts her:

> Sie berührte mit ihren Lippen die feuchte und heiße Wange Johannas; sie berührte mit ihren Lippen Johannas Mund. Sie zog sie inniger an sich. Ihre Umarmung war nicht mehr die sanfte Geste der Freundinnen, die abends im vertrauten Gespräche sitzen. Sie hielten sich anders umschlungen. (*FidN*, pp. 36–37)

This 'inniger' embrace, the description of being 'anders umschlungen' is further suggestive of queer intimacy. Johanna and Karin's relationship, at least their intimate one, lasts only for this one night; upon meeting Ragnar, Johanna's interest immediately re-routes towards him. In consequence, 'Karin [musste es] mit ansehen, wie Ragnar, dem großen, armen und begnadeten Bruder, ein neues, süßes und hoffnungsloses Abenteuer zuwuchs – wofür sie die große Hoffnung gewesen war' (*FidN*, p. 119). If Ragnar is taking her place, then we have to assume that Ragnar and Karin's relationships to Johanna are of a similar type: sexual and/or romantic. With Karin, it dissolves before it can truly begin, abandoning the reorientations of desire into 'other' embraces, into relationships of self and other that melt together at the same time they stand opposed, meaning that this brief moment of connection cannot survive beyond its initial moment. In a sense, it foreshadows the outcome of Johanna's relationship with Ragnar, which is also ultimately abandoned, and certain 'hopes' with it.

If we insist on viewing Johanna and Karin's relationship as lesbian, however, we are tacitly deciding that Johanna is indeed a purely female figure, and thus that her subsequent relationship to Ragnar is straightforwardly heterosexual. Again, I believe this is too simple. If Johanna is located – and it seems fairly obvious, from Mann's descriptions, that she is – outside of a strict gender binary, then no desire on her part can be labelled as entirely heterosexual *or* homosexual. In this light, her turn from Karin to Ragnar is not indicative of a change from homosexual to heterosexual, or indeed vice versa, but rather from a certain type of person to another, or from a certain type of relationship to another. The two relationships are markedly different. The passage describing the first night Johanna and Ragnar spend together reads:

> Die Stunde war da, die Stunde hatte die Macht, alles auszulöschen, alles in sich zu saugen, was jemals in Johannas Leben gewesen war; alles unwichtig zu machen, alles zu entwerten, was noch kommen würde. (*FidN*, p. 139)

While her night with Karin is described in intimate terms, this one with Ragnar has a much more violent effect, extinguishing Johanna's past and even foreclosing her future. What Ragnar offers is, ultimately a destruction of her sense of self: 'Sie stürzte in diese Umarmung wie in einen Abgrund, dessen Glanz und Finsternis alles verschlang, was bis dahin Realität gewesen war' (*FidN*, p. 139). To be with Ragnar is to gaze into the abyss. Rather than finding meaning in love, as the 'traditional' Bildungsroman would have its hero do, Mann presents it as something propelling his protagonist into nothingness. Johanna's ultimate reclamation of this nothingness, as she gives up her relationship for duty, is a queer embracing of something failed that allows an openness and new space to expand into.

The spatially destabilizing tones of Johanna's experiences are reiterated in the temporal dimensions she moves through. In a novel of development, there is normally a

fairly linear temporality, a chronological arrangement that exposes the changes in the hero over time. Although *Flucht in den Norden* is largely chronological, Mann also plays with time so that even within the linearity, there is an irregularity which means no straightforward progress is possible. When Ragnar leaves Johanna in the guest house after their first night together, and she watches him walking back towards the main house, the moment appears to already be tearing away from her:

> an der Tür drehte er sich noch einmal nach ihr um. Sie erkannte sein Lächeln. Im selben Augenblick spürte sie mit einem Schrecken, der noch stärker war als ihr Glück: dass dies vorüberging, schon entfloh; dass sie nicht die Macht hatte, diese Sekunde in die Ewigkeit zu verwandeln; dass dieses Glück nur dazu da war, um in Schmerz verwandelt zu werden, in Schmerz Schmerz immer mehr Schmerz – um seiner Vergänglichkeit willen. (*FidN*, p. 144)

The present takes on the feeling of the past: Johanna is unable to exist in the now, and unable to carry the moment forward. Her affair with Ragnar is associated with death and destruction, which inhibit her ability to move forwards. The following chapter of the novel opens with the statement 'es gab nur noch Ragnars Gegenwart' (*FidN*, 145). There is a deliberate ambiguity here between Ragnar's presence and his present moment, suggesting that he has taken over Johanna's perception of both her spatial and temporal surroundings. She lives in his time and space, not hers; and there is once again no reciprocity, no sense that he is in turn living in Johanna's present or presence. Their relationship continues to obscure her, and her own experience of reality is relegated to the abyss he represents. While her self-identity is routed through the other, in the senses of Foucault and Mann's Andreas, the darker tones of this romance means that rather than allowing her to grow, Ragnar actively limits Johanna's opportunity to take up her own space and time.

Despite what seems to be a great deal more intensity – even if it comes with strongly negative connotations – in her relationship with Ragnar, Johanna is still presented as somehow less connected to him than she is to Karin. The queerer, 'anders umschlungene' relationship accesses a level of Johanna's psyche that Ragnar cannot. In this latter relationship, the narrator chimes in to remind us – or Johanna herself –,

> Du kannst ihn lieben, so viel du willst, Johanna, er wird immer so neben dir sitzen, er weiß nichts von dir, keine Umarmung wird ihn dir ganz nahe bringen, er ist fremd, fremder Ragnar. (*FidN*, p. 218)

This is an example of a narrative strategy that recurs several times in the text: the second-person address to Johanna. The voice has no identifiable source; it both reads as an inner, berating voice, and is clearly positioned outside of Johanna, able to address her as 'du'. The complex intimacy of the voice and Johanna stands in stark contrast to the fundamental unknowableness of the other – of Ragnar – to whom no embrace can fully reconcile her. This presents a further contrast to the earlier descriptions of her relationship with Karin, who is 'verwandt', and who is almost her own mirror image; Ragnar, Johanna's choice, has only led her further away from closeness. On one occasion, when Johanna wakes up first beside Ragnar and watches him sleep, she wonders: 'Was ist denn das, Ragnar Ragnar, dass ich immer wie eine Scheidende an deiner Seite bin – als eine Scheidende immer an deiner Seite?' (*FidN*, pp. 235–36). Here, Johanna is clearly already reckoning with the loss of Ragnar, foreshadowing the ultimate failure of their relationship and her departure, even if it exists only as a nebulous image at this stage. The loss of him is, in a sense, the loss of a version of herself, if 'scheiden' is to be understood both as parting and dying. She is caught in a contradictory relation to him, both by his side and departing and withering, 'immer' – her positionality once again remains fraught and fluid. In these varying dynamics of

connection and otherness, of voices both internal and external, we see a constant destabilization of dichotomous positioning such that it becomes a mutable position*ality*, troubling of any binary dichotomy. There is no real fulfilment in this desire, which is what allows it to prevail rather than resolving. At the same time, its instability means it is not enough to anchor a sense of self to.

Johanna's growth is expressed through her increasing ability to locate her self-identity and the coordinates of her future outside of her desire for Ragnar. Ultimately, their relationship collapses when she decides to leave Scandinavia, and him, and rejoin her political comrades in France. Towards the end of the novel, Johanna becomes increasingly uncomfortable in her relationship with Ragnar, as she begins to acknowledge the goals she is wilfully ignoring in order to be with him on his terms. During their aimless road trip, she asks Ragnar where he wants to go next, and he responds that he neither knows nor cares (*FidN*, pp. 238–39). Following this,

> Johanna, die plötzlich sehr blass wurde […], sagte, und atmete mühsamer 'Ragnar – es geht nicht so – ich kann es doch nicht mehr … Siehst du, ich bin doch auf keiner Vergnügungsreise. Ich verlange ja nicht von dir, dass du dich gar zu sehr in meine Lage versetzt, nein, das verlange ich ja nicht von dir. Aber ich kann mich doch nicht auf die Dauer so stellen, als ob es nichts weiter zu tun gäbe für mich, als schwimmen zu gehen und im Auto durch Wälder zu fahren. Das kann ich doch einfach nicht, Ragnar!!' Es war ein Flehen in ihrer Stimme. Sie fasste nach seiner Hand. 'Ich muss weg von dir', sagte sie. 'Ich muss weg von dir, Ragnar. Ich muss weg von dir.' (*FidN*, p. 239)

Her political commitments, however suppressed, remain. She recognizes that to follow them, she will have to leave Ragnar. Tellingly, she claims that she does not expect Ragnar to put himself in her shoes, and indeed he does not: their dynamic is one in which he makes the choices, and she follows; he draws her to the abyss, and only her own will can prevent her from falling into it. As their relationship begins to crumble, as

it must, she is able to slowly start rebuilding herself in the knowledge that she has something to turn to beyond him, and away from him.

The final shattering of Johanna's escapist fantasy with Ragnar is precipitated by German newspapers she buys in what turns out to be the final city stop on her and Ragnar's north-bound road trip and reads in a bar. While she grapples with current events, Ragnar tells her she ought to forget about Germany, his main argument being

> Es ist so lächerlich unbegabt für das Leben, dieses Volk mit seiner dünkelhaften Extraproblematik, dass es niemals, niemals eingetreten ist in den Kreis der Zivilisation. Das ist der Grund, das ist der einzige Grund, warum es unsre Zivilisation bedroht, zu der es den Zutritt nicht hat. (*FidN*, p. 313)

Ragnar's political opinion is at best misinformed, at worst actively hostile towards Germany, with little of his criticism seeming to be directed at fascism specifically. Johanna is shocked and horrified:

> Er redete sie mit großer Heftigkeit an, alle Macht, die er über sie hatte, legte er in seine zornig entflammten Worte. Das Gesicht seiner Geliebten war weiß geworden wie ein Stück Papier. 'Aber ich gehöre doch zu diesem Volke', sagte sie beinah tonlos. 'Ich spreche doch seine Sprache.' (*FidN*, pp. 313–14)

The extent of his power over her arrives explicitly on the page. Johanna can no longer ignore it. Despite her physical distance from it, she remains a product of Germany, and speaks German; she may not belong to the German state of the time that so strongly opposes her own political beliefs, but she does belong, on a fundamental level, 'zu diesem Volke'. As Johanna and Ragnar's relationship crumbles, she is able to start reasserting her own identity outside of their relationship – but she is also outside this thing that she is identifying with, Germany, a Germany which itself exists only in nebulous form and is separate from the Nazi state. The relationship fails, and this

propels rather than prevents Johanna's onward development – but she also remains located in circles of outsideness, in which her only choice is to move towards something that feels more authentic, but has no set position in which it can be found.

The Failing Place

We meet Johanna on her journey away from home, a classic feature of the Bildungsroman's structure. Johanna remains an outsider throughout the book, as does Andreas in *Der fromme Tanz*, but here there is a directly geographical and political basis for this status. Space is never a straightforward entity for Klaus Mann, and here there is a pervasive duality of the landscape Johanna is in – Finland – and the one she is away from, Germany, but which is nevertheless a recurring presence. There is a reciprocal troubling of boundaries at play, where no place exists independently of other spaces when focalized through a human perspective. Johanna's various landscapes are constructed in different ways, and affect Johanna's experience differently.

Finland, where the action of the novel largely takes place, is characterized by expansiveness and isolation which acts against Johanna's development. Klaus Mann had travelled in Scandinavia in 1932, and his experiences likely inspired the setting of *Flucht*. In a reflection on this trip, he describes the Finnish landscape: 'Sie ist von einer Gleichförmigkeit, die aber fasziniert, statt zu langweilen'.[169] The expansive sameness he notes is emblematic of the space his novel describes. Shortly after Johanna's arrival, in response to her observation that the landscape around them seems vast and empty, Karin states: 'Ja, an Platz ist kein Mangel hier, es gibt unendlich viel Platz…' (*FidN*, p. 44). The space is unlimited, and thus unreachable, unable to be traversed or possessed in its

[169] Klaus Mann, 'Nördlicher Sommer' [dated 1932], in *Woher wir kommen und wohin wir müssen: Frühe und nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Edition Spangenberg, 1980), pp. 64–92 (p. 74).

entirety. Its limitlessness brings with it, rather than freedom, a sense of unnerving stillness. Having arrived at Karin's family estate,

> Der Friede über dieser Landschaft war so ungeheuer, dass er fast erschreckend wurde für Johannas Herz. […] Mit einer andächtig gedämpften Stimme versuchte sie etwas darüber zu sagen. 'Das ist ja betäubend still hier', brachte sie hervor. 'Es hat etwas Betäubendes für mich, weißt du…' (*FidN*, p. 55)

Rather than stimulating her personal growth, as the journey away from home is supposed to do, this landscape numbs Johanna, cutting her off from her critical faculties in the same way that her relationship with Ragnar does. On her first night at the estate, 'Johannas Schlaf […] war tief wie eine Betäubung' (*FidN*, p. 70). Waking or sleeping, Johanna is anaesthetized, removed from reality, numb to her previous or future lives. This numbness is profoundly disorienting:

> Als sie aufwachte, war ihr erstes Gefühl ein großer Schrecken, weil sie nicht wusste, wo sie sich befand. Sie starrte in ein fremdes Zimmer, in dem sie nichts erkannte. Wie die Damen, die auf der Bühne aus Ohnmächten erwachen, fragte sie sich allen Ernstes: Wo bin ich? – Sie hatte ein Gefühl, als stürze sie, ungewiss, wohin. (*FidN*, p. 70)

This sense of falling links once again to Ragnar and the abyss he – and the landscape so associated with him – opens up before Johanna. It is a feeling that recurs throughout the novel: of falling into the unknown, of losing all sense of where and when she exists. This version of becoming undone, which seems to obscure Johanna, rather than enabling her expansion, may provide a temporary sense of freedom, but lacks the ability to support Johanna's identity.

A sense that she is being moved, rather than moving, persists throughout the novel, in line with Johanna's sense of being numbed. On the road trip heading into the

remote north with Ragnar that takes up much of the second half of the novel, the couple find themselves in an empty, foreboding landscape:

> ‘So ähnlich wie hier muss es auf dem Monde aussehen’, bemerkte Johanna mit einer ehrfurchtsvoll gedämpften Stimme. ‘Ja, so habe ich mir das immer vorgestellt…’ Weit hinweg, Johanna, ganz weit hinaus. Du hattest Ziel und Weg der Reise nicht zu bestimmen, man hat dich entführt, du warst leicht von der Stelle zu bringen, denn du hattest keinen Boden unter den Füßen. Du Heimatlose bist in eine Mondlandschaft verschlagen. (*FidN*, p. 292)

Absolving Johanna of responsibility – and also underlining her lack of agency up to this point – with the reframing of ‘man hat dich entführt’, the narrator implies further that she is not driving forward her own story, but being driven. This cannot, then, be the development the Bildungsroman is all about, where the individual is propelled by internal, rather than external, forces. A tension is established, wherein being ‘heimatlos’ is something Johanna will have to lean into if she is ever to do anything to ‘save’ her former, perhaps never-again Heimat, but this leaning in has to be a deliberate gesture, rather than a ‘verschlagen’ to an alien space, which seems to stress that Johanna has ended up there with no onward progression available. When Johanna at last decides to leave Ragnar, her assertion of herself into space – into the other, non-present landscape – marks the resumption of her true growth. This passage also offers another example of the ambivalent narrative perspective that is both privy to Johanna’s thoughts and critical of her, both within and without her. Mann’s choice of narrative technique therefore emphasizes the subjectivity of the individual whose development is, for now, only partially under her control. Until the very end of the novel, Johanna seems largely to accept this directionlessness; in another example of narrative perspective hovering somewhere on the boundary between the character’s inner world and the world of the story beyond, we are told

> Sie hatte nichts hinter sich, Johanna, keine Heimat hatte sie und war ausgeliefert auf Gnade und Ungnade den Launen, Witzen und Grausamkeiten der Fremde. Sie hing in der Luft, man konnte ihr einen Stoß geben, wie's beliebte: Sie baumelte in die gewünschte Richtung. (*FidN*, p. 243)

Johanna is described like a paper doll that the wind can blow where it pleases; her passivity is evident in 'ausgeliefert'. 'Sie hatte nichts hinter sich' implies the impossibility of the return home that concludes the archetypal Bildungsroman: there is no home to return to. Rather than intentionally conquering new distances and exploring new versions of herself in new spaces, Johanna's environment minimizes her, numbs her, and cuts her off from the landmarks that would allow any identity-constituting positionality to form.

The journey Johanna undertakes, defined by a landscape which oppresses her, and which she has not actively chosen to undertake, continues to function in an opposite fashion to the positive, formative journey Andreas embarks on in *Der fromme Tanz*. Johanna asks Ragnar what they should do next at one point: '"Ganz wegreisen", sagte er mit der tiefen, lockenden Stimme. "Weit hinweg, Johanna, weit hinaus. Wo es nichts mehr gibt, nur noch uns …"'(*FidN*, p. 263). This extract precedes the above quotation in which the narrator says 'Weit hinweg, Johanna, weit hinaus', and in fact this phrase becomes a recurring motif across the latter part of the novel, echoing beyond Ragnar's direct voice. In this way, the narrator, Johanna and Ragnar all seem to speak among and across one another in the voice of the text, suggesting again the permeable nature of selfhood and specifically how her relationship with Ragnar influences Johanna's own perceptions and experiences. The directionality implied by 'hinweg' and 'hinaus' clearly orients their journey as being *away* from something, rather than towards anything – although, in Ragnar's reading, the goal would be the two of them together – another

version of the escapism that prevents Johanna from enacting her political ideals. In fact, we are told 'sie war in einen merkwürdigen Zustand der Passivität geraten, der fast Willenlosigkeit war' (*FidN*, p. 264). And the echo comes again, parenthesized this time: '(Wir fahren weg, weit hinweg, Johanna, weit hinaus, wo es nichts mehr gibt, nur noch uns.)' (*FidN*, p. 264). The narrator plays between an external voice, Ragnar's voice, and Johanna's inner voice, decentralizing the voice of the story into an uncertain and disconcerting positionality. The lack of clarity in the voice reflects the cloudiness that defines the physical landscape of the novel's setting, which increasingly further reflects Johanna's psychological landscape. Rather than opening up the world, the journey – the escape – seems to blur it. This road trip is not a journey for the purposes of development, but to escape, the 'Flucht' of the novel's title, and this escape necessarily engenders isolation as well as the lack of both motivation and social responsibility.

As in *Der fromme Tanz*, and in much of Klaus Mann's work (and also his own life), much of the story of *Flucht in den Norden* is staged in and between hotel rooms. In one such room, Johanna expresses that it does not matter where one is;

> Sie hatte in diesem Augenblick überhaupt kein Gefühl dafür, wo sie sich befand. Man hatte sie irgendwohin gefahren, es war eine Hafenstadt, man könnte glauben, es wäre Toulon, vielleicht war es aber auch ganz woanders, das machte wohl keinen Unterschied, den nächsten Tag würde man schon nicht mehr hier sein, ungewiss und beinah gleichgültig, wo. (*FidN*, p. 271)

As she loses identity, space and place also increasingly lose meaning. Even hotel rooms, in this book, seem to dissolve into the very sense of 'place-lessness' that defines her experience of the lonely, expansive Finnish landscape. Crucially, from her perspective, she has no agency over her location, but has been 'irgendwohin gefahren'. The very idea of a fixed location, as she travels north with Ragnar, becomes less and less meaningful. In fact, she senses that

> Irgendwo zu bleiben war gefährlich; denn die Möglichkeit bestand, dass man dann zur Besinnung käme – Besinnung aber war grade das, was man sich jetzt nicht leisten konnte und wollte. Mit der Besinnung musste die Frage nach dem Sinn, ja, nach der Entschuldbarkeit dieser Reise auftauchen. Johanna war weder fähig noch geneigt, sie zu stellen. (*FidN*, p. 283)

Her relationship with Ragnar and the trip they are on are both forms of escapism, relying on her denial of her deeper beliefs, and further relying on constant movement that, paradoxically, is what numbs her into a state of acquiescence. The journey has a direction – north – but no fixed destination; 'Man fuhr also wieder, und man fuhr nach Norden. Weit hinweg, Johanna, weit hinaus, wo es nichts mehr gibt…' (*FidN*, p. 291). This is a journey doomed to failure, a journey heading into nothingness, and here the nothingness is oppressive rather than freeing, avoidance rather than escape. Nevertheless, this passive failure is ultimately secondary to an active one: it is Johanna, rather than the space, who will put an end to the journey.

In the stark northern landscape, defined by its emptiness, Germany seems very far away, but equally it is always there, popping up in unexpected ways and in unexpected places to further destabilize Johanna's experience. Close to the start of the novel, on their journey to Karin and Ragnar's family estate, Johanna and Karin stop at a hotel for lunch, where Johanna notices the bookshelves:

> Man scheint hier viel zu lesen, dachte sie flüchtig. Wahrscheinlich auch deutsche Bücher. Das ist eigentlich rührend – so weit weg … Ihr kam plötzlich, mit einer Mischung von Wohlbehagen und Schrecken, zu Bewusstsein, dass sie in der Fremde war und dass es einen Weg zurück für sie zunächst nicht mehr gab. Sie war abgetrennt von ihrem Lande, furchtbare Umstände hatten es so gewollt. In fremden Stuben mochte sie in einem Bücherschrank unvermutet ein Stück Deutschland wiederfinden als ein Geschenk. Denn man kann wohl aus seiner Heimat verbannt sein, und man hat sie mit falschem Passe verlassen; aber etwas von diesem Lande, das die Heimat bleibt, ist über die Erde verteilt – und dieses Etwas ist vielleicht sein Bestes –, sodass man es schönerweise irgendwo findet,

> das gibt dann ein kleines Wiedererkennen und ist sehr angenehm, wenngleich es traurig macht. (*FidN*, pp. 41–42)

She has not even seen any German books, but the thought that they might exist here, in this country to which she has come to escape, is so moving to her that she feels homesick, in a way that obviously requires her to consider what it is of Germany that feels like home to her. It is not the place, Germany, which she has been forced to leave, but the traces of it scattered out over the world, the truth of it and, for the political exile, the best of it, existing in its collapse. Germany, and the political stance evoked by it for Johanna, offers her best chance of establishing a positionality that would allow her to direct her own onwards path.

Recognizing increasingly that what constitutes her is outside of herself, but not in her current environment facing away from the political crisis, Johanna's worlds start to break down in their dichotomy and intrude into one another. Reminders of Germany are constituted by literal interventions in the form of letters and telegrams arriving with news of home and/or the resistance. These interruptions uphold the tension at the core of Johanna's development over the course of the narrative: her gradual realization that she cannot both hold on to her principles and escape from them, that her old world and her new world are not seamlessly compatible. Receiving one such missive from Bruno,

> Johanna legte den Brief weg. Sie war blass geworden. *Ihre* Welt – die Welt, der sie verpflichtet war und der ihr Leben gehörte – stand mit einem Male übermächtig vor ihr auf. (*FidN*, p. 75, original emphasis)

If her life belongs to another world, what exactly can her life here consist of? Like the Finnish landscape, presumably, it is composed of an emptiness, an alienation in which Ragnar slowly becomes the only point of orientation. In response to this reminder of her other life, Johanna talks herself into believing she will return soon: 'Ich werde da auch

bald mitmachen. In ein paar Tagen fahre ich hin' (*FidN*, p. 77). She does not; at this stage, she fails in her commitments. However, these messages from home are clearly enough to displace her image of herself in exile. As the novel continues, her world in Germany appears to get further and further away. She receives a letter from her parents, reading it 'mit Trauer': 'Aus einer verlorenen Welt kam er als hoffnungsloser, unwissender und matter Klageruf' (*FidN*, p. 108). It is not just that she is away from Germany, but that Germany is 'verloren'; any pleas echoing from there are hopeless and naïve, the calls of a people already doomed. There is no returning home; the Bildungsroman cannot end with her going back to her society, because that society is gone. This absent landscape survives, however, in her memory of it, and continues to disrupt her spatial orientations even far away.

In a similar vein to letters, news – whether via newspapers or word of mouth – creeps in around the edges of Johanna's northern fantasy, infecting her escapism with a sense that the world outside is carrying on without her, and falling to pieces, and she is deliberately turning away from it. Indeed, it is newspapers that ultimately trigger the beginning of the end for her and Ragnar, but the news's intrusions are present throughout. The inhabitants of her exile landscape, viewing Germany purely as outsiders, occasionally joke about its ridiculous-seeming policies, or otherwise are unable to grasp the magnitude of events. On one occasion, when her host family are amused by Germany, Johanna notes with horror that 'es war noch Deutschlands Entschluss zur totalen Unmenschlichkeit, über den sie sich so maßlos amüsierte' (*FidN*, p. 163). For them, Germany is distant enough to laugh about; for her, its loss is a tangible, painful, and proximate reality. In response, 'alles, was sie in den letzten Tagen nicht vergessen, aber doch aus ihren Gedanken verdrängt hatte, alle Wut, aller Gram, alle Kampfeslust stiegen jetzt übermäßig wieder auf in ihr' (*FidN*, p. 175). Every time

the spectre of Germany rears up, she is thrown out of her current sense of being and reminded that a part of her exists in a relational tie to elsewhere. This pull towards another landscape, geographical and political, is always tugging at her and troubles her relationship with Ragnar more and more as the novel goes on. The sense that reality is also always somewhere other than where Johanna is currently situated is illustrated through her conversation with Ragnar addressing her political concerns:

> 'Ich weiß ja schon, was dich immer bedrückt', redete Ragnar weiter und ließ ihre Hand nicht los. 'Es sind immer diese allgemeinen Sachen, die politischen, ich weiß schon, Johanna. Aber das ist doch eigentlich etwas ganz Abstraktes, etwas Unwirkliches, so weit weg … Und wir stehen doch hier', sagte er etwas lauter. – 'Es ist nichts Unwirkliches', sagte Johanna. 'In jeder Sekunde ist es doch Wirklichkeit. Und jede Sekunde, die wir nicht daran denken, ist schon beinah Verrat. Jetzt haben sie einen Freund von mir in Deutschland verhaftet …' (Dass ich dich liebe, Ragnar, das ist die Wahrheit, das ist die ganze Wahrheit, es ist wahrer als alles andre.) 'Aber wir stehen doch hier', wiederholte Ragnar eigensinnig. 'Und nur einmal stehen wir hier, und wir kommen nicht wieder. Und wer entschädigt uns denn, wenn wir es versäumen, jetzt jetzt jetzt versäumen, jetzt und hier?! Das ist doch die Wirklichkeit Johanna, unsre Wirklichkeit, du musst es doch spüren', sagte er mit einer weiten Bewegung, 'und wer entschädigt uns, wenn wir sie jetzt versäumen?' (*FidN*, pp. 240–41)

The parenthesized, interjecting address in the first person here, and yet outside of the direct speech, is another instance of the narrator's voice blurring with Johanna's, troubling identity in a way that further makes Johanna's subjecthood uncertain. Johanna consists of splintered versions of herself attempting to communicate within and without her. Although Ragnar stresses that they should not miss out on the reality the two share, in reality everything lived is the choice to not live something else. There is always something being missed, and no way not to go wrong. It is simply a question of which reality you can live with not living, which place you can live with not living in, which failure is generative and propelling, and which is limiting.

The Failing Form

For the vast majority of the book, Johanna is actively avoiding facing up to what she knows is her task and her purpose, even as reminders of the world she is ignoring come back to worry at her again and again. This means that, although *Flucht* is fairly chronological in structure, the pacing of its protagonist's development does not play out in a typical rhythm or in line with what we see in *Der fromme Tanz*. The novel is structured with the narrative's climax at the very end of the book, where Johanna's overriding sense of passivity and escapism abruptly crumbles upon seeing news of Germany in a bar's selection of newspapers, and the bulk of her growth abruptly seems to take place. Invoking horror in Johanna, Ragnar tells her to forget about Germany as a lost cause, irrelevant to their future together. In her shock, she responds:

> 'Ich hatte nur nicht gewusst, dass ein so großer Hass in dir ist gegen mein Volk – denn es ist doch das meine, Ragnar; täuschen wir uns doch nicht, und wenn ich zehn andre Sprachen lerne, ich bin mit unendlichen Fäden daran gebunden. […] Was du gesagt hast, ließe sich beinah Wort für Wort korrigieren. Aber ich habe keinen Grund und kein Recht, mein Land zu verteidigen – so wie es jetzt ist. […] Es liegt an uns', sagte langsam und feierlich das Mädchen Johanna, 'es liegt an uns, eine Zukunft für dieses Land zu erzwingen, die dem widersprechen wird, was du heute gesagt hast. Und bis dahin mag jede Schmähung unwidersprochen bleiben, damit sie täglich der Stachel ist, der uns treibt.' (*FidN*, pp. 315–16)

Suddenly and all at once, Johanna appears to relearn her sense of belonging and social responsibility, simultaneously, as evidenced by 'täuschen wir uns doch nicht', recognizing that their journey together has largely been a fantasy of avoidance. 'Das Mädchen Johanna' implies that Johanna's ambiguous gender has clarified in this moment, even as she makes a decision that will take her away from the 'feminine' pathway that a domestic life with Ragnar would have offered, and perhaps towards Schiller's heroine. It is a different version of femininity here, then, one which does not

preclude development. Johanna's passivity seems to melt away: now, his argument 'ließe sich beinah Wort für Wort korrigieren', and the onus of acting in the interests of a better future is located 'an uns'. This 'uns' relocates Johanna to a collective first-person that is no longer her and Ragnar, but her and her comrades: although dissolving into the crowd, this dissolution itself is positioned as a path to self-understanding and the possession of individual agency. Rather than finding herself as an individual, her journey of *Bildung* leads her to find herself as part of a collective. Her positionality cannot rely on Ragnar, who only pulls her towards nothingness; she must relocate her desires more productively.

All of this means that, just when we expect a resolution, in the final pages of the novel, everything turns on its head and Johanna is suddenly reoriented. At their final hotel, Johanna receives a telegram that reads: 'Bruno gestern in Köln auf der Flucht erschossen worden stop komme nach Paris wir brauchen dich Georg' (*FidN*, p. 316). Johanna immediately declares 'Ich muss fort' (*FidN*, p. 317). Where the need to be on the move was previously repeated in terms of 'ganz weggehen', 'hinweg' and 'hinaus', Johanna here says 'fort', a change that reorients her in an 'onwards' rather than 'away' direction. The journey, perhaps, has always been the same one, but only now is she turning to face forward while making it. Ragnar asks when she will come back to him; she responds 'Ich werde nicht wiederkommen' (*FidN*, p. 317). 'Jetzt habe ich keine Wahl mehr' (*FidN*, p. 317), she claims. Her earlier passivity is renegotiated into a mode of self-sacrifice: a way of existing not for oneself that is also not a capitulation to the desires of another. Ragnar's objection that Bruno may present only 'ein sinnloses Beispiel. Märtyrer sind keine Beweise' (*FidN*, p. 317) is of no consequence:

> Johanna wandte ihm das erhobene Gesicht zu. Es hatte sich in ihm etwas verändert: Die weiche Linie unterhalb des Mundes war verschwunden, plötzlich

> passte alles in diesem Gesicht zu der schönen und kühnen Stirne. ‘Kein großes Opfer wird umsonst gebracht’, sagte sie. ‘Und kein großer Glaube ist je vertan worden.’ (*FidN*, pp. 317–18)

In this decisive moment, Johanna decides she can no longer continue to avoid what she knew she needed to do all along – to return to the fight. That Bruno’s death precipitates this moment of decision, when her interest in him was implied to be part of why she joined a political group in the first place, resulting in the convictions that have driven her into exile, may suggest the death of such romantic notions once and for all. Or, perhaps, it is the result of recognizing, finally, that in order to be worthy of the people she loves and has loved, she has to accept her duties for the collective beyond her own individual wants. While this reads as another kind of submission, Johanna emphasizes that ‘unser ganzes Heldentum wird sein, unser Schicksal zu akzeptieren. Unser ganzes Heldentum wird sein, nicht unterzugehen, ehe es unser Schicksal verlangt’ (*FidN*, p. 318). Thus, even if subjugating her own desires to broader goals, Johanna decides that to survive and not to give in is a type of heroism in itself: where the traditional Bildungsroman protagonist would recognize the validity of his original home environment, Johanna recognizes that to submit to normalizing forces, especially when the forces are of unprecedented political power, would be the opposite of development. Ultimately, as Johanna prepares to leave Ragnar and the north behind for good, the narrator declares: ‘eine lange Zeit wirst du heimatlos sein’ (*FidN*, p. 319). This is the opposite of what the Bildungsroman is perceived to do, and yet it is a more honest version of development for Johanna: to be anything other than homeless in the world she faces would be either to accept life in an unlivable society, or to continue to ignore a central facet of her reality. There is no going home, and no resolution. There is only moving forward.

Conclusion

Klaus Mann's versions of Bildungsromane are subversive, but they also expose the potential for non-normativity in the genre as a whole. The Bildungsroman has always been about opening up, and Klaus Mann merely refuses to entertain the pretence that there could be closure again. Remaining open, failing to conclude, grants access to opportunities and ways of being that involve unbecoming, reorienting, and expanding.

In *Der fromme Tanz*, everything around the protagonist refuses to reach resolution. There is no version of art capable of full expression, only hope and potential. Unanswered, and unanswerable, questions are positioned as the backbone of a meaningful life. Transience wins out over the complete, and desire, from within, provides the only teleology worth following, the 'Richtschnur' that pulls the subject forwards. Spaces lose solidity and open up their walls, as fluid as water. The self is not identical to itself, allowing space for the individual to de- and reconstruct without ever finishing. Desire undoes, and processes of societally sanctioned becoming are avoided. Stories end in the unknown, as everything must.

In *Flucht in den Norden*, a romance with the goal of domestic stability based on a gendered distribution of roles as an established end point is sacrificed for political conviction. The irredeemably non-normative self rejects the 'correction' of a heterosexual settling-down, and continues fighting. The romantic relationship presents nothingness, rather than the hope of potential. When desire isolates, rather than opening, it no longer drives forward, but destroys its subject. Time and space are not solid. The protagonist ultimately moves from one version of going wrong to another, from a failure defined dichotomously to success, in which she gives up her own motivations, to a failure functioning as a queering of the very idea of success, where there can be no having it all, but choices that expand us in directions that are either more or less likely

to enable our continued growth as human beings. This is a process only embraced for its full potential in turning away from societal expectations to what is desired most deeply, and most internally. For Johanna, that desire is change, and so still has no identifiable object. Escapism is not synonymous with potential; rather, finding yourself as part of a collective, dissolving desires and other-defined, dichotomous identities that do not serve you, allows true development, counterintuitively perhaps, to take place.

Across both novels, going wrong is not a stepping stone to success, but a way of being. Unbecoming the constructions others have made for us, and embracing what is meaningful and open, allows the potential in everything to emerge. Failing is constructive, and, like self-construction, is a process that has no end to reach.

Chapter 2: Going Elsewhere
Alexander and *Symphonie Pathétique*

Klaus Mann's second novel, *Alexander. Roman der Utopie* (1929), and his fifth, *Symphonie Pathétique. Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman* (1935), are unique amongst his works in focussing on the lives of real historical figures: the ancient Macedonian king Alexander the Great and the nineteenth-century Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, respectively. At the same time, the presence of the label 'Roman' in the subtitle of both novels foregrounds their belonging to a genre usually associated with fictionality, and indeed much of the content of this pair of Mann's novels goes beyond what can be definitively known about the historical figures. He displaces his characters beyond their historical dimensions, and those characters in turn are oriented towards desires located beyond themselves. The works are constituted by the very tension between historical and spatial situatedness and its un-anchoring through the destabilizing of time and space in Mann's narratives.

In *Alexander*, Mann tells the story of the eponymous character's life in the pursuit of greatness and territorial conquest, encapsulated in his paradoxical desire for utopian 'Grenzenlosigkeit', which is, by definition, unreachable. This desire is filtered through Mann's portrayal of Alexander's various relationships, particularly the queer ones between him and his childhood friends Hephaistion and Kleitos, which illustrate Alexander's psychological drive for possession and expansion, desires incompatible with the fact that 'Grenzenlosigkeit' has to be unpossessable in order to exist. As such, Alexander is involved in a continuous process of expansion that can never equate to ownership over his environment, and which on some level, if it did equate to ownership, would not be what he wants it to be – boundless – at all.

By contrast with the full lifetime of *Alexander*, *Symphonie* offers a portrait of only the last few years of Tchaikovsky's life at the height of his fame as a touring composer and performer, using the pseudo-homoromantic relationship between Tchaikovsky and his nephew Wladimir to illustrate the non-normativity and discordance of his entire way of being in the world of the novel, manifested most clearly as an irremediable longing to be 'anderswo'. Like Alexander in his desire for 'Grenzenlosigkeit', Tchaikovsky is oriented towards something inherently beyond grasping: elsewhere, if it could be reached, would no longer be elsewhere, but here. Because these desires often function analogously with the protagonists' sexual desires, the possibility of ever truly possessing the other is prohibited. There is only longing, and its unfulfilment is the only way for that longing to retain meaning and to drive the characters forward. These are novels about longing, desire, and hope, and so the failure is built in from the start: all of these pulls exist, by definition, because the desired, longed for, hoped for thing is not (yet) present and, as Mann portrays it, never can be.

A continuous reaching without fulfilment comes to define both the thematic and formal concerns of these two novels. Formally, the historical basis of the characters and Mann's expansion of the characters beyond it mean that they are caught somewhere beyond straightforward historical fiction, still tied to the past but with no firm anchoring. Thematically, there is an ongoing sense in the novels that the present time and place the characters experience is not enough – is not, and cannot be, boundless or elsewhere. Failing, falling short, is inscribed in these novels from the outset. *Alexander*, in particular, has also been cast as a commercial and critical failure, with Fiona Malcolm summarizing that 'the overall impression gained from a study of the scholarship of this novel is that it is held to be a two-fold failure; a failed writing,

describing a failure'.[170] In *Symphonie*, similarly, the plot which follows the end of Tchaikovsky's life results in a text that, above all, 'schildert Zerfall und Untergang'.[171] This points towards the dual gestures of failure present throughout Mann's works: both as a breakdown in contrast to, and consequently of, success, and as a refusal of that normativity, which manifest both formally and thematically. Both Alexander and Tchaikovsky are typically remembered as men who succeeded in their endeavours, but Mann deliberately subverts their stories into accounts of failure, and failed accounts, contrasting with the failed account of success we see in *Mephisto*. In these novels, these historical figures are displaced from their historically-bound context, but this displacement is never a full severance with time and space. Rather, we see a renegotiation of the ways in which, space, time and identity rely on each other to be situated. Where modernism already emphasizes time and space as a subjective experience, Mann un-anchors us even from a single subject. His protagonists already exist as historical figures beyond the fictional texts, complicating a focalization through an identity which is always halfway beyond his control. In reaching towards boundlessness and the elsewhere, the spatial and temporal endeavours of the novels and their characters are bound to fail, because to arrive at a final destination would be to negate the meaning of the very things they desire.

Although Mann gives both of these novels generic subtitles, each subtitle indicates a category of which his text is the only member: 'Roman der Utopie' and 'Tschaikowsky-Roman'. Given the limits of these generic terms, it is unsurprising that critics have generated their own descriptions of Mann's works. *Alexander* has been labelled a 'historical novel',[172] while *Symphonie* has been termed a 'Musiker-

[170] Fiona Malcolm, 'The Literary Relationship between Klaus and Thomas Mann' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 2003), p. 215, doi:10.22024/UniKent/01.02.86427.
[171] Rolf Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', *Aufbau*, 12.12 (December 1956), pp. 1105–19 (p. 1112).
[172] E.g. by Peter T. Hoffer in *Klaus Mann* (Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 15.

Roman',[173] a 'biographical novel', [174] and an autobiographical '(self-)portrait of a European artist'.[175] To a reader, the choice of known characters makes it evident that there is something historical and/or biographical at work in both texts, and unpicking this background is key to understanding how Mann is able to rewrite the time and space of real-life figures through the lens of fiction. In both texts, as Peter Hoffer argues,

> Klaus's main objective was not to maintain historical accuracy, but to convey as succinctly as possible the inner conflict which exists in a great individual at the peak of his creative potential.[176]

While these novels are sometimes categorized as historical, factual accuracy was clearly not among Mann's primary concerns. Indeed, his portrayal of Tchaikovsky has been described as 'freie Interpretation',[177] not least because – as with Alexander – Mann makes claims for the queer experiences and orientations of his protagonist that cannot be conclusively proven. At the same time, this free interpretation is not a disregard for the truth, but a troubling of boundaries that would impose a singular interpretation of history. Nevertheless, the characters have a historical basis, and subsequently, whatever Mann does with them, they keep one foot in the reader's sense of extra-literary reality as well, and indeed this is a prerequisite for the troubling.

Although Mann's novels are both historical and biographical, the labels 'historical novel' and 'biographical novel' represent distinct concepts with different implications for the relationship between the literary work and history itself. The

---

[173] Valentina Savietto, 'Intermediales Potenzial und musikalisches Pathos. Zu Klaus Manns Musiker-Roman *Symphonie Pathétique*', in *Intermedialität – Multimedialität: Literatur und Musik in Deutschland von 1900 bis heute,* ed. by Raul Calzoni, Peter Kofler, and Valentina Savietto (V&R Unipress, 2015), pp. 53–76 (p. 76).
[174] Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 17.
[175] Marleen Rensen, 'Klaus Mann, Music, and the Art of Transformation in Biofiction', *Auto/biography Studies*, 38.1 (2023), pp. 55–81 (p. 59), doi:10.1080/08989575.2023.2192048.
[176] Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 17.
[177] Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', p. 1112.

'biographical novel' comes into play when the focus is on an individual life, rather than a historical moment as a whole.[178] It 'shifts the focus from the seemingly objective reality of the external world to the subjective reality of the internal world'.[179] This involves anchoring to a specific subject, who often becomes the focalizer of the story. Although its ambitions may seem more moderate, it is still a form attempting to render a real-life experience into a piece of literature. Because the real-life must exceed the bounds of its literary rendering, Paul Kendall argues that 'biography must always be a flawed achievement and the biographer, a man [*sic*] who fails before he begins'.[180] This statement could equally apply to any manner of representing in an artistic form something which exists outside the mind of the creator. For Kendall, the failure is because 'a biography is always publicly haunted by the life which it has attempted to recapture',[181] a comparison readily available that can discredit any element of the artistic work. Biography therefore becomes a 'craft of the impossible'.[182] Like the desires Mann writes for Alexander and Tchaikovsky, biography is always involved with trying to attain something beyond its reach.

The shift in terms from 'biography' to 'biographical novel' places increased emphasis on the purposeful shaping of a life into a literary text. Its focus on an individual's life means that the form can 'utilize the single greatest virtue of the novel: growth of character'.[183] At the same time, it differs from the developmental focus of the Bildungsroman, since the protagonist is typically viewed from an external point

[178]Cf. György [Georg] Lukács, *Der historische Roman* (Aufbau-Verlag, 1955), p. 308.
[179] Michael Lackey, 'The Rise of the Biographical Novel and the Fall of the Historical Novel', *Auto/biography Studies*, 31.1 (2016), pp. 33–58 (p. 46), doi:10.1080/08989575.2016.1092290.
[180] Paul Murray Kendall, *The Art of Biography* (Allen & Unwin, 1965), p. xi.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., p. 153.
[183] Irving Stone, '"The Biographical Novel" from *Three Views of the Novel* (1957)', in *Biographical Fiction: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp.115–30 (p. 115).

regarding their relationship to their historical, geographical and social contexts. Mikhail Bakhtin argues that

> Although the hero's life course is indeed depicted, his image in a purely biographical novel lacks any true process of becoming or development. The hero's life and fate change, they assume structure and evolve, but the hero himself remains essentially unchanged.[184]

Working with real people limits the extent to which their character can be shaped by the author, depending, of course, on that author's commitment to the truth as they understand it. In any case, their existing context means historical characters are less easily manoeuvred, along lines of development or otherwise, than in a typical fictional setting. Nevertheless, the label 'novel' means that there is never any doubt about a text's fictionality. In choosing the subjects he does, Mann is undertaking a deliberate queering of the past, taking the known and familiar and expanding it beyond those bounds and into the unknown, the tension between the historical and the fictional creating an ongoing interplay of the two.

In many ways, then, the field and label of 'biofiction' (or 'biographical fiction') makes explicit what was always already the case in the biographical novel: that it is not the thing it represents, and as such is a project of fiction. In biofiction, even the attempt to be as close to documented reality as possible is refused, a gesture of deliberate failure that makes measuring the truthfulness of the narrative a secondary concern. In fact, authors of biofiction 'use the life of their subject in order to create their own vision of the world', and 'do not feel bound to the biographer's law of accurate representation'.[185]

---

[184] M. M. Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel),' in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays,* ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern W. McGee (University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 10–59 (p. 17).
[185] Michael Lackey, 'Introduction: A narrative space of its own', in *Biographical Fiction: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 1–15 (p. 10).

There is a corresponding shift in the audience: 'readers don't come to biographical fiction for truth. They come to biographical fiction for possibilities.'[186] Klaus Mann exploits to the fullest what is largely unacknowledged in historical fiction, and only partially acknowledged in biofiction: the embrace of non-linear, counterfactual stories as a formal as well as thematic engagement of possibility beyond given historical, biographical bounds. Fact and counter-fact are constantly troubling one another. Klaus Mann's texts present versions of lives that *could* have happened. If such lives were possible in history, then they also exist as possibilities within the present moment and for the future. Anchoring the real to the fluidity of the subject, loosening the boundaries of the factual and verifiable, exploits the inherent queering of a form which requires simultaneously bringing the past into the present and still showing it recognizably to be the past.

When Klaus Mann enters this generic landscape, he utilizes two different models when writing his two different texts. *Alexander* offers a full biography of its hero, from childhood to death; *Symphonie* instead presents a snapshot, a handful of years at the end of Tchaikovsky's life. *Alexander* would seem to align itself with traditional biographical fiction, while *Symphonie* sets up the expectation of a biofictional, but factually based, psychological portrait of Tchaikovsky in his final years. In fact, Mann writes both characters as highly fictional, personally imagined figures. In both cases, however, the use of characters that exist beyond and before the realm of his novels influences the way they are constructed and subsequently received. Both Alexander and Tchaikovsky can be termed 'referential characters', figures who

[186] Michael Lackey, 'Biographical Fiction and the Creation of Possible Lives', interview with Chika Unigwe, in *Conversations with Biographical Novelists: Truthful Fictions across the Globe*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 247–58 (p. 255), doi:10.5040/9781501341496. Credited to Unigwe.

> act according to the pattern that we are familiar with from other sources. Or not. In both cases, the image we receive of them is determined to a large extent by the confrontation between, on the one hand, our previous knowledge and the expectations it produces, and on the other, the realization of the character in the narrative. Opting for a referential character implies, in this respect, opting for such confrontation.[187]

Klaus Mann's choice of characters incites a confrontation between the 'known' past and his representation of it in the present, meaning that the novels move fluidly between proximity and distance, enacting constant displacements on a formal level that the characters also experience thematically. Alison Ford argues that Mann, in *Alexander*,

> relies upon the temporal distance between his audience and the events of his novel initially to show in the Macedonian army, with Alexander as its leader, an idealised homosexual community.[188]

This reading does not take into account Mann's approach to history as something that is not solely distanced, but also, in exceeding the bounds of historical fact, present. The historically isolated, idealized community is not the point; rather, Mann creates a utopia that is about unreachability and unmappability. Mann uses temporal distance to show possibilities, positive and negative, successes and failures, that come together at a moment in time and space. The distance leaves space for the reader's critical intervention. And yet, this distance does not remain absolute, and time and space are never constant or consistent markers. Klaus Mann would later argue that 'erst aus der Spannung zwischen dem realen Zustand und der Utopie resultiert ja der kämpferische,

---

[187] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* 4th edn (University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 109.
[188] Alison Ford, 'Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic: Literary Tradition and Experimentation in His Prose, 1924–1933' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p. 220 <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-weimar-republic-literary-tradition/docview/301557040/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026].

der revolutionäre Elan'.[189] Similarly, the tension with the past illuminates the undercurrents of the present, offering new ways of reclaiming a place in the past and, via bringing the past into the present, a place in that present.

The importance of the implicated present in representations of the past is upheld by the fact that both *Alexander* and *Symphonie* are at least partly about Klaus Mann and his own life, not just about the historical figures who act as the main subjects. In July 1935, Mann wrote: 'Der "Tschaikowsky" ist ein *autobiographisches* Buch'.[190] This presents a complication to the entire project's perspective: is the book about a historical figure, viewed from the present, or about a present figure, filtered through the past? The answer, of course, is both: this roaming and interchanging focalization means that the supposedly singular story we are being told in fact exists in multitudinous layers. Mann describes a similar association with the figure of Alexander in *Der Wendepunkt*. While writing the novel,

> Das Hotel 'Welcome' in Villefranche-sur-mer, einer meiner Lieblingsaufenthalte, belebte sich mir mit den Schatten antiker Krieger, Philosophen und Hetären: ich lebte mit Alexander; sein Schmerz um Kleitos, den spröden Freund, war auch der meine; ich mischte mich in sein Gespräch mit Aristoteles. (*WP*, 296)

In some sense, Mann *is* his version of Alexander, just as he *is* his version of Tchaikovsky. Both novels, then, also verge on the autofictional. In the modernist time period where Mann is writing, autobiography undergoes a similar transformation to biography, embracing forms that may eschew the traditional 'life-story' and instead focus on 'short periods of a person's life', or 'a particular, life-defining and life-altering

[189] Klaus Mann, 'Woran glaubt die europäische Jugend?', *Recherches Germaniques*, 13 (1983), pp. 237–68 (p. 254), doi:10.3406/reger.1983.1511.
[190] Diary entry dated 13 July 1935, in Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. II: 1934–35, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 117. Original emphasis.

problem'.[191] Autofiction emphasizes the fictionality of putting one's own life into literary form, enabling an exploration of different versions of the self beyond the limits of authenticity or truth.[192] There is a utopian element in the freedom to write and rewrite a version of oneself: 'das Potenzial, sich selbst zu entwerfen, zu inszenieren und damit auch gesellschaftlich zu positionieren'.[193] In Mann's novels, where Alexander and Tchaikovsky are also, to some extent, autobiographical representations, the play between historical figure and invention is also a play with autobiographical constraints and possibilities. Writing Alexander and Tchaikovsky is simultaneously a way of experimenting with the representation of Mann himself, one that brings potentiality, rather than factuality, to the fore.

The overlaps of biofiction and autofiction in these texts highlight Mann's experimentation with focalization.[194] Rather than anchoring solely to the experience of one figure and one perspective, he implicates his own presence in the texts' construction. Mann's use, in these novels, of narrative perspectives that shift in focalization and distancing from the characters, both un-anchors the individual from time and place, and un-anchors the story from one individual. This is history seen from multiple views at once, views that are located both in the past of the story and the presents of the communication and reception of the text. Identities are displaced from their ties to the individual, and displaced relative to the time and space that would be expected to constitute the fabric of factual historical events.

---

[191] Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman, 'Modernism and Autobiography: Introduction', in *Modernism and Autobiography*, ed. by Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. xi–xx (p. xi), doi:10.1017/CBO9781139177832.
[192] Yvonne Delhey, Rolf Paar, and Kerstin Wilhelms, 'Autofiktion als Utopie. Zur Einführung', in *Autofiktion als Utopie // Autofiction as Utopia*, ed. by Yvonne Delhey, Rolf Paar, and Kerstin Wilhelms (Wilhelm Fink, 2019), pp. 1–8 (p. 2), doi:10.30965/9783846764060_002.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Cf. Bal, *Narratology*, p. 136.

The various displacements undertaken by the novels and through the characters are underpinned, once again, by the desires of the protagonists that stretch beyond their immediate context. The protagonists of the novels are following their desires but are faced with failure on two levels. Considering the historical figures metatextually, the audience knows what happens, what is achieved and what remains unachieved, in advance. Secondly, in the fact that the very nature of their desires, for limitlessness and the elsewhere, in time and in space, cannot be fulfilled, since their fulfilment would mean the desires would cease to exist as a consequence. To reach limitlessness would be to reach a limit, while to reach elsewhere would be being somewhere. This unsolvable open-endedness applied to historically verifiable and therefore 'closed' stories constitutes the centre of the formal troubling Mann is undertaking here. As part of the un-anchoring from history and the displacement of desires, fluid space and time are central to how the novels construct the landscapes in which their characters operate. A key way of conceptualizing space and time in novels is via Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope'. Literally meaning 'time space', the chronotope refers to 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature', and this connectedness is 'formally constitutive' of the novel.[195] In Bakhtin's chronotope, time and space are not separate, absolute entities, but context-dependent and relative. In this, they become queer and queering formations. To think about what queer time and queer space – and, therefore, a queer chronotope in the novel – might look like – it is useful to gloss again the meanings of 'queer' discussed in the introduction to this study, a term which is often used either as an umbrella label for non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender identities, or as a synonym for defamiliarization or

[195] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. and intro. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 2011), pp. 84–258 (p. 84).

strangeness. In David Halperin's explanation, 'queer' is both 'whatever' and 'nothing', a seemingly fundamental contradiction.[196] When we label something as queer, it can be seen as an embodiment of 'an unresolved tension',[197] but this is never a strict separation of contradictory components, rather a relation of fluidity that enables possibilities of being and identifying. Queer is the nexus of seemingly mutually exclusive concepts, which, when we use the phrase 'queer novel', implies that the queer novel is an embodiment of this nexus, these impossible yet embodied possibilities, as well. It is also the nexus of queer time and queer space – the queer chronotope – which we can formulate as being anytime and no-time, anyplace and no-place, all at once. These (any-/no-)times and (any-/no-)spaces illustrate precisely the types of temporal and spatial landscapes towards which Mann's characters are oriented.

Mann uses the novel in conjunction with the queer and the failing to destabilize the chronotope's 'occupying a certain specific place in space', applying the anything-nothing of the queer to the thematic and structural forces of 'Grenzenlosigkeit' and thus 'queering' linear time and locatable space. The 'Grenzenlosigkeit', non-congruence, and displacement into an 'anderswo', where there can never be a full localization of textual space, nor a full acquaintance with textual temporality, underpin the queer novel's ability to keep open the possibilities of being both alongside and within the temporal and spatial embodiment that makes up the novel. These possibilities flourish specifically because they embrace a failure of fixities. The constitutive space-time interrelation that Bakhtin sees in the novel is destabilized when this materialized time and temporalized space are conceived as queerly fluid, unbounded, and de-synchronized.

---

[196] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62.
[197] Kevin Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 7, doi:10.5749/minnesota/9780816694778.001.0001.

Jack Halberstam refers to queer space as 'the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage'.[198] In this argument, queer space is not a concrete space at all, but an engagement with space-making that moves possible spaces towards embodiment, which we can see as a desynchronized space, accessible only through the imagination of a future, which becomes a version of queer time. The reanimation of the past is central to the treatment of time in historical novels, where both the past and future of the books' subjects are known, and communicated through the author's present time of writing. The chronotopian fabric of Mann's novels is frayed at the edges by queer ephemerality and de-synchronicity, with the loose ends of boundlessness and elsewhere-ness on the thematic level constituting a spatial and temporal queer malleability and fallibility within the novel. The undoing of history and desire represent an approach to unbecoming that differs from the emphasis on redirection and continuity we see in *Der fromme Tanz* and *Flucht in den Norden*. There, undoing is about growth; here, undoing is about displacement, and the hope this makes possible in constantly redefining the landscapes we live in. *Alexander* and *Symphonie* are characterized by pushes towards boundlessness and elsewhere, and by this queer spacetime that allows them to work towards the embodiment of queer possibilities, that involves undoing boundaries, without ever accepting the fixity of arriving.

When it comes to failure, the fact that biofiction very deliberately ignores the standards of accuracy expected of biography means that there is always already an element of falling short. Klaus Mann makes no attempts to cast his novels as purely truthful documents, choosing to confront expectations based on historical knowledge in favour of troubling temporal distance and inherited history. His approach represents a

[198] Judith [now Jack] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press, 2005), p. 19, doi:10.18574/nyu/9780814790892.

way of centring failure in the stories of people remembered as successes, a deliberate intervention in narratives of what successful lives look like: perhaps they look like failing, at least while they are happening. Perhaps the worlds of the past are as fallible as those of the present, and as rife with possibility.

Throughout both *Alexander* and *Symphonie Pathétique*, Klaus Mann explores real figures in unreal lives, reality couched in fiction, and queer desires that threaten the boundaries of reality, of fiction, and of time and of space. Failure and lacking are presented as propelling rather than impeding forces, with failure operating as hope for an elsewhere, and an else-when. Klaus Mann, wrote Max Brod, 'war einer der wenigen Köpfe, die ständig auf der Suche sind'.[199] This characterization extends to both Alexander and Tchaikovsky, the semi-autobiographical figures Mann (re)writes. The novels destabilize time and space through a queering use of generic forms, undoing expected fixities and revealing the fluidity and fallibility underlying everything. Failure acts like hope, which acts like desire, forward motions which exist precisely because they are unfulfilled. Going elsewhere is only ever a direction, never a destination.

[199] Max Brod in *Klaus Mann zum Gedächtnis* (Querido, 1950), pp. 23–25 (p. 24).

Alexander. Roman der Utopie

Although, and precisely because, knowledge of the actual Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) is hampered by 'the virtual absence of contemporary sources', he is remembered in typically heroic terms as a warrior and a conqueror.[200] Plutarch describes him as 'cruel and inexorable' at times, a ruler who was 'eager to overcome fortune by boldness and force by valour'.[201] Even where Alexander is described as a nuanced figure, the heroic impression persists:

> in Alexander the warlike is also humane, the mild also manly, the liberal provident, the irascible placable, the amatory temperate, his relaxation not idle, and his labours not without recreation.[202]

He is seen as a hero, even with faults. Crucially, his desire for conquest is seen as a core component of this identity: 'For Alexander, conquest was the goal, an ongoing, ever continuing and expanding, objective. Alexander wished to conquer the entire world.'[203] Despite this external draw, 'Alexander's desire for conquest was not racist, nor part of some natural law, it was entirely personal'.[204] He is driven by something internal, by his own longing. This feature seems to have been particularly appealing to Mann when choosing the historical figure as his protagonist; he would later write, 'was mich an meinem neuen Heros reizte, war die beinah frevelhafte Ungenügsamkeit seines

---

[200] Edward M. Anson, 'To the Ends of the World: What the Campaign Was All About', in *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. by Daniel Ogden (Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 67–81 (p. 68), doi:10.1017/9781108888349.005.
[201] Plutarch, 'Alexander', in *Lives, Vol. VII: Demosthenes and Cicero; Alexander and Caesar*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Harvard University Press, 1919), pp. 223–440 (p. 349, p. 389).
[202] Plutarch, 'On the Fortune of the Virtue of Alexander', in *Moralia, Vol. IV: Roman Questions; Greek Questions; Greek and Roman Parallel Stories; On the Fortune of the Romans; On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander; Were the Athenians More Famous in War or in Wisdom?*, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt (Harvard University Press, 1936), pp. 380–489 (p. 415).
[203] Anson, 'To the Ends', p. 69.
[204] Ibid., p. 70.

Traumes, die enormen Dimensionen seines Abenteuers' (*WP*, 296). From the start, Mann conceives of Alexander in terms of wanting more than can ever be achieved.

Mann's portrayal of wanting, of desire and its ongoing unfulfilment, defines his version of Alexander, serving to highlight the queering of history Mann is undertaking – both by making it distant-and-yet-present, and by making it explicitly homosexual. Since antiquity, Alexander has been remembered as a lover of men; both Athenaeus and Plutarch relate an anecdote of Alexander kissing the 'eunuch' Bagoas.[205] For Athenaeus, 'this is a story illuminating Alexander's sexual inclinations, one that substantiates the assertion that Alexander was a lover of boys'.[206] The extent to which he may or may not have also loved women is unclear. Referring to Mann's portrayal of Alexander, Stefan Zynda argues that 'dieser Roman ist nicht allein eine Darstellung des Feldherrn, sondern in starkem Maße auch des Homosexuellen Alexander'.[207] This presents a false dichotomy: that being a military leader and being queer are oppositional, whereas, for Mann, Alexander's military desires for territory and conquest, and his personal desires for men, are constantly overlapping and co-constitutive forces. Mann knew that, in his version of Alexander, the hero would not measure up to cultural expectations. In July 1929, he wrote to Stefan Zweig: 'Es ist eine krasse Unverfrorenheit von mir, daß ich mich daran gewagt habe'.[208] He knows reactions are likely to be negative, but he proceeds regardless.

For Klaus Mann, the contradictions and ambiguities of the historical Alexander's character are not to be neutralized into the overall image of a warrior, nor historicized as 'normal', but rather embraced as ways of opening up the potentialities of the character.

---

[205] Cf. Lara O'Sullivan, 'Kissing Bagoas', *Greece and Rome*, 71.1 (2024), pp. 22–40 (pp. 22–23), doi:10.1017/S0017383523000219.
[206] O'Sullivan, 'Kissing', p. 23.
[207] Stefan Zynda, *Sexualität bei Klaus Mann* (Bouvier, 1986), p. 63.
[208] Klaus Mann, letter to Stefan Zweig, 3 July 1929, in Klaus Mann, *Briefe und Antworten 1922–1949*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Rowohlt, 1991), p. 62.

He challenges the warrior image through a construction of a masculinity for his protagonist that falls outside both the hypermasculinity associated with ancient warriors, and the effeminacy often used as a stereotype in Mann's own time for same-sex desiring men. As a child, the tutors of Mann's Alexander report on his progress, saying:

> dieser Knabe war entschieden unter seinen Jahren; so viel Zurückhaltung gab es nicht, der mußte unbegabt sein. Zugegeben, daß er nicht ganz ohne Anmut war, aber von einer linkischen Anmut, einer behinderten, die nichts Männliches, nichts Energisches hatte. (*A*, p. 13)

Physiologically, Alexander, in his early years, falls short of expectations of masculinity. That his grace is 'behindert' suggests already the tension which will see him work towards 'Grenzenlosigkeit' in all areas of his life. Yet at other times, Alexander seems to thrive in a masculine environment. Beside a river with his fellow soldiers as a young man,

> Wenn Alexander ihre [his soldiers'] braunen Körper sah, konnte er nicht allein und in Kleidern bleiben; er warf sie ab, denn er gehörte zu denen, die sich anspritzten und jubelten. Er gehörte zu ihnen, er war einer von ihnen, nichts als ihr enthusiastischer Kamerad. Er war zwanzig Jahre alt, wie sie, braun wie sie, muskulös wie sie, ihm wuchsen die Haare wie ihnen. […] Seine Sehnsucht, nichts als junger Mann unter jungen Männern zu sein, teilzuhaben an ihrem Bunde, der ihm herrlicher und frischer als der Bund zwischen Mann und Frau schien, war stärker als alles. – So sprang er zu ihnen ins Wasser. (*A*, pp. 66–7)

This scene, with its clear focus on the bodies of men and the bond between men, is obviously queerly coded. The 'Mann unter jungen Männern', tanned, muscular and hairy, is the same character with 'nichts Männliches' previously, presenting a fluidity of gender expression within Alexander which is picked up here by the image of the water seemingly dissolving the very boundaries between bodies. Although this incongruity could be read as merely the before and after of puberty, it still presents gender as unset

and malleable, which further suggests a recasting of the possible ways to be a person who desires men – as someone not strictly a feminine counterpart or a masculine man himself, but rather not clearly able to be assigned to an easily categorized role. In this sense, Mann destabilizes the image of Alexander as masculine and aggressive above all else.

The structure of the novel underpins the dislocation of Alexander's story from a clear-cut biographical linearity as well. The novel is split into five chapters, entitled 'Aufbruch' (*A*, pp. 9–47), 'Sieg' (*A*, pp. 48–89), 'Prüfung' (*A*, pp. 90–124), 'Verführung' (*A*, pp. 125–47), and 'Der Engel mit den verbundenen Händen' (*A*, pp. 148–82). Each chapter has a further five sub-sections. The chapter titles, so listed, are already indicative of a strangely ordered trajectory: rather than victory being a final, crowning achievement, it is shunted towards the start of the novel, already obscuring any notion of long-lasting glory that would otherwise be associated with it. Similarly, the 'Prüfung', the testing of the character, comes not as a prerequisite for success, but in its aftermath. The beginning is clearly and conventionally marked by 'Aufbruch', but the final chapter – the only one titled with a phrase, rather than a single word – refers instead to a figure who appears to Alexander on his deathbed, an angel with bound hands whose image in this title, given that the others pertain to the shape of Alexander's life, merges with the image of Alexander himself, hands bound and unable to continue his endeavours, angelic in his golden youth even as he dies. Through this succession of chapter titles, Mann already indicates that success will fade, that testing cannot be avoided, and that ultimately there is a death, and a sense of futility, that await his version of the historical figure, even while his novelization brings Alexander back to life.

Unachievable Desires

In adding the term 'Utopie' to *Alexander*'s subtitle, the concept of 'utopia' that the novel supposedly represents is implicated from the very beginning. In its most basic definition, utopia derives from the Greek *ou-topos,* meaning 'no place' or 'not a place'.[209] The term labels a space that simultaneously cannot be a space, its existence perhaps most strongly manifested in the imagination of its existence, in the desire for it. It is displaced onto what is *not* here, a constant presence, but a presence that is always elsewhere. Utopia is a way for Mann to write queer desiring into spatial terms; it exists in the wanting of it, but can never be possessed. In a 'Roman der Utopie', then, we have another version of a novel of desires. Alexander certainly seems to be made up of utopian desires, and in multiple contrasting and yet co-constitutive ways, although the word 'Utopie' does not appear in the body of the text. This does not mean that the book is not about utopia, but suggests that the reader has to discover or create unprompted the expected utopia across the narrative time of the text. By definition, this construction cannot reach an ultimate material form – it is not a locatable place, but something boundless and unreachable, in a way that exceeds the boundaries of the material novel itself and reveals this as a co-construction with the reader. The shape of utopia, the longing for it and its unreachability, are echoed in all of the various desires that drive Mann's Alexander forward.

One of the first desires Alexander expresses on the page is for knowledge, seemingly a desire to understand the bounds of his world. As a child, Alexander is told by his tutor Aristotle: 'Ihre Neugierde ist unersättlich' (*A*, p. 20). The inability to be fulfilled is a recurring feature of Alexander's psychology. As an adult, when Alexander

[209] Helga Schmid, *Uchronia: Designing Time* (Birkhäuser, 2020), p. 12, doi:10.1515/9783035618112.

listens to stories about Babylon, it turns out that 'die ungeheure Wißbegierde dieses jungen Königs zu befriedigen, schien unmöglich. Hatte man ihm die ganze Nacht durch erzählt, wollte er am Morgen noch weiter hören' (*A*, p. 85). There remains a constant need for more, for stories as yet unheard, that speaks on a metatextual level to Mann's choice in rewriting the historical figure as he understands him. Wanting knowledge, like wanting utopia, cannot reach any final fulfilment; as Alexander finds out, listening to stories, there is always more to know, and not enough time to know it.

The longing for knowledge cannot be fully sated without negating the character's continuing curiosity. The tension between what is wanted and what can be achieved without detracting from the desired thing underlies all of Alexander's desires. As a ruler, his desire for territory enacts the same dynamic on a spatial level, and thus operates analogously to utopian thought. In planning his Asian campaign, 'allein das Grenzenlose' (*A*, p. 45) draws him onwards, echoed in how Alexander himself describes his lust for knowledge as 'grenzenlos' (*A*, p. 77). It is not so much that he is looking for something, as that the searching is in fact an 'end' in itself. This searching is the searching for the boundlessness of an unrestricted sense of self – which, like utopia, would cease to be unrestricted if it were able to be located. The truest manifestation of queer unboundedness is in the *search* for queer unboundedness; if Alexander could locate unboundedness, the very heart of what drives him through life would cease to exist. The failure of the goal is necessary, and allows the unknown itself to become a part of his identity. Alexander's constant need for *more* demonstrates that his journey is not just about the utopian, physical search for territory, but also about his own, personal drive for answers or resolution which must remain similarly fluid and unfulfilled. The fact that this unfulfilment, via the novel's historical setting, seems to have persisted through the millennia to the story's telling, makes it even more striking.

In its original form, the concept of utopia is already a spatial proposition. In Thomas More's 1516 creation of the idea of utopia, the name denoted a fictional island and the society built upon it, in a text discussing the features of an ideal state that might have been unrealistic, but were broadly desirable. In More's Utopia, none of its cities 'is driven by any desire to extend its boundaries'; it is a society in which 'they tend to incline to the position that no kind of pleasure ought to be forbidden, as long as no harm comes of it'.[210] Its inclusivity goes further than that of Alexander's society in Mann's novel, while its lack of territorial ambition sharply delineates it from the realm in which Mann's land-hungry Alexander exists. Alexander seeks ownership of something that categorically cannot be owned, boundlessness itself, and so is caught up in a utopian longing that is separate to the embodied utopia More creates.

Utopia as a spatial entity cannot actually be inhabited, because it is no-place. Similarly, it is often framed as a temporal proposition, such as in the work of Ernst Bloch, of whose 1918 *Geist der Utopie* Mann was an early admirer.[211] Written in the aftermath of Germany's defeat in the First World War, Bloch 'posits a Utopian impulse governing everything future-oriented in life and culture',[212] displacing utopia into a temporal, rather than strictly spatial, dimension. Bloch describes the '*externe, kosmische* Funktion der Utopie':[213]

> In uns allein brennt noch dieses Licht, und der phantastische Zug zu ihm beginnt, der Zug zur Deutung des Wachtraums, zur Handhabung des utopisch prinzipiellen Begriffs. Diesen zu finden, das Rechte zu finden, um dessentwillen es sich ziemt zu leben, organisiert zu sein, Zeit zu haben, dazu gehen wir, hauen wir die metaphysisch konstitutiven Wege, rufen was nicht ist, bauen ins Blaue

[210] Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. by Clarence H. Miller, 2nd edn (Yale University Press, 2014), p. 54, p. 72.
[211] Cf. Ernst Bloch, letter to Klaus Mann, 27 January 1936, in Ernst Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, vol. II, ed. by Jan Robert Bloch and others (Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 643.
[212] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso, 2005), p. 2.
[213] Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie: Zweite Fassung* (Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 13. Original emphasis.

> hinein, bauen uns ins Blaue hinein und suchen dort das Wahre, Wirkliche, wo das bloß Tatsächliche verschwindet - incipit vita nova.[214]

The 'Zug' that Bloch detects, the progression 'ins Blaue hinein', to a place where reality dissolves, is what characterizes his utopia. It is a pull into the distance, into the unbecoming of all things. He later states: 'Was wir sind, wissen wir nicht, wir sind noch unruhig und leer und wie uns selber versteckt gehalten'.[215] The implication is that the utopian impulse is equally driven by an individual need to strive for a sense of meaning and fullness and self-knowledge. Bloch's utopia is a product of its time, and 'has to be partially understood as a reaction to World War I, which put into a fundamental crisis the general principles of a 19th-century philosophy of progress, which maintains faith in the successive improvement of societal conditions'.[216] Consequently, Bloch's utopia is an attempt to relocate progress, placing it on the individual as part of the collective who strive towards something better but as yet undetermined. Mann understood Bloch's work further as a call to action, later writing: 'Es ist von dringlichster Wichtigkeit in unserer Situation: denn aus diesem Opus metaphysicum, aus diesem erschütternd religiösen Werk ergeht an uns die pathetischste Aufforderung zum Aktivismus und zum Kollektivismus'.[217] Utopia remains a pull forward that demands collective activism in enabling a better future; Mann expresses it through his historical figure who, propelled by the desire for utopia, is attempting to manifest a different society.

Mann seems to have been drawn particularly to the idea of dreaming of something better, which comes to define the utopia his novel is about, rather than any

---

[214] Bloch, *Geist*, p. 13.
[215] Ibid., p. 285.
[216] Falko Schmieder, 'No Place Yet: Ernst Bloch's Utopia in Exile', in *Escape to Life: German Intellectuals in New York: A Compendium on Exile after 1933*, ed. by Eckart Goebel and Sigrid Weigel (De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 128–41 (p. 129), doi:10.1515/9783110258684.128.
[217] Klaus Mann, 'Heute und Morgen. Zur Situation des jungen geistigen Europas 1927', in *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Aufsätze* (Transmare Verlag, 1931), pp. 21–56 (p. 50).

actual state it represents. Mann was a long-time reader and admirer of Bloch's work, and in fact the two knew each other. Meeting for the first time in 1926,[218] they would go on to exchange letters during the exile years of the 1930s. Admittedly, the surviving letters from Bloch to Klaus Mann suggest that he was mainly interested in the access offered by Mann's connections to publishers.[219] Nevertheless, it is clear that there were shared sentiments about Bloch's utopian ideas. In January 1936, Bloch writes:

> schon lang wollte ich Ihnen einige Worte schreiben. Gleich nach Ihrem hiesigen Vortrag. War sehr von der Treue bewegt, die Sie dem Geist der Utopie halten. Von der Energie, mit der Sie vor den Träumen der Jugend Achtung tragen. Kommt es mir zu, Ihnen für die Treue zu danken, so tue ich es. 1918 war die Utopie erschienen, und Sie, in der Knabenzeit, waren einer der ersten Leser.[220]

Mann has evidently given a presentation on Bloch's work. Bloch identifies him as a long-time supporter, and specifically praises both the loyalty of Klaus Mann to the work – suggesting that he believes Mann's interpretation of *Geist der Utopie* to be largely accurate – and that he has drawn attention to the dreams of the youth. This dreaming is what Mann seems to take out of Bloch's concept above all else: the concept of there being something better, but equally that this 'better' exists in the dreaming for it, rather than in reality.

Bloch's text is a vision of a new world, like More's, but in more ephemeral terms. Yet, like Mann, he turns to history to foreground the sense of futurity in his work. In the 1923 second edition of Bloch's book, one subsection is entitled 'Vom Nebel, dem Alexanderzug und der Grösse des Ja',[221] presenting a connection between Alexander the

[218] Cf. Hanna Gekle's introduction to Bloch's letters to Mann, in Ernst Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, vol. II, ed. by Jan Robert Bloch and others (Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 619.
[219] This is clear throughout Bloch's letters to Klaus Mann.
[220] Bloch, letter to Klaus Mann, 27 January 1936, in Bloch, *Briefe 1903–1975*, vol. II, ed. by Jan Robert Bloch and others, p. 643.
[221] Bloch, *Geist*, p. 212.

Great and utopia that pre-empts the link Mann sees between the same two entities. Bloch's section states: 'Das eingesessene Leben ist zu Ende […]. Also gehen wir nach Osten, stets schon hatte sich die Abwehr gegen ihn als nutzlos erwiesen'.[222] Alexander's campaign is given as an example of this drive towards the Orient, which appears to be equivalent to a drive towards utopia: 'Alexander lenkte bewußt nach Persien ein, zwanzigjährig, der jugendliche Mensch, ein seinen Träumen nachziehender Jüngling des Märchens […] mit Gesichten und Zielen, Griechenland nach Asien hinüberzurichten'.[223] Alexander is described like the hero of a Bildungsroman, setting out on an adventure to follow his dreams, while remaining always 'nachziehend', so a step behind them.

Mann also follows Bloch in designating the East as the dimension of utopia, which gives it a positionality, but not really a position, because the way the East – the Orient – is constituted in the Western imagination is never strictly about geography. As Edward Said asserts, the 'Orient' has been 'since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences'.[224] It is an imagined, rather than real place, in the Western imagination. In fact,

> It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries.[225]

While this is a highly problematic tendency in regard to the Western views of Asia and the Middle East, it speaks also to the idea of utopia. Like utopia, the 'Orient' as a Western image exists only in that imagining. It is the other place, the place beyond the known; it is towards this place that the Alexander of Bloch's reading is heading, and it is

[222] Ibid., p. 213.
[223] Ibid., p. 214.
[224] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979), p. 1.
[225] Ibid., p. 57.

also the drive behind Mann's Alexander. When the Alexander of the novel is beginning his rule, his mother gives him an 'Auftrag'. She tells him:

> Ziehe nach Asien, *liebend* wird es sich dir unterwerfen, denn du bist schön, Enkel des Achill! Das mütterliche Asien wird dir gehorchen, denn du hast den Auftrag der Mutter. (*A*, p. 42, original emphasis)

This presents Asia as conquerable, and equally patronizes the continent as susceptible to Alexander's beauty. Alexander takes on this task, later telling his troops: 'es geht nicht mehr um den Besitz Syriens oder Ägyptens, es geht um die Herrschaft über den unendlichen Orient!' (*A*, p. 79) The 'Orient' is synonymous with endlessness; and this is what, for Mann's Alexander, utopia means too. Mann's adoption of Bloch's concept of utopia thus includes the orientalist undertones associated with Alexander's campaigns.

The version of Alexander driven by desire – for knowledge, territory, the utopia of the Orient and, in a different sense, for other men – becomes Mann's embodiment of the person searching for an ideal that can never be reached in locatable time and space. Utopia is conceived of as something unreachably distant, and this distance stretches both spatially and temporally, with More's creation of an idyllic island and Bloch's orientation towards the future. There is an equivalent term for the specifically temporal utopia, 'uchronia', which, in analogy to utopia, 'is defined as 'no time' or 'non-time' from the Greek 'ou-chronos'.[226] In a reading suggested by Helga Schmid, uchronia is compared to 'the German neologism *nirgendwann*, meaning anytime and never',[227] which resonates again with Halperin's definition of queer as both anything and nothing and the biofictional aim of rewriting the past with elements of fantasy that exceed historical likelihood or knowability. In *Alexander,* the utopian construction of space is

[226] Schmid, *Uchronia*, p. 13.
[227] Schmid, *Uchronia*, p. 27.

necessarily intangible; this is also the case for the uchronian construction of time. During the fever dream preceding his death, Alexander asks 'Was haben wir erreicht, wenn wir *nicht* das Reich des Glückes und der endgültigen Seligkeit errichtet haben auf Erden?' (*A*, p. 176, original emphasis). It is not clear if Alexander is trying to persuade himself that they have, in fact, founded a utopia, or if he is doubting the validity of anything he has done in the face of *not* having founded it. The utopia exists in an ambiguous past that may or may not have happened, while the 'nicht … endgültig' construction similarly suggests a kind of temporal open-endedness analogous to a spatial 'Grenzenlosigkeit'. In any case, utopia is never perceived as located in the present – and yet the idea of it was and is present, and its manifestation, though never reachable, exists in the future. As utopia and uchronia are, by definition, only ever ideas, the presence of the idea implies the presence of the thing itself: a present time that is not a time, a paradoxical immediate distance, which is the space in which Alexander's queer experiences play out. Ephemeral time and space in what we might term the 'uchronotope' (to combine Bakhtin's term with utopia and uchronia) of the queer novel are both thematic elements of the novel and formally constitutive forces, implicating the reader in place- and time-making practices that are necessarily unachievable.

The impossibility of any achievement is because the goal – the utopia – cannot survive as no-place and be inhabited as a place at the same time. Mann's Alexander talks about a 'Ziel', saying, after his father's death, to his friend Hephaistion, as he looks out from the bow of a ship at the land he hopes to conquer: 'Wenn dieses glückt, Hephaistion, dann ist das Ziel der Menschheit erreicht. Blut wird fließen, aber das Ziel ist erreicht' (*A*, p. 46). This 'Ziel' is projected into the future, suggesting that, though not a present reality, it is realizable for the future. This seems at first glance to contradict the idea of utopia. However, the always searched-for 'Ziel der Menschheit' that we can

extrapolate as being the vision of utopia Alexander holds remains a projection, contingent on the conjunction 'wenn' that includes the meaning 'if' alongside 'when'; he sets out to achieve something without a clear idea of if, how, when or where it is achievable, with the use of 'wird' positioning such a utopia in an undetermined, but future time. I understand the utopia of *Alexander* as a correlate of the boundlessness ('Grenzenlosigkeit') we see mentioned repeatedly as one of Alexander's main desires (discussed further below), which makes his goal impossible: there can be no reaching the utmost limit of borderlessness without encountering its own border, rendering it obsolete. Thus, when critic James Robert Keller notes that *Alexander* 'is a novel of utopias in general, not of any one particular utopia',[228] he obscures the fact that there can be no particular utopia – the place which does not and cannot exist outside of the longing for it.

The possibilities opened up precisely by facing the impossible and the unreachable link to a queerer understanding of utopia which emphasizes working towards better lives that can never truly be solely our own. Indeed, utopia has resurfaced as a concept in queer theory in recent decades, particularly in the work of José Esteban Muñoz, and the use Mann makes of the concept seems to foreshadow the queer dimensions in which it would later be described. Muñoz writes: 'Utopia can never be prescriptive and is always destined to fail'.[229] At the same time, 'within failure we can locate a kernel of potentiality'.[230] Consequently,

[228] James Robert Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann* (Peter Lang, 2001), p. 133.
[229] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2019), p. 173, doi:10.18574/9781479868780.
[230] Ibid.

> The critical work that utopian thought does, in its most concise and lucid formulation, allows us to see different worlds and realities. And this conjured reality instructs us that the 'here and now' is simply not enough.[231]

The desire for something *more* than the present moment, for something possible but unrealizable, is an inherently queer concern. Francesco Albé, who also discusses Muñoz's work in relation to Mann's *Alexander*, reminds us that 'Utopias can and do fail […]. Their potentiality, rather than actuality, is what renders them productive to queer experiences beyond their possible defeat'.[232] Angela Jones has argued in a similar vein that for 'far too long, utopias have been understood as ideal or perfect places or societies—a telos', and instead posits queer utopias as

> the creation of spaces in the present that do not necessarily allow for complete emancipation or even happiness, but are suggestive of the potentiality for the future; they give hope.[233]

These queer spaces may fail – and, in fact,

> the more they fail, the more it pushes queer folk into collective action, to try again to create new spaces for themselves—spaces that represent the potentiality and hope for queer futurity.[234]

Queer utopia, as a term, in a sense merely brings out the queerness that was already inherent to the utopian concept. It exists by not existing, is found in the not-finding-it, and succeeds through ongoing failure and through the collectivity that Bloch also associated with utopia. Queer utopia emphasises hope and potentiality, to which failure

---

[231] Ibid., p. 171.
[232] Francesco Albé, Queer (Dis)locations: Klaus Mann's Early Works and Weimar Homosexual Culture (1919–1933)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2023), p. 144, doi:10.17863/CAM.107266.
[233] Angela Jones, *A Critical Inquiry into Queer Utopias* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 3, doi:10.1057/9781137311979.
[234] Ibid., p. 4.

is central. Alexander's unachievable desires – for knowledge, for territory – are always about the longing, and never about an ending in which full possession is possible.

In *Alexander*, despite the unreachability of his desires, there are some illustrations of a realized kind of 'queer utopia' consisting of the love between men. On one morning, 'es verband enthusiastische Kameradschaft den Alexander mit seinen Soldaten, die ebenso jung waren. Alle liebten sich untereinander: sie waren alle nicht älter als fünfundzwanzig' (*A*, p. 48). They are all young, and all love each other; the implication, in fact, in this sharing love between each other, is sexual in nature. Alexander runs naked with his friends, in response to which 'die Armee raste, ihre Führer waren schön und stark wie die Halbgötter' (*A*, p. 48). Once again the beauty, the youthful strength of Alexander and his companions are emphasized: this is a version of a homoerotic utopia. The sexual element is made more explicit in the description of how, at night, the soldiers sleep mostly 'im Freien, viele paarweis ineinander verschlungen' (*A*, p. 50); the sexual freedom is clear. Even so, however, in this seeming idyll, while his troops sleep soundly together, Alexander remains awake, thinking of Kleitos (*A*, p. 50). His own unfulfilled desires mar what otherwise seems to have been so successful a landscape for queer liveability. Increasingly, the communality of these early scenes withdraws from Alexander's life, and by the end of the novel, there is no longer a utopia around him – whether he partakes in it or not – but largely resentment. As he loses the respect of his troops the longer his unending territorial campaigns continue, he asks: 'Wofür habe ich gekämpft, wenn nicht für euch?' (*A*, p. 156). In his mind, he has displaced his own desires as the things drawing him forwards onto the troops he rules:

> *Sie* hatten den Gewinn von seinen Siegen; *er* nur für den nächsten die enervierende Sorge. Sie schliefen besser als er, sie freuten sich der Weiber, sie

> aßen mit mehr Genuß. Er tat alles für sie; wie dankten sie's ihm? (*A*, p. 156, original emphases)

It seems unlikely, given the psychological portrait Mann paints of Alexander, that anything he has done is motivated by wanting to do good for others. His desires are personal: for Kleitos, for conquest, for territory, for endlessness. The utopia that he comes closest to creating is still not enough for him, and even this spectre of the dream slips away from him with time. The un-anchoring desire represented by utopia takes Alexander all over the map, both literally and figuratively. It can never be manifested as a completed state. In fact, it survives precisely because it cannot be achieved, the queer remaining open and thus increasing possible ways of being, even if none of them can (yet) come to fruition.

For Mann's Alexander, the collective utopia may be a goal, but it is not truly part of his reality. Instead, his queer desires mainly play out in the specific relationships between himself and his friends Kleitos and Hephaistion, functioning analogously, once again, to the desires for knowledge, territory, and utopia. Indeed, his initial interest in Kleitos is communicated in terms of territorial conquest:

> zu gewinnen dies Kind, das in seiner Abgeschlossenheit unerreichbar blieb, wurde der ausschließliche und brennende Ehrgeiz des Alexander. […] Er hatte in seinem Herzen unabänderlich beschlossen: wenn einer mein Lebensgefährte sein kann, so dieser. […] *Er ist mir vorbestimmt*, dachte mit blinder und pathetischer Hartnäckigkeit Alexander. Ich will ihn haben, ich muß ihn haben, es soll mein erster, wichtigster Sieg sein. (*A*, pp. 15–16, original emphasis)

To win Kleitos – to have him – is to have his body, is for him no longer to be 'abgeschlossen'. Given the strength of his feelings, the conviction that some outer force had predetermined Kleitos for him, it is to be expected that, upon rejection, Alexander feels that his entire life has been turned upside down. If he has been *vor*bestimmt, then

Kleitos inhabits a future dimension to Alexander, held out ahead of him, capturing the non-synchronous quality of the two. When Alexander 'legte sein Gesicht auf das Kissen des Kleitos' (*A*, p. 17), Kleitos responds only with the words, '*"Du störst mich sehr"* […] ohne ihn anzuschauen' (*A*, p. 17, original emphasis). His advances are rejected without so much as being acknowledged, and 'er wußte, daß in diesem Augenblick eine Entscheidung für sein Leben gesprochen worden war' (*A*, p. 17). When he places his body beside Kleitos on his pillow, Kleitos only becomes more unreachable: even in this situation with concrete scenery, his queer desire cannot be fulfilled. Alexander's life is constituted by the reaching for something that refuses to be reached, held, or made familiar.

Desires and their failures, specifically in relation to Kleitos, dislocate Alexander continuously, in a working of utopia that holds it to be a space not of straightforward positivity, but the potential resulting from being as-yet unfulfilled. The failure to win Kleitos motivates immediate change in Alexander:

> Alexander veränderte sich schnell. Es war, als holte er sich Kraft aus seiner schmerzlichsten Niederlage. Er wurde selbstbewußter, schöner, härter und elastischer. Nur Hephaistion sah ihn noch weich. Der verstand alles, ohne daß Alexander erzählt hätte. Er war der einzige, in dessen Armen dem Prinzen Alexander das Glück zuteil wurde, weinen zu dürfen. (*A*, p. 17)

His rejection, counterintuitively, appears to give him strength, at least outwardly. We see the narrator here moving briefly into Hephaistion's perspective, who 'verstand alles', and this shift implicates Hephaistion in the disconcerting pathways of desire that surround Alexander. Hephaistion is secondary only to Alexander himself when it comes to the focalizers the narrator inhabits to communicate the story. Even as a child, Hephaistion

> wußte, daß es in seinem Leben keinen Menschen außer Alexander geben würde. Aber mit traurigem, geheimem Stolze wußte er auch, daß Alexander ihn brauche, daß er ihm notwendig und unersetzlich sei. (*A*, p. 16)

The historical figure exists, in Mann's novel, largely through this triangulated perspective: Alexander as historical figure, as the reader is already familiar with him; Alexander through his own thoughts and feelings; and Alexander as seen by his contemporaries, chiefly Hephaistion. As such, he is consistently dislocated from a clear subject position, placed into an ambiguous and fluid realm where, like the utopia he strives for, the idea is more real than the (impossible, unknowable) reality. Hephaistion is necessary to Alexander; so is this external perspective. Along with Kleitos, the two are positioned in a love triangle: Alexander 'wird von Hephaistion geliebt, ohne diese Liebe zu erwidern; und er liebt Kleitos, ohne bei diesem Liebe zu finden'.[235] Each component of the triangle is doomed to failure, each desire sent out into emptiness with no recognition or reciprocation in kind, and yet Alexander's life is defined by these two relationships. While Alexander is constituted, as a literary figure, both by his desire for Kleitos and by Hephaistion's desire for, and focalization of, him, it is Kleitos's unreachability that mirrors the other things Alexander cannot reach, be they space, limitlessness, or knowledge of all things.

Alexander's desires, all unachievable but reached for, melt together, and so preclude any possibility of simple fulfilment; they operate to dislocate and un-anchor him in multiple directions. Even within the text, Alexander merges his desires together. When taking over Babylon, 'geliebt wollte er sein, nichts war wichtiger' (*A*, p. 82). Wanting to be loved – which is what he wants in his desire for Kleitos – is of paramount importance. At a later stage, Alexander's situation is summarized as incomplete, as it

[235] Stefan Zynda, *Sexualität bei Klaus Mann* (Bouvier, 1986), p. 64. Zynda compares this triangle to that between Andreas, Niels and Paulchen in *Der fromme Tanz* (p. 65).

always is: 'Noch lange nicht die ganze Welt war erobert. Sie mußte aber ganz erobert sein, denn es kam darauf an, alles zu wissen. Nur wer alles erobert hat, weiß alles' (*A*, p. 170). Knowing everything is now the most important. But knowing everything requires conquering everything. And the most important thing, previously, was being loved – known, in a biblical sense. These seemingly separate desires join together in Alexander, unable to be separated, and thus unable to be delineated in a teleological, achievable sense. By the end of the book, Stefan Zynda summarizes, 'Alexander [ist] in zweifacher Hinsicht gescheitert: Er konnte weder Kleitos' Liebe gewinnen, noch eine utopische Gesellschaft errichten, was seine Mutter Olympias ihm aufgetragen hatte'.[236] 'Zweifach' is understating the situation. There are not just two desires which fail, but many, and perhaps they are not even separable to be countable.

Throughout the text, Alexander's multidirectional desires mean that there can be no one resolution to them, and no one collapse. Rather, in his desire for knowledge, for Kleitos, for territory, and for boundlessness, the character embodies an intentional strategy of failure that is necessary for his desires to continue to stretch outwards and onwards, past what he already has or could have, and past the boundaries of his own lifetime. Alison Ford argues that

> in the apparent negativity of its ending with Alexander's empire disintegrating and Alexander himself on the verge of breakdown, *Alexander* appears to represent an anti-utopian vision of things to come.[237]

Ford's argument does not take into account that utopia is necessarily a project of failure, of falling short, and thus its non-attainment is not actually a negation of it, but a

[236] Zynda, *Sexualität*, p. 71.
[237] Alison Ford, 'Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic: Literary Tradition and Experimentation in His Prose, 1924–1933' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999), p. 255 <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-weimar-republic-literary-tradition/docview/301557040/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026].

reinforcement. Further, the idea of utopia suggests that, in its use of a historical figure, the text is pointing to a future, an anti-teleological timeline that emphasizes the uchronian leanings of the text's construction. Utopia can be anywhere at anytime (and nowhere, and at no time), which is to say that the desire for utopia, being its only reality, exists in a temporal and spatial dimension both removed from and embedded in the historical and bodily experiences of time and space. This queer space, everywhere and nowhere, anytime and no time, allows failures to be propulsions that push onwards towards the possibilities of the unknown.

The unknown that marks the (non-)end of all of Alexander's desires is ultimately linked to death, with both death and desire marking the limits of the individual, where the soul leaks beyond the boundaries of the body, an ultimate dislocation which emphasizes that utopia exists beyond any earthly reach but, like desire, persists in the holding of the thought of it. Rather than a purely pessimistic relationship, tying love and death together in fact expands the potential of both entities. In *Alexander,* these two forces undeniably play out across the body in space and time, through the lenses of desire, intimacy, illness, and fragility. After his father Phillip's death, Olympias tells her son Alexander:

> Du selber wirst nicht sehr lange leben, mein süßer Sohn, ich weiß auch nicht, ob du jemals glücklich sein wirst. Aber du bist ausersehen, der Menschheit das Glück zu bringen, mein Alexander! Du erzwingst es mit Liebe und Schwert! (*A*, p. 43)

The correlation of love and the sword suggests that desire and conquering are synonymous in Alexander's life, with a sexually connoted violence involved in both. We see this when Alexander takes comfort from Hephaistion after killing Kleitos, and says 'statt mich zu töten, küßt er [Kleitos] mich. Du [Hephaistion] küßt mich, statt mich zu

töten' (*A*, p. 112), seemingly recognizing the interchangeability of kissing and killing in his own life. Similarly, on Alexander's wedding night after his marriage to the warrior Roxane, he reflects on his inability to consummate the relationship, asking: 'Warum darf ich sie nicht anfassen? Warum darf ich nur anfassen, um zu töten? Ach, den [Kleitos] ich am liebsten angefaßt hätte, den habe ich ja getötet' (*A*, p. 116).[238] His ability only to kill is again related to his unfulfilled love for Kleitos. Increasingly, towards the end of his life, Alexander recognizes that he has stood in the way of his own goals, such as when he confronts the young soldiers who had planned to assassinate him. Here, 'Alexander dachte mit Grauen: Sie sind vor mir nichts als Angst. Ich wollte doch, daß sie mich lieben' (*A*, p. 120). As he lies dying, the angel who visits Alexander in a dream asks: '"Was war schwerer, das Siegen oder das Unterliegen?" "Ich kann beides nicht mehr unterscheiden", überlegte reuevoll Alexander. "Denn in den Siegen spürte ich schon die Niederlage voraus –"' (*A*, p. 180). Victory and defeat, like love and death, have become so intertwined as to be inseparable, and once again Alexander is out-of-sync, always ahead of or behind the currents shaping his own life. Although this skews towards the pessimistic, it is worth emphasizing that death does not actually 'win' over love in their dualistic relationship; as we can see in *Alexander*, mourning his dead friends, love – in this case, queer love – carries on after death, and death, for those left behind, carries on after the deaths of others too, through mourning and the spectre of one's own demise. In fact, the love surrounding Alexander extends through the centuries, creating the landscape in which a biofictional novel can happen. Holding this

[238] As an aside, the fact that the failure of this marriage is often critically attributed to Alexander being 'the exclusively homosexual man' (Ford, 'Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic', p. 221) despite Alexander's thoughts upon meeting her – 'wir sind uns vorbestimmt seit eh und je' (*A*, p. 115) – closely mirroring the phrasing of his desire for Kleitos (see above), points to the tendency to oversimplify – de-queer, even – the character. Alexander at no point claims to be gay in any certain terms, and his unwillingness to engage sexually with Roxane can be explained, as Alexander himself says here, by his inability to separate love from violence, not necessarily by the mere fact of her being a woman.

tension, rather than attempting to resolve it, means that time cannot be defined along the single line of a lifetime, but is encapsulated in paradoxes. Queer survival, with its associated 'weakness, frangibility, uncertainty, dispossession, senescence, indistinction, and even morbidity',[239] allows the 'failures' of death and unrequited desires to become different ways of continuing to exist.

Unfinishable Selves

Alexander is driven by desire, which necessarily implicates another – the desired – in his thoughts and actions. The confrontation of the self with others, Mann demonstrates, can result in a fragmented identity that queers the subject even unto themselves. The stories Alexander's mother Olympias repeatedly tells him as a child seem to define Mann's framework for this disintegration. One such story is that of Orpheus, 'den die Mänaden zerrissen. Sie zerfetzten ihn zu kleinen Stückchen, weil sie ihn liebten und betrunken waren' (*A*, p. 11). Orpheus is supposedly torn apart by love in an act of sparagmos. This is the same loop traced by Alexander's desire, from within towards the other, and back again, a return which, like the act of consuming, erases the boundaries between self and other or inside and outside. The other story mentioned is that of Osiris who, after being thrown dead into a river, is washed onto shore, where he is found by Isis,

> seine Geliebte, Schwester und Mutter, die ihn mit aller Innigkeit suchte. Sie pflegte, schmückte, liebkoste den armen Körper ihres süßen Gatten; aber kaum, daß sie ihn allein ließ, um ihr Söhnchen Horus zu sehen, bemächtigte sich der königlichen Leiche Typhon und zerstückelte sie in vierzehn Teile. (*A*, p. 11)

[239] Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 5, doi:10.1093/oso/9780190676537.001.0001.

Osiris, unlike Orpheus, is torn apart in hatred, not through love. And yet, even this destruction is not final: 'Denn das Zerstückeltwerden des Gottes war die Voraussetzung für das Wunder seiner Auferstehung; der Jammer mußte groß gewesen sein, damit der Jubel unendlich sein durfte' (*A*, p. 12). Osiris's death is merely a precursor to his resurrection, and this appears to be how Alexander views his own mortality, too. The breaking apart, the dissolution, merely highlights the wonder of the reconstitution, the re-becoming.

With these stories of his formative years in the background, where the individual is literally broken into pieces in the face of the strongest emotions that can be shared with another – love and hatred – it stands to reason that an ongoing sense of dissolution remains a part of Alexander's characterization as he comes up against the force of his own desires as routed through and incorporating the desired entities. At one point, Alexander 'überlegte ununterbrochen: *was ihm hier fehle*. Was genügt mir hier nicht? dachte er inständig' (*A*, p. 24, original emphasis). Like the figures in his stories, Alexander lacks a sense of wholeness, albeit in a less literal sense. For Alexander, there is always something missing, and despite attempting to fill the empty spaces with the acquisition of land to govern, this fragmentary sense of selfhood never allows him to feel complete or even resolves to the extent that he knows what it is he is missing. It is this very lacking of something undetermined that opens up the possibilities of Alexander's life, as he is compelled always to go on searching. To incorporate the unknown into one's identity is to recognize the possibility of being other than how we knowingly experience ourselves – it involves accepting that something in ourselves is queer and cannot be un-queered, that something in us is fragmented and reconstituted with and through the other, and that this opens up new possibilities for how we identify

and how we experience the outside world. The breakdown of concepts of wholeness when confronted with emotional extremes allows identity to be fluid and incomplete.

Unreachable Endings

Resolution is never an option for Alexander, whether in terms of his multidirectional desires or even in holding on to a cohesive sense of self. The text is formally constructed with a similar lack of resolution. It is structured with a texture of interruption which both reflects and motivates the interruptions of identity and desire happening on a thematic level. The text's trajectory is troubled through tenses that shift between the imperfect and the present,[240] such that the temporality of the story is moved between the historical and the immediate present, reflecting Mann's use of a historical figure through which to portray his own experiences and desires. Beyond tenses, the text actively works against a sense of resolution at its end, as the chapter titles have already suggested. In maintaining an unfulfilled trajectory that refuses to conform either to a neat ending or a steady continuation, instead remaining uncertain and unsettling, Mann ensures that there is no final resolution or destination as might typically be expected at the end of a narrative form. After Alexander has his general Parmenion assassinated, he becomes increasingly disliked by his troops, but continues to forge ahead with his plans of conquering. In response to the declaration to his troops that the campaign, this time, is headed to India,

> Es gab nicht offenen Widerspruch, aber mürrisches Schweigen. 'Er führt uns ans Ende der Welt. Was suchen wir dort?' höhnten sie unter sich. Er aber trat vor sie hin und sagte mit seiner zugleich drohenden und lockenden Stimme, die immer noch hinriß: 'Ich führe euch ans Ende der Welt.' (*A*, p. 124)

[240] Extended passages in the present tense can be found from pp. 43–5, 53–4, 57–8, etc.

In German, as in English, the phrase 'end of the world' can have both a spatial and a temporal meaning, giving it a multidimensionality that further removes it from the realm of the concrete, even as it seems to lay claim to a frighteningly final state. The utopia Alexander is pursuing is the furthest possible thing from his familiar world, the queerest direction possible.

In moving away from what he knows, which, towards the end of the novel, occurs on the level of his friendships, too, as he increasingly distances himself from human relationships, Alexander moves towards a state of utter loneliness. When arriving at Hephaistion's sickbed, only to find him already dead, Alexander becomes almost paralysed:

> Erst da Hephaistion auf des Königs immer dringlichere Fragen hin schwieg, began der zu ahnen, schließlich zu verstehn. Was eintrat, war eine ungeheure Stille. Öde wuchs auf, verschlang jeden Laut, jede Farbe, fraß alle Lebendigkeit, sogar Tränen durften in ihr nicht fließen. Der König Alexander saß inmitten einer Einsamkeit, die ihn wie eine Mauer umschloß. (*A*, p. 165)

Asking insistent questions to the dead is surely the ultimate manifestation of the unanswerable; his thirst for knowledge fails. The 'grenzenlos' meets the border between life and death and cannot continue. When the angel of death who visits Alexander as he himself later lies dying tells him that he will return in another guise, Alexander asks if this is in order to finally implement his empire, but the angel fades and Alexander dies – 'die Frage, die er mit der letzten Leidenschaft seines Lebens gestellt hatte, blieb unbeantwortet im Raum' (*A*, p. 181). While, in a sense, he does return in another guise – as the focus of historical fiction in times to come – Alexander ultimately receives no answers, reaches no individual fulfilment, no geographical, temporal or figurative utopia: he dies as he lived, searching for the unreachable, in a geography un-anchored in

time or space. And yet, even though he feels ‘umschlossen’ in his loneliness, Alexander has reached beyond himself with the unanswered question. The ‘letzte Leidenschaft’ is only the last one ‘seines Lebens’ in its current form, but with the possibility that there may be a further one to carry forward his desire that even death cannot still. This open-endedness, although somewhat morose, does suggest to the reader that even with the end of the book, the historical narrative is not over: no answer is given, but the question, and the story, remain floating in space.

***

Through this character who is always searching for something, Mann asks the question of how we can understand ourselves when what we desire must always remain queer to us, defying the ‘norm’ of self-knowledge, especially with the added tension of identities that do not conform to normative models of gender or sexuality, a question which, like those asked by Alexander, is never given a clear answer. At the same time, the unknown paves the way for the possibility of fluidity in identity and of living more expansively on a figurative level, which, for Alexander, runs parallel to the physical reality of his military campaigns. The hunt for something to fill a sense of emptiness becomes a way of propelling a narrative forwards, but the hunt for the unknown can never be completed, because at that point the unknown would be known, and therefore not the searched-for entity. The searching is its own end – for Alexander, for utopia, for queer identities that refuse to fall in with limiting categories. Its failing trajectory is only the enabling of freedom. The fact that novel ends on an unanswered question means that the unattainable possibility of a sense of conclusion remains open and ongoing. Queerness refuses to be pinned down: this seems to be the overarching message of the novel’s

techniques and characters, and the point of convergence for the failing, queering novel form, the ideas of utopia and uchronia, and the freeing possibility of never reaching a final form, either on these levels or as an individual.

Symphonie Pathétique. Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman

Klaus Mann's diaries are only archived from 1931 onwards, so we know much more about how he conceptualized his second biographical novel than we do with *Alexander.* The inspiration for *Symphonie Pathétique* is explained in an entry from 7 January 1934, after Mann had seen Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony in concert in Amsterdam. He writes: 'sehr berührt vom Ganzen. Lust, über Tschaikowsky zu schreiben. (Tschaikowsky Roman. Schwul.).'[241] The 'Tschaikowsky-Roman' becomes the novel's subtitle; Mann is also centring queerness as a central feature. Later on in the progress of this idea, in an entry dated 9 October 1934, he states: 'Ich habe ja noch keine Ahnung von seiner Biographie. Spüre eine *Künstlernovelle.*'[242] The biographical accuracy of his portrayal is of very little concern. As with the choice of Alexander as subject, the un-anchoring of the anchored seems to be Mann's primary approach to his novel.

Reflecting on the novel after its publication, Mann claims that:

> Dieses Buch enthält nichts 'Aktuelles' – oder enthält es doch nur auf eine indirekte, übertragende Weise. Es mag sein, daß von der Schwermut der Emigration, die schon als Unter- und Neben-Thema in 'Flucht in den Norden' spürbar wird, manches eingegangen ist in die Melancholie des gleichsam heimatlosen, zwischen Ost und West irrenden, vielfach belasteten, hoffnungslos liebenden depressiven Künstlermenschen. Alle seine Schmerzen – und ihre Überwindung durchs Werk sind der Gegenstand dieser Erzählung, die ich mit einer stärkeren Anteilnahme geschrieben habe als irgendeines meiner anderen Bücher.[243]

[241] Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. II: 1934–35, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 10. While Mann uses the German spelling 'Tschaikowsky', I use the typical English transliteration, 'Tchaikovsky,' outside of direct quotations.
[242] Ibid., p. 64, original emphasis.
[243] Klaus Mann, 'Selbstanzeige: "Mephisto" [dated 1936], in *Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1969), pp. 50–54 (p. 51).

The book has no explicit relation to Klaus Mann's contemporary moment – although of course its figure is a lot closer to it, in time, than Alexander the Great – but he recognizes that present experiences also animate his version of a historical story. The 'stärkere Anteilnahme' taken on and experienced by Mann in the writing further speaks to the autobiographical relevance of the novel. In his autobiography *The Turning Point*, Mann would go on to say:

> I wrote his [Tchaikovsky's] story because I know all about him. Only too intimately versed in his neurasthenic fixations, I could describe his aimless wanderings, the transient bliss of his elations, the unending anguish of his solitude. (*TP*, p. 283)

His focus on Tchaikovsky's 'unending anguish' means that the experience of failure was a central tenet of his draw to the character. Similarly, Mann writes, Tchaikovsky 'was uprooted, disconnected: that's why I could write his story' (*TP*, p. 283). Thus, his spatial displacement is also one of Mann's themes in writing his biofictional novel, returning to the un-anchoring that is so central a concern in each of the two novels discussed here and which clearly far exceeds the biographical specificity of exile.

The choice of Tchaikovsky as subject, another historical figure suspected to have had queer entanglements,[244] seems to have been made before undertaking any background research. However, the image of Tchaikovsky in popular culture still conditions the way Mann's text is read, at the time of its publication and today. In his essay 'Pathetic Symphonist: Chaikovsky, Russia, Sexuality, and the Study of Music', the musicologist Richard Taruskin describes Tchaikovsky as one of the great figures of the 'Silver Age of Russian culture', a period characterized by an 'efflorescence … in

[244] Tchaikovsky wrote about (homo)sexual exploits to his brothers; cf. Philip Ross Bullock, *Pyotr Tchaikovsky* (Reaktion Books, 2016), p. 191.

large part animated, as everyone acknowledged, by what we would now call a gay sensibility', which was seen not as 'unhealthy or aberrant, or even as unmanly' because of the perceived overlap of the 'aristocratic and the gay'.[245] This apparent rush to forestall a perception of 'unmanliness' is reminiscent of historical treatments of Alexander the Great, and attempts to demote queer experiences to an incidental class characteristic. Taruskin's idea of queerness seems to rely heavily on the idea of 'efflorescence', especially since he claims that Tchaikovsky's life was not 'in any way frustrated or unfulfilled'[246] and that 'homosexuality, in those days, simply did not, as today's critics say, "essentialize" a person. It did not typecast, or stereotype, or render one's nature darkly and irrevocably Other'.[247] This attempt to neutralize his queer inclinations and reintegrate Tchaikovsky into a framework of acceptability contrasts starkly with the features of Tchaikovsky that Mann discerns and identifies with: his loneliness, his displacement, his outsider experience. With his novel, Mann intervenes to reclaim the historical figure for a queer and queering narrative, in which desires are not footnotes to musical genius, but rather underpin all of Tchaikovsky's life and work.

Mann was not the first to associate Tchaikovsky with the queer. In fact, in Philip Bullock's biography of Tchaikovsky, he states that 'evidence for the extent to which Tchaikovsky's music was associated with same-sex desire can be found in E.M. Forster's posthumously published novel *Maurice* (1971)', where a queer character finds a sense of acceptance through the composer.[248] Although Mann cannot have read this novel, the fact that its first version was written in 1913-14 implies that the correlation was already culturally present. Bullock refers to Mann's novelization of Tchaikovsky as

---

[245] Richard Taruskin, 'Pathetic Symphonist: Chaikovsky, Russia, Sexuality, and the Study of Music,' in *On Russian Music* (University of California Press, 2009), pp. 76-104 (pp. 78-9), doi:10.1525/9780520942806.
[246] Taruskin, 'Pathetic Symphonist', p. 79.
[247] Ibid., pp. 79-80.
[248] Bullock, *Pyotr Tchaikovsky*, p. 187.

'an account of the composer's final years that is not just a fictionalized biography but an apologia for a sexuality that Klaus himself shared'.[249] The label 'apologia' implies that the novel is a gesture of defence against accusations,[250] presumably referring to negatively-framed accusations of homosexuality. I do not believe this to be an accurate characterization of the novel – I do not believe that Mann's primary aim here is a defensive one; but Bullock does seem to agree that Tchaikovsky's queerness, rather than his role in musical history, is at the heart of Klaus Mann's portrayal of him.

Unattainable Space

Much as in *Alexander,* the way that space and time are set up in *Symphonie Pathétique* primarily rests on the main character's psychological life. While the terms of utopia or uchronia have no direct link to this novel, the ideas of nowhere/anywhere and no-time/anytime persist. In Tchaikovsky's case, his sense of place is often defined by the contradictory forces of alienation and popularity. In the opening pages of the novel, Tchaikovsky wakes up in a Berlin hotel room:

> Der Mann im Bett blieb bewegungslos, die Augen geschlossen. 'Um Gottes willen, warum bin ich hier?' dachte er. 'Warum bin ich hier, was habe ich hier zu suchen? Warum bin ich nicht, wohin ich gehöre - du unbegreiflicher Gott, warum bin ich nicht daheim? […]' (*SP*, p. 10)

This sentence introduces an interesting tension by the fact that it does not read '*wo* ich hingehöre', as we might expect, but 'wohin', where*to* I belong, which implies direction towards rather than position in. Decentring destinations once again, Mann reminds us that his characters take on positionalities, but not positions. The notion of 'daheim' is

[249] Bullock, *Pyotr Tchaikovsky*, p. 187.
[250] Cf. Sharon D. Downey, 'The Evolution of the Rhetorical Genre of Apologia', *Western Journal of Communication*, 57.1 (1993), pp. 42–64, doi:10.1080/10570319309374430.

invalidated even as it is pronounced. Tchaikovsky longs to be where he belongs, but that space can only be located in not being here, and may well not exist at all. By its nature, this space is ambiguously distanced, like a utopia, and can thus be called queer, existing in opposition to the spatial norms of physical immediacy and self-congruent location. Similarly, amid the bustle of Hamburg, a central leitmotif of the novel that speaks to Tchaikovsky's spatial discontent appears for the first time: 'Mit einer ungeheuren Dringlichkeit wünschte er sich, *ganz woanders zu sein, nur nicht hier – nur nicht hier*' (*SP*, p. 32, my emphasis). Tchaikovsky's need to be somewhere else, somewhere *not here*, is a recurring tendency:

> Dieses zugleich lähmende und aufpeitschende Weh, das peinigender war als ein physischer Schmerz, konnte ihn überall packen, auch zu Hause – wenn es ein 'zu Hause' für ihn gab. Aber immer wieder bezog Peter Iljitsch seinen Haß und seinen Ekel in vollstem Ernst auf den Ort, wo er sich eben befand. (*SP*, p. 32)

He routinely directs his hatred towards his present situation, but it is already questionable whether there is, in fact, the sense of a home to explain his discomfort when away from it. Rather, it seems that the very fact of being present is what elicits his revulsion, meaning that the absent is always closer to the coordinates in which he imagines himself. Even Tchaikovsky himself recognizes that the need always to be somewhere else is unresolvable:

> Meistens war er auf Reisen kaum glücklicher als daheim; denn da er nun 'anderswo' war, war das Anderswo wieder 'hier'. Das Gesetz, dem er hatte entfliehen wollen, das Gesetz seines eigenen Lebens, blieb gnadenlos über ihm, unter welchen Himmel er sich auch flüchtete. (*SP*, p. 154)

There is no reaching 'elsewhere', because if it could be reached, it would not be 'elsewhere' any more, again functioning as a utopian-style spatial failure in analogy to

the unreachable 'Grenzenlosigkeit' of *Alexander*. This tension is phrased more emphatically when Tchaikovsky says: 'Wäre ich doch nicht hier! […] Wäre ich doch woanders. *Am besten nirgendwo* – aber doch bitte nicht hier' (*SP*, p. 32, my emphasis). The suicidal notes of the desire to be nowhere are situated alongside the desire to be anywhere (else), once more echoing Halperin's idea of queer as nothing-anything. Tchaikovsky longs for somewhere else, but the fact that the 'else-ness' is central to what he wants means it must always remain apart from him, present in his desires but fundamentally absent. Even looking back on the earlier years of his career, this sense of needing to be elsewhere, of escape into the unknown, persists as the drive towards 'die Flucht ins Ausland (irgendwo anders sein, nur nicht hier)' (*SP*, p. 153). In a sense, then, Tchaikovsky longs to be positioned in unfamiliar space, even as this makes him fundamentally lonely; he longs for a belonging that is elsewhere and unreachable, and thus can only ever be an experience of failure. He longs to exist beyond his present time and place, and in a sense, achieves this, but only after his death, when he appears here in Mann's novel, beyond the boundaries of his historical existence.

Places are let-downs for Mann's Tchaikovsky: there is always an elsewhere that would be preferable, pointing to the unresolvable desires that drive the character. He seems to long to belong, and at the same time this manifests in a desire for anonymity, that is, to let go of the identity he bears for those who know him. As a way of seeking out isolation, this complicates Tchaikovsky's character further, as we know he is afraid of being alone at other times. Often breaking away from a city he has been performing in, these escapes suggest the ability to switch identities along with geographies, albeit never reaching the longed-for coordinates of elsewhere and whatever identity that might correspond to. In one such excursion to Lübeck, he notes: 'die Einsamkeit schmeckte gut, wie frische Luft' (*SP*, p. 98). Additionally, he finds: 'Immerhin war es angenehm zu

wissen, daß von all diesen Leuten sicherlich keiner jemals den Namen Tschaikowsky gehört hatte' (*SP*, p. 99). Similarly, when he decides to escape to Magdeburg before returning to Berlin, he thinks: 'Ich will wieder in eine fremde kleine Stadt fliehen' (*SP*, p. 107). Much the same happens after a successful concert in Paris, when Tchaikovsky hopes 'arbeiten und sich ein wenig erholen zu können, in einer möglichst fremden kleinen Stadt, wo er niemanden kannte' (*SP*, p. 269). The point is not to see the sights, but to become anonymous. The use of the word 'Zuflucht' points precisely to the irreconcilable desire for refuge, and the directionality of an unreachable flight towards somewhere else. Else-where, like no-where, exists as a distance from a place, rather than an inhabiting of it. Even his search for refuge is figured only as a searching; no firm hold in space is attainable.

Unlocatable Experiences

The unreachability of elsewhere that Tchaikovsky nevertheless doggedly pursues points to the character's tendency to reach beyond himself for the elements that would constitute a stable sense of situatedness and, therefore, identity, but which can never be fully attained. Like Alexander, Mann's Tchaikovsky is constructed as a figure made up of fragments which point towards a further fallibility of what identity he has. This sense of a fragmented character also features on a metatextual level, since the reader brings their own fragments of Tchaikovsky, as culturally remembered, into dialogue with the character Mann creates. Within the text, Tchaikovsky's fragmentation is sometimes imposed from the outside, such as with the national ties others assign to him. At one stage, Tchaikovsky's 'erbittert' thoughts note:

> In Leipzig wirft man mir vor, ich sei französisch, in Hamburg, ich sei asiatisch, in Paris, ich sei deutsch, in Rußland findet man: ich sei alles im Durcheinander und jedenfalls völlig unoriginell. (*SP*, p. 166)

A wide array of perceptions of him coexist, to the extent that he feels: 'Ich […] gehöre nirgends hin. Man läßt mich allgemein fühlen, daß ich nirgends hingehöre' (*SP*, p. 169). This 'allgemein' feeling is the most constant part of his experience, and yet consists of being nothing and nowhere. Similarly, after a successful concert in Tblisi, Tschaikowsky is described as 'etwas in Auflösung begriffen, etwas entwürdigt, etwas lächerlich gemacht inmitten seines Triumphes' (*SP*, p. 247). His success is marred by a sense that, on a personal level, he has failed – not at anything in particular, but simply at being a consistent entity. Later, Tchaikovsky describes himself as 'eine durchaus zweitklassige Kreatur, zusammengesetzt aus den verschiedensten trüben Elementen' (*SP*, p. 273). His identity is 'alles im Durcheinander', belonging nowhere, 'zusammengesetzt' out of all sorts of fragments, and apparently recognized as such both by himself and by outside observers. Even if we could situate Mann's Tchaikovsky definitively in time and space, and in a clear relationship to the historical figure, it is unclear how much of a cohesive identity exists that could even mark that spot. Rather, Tchaikovsky exists in pieces, within the text and beyond it, and so troubles the idea of the historical figure as such.

Tchaikovsky's fluid desires are couched in a narrative text that is equally malleable. Although Alexander von Bormann argues that, in *Symphonie*, Mann's narration 'bleibt durchaus traditionell', in contrast to the text's 'thematischen Entgrenzungen',[251] this is only partially the case. While the narration does adhere to a fairly standard chronology, its use of mixed tenses and narrative perspectives mean that straightforward notions of temporality and clear separations between narrator and

[251] Alexander von Bormann, 'Das Werk als Auftrag. Formsemantische Hinweise zu Klaus Manns Romanen', in *Klaus Mann*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (text + kritik, 1987), pp. 62–72 (p. 65).

characters are consistently troubled on this formal level, and the reader is continually displaced and reoriented in regard to the figure who is both historical and fictional. This can be linked back to the duality of *Symphonie*, in Mann's initial conception, as both biographical and autobiographical: the voices that communicate the text are not located in the same space or time. Two of the novel's ten chapters stand as particularly clear examples of this narrative fluidity. In Chapter 4 (*SP*, pp. 125–159), there is a jarring switch from the third-person voice used previously to what appears to be a second-person voice that rapidly becomes first-person. At the start of the chapter, as Tchaikovsky walks home after meeting by chance a female ex-partner, the text reads: "Ô toi que j'eusse aimé!'[252] Diese resignierteste Formel, diese kraftlos-bedingte Beteuerung begleitet deinen Heimweg, Peter Iljitsch' (*SP*, p. 125). Tchaikovsky is obviously the 'du' in this construction, while the displacement of a love that never happened into a counterfactual framework moves it into the same realm as his other, queerer desire for elsewhere – except, this time, the desire itself is conditional, not merely its fulfilment. On the same page, the voice moves into the first person, with the use of conditional verbs to mark an unreal condition once again: 'Du wärest es gewesen, dich hätte *ich* ausgesucht, wenn – ja: wenn […]' (*SP*, p. 125, my emphasis). Narratively repositioned, there is no stable perspective from which to view the character. The narration continues: 'Vielleicht liegt es daran, lieber Pierre […]' (*SP*, p. 125). The use of 'lieber Pierre' to address the second person means that what we are seeing is either self-talk, in which case the 'whom I would have loved' takes on an additional dimension of counterfactual displacement, an internal dialogue, or the direct voice of the narrator, in

[252] English: Oh, you whom I would have loved! (my translation). This use of the French imperfect subjunctive is exceedingly rare in spoken French, and is also an adaptation of line from the Baudelaire poem 'À une passante'; Mann changes Baudelaire's 'aimée' to 'aimé', thus recasting its gender. This change, in a quotation which already contributes to a further un-anchoring, this time intertextually, also acts to queer the intertext.

the latter case implicating both the characters and the reader under the address of 'du', ambivalences that trouble the cohesiveness of the narration further. By a few pages later, the narration has shifted back into a third-person mode (*SP*, p. 129). Mann uses the narrator to introduce a split, and therefore non-self-congruent, queer perspective, which demonstrates the questioning of the idea of a clear-cut identity at this point in the novel, instead emphasizing multiplicity and contradiction, through a narrative positionality that refuses to settle.

The displacement of desire into the subjunctive is a technique that pushes for a recognition of potentiality over reality. The way Tchaikovsky's romantic entanglements with men are described suggests that his queer desire takes place in a mutable temporality created by Mann's linguistic choices surrounding modal, conditional, and temporal constructions. When he remembers Kotek, an ex-lover who died in Berlin, Tchaikovsky thinks:

> Ich hatte ihn gern, eine Zeitlang hat er viel für mich bedeutet, und er hätte noch mehr für mich bedeuten können, wenn er gewollt hätte und wenn wir Zeit gehabt hätten. (*SP*, p. 31)

The use of the conditional here means that his desire, even as it begins in the past, ends up in an ambiguous time-that-could-have-been-but-wasn't. Thinking in the subjunctive opens up dimensions beyond the past, present and future, and beyond the categories of here and elsewhere: it opens up a space that is possible, but never embodied, free in its un-anchoredness even as it suggests unfulfilment. This realm of desire, equally, appears to describe Tchaikovsky's experience of time and place in general.

Love, for Tchaikovsky, embodies the impulse of reaching beyond oneself in the hope of meaning and fulfilment, which are never achieved, and desires and identity are displaced temporally but also spatially. In one instance of seemingly projecting

experiences into space rather than time, Tchaikovsky appears to conceptualize love as something you can put somewhere. This becomes evident in the following passage:

> Niemals habe ich dort geliebt, wo die Hoffnung oder die Gefahr bestand, daß man Ernst machte, daß ich gebunden würde, daß man mich wiederliebte und so festlegte. Ich habe nie eine Frau geliebt, so wie Frauen geliebt sein wollen, damit sie Ernst machen und unser Leben verändern. Dort, wohin ich mein Gefühl verschwendete, bestand nicht die Gefahr, nicht die Hoffnung bindender Konsequenzen, das verschwendete Gefühl wurde dort mit Unverständnis oder mit kühler Freundschaft oder mit kalter Berechnung, im besten Fall mit einer flüchtigen Zärtlichkeit angenommen. Ach, wie oft mußte ich mein sinnlos sich verströmendes Gefühl verstecken, so unangebracht und unverständlich wäre es für die gewesen, die mit ihm zu beschenken und reich zu machen, ich gierig war. (*SP*, p. 126)

The 'Hoffnung' and the 'Gefahr' of being loved back suggests that as much as he laments the emptiness he casts his feelings into, he seeks it out too, not wanting, on some level, for his love to land somewhere and for reciprocation to be possible. Desire then takes on a spatial quality, which implies already that he confuses people and places in a way that makes his ideas of geography and home fluid and difficult. Love exists in the same non-geography as his other desires, all of them pulling him towards the unknowable, unmappable elsewhere.

Formally, the constant pull of the elsewhere and the desires it brings with it manifests in narration that seems to shift in location and temporality, just as it at times seems to shift between, or even totally dissolve, focalized perspectives. Chapter 9 of the text opens with the historicizing paragraph:

> Reich an Eigenschaften und Ereignissen; gesegnet mit Erkenntnissen und mit Leistungen riesigen Formats; beladen mit Problematik, unerlöster Sehnsucht; düster und glanzvoll, erdenschwer bei aller kühnen Gespanntheit des Geistes; brutal bei aller sittlichen Empfindlichkeit; rührend, ungenügend bei allem technischen Können; fragmentarisch, genial vorwegnehmend, in die Zukunft weisend; reich an Widersprüchen, Niederlagen und Triumphen, reich an geistig-moralischen Aufschwüngen und abstoßend durch Habgier, Materialismus,

> pseudo-moralische, heuchlerische Dumpfheit; heroisch in der Selbstkritik; das Gesicht des Planeten und das Lebensgefühl der Menschheit phantastisch verändernd: So geht das große Neunzehnte Jahrhundert in die Geschichte ein. (*SP*, p. 280)

This passage draws attention to the fact that the narrator is looking back on history, able to summarize the historical context that the characters were still experiencing first-hand, and paints the nineteenth century as one filled with contradictions. At the same time, its summary in the present tense moves the narrator's commentary into a space that is both past and present, and neither, at the same time, displacing the reader from a clear historical position even while it describes the past from a distance.

In the same chapter, the displacement of positionality for the reader is underlined by an emerging tendency of the third-person narrator to implicate the reader, otherwise positioned outside of the world of the book, in the narrator's perspective. Another of the novel's leitmotifs demonstrates this, when the narrator refers to 'unser Blick voll Ehrfurcht und Mitleid' (*SP*, p. 281) that rests upon Tchaikovsky. We, the readers, are made to consciously focalize the character through the narrator, with whom we are now very explicitly sharing space, and whose temporality consequently expands to include the present of the reader. This guiding influence also manifests in a signposting technique not seen previously in the novel; the narrator notes: 'Eine Station nach der anderen läßt er hinter sich. Auf welcher Station finden wir ihn nun?' (*SP*, p. 282), then briefly recaps the immediately preceding plotline, rounding off with 'hier verließen wir ihn', before shifting back to the present tense as the narrative continues (*SP*, p. 282). Rather than offering signposts to the reader to clarify their perspective and position, the reader is buffeted between narrative temporalities, what has happened and what is happening, the action of the characters and the action of the narrator appearing separate, so that temporal fluidity comes to define the novel and the reader's experience of it.

These techniques speak to the novel's constant troubling of the expected spatial and temporal dimensions of a historical figure. There is no stable place for the character and the reader, viewed relationally to the character, has no sense of stable position either. The ongoing failure to locate experience or identity enables precisely the fluidity and incongruity that come to constitute, as much as he can be constituted, Mann's Tchaikovsky.

The transience of identity and space, as we have seen, is co-constitutive of the transience of time, which exists simultaneously in fragments and in overlappings. When Tchaikovsky is examining a family photograph from his childhood, focussing on the images of his twin brothers Modest and Anatol, the destructive and yet generative effects of the passage of time are highlighted. Focalized through Tchaikovsky, the narrator describes how

> die beiden Knaben sind tot, es sind zwei andere Menschen, die heute leben und die Peter Iljitsch seine Freunde und Brüder nennt. […] Jede Sekunde, seither verflossen, hat etwas verändert an ihnen. Denn jede Sekunde ist ein kleiner Tod, sie tötet Leben, aber zugleich ist sie auch Leben, denn das Leben besteht ja nur aus solchen fliehenden, tödlich gleitenden Sekunden. […] Was der Trost dieses Lebens ist, was es überhaupt erst erträglich macht – seine Vergänglichkeit, das Provisorische, Spukhafte, Uneigentliche, fliehend Entgleitende seines Wesens – ist zugleich das Schlimmste, Bitterste an ihm, sein Fluch und der tiefe Grund all seiner Traurigkeit. (*SP*, p. 133)

In Tchaikovsky's perception of time, people do not so much change and grow as they age, but actually consist of temporally-dependent identities that are routinely shed and replaced. Death, meaning here the small deaths involved in changing over time, may be the collapse of life, but it also generates the new and allows for change to continue occurring. In a later passage, also reflecting on a memory with Modest, Tchaikovsky despairs that 'inzwischen ist so viel Zeit entglitten und in den Abgrund gefallen' and 'ich finde uns ganz verwandelt, uns selbst entfremdet, zu anderen geworden durch die

stille, gewaltige Macht der entgleitenden Zeit' (*SP*, p. 213). Time makes us other to ourselves, queers us, replaces the familiar with the new and unknown, but there remains a sense of freedom in this: this is life as it is made up of fleeting moments, its fleetingness acting as both the greatest comfort of life and its greatest curse. There is sometimes evidence of this more negative slant to the transitory. Walking the promenade deck on a ship to America after another passenger has taken his own life, Tchaikovsky despairs: 'Entglitten sind so viele Gesichter, die mir etwas bedeutet haben […] Mein Leben zerfällt in Episoden und Fragmente, es ist zerfressen und zerstört von der Vergänglichkeit' (*SP*, pp. 276–77). This lament differs from more positive presentations of fragments in other parts of the text because of Tchaikovsky's overwhelming melancholia; transience destroys what is solid, but it also means that, if transience is what life consists of, then there can be no clinging to the past without sacrificing a future. This life in fragments, eaten up and spat out by the spectre of impermanence, is reflected formally in the temporal instability of Mann's narration that prevents clear-cut linearity. The situatedness of the characters and events in the novel, and the novel in the reader's experience, are constantly changing, troubling any solidity as it moves forward.

The queerness of these experiences that distance the self from its own desires while continuing to exist relationally to them is encapsulated in the queer desires Mann writes for his Tchaikovsky. An early lover, Apuchtin, functions as a disruptor to Tchaikovsky's temporal norms. Tchaikovsky remembers Apuchtin whispering:

> Hast du es gerne? Ist es dir angenehm? Ich weiß schon: es ist dir sehr angenehm. Wir wollen nie Frauen lieben – versprich es mir, Pierre! Es ist albern, Frauen zu lieben, es gehört sich nicht für unsereinen, das überlassen wir den Spießern, die Kinder bekommen wollen. Wir lieben nicht, um Kinder zu bekommen, wir machen nicht ein so gemeines Geschäft aus der Liebe. Ohne Zweck wollen wir

> lieben – ohne Ziel müssen wir lieben […] Ist es dir angenehm, kleiner Pierre?[253] (*SP*, p. 145)

Male-male love, in this context, is a way of undercutting the expected continuity of providing children; this love exists in and for itself, tied to its current moment of experience only. With this passage, Mann foreshadows Lee Edelman's concept of the death drive as explained in his 2004 work *No Future*, which presents queer time as time lived outside of the normative markers that typically mark the life stages of the human member of society: partnership, marriage, children, death (mitigated – even overcome – by the continued existence of the children).[254] In choosing not to procreate, in Edelman's view, the queer individual chooses death, which, if implemented in Apuchtin's framing of the choice not to want children, means that love for the sake of love – love 'ohne Zweck' – is love for the sake of death. Mann undertakes a striking queering of the very institutions of marriage and family that underpinned, and continue to underpin, the social ideals of personhood and the expected trajectory of a life. Mann also positions this version of being and desiring as future-in-the-past, and it is remembered as it was spoken in the then-present, so that the paratextual space created by the novel is commandeered by queer indefinability. Although he writes Tchaikovsky as a fundamentally lonely character, Tchaikovsky is also able to love and desire with pleasure as the only objective, one that corresponds to the freedom of queer presence and the failure constituted by the refusal of normativity.

---

[253] Tchaikovsky is often referred to with the French transliteration of his first name, Pierre, when in France or speaking with/thinking of French acquaintances and situations. This suggests fluidity or mutability of identity, which appears as context-dependent as space and time.

[254] Cf. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Duke University Press, 2004), p. 9, doi:10.1515/9780822385981.

Impermanent Art

While Mann's Tchaikovsky at times laments the destructive effects of transience, this is contradicted by his musicality, where it is precisely the changing notes over time that create melody, narrative, and meaning. Music is Tchaikovsky's main mode of expression, portrayed as an externalization of, and the most solid part of, his identity. After meeting the young conductor Arthur Nikisch, he refers to Nikisch as 'ein echter Freund – ein Freund seiner Arbeit, also des konstruktiv festgelegten, den Zufällen entrückten, definitiven Teils von Peter Iljitschs Wesen' (*SP*, pp. 76–7). The suggestion is that his music is the most concrete part of Tchaikovsky's identity, despite music itself being – other than in its instrumentation and notation – not at all concrete, taking up not physical but temporal space. Similarly, when under the patronage of Nadeshda von Meck, Tchaikovsky believes that 'sie kennt und versteht meine Musik, also kennt und versteht sie mein Leben' (*SP*, p. 134). His music is synonymous with his life and his identity, both of which are then placed in the invisible, temporal space that music occupies. As such, the displacement of identity happens on the temporal as well as spatial levels. Temporal displacement is also at the heart of Mann's approach to the biographical novel, where the past is preserved, but only in its relation to the present moment.

For Tchaikovsky, music is not just a way of expressing his identity, but also his memories, suggesting once again the impermanence of all things, but their beauty in that very condition. Memories do not exist forever, and neither does the individual. As Tchaikovsky listens to the violinist Siloti playing one of his pieces, he ponders: 'es sind ja nicht meine Erinnerungen, die ihn bewegen, sondern nur die Form, die ich aus ihnen gemacht habe – nur die Formel, auf die ich sie gebracht habe...' (*SP*, p. 81). Mann highlights the significance of form here, a form which expresses his identity, his life,

and his memories, all in a transient form through the musical medium. The transience is stronger than what it transmits:

> Wenn der Alternde an die Jahre seines Lebens dachte, die zwischen den Genesungswochen am Genfer See nach der Ehekatastrophe und der gegenwärtigen, schon entfliehenden, schon entgleitenden Stunde lagen, dann zeigte sich: die Werke waren stärker geworden als das Leben, dessen Spuren sie waren. (*SP*, p. 157)

The traces of a life are embodied in music, while music is itself bodiless as it exists in our aural experience. The bodiless is stronger than the embodied entity encapsulating it. Bodiless bodies of identity, life, and memory rise through music in the there-not-there manner of mirages, filtered through the temporal and transformed across different states of being, but always remaining out of reach.

Music is a way of transforming identity and memory, displacing them from their subject-bound position into an outwards-facing and transient form. Equally, it is a way for Tchaikovsky to transmit his feelings, particularly suffering – which, considering the above conflations of music with identity and memory, then suggests that suffering *is* identity, is memory. In the opening chapter, Tchaikovsky, caught by his agent Neugebauer while returning to his hotel, thinks: 'dieser Tag muß vorübergehen. […] Wozu muß ich alles dies aushalten? Nur um es in eine Melodie zu verwandeln?' (*SP*, p. 34). There is little worth for him in his life, other than the ability to translate it into music. As Tchaikovsky listens to a performance of his violin concerto, he considers:

> Was war alles vorangegangen, ehe er die Arbeit am Violin-Konzert hatte beginnen können –: nicht daran denken! […] Nicht denken jetzt an die Schmerzen, die man in Musik hatte verwandeln müssen, sondern nur an die Wochen, in denen eben diese Verwandlungsarbeit die leichte und strenge, die schöne und befreiende Pflicht gewesen war. […] Welche Gnade: die private Schande, das groteske Fiasko wieder gutmachen zu dürfen, aufheben zu dürfen,

> tilgen und vergessen zu dürfen, indem man sie in Melodie verzauberte. (*SP*, pp. 78–9)

The use of verbs such as 'verwandeln' and 'verzaubern' imply a certain magic in the process of expression, a process Tchaikovsky later describes as 'eine artige Alchimie, ein Zaubertrick' (*SP*, p. 247) and 'der magische Trick […], Schmerzen in Musik zu verwandeln' (*SP*, p. 322). The music he produces is not only the transcription of his experience, but the transfiguration of it. His suffering becomes his music, which is his identity and his memory, also. The term 'Verwandlungsarbeit' is an apt description of this process. In a sense, this is another commonality between Tchaikovsky and Mann the author: Tchaikovsky's 'Verwandlungsarbeit' turns his identity, life, and memories into the form of music, and Mann's 'Verwandlungsarbeit' subsequently turns this musical form into words and the form of the novel, with each level of transfiguration adding a further degree of 'queerness' in its increasing distance from the experiences at the origin. The novel is constituted by these concentric circles of queer time, space, and transformation, all of which fail to adhere to a mappable position. Music, in its transfigurational impermanence, positions feelings, identities, and memories somewhere beyond the reachable.

Inseparable Longings

Tchaikovsky's desires, like Alexander's, are multidirectional, although here there is no desire to conquer or possess physical territory. Rather, Tchaikovsky is drawn towards the unreachable elsewhere, the would-have-could-have of unlived and unlivable temporalities, and the transience offered by music. He exists as a tangle of a person, and the relationships he forms with others tend to reflect and contribute to his inner turmoil. Although there are other lovers, as discussed above, Tchaikovsky's greatest love in the

novel is his nephew Wladimir, and their intergenerational quasi-romantic relationship further highlights the fluidity of queer temporalities. Wladimir is described at eighteen as 'wißbegierig' (*SP*, p. 90), reminiscent of Mann's characterization of Alexander, so is already placed into the familiar tension of desiring something unreachable and, therefore, unpossessable. The young Wladimir is infatuated with his famous uncle; he

> hatte die erste große Auslandstournee Peter Iljitschs mitgemacht in seinen Vorstellungen und Träumen: während Tschaikowsky sich ganz einsam glaubte, war der aufmerksame Jüngling mit ihm gewesen, in Leipzig und Hamburg, auch in Lübeck, auch in Magdeburg; in Berlin und in Prag, in Paris und in London. (*SP*, p. 195)

Wladimir is 'mitmachend', and the narrator even refers to him as the 'Jüngling, der sein [Tchaikovsky's] Leben mitlebte' (*SP*, p. 199). Although the two are separated by distance and by age, they inhabit the same space that we know, at the same time, does not exist in a tangible location for Tchaikovsky. When Wladimir later joins Tchaikovsky in St. Petersburg, he comments 'so werde ich also nun *wirklich* dabei sein' (*SP*, p. 255), as he is now physically, as well as psychologically, 'mitlebend'. The closeness of the two is not one of parallels, but one that actually overlaps and interplays, to the extent that when Tchaikovsky wonders, in the middle of an existential crisis, 'Habe ich denn kein Heute? Was ist denn mein Heute? … *Was ist der Name meiner Gegenwart?*' (*SP*, p. 213, original emphasis), the answer is given when the name 'WLADIMIR' comes 'aus der fremden Nacht … auf ihn zu' (*SP*, p. 14). Wladimir – who is absent – is the name of Tchaikovsky's present, and the anchor to his mobile, protean presence; again, the realm the characters inhabit refuses to adhere to strict borders in space or time, and the anchor is, as ever, really an un-anchoring. As Wladimir grows up, his relationship to his uncle becomes increasingly distant. Tchaikovsky reflects: 'Ich schaue ihn an, als sei er mein Eigentum, und er ist mir fern. Mein Eigentum und mir unendlich fern' (*SP*, p. 264). He

feels possessive towards Wladimir, and yet recognizes that this possession is unendingly distant, much like Alexander's desire for territorial conquest and ultimate sovereignty. The shared times of Tchaikovsky and Wladimir demonstrate the queer overlappings of history and immediacy, and the intimacy of longing without fulfilment.

Unfulfilment in relationships – and in everything – forms a part of the spatial and temporal fabric of the queer novel in Mann's hands. For Tchaikovsky, his love for his nephew can never fully manifest in the romantic manner that he wants, although he seems to feel as if he possesses the idea of him, if not the reality. Another leitmotif of the text, this time directed obliquely at Wladimir—'der Tag ohne dich ist die Sünde'—already means that a timeframe is being defined by the absence of another in it. The first we hear of this phrase is as Tchaikovsky ponders Wladimir's impending departure back to his mother after a stay with him, where he asks:

> Wie werden die Tage sein, die Bob[255] nicht mehr mit mir teilt? Es werden freudlose Tage sein. Der Tag ohne dich ist die Sünde. Mein Herz ist schon so sehr an dich gewöhnt. […] Wie soll das werden, wenn du nicht mehr bei mir bist? Der Tag ohne dich ist die Sünde. (*SP*, p. 217)

He is not wondering what his home – his space – will be like once Wladimir leaves it, but what his time, his days will be. Wladimir fills up both his spatial and temporal experiences, but as ever, Tchaikovsky lives more in the transient temporal than in the concrete spatial, so it is there that Wladimir's absence is most keenly felt. There is a further temporal dislocation in the use of the future-in-the-past, which causes the time of 'not yet' to overlap with that of 'no longer' in the present of speaking, once again displacing his desires into a framework where their realization becomes categorically impossible. It is striking that he thinks of being without Wladimir as sinful, when

[255] 'Bob' is Tchaikovsky's nickname for Wladimir.

typical (religious) discourse would label his feelings towards Wladimir as sinful – on the basis of homosexuality and of incest – suggesting a queerer and less condemnatory version of desire that offers a blessing to the time when the desired is present, which, for a reader, is of course then displaced into the past by the process of Mann's novelization.

Complex interrelationships between and mergings of characters impact further Tchaikovsky's sense of home as a spatial resting point defined by Wladimir, and so not geographically settled in any meaningful way. With the two of them at his home in Frolowskoe, Tchaikovsky says: 'ich habe jetzt gar keine Lust, wie ein Akrobat durch die Welt zu ziehen. Ich bin gerne hier …' (*SP*, p. 231). His own sense of home at this stage is so unfamiliar to him that it shocks him: '"Was ist denn das?" empfand sein erschrockenes Herz. "Das kann doch beinah nicht sein. Ist dies wirklich – wirklich ein vollkommen glücklicher Augenblick?"' (*SP*, p. 231). Significantly, the 'Augenblick' means that his sense of home has shifted from the spatial ('hier') into the temporal. Despite what appears to be, at last, a sense of being at home, it transpires that this is still transitory. In Mann's novel, the sense of home moves away when Wladimir does:

> Gleich nach Wladimirs Abreise begann Peter Iljitsch Frolowskoe – das Landhaus, den Blumengarten, die Holzbank und den Spaziergang durch die Wiesen – zu hassen und sich sehr dringlich zu wünschen, ganz woanders zu sein, nur nicht hier. […] Bob fehlte ihm, wohin er auch immer schaute und trat; überall vermißte er sein Gelächter und sein Gespräch. Der Tag ohne ihn war die Sünde. (*SP*, p. 238)

The place is defined by the person whom Tchaikovsky associates with it, so the sense of it being a home departs with Wladimir. Although his love is put 'there', when the loved person leaves, there is no 'there' anymore; it is their presence and their absence that defines the space. The familiar, impossible desire to be elsewhere returns to haunt Tchaikovsky again and again, and this creates a text which thematically agitates against

spatial or temporal unity, even as it formally enacts the same agitation in its reworking of a historical figure into the dimensions of fiction.

His desire for Wladimir is the closest Tchaikovsky can come to mapping out the landscape he lives in. In fact, it is always through others that the rules shaping how Tchaikovsky lives are formed, reflecting his need to be elsewhere which works his present experience through absence. Much of this, in the novel, appears to trace back to his childhood, and in particular his relationship with his mother. The childhood Tchaikovsky identifies with his mother, rather than his father, perhaps implying a degree of fluidity in gender. His reliance on the image of his mother is set up in a passage showing the origin of another of the book's motifs, 'du sollst deiner Mutter folgen'. Tchaikovsky remembers the words of his family's French nanny, Fanny Dürbach:

> Abends betete Pierre für die geliebte Mama. Von Fanny hatte er oft gehört: 'Du sollst deiner Mutter folgen!' Pierre betete: 'Lieber Gott, lasse mich doch immer meiner Mutter folgen!' (*SP*, p. 139)

Following his mother becomes a central driving force in Tschaikovsky's life, one that manifests, perhaps, in his own age-gap relationships, his own pervasive sadness, and indeed his eventual death. It rests on his interpretation of following one's mother as copying her, rather than obeying her, a slippage of meaning that orients Tchaikovsky towards the events of his mother's life – and, crucially, her death. In what appears to be a defining moment of his childhood, his mother dies of cholera in 1854 when Tschaikovsky is only fourteen (*SP*, p. 141). Much as in the case of his own eventual demise, his mother's is swathed in a certain amount of mystery and speculation:

> Ein Gerücht war aufgekommen im Hause und im Bekanntenkreise: Alexandra Andrejewna Tschaikowsky hatte sterben *wollen*. Sie hatte den Tod herausgefordert und provoziert. Sie hatte ihn herbeigeholt mit eigener Hand, als

> sie zum Munde führte das Glas mit dem Wasser, von dem sie wußte, daß es vergiftet war. (*SP*, p. 141, original emphasis)

This passage can be read as a reference to, and foreshadowing of, the suicide that Tchaikovsky, in Mann's rendering of history, will later commit: his mother wanted to die, and Tschaikovsky feels a need to follow her in all things. What she may have said – what he could have obeyed – is not a concern of his; instead, the form of her life and death creates the cadence for his own existence, offering a pathway that leads only to nothingness as encapsulated in the elsewhere that exists beyond bounds. When the adult Tchaikovsky visits his old nanny, she shows him a poem he wrote as a child. He remembers the writing of it, and Fanny saying:

> Deine Mama hat gesagt, du sollst aufhören zu schreiben, und du sollst in den Garten gehen, mit Hyppolit[256] spielen. Wenn du nicht gehorsam bist, bekommst du das Glockenspiel nie wieder zu hören. Man soll der Mutter folgen. (*SP*, p. 319)

It is not only Fanny's warnings that motivate him to commit to following his mother, but also, arguably, this threat that he would be separated from hearing music if he did not. Tschaikovsky comes to identify with the figure of his mother, who remains one of his only true loves in his life, despite – or perhaps because of – her early death. Following his mother is the same as following his music, with both comprising large parts of his identity and propelling him through his life to its unhappy end. Music, mother, identity, suffering, and memory, are all attached in a single constellation.

The mother and the music are already symbols that overlap, displacing the followed entity into the temporality of the past and the transient. This picture is further

[256] One of Tchaikovsky's brothers.

complicated by an additional association of both with Wladimir. Reflecting on his feelings towards his nephew, Tchaikovsky states:

> Ich will ihn lieben wie meinen eigenen Sohn, denn ich darf keinen haben. Er hat in der Stimme und im Blick viel von meiner schönen Mutter, der ich hätte folgen sollen. Man soll seiner Mutter folgen. (*SP*, p. 159)

The leitmotif of following one's mother recurs here, but now Wladimir is also in the position of the person who should be followed, a different desire to propel Tchaikovsky forward. Meanwhile, the use of the verb 'wollen' implies that this parental mode is not in fact the manner in which he loves him, and on some level he wishes he did love in this more socially acceptable way; instead, his feelings towards Wladimir are consistently presented as romantically-charged. Indeed, his feelings are described in parallel to relationships of Tchaikovsky's that definitely were romantic, such as that with Apuchtin; in reference to Wladimir, Tschaikovsky believes:

> diesmal ist mein Gefühl nicht verschwendet und nicht ins Leere geworfen. […] Alles bisher war nur Vorbereitung und nur eine lange Übung des Herzens: Apuchtin, und die ihm nachfolgten – wie fremd, unendlich fremd sind die mir alle gewesen! ... Denn mein Gefühl war nie stark genug, immer hat es versagt. Es entzündete sich schnell an den Fremden, doch es blieb ihnen niemals treu. Wladimir aber hat oft ganz den Blick und die Stimme meiner lieben Mutter. Er erinnert mich auch an Sascha und an Bruder Modest, als der noch jung und liebenswürdig war. Er ist mir so nahe verwandt. (*SP*, pp. 216–17)

Wladimir is the culmination of all previous loves, and the suggestion of incestuous feelings only makes him closer to Tschaikowsky, who is otherwise too removed from his love interests to make a lasting commitment. He is 'verwandt', not just in an emotional, romantic sense, but genetically, and this is part of Tchaikovsky's attraction. Their physical interaction is not enough to constitute Wladimir as his own person; when Tchaikovsky touches his nephew's hand, his reflection is that it 'glich […] der Hand der

Mutter – und ihr hätte man folgen sollen' (*SP*, p. 218). The leitmotif returns again; what should have been, the following of the mother – a death Tchaikovsky perhaps thinks he should already have copied, situating him in a further temporal unbalance – is able to be reenacted with his nephew, a new focus for his desire which pulls him onto new pathways, even as it is also doomed never to be fulfilled.

The identities of Wladimir and Tchaikovsky's mother, as he perceives them, increasingly overlap, suggesting a dissolution of the straightforward 'other' against whom Tchaikovsky might have been able to define himself with some degree of stability, if things did not keep on moving, not to mention the fact that these 'others' are associated with what is 'his' – his music, identity, and memories. Just as Alexander is visited by an angel of death shortly before he dies, so is Tchaikovsky here, but his angel has a familiar face – in fact, a face of more than one familiar face. The angelic figure is an amalgamation of Tchaikovsky's mother and his nephew, figures who 'gehören zu einer einzigen Gefühlskonstellation',[257] possessing both 'die Anmut' and 'der Reiz' of the 'Page' (Wladimir) and 'die Sanftheit und Strenge' and 'die Schönheit' of the mother (*SP*, p. 290). This 'Todesengel'[258] is already a queered figure in combining discrete elements of identities, and there is a further complication: by the end of the novel, Tchaikovsky is 'nicht mehr dazu imstande, seine Liebe zum Werk und seine Liebe zu Wladimir voneinander zu trennen' (*SP*, p. 324) His work is loved in the same way as Wladimir. As we have seen, at this stage he is also unable to separate Wladimir from his mother. Wladimir, his mother, and his music form an amorphous entity in Tchaikovsky's life, recognizable but ephemeral; his music is also his identity and his memory; and since his love for Wladimir is a defining feature of his experience of time, so too must

[257] Valentina Savietto, 'Intermediales Potenzial', p. 68.
[258] Ibid.

be his mother, and his work, and his identity. All of them unite in the final analysis to become a symbol of all that has been denied to him, and all that is ultimately beyond him. Even as Mann writes this biofictional novel, his subject is constituted by desire for others, and those others cannot even be definitively separated into individual entities or separated from the one desiring them. With desire in no single position, the positionality towards it experienced by Tchaikovsky is doomed to remain distanced, even as it exists only within him.

Uncertain Closure

The end of the novel – Tchaikovsky's death – represents the culmination of many of the themes I have discussed and, as in *Alexander*, involves a tense equivalence between love and death. A day or two after the premiere of the Sixth Symphony, the titular *Pathétique*, Tchaikovsky goes to a restaurant with a group of friends and insists on drinking tap water, despite being warned that there is a cholera epidemic and that mineral water would be safer. He gets his tap water: 'mit der einen Hand berührte er Wladimirs Schulter, mit der anderen führte er das Glas an die Lippen' (*SP*, p. 347). In one hand he holds what transpires to be his death; in the other, his greatest love, he himself positioned in between them and bridging their distance. By the next morning, the disease has set in (*SP*, p. 349). The narrator returns to the motif of defining the 'Blick' of the reader in this moment:

> Mit wieviel Pein und mit wieviel Erbarmen sieht nun unser ehrfurchtsvoller, mitleidsvoller Blick auf diesen rührenden Menschensohn, diesen sehr Standhaften, der es endlich endlich genug sein lassen wollte – auf unseren Freund und Helden Peter Iljitsch Tschaikowsky. (*SP*, p. 353)

In this passage, Mann reasserts the historicizing perspective of the biofictional novel, reminding the reader that the subject exists apart from them, and indeed even beyond the manageable confines of the book. While we are implored to view Tchaikovsky with 'Mitleid', Mann does not shy away from presenting him as a complicated and difficult character at the end of his life. In fact,

> In einer ekstatischen Konfusion, die allen Umstehenden das Blut gefrieren ließ, nannte er den Tod seine Mutter, seine Mutter den Sohn, seinen Sohn den Geliebten, seinen Geliebten den schwarzen Engel – und diesen zur inzestuösen, tödlichen Vereinigung auf sein Lager zu zwingen, schien der Rasende wild entschlossen. (*SP*, p. 357)

Everything comes together at the end of the novel, but rather than resulting in a sense of resolution as we might expect, Mann makes sure that this is not a peaceful death – though he is surrounded by the hallucinated figures of death, his mother, and Wladimir, the son, the lover, and the angel, the 'Vereinigung' of these figures is 'tödlich'. At the same time, the verb 'schien' implies a narratorial distancing that zooms away from the dying protagonist, rather than towards him, reaffirming that the focalization has always been fluid and detachable. Death cuts Tchaikovsky's time, but death is also the ultimate blending of disparate loved figures; it produces as it destroys. While he finally dies (*SP*, p. 361) alone, the unfulfilled possibilities of his life refuse to be resolved, just as was the case with Alexander in Mann's earlier novel. Rather than elucidating history, Mann seems to cloud it further, and in doing so brings its non-resolution out from its historical distance: this is not the story of a man rising above history, but one caught in a process of undoing within and beyond it.

***

Tchaikovsky is never a resident of the time or place he wants to be; the closest he comes to situatedness is in his queer desire for Wladimir and for being elsewhere, neither of which can be achieved, so that his location always remains beyond his access. Love is isolated from him, and it isolates him. Contradictory drives to escape and to belong capture the tension of living on the edge of social acceptability where the only way to keep going is to keep falling short of an ending. The book's protagonist is equally fluid; Mann uses a multiplicity of labels to craft a figure who is disrupted through time and space, fragmented, and glued together incongruously, which is how the character is constructed for the reader as well. Despite persistent loneliness, alienation and fragmentation, there is a parallel vein of love and hope enabled through queer identity, queer space and queer time; queer lives freely in the space of the in-between, existing for its own sake, open to failure, and without necessarily needing direction. For Mann's queer novel, this highlights the way that identity, temporality and spatiality interact and inter-produce one another. Fittingly, Mann's novel ends with this image: there is no resolution, but merely a conference of disparate – and yet intimate – elements.

Conclusion

From the outset, these two novels openly blur the lines of fact and fiction in the service of queer representation and documentation. Blurred lines are everywhere, and this playfulness towards genre translates to a playfulness with ideas of identity, space and time, an attitude which is central to the way the novel is done queerly, and done with queer intention. The novel, for Mann, is a medium able to accommodate the unreachable 'Grenzenlosigkeit' and unfulfillable need for being 'anderswo' that define queer space and time, with both the limits of materiality and endless possibilities

encoded in the nature of the form. Through the queer force of disruption and tension that refuses to be resolved, outsiders are allowed to be outsiders, and this is freeing as well as alienating. Because, in its disruption, the novel carves out its own spatiality and temporality, in the paratextual realm it creates and in the hands and minds of the reader, it becomes an ideal chronotope for expressing queer presence which remains situated in the elsewhere of un-situatable-ness. Rather than the drive for personal growth we see in Mann's Bildungsromane, here the identity of the protagonist is always already somewhat set: they exist outside of Mann's versions of them as cultural figures. In *Alexander* and *Symphonie*, these characters do not grow, as such, but rather become increasingly displaced from their spatial and temporal contexts through transience, mixed positionalities, and desires that always pull onwards and beyond without ever reaching a limit.

In *Alexander,* the realm of de-synchronicity and unreachability is related to utopias and uchronias, ideals that exist only in the pursuit of them, an immediate distance that is there and not there at the same time. Queer desire is correlated with territorial desire, both of which compel the protagonist onward, but never towards a certain end. Even the inescapable linearity of a human lifetime is knotted up with love, and the same is true in *Symphonie Pathétique.* In this later novel, the protagonist's queer relationships primarily happen in the past, or only would have happened, or would have been going to happen, or dissolve into blurs, creating a separate, paratextual and extra-historical temporality and spatiality in which the queer takes place. Time becomes shareable across age and distances, and again queer desire is described in temporal terms. With a non-singular narrative perspective and motifs of fragmentation, another version of the utopian, uchronian spacetime is created, the simultaneous possibility and impossibility represented in these terms reflecting the limitations and freedoms of

queerness as it happens in these spaces at the frayed edges of the novel form. As in *Alexander,* even the protagonist's eventual death cannot disentangle death from love, which in these cases is queer, which is life, which is memory, which is identity.

When we think about how these novels play with history and immediacy, space and time, then, there are no definitive answers to pin down a location: queer space and queer time in the queer chronotope of the novel are defined by fluidity, by an ongoing refusal to be separated into achievable ends. The queer space and time of Mann's novels refuse to be concretely designated, and offer a degree of affirmation in the freedom of accepting the presence of unsolvable tensions and embracing failure. Non-congruence allows these tensions to sit together, so that the queer is not separate from the familiar and the non-disruptive, but runs with it, to its own beat. In Mann's hands, the queer novel is allowed to refuse to offer neat resolution: if the 'grenzenlos' or the 'anderswo' were reachable, they would no longer be 'grenzenlos' or 'anderswo'; if the queer were able to be domesticated and brought home, it would no longer be queer. Where Mann's Bildungsromane present failure as a way of growing in free directions, his biofictional novels show that it also enables a form of desire that has no end, and as such is also bound towards the infinite unfulfillable.

Chapter 3: Coming Together
Treffpunkt im Unendlichen and *Der Vulkan*

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen (1932) was the last novel Klaus Mann wrote before leaving Germany for exile in early 1933, and *Der Vulkan. Roman unter Emigranten* (1939) was the last of his novels published in his lifetime, shortly before the start of the Second World War. Both texts manage to convey the sense that catastrophe is imminent, even if the exact shape of that catastrophe remains unclear. The books are written as documents of their time, and each is structured around multiple characters and storylines in an attempt to capture disruption, confusion and dislocation from as many angles as possible. Among these angles are thematic concerns with dissolution, departures, home, exile, writing, and hope. For the characters of the novels, the dimensions of their worlds, and any chance of anchoring themselves within them, are falling apart, and the novels reenact this process of collapse formally. These texts echo the patterns of personal growth and outward-facing desire present in Mann's other novels, formally enacting dissolution in a way that speaks to political urgency and the state of the self in times of crisis, but they are also tangibly different from his other works. *Treffpunkt* and *Der Vulkan* are, in many ways, Mann's most intimate novels, and at the same time his most formally disintegrating, reflective of his immediate times, places, and experiences. Where Klaus Mann is most intent on illustrating individual dissolution as reflective of his age, he creates texts in the form of multi-focal chronicles, and the atomization of the individual is most directly connected to and expressed through the body of the text. These novels represent a different relationship to form than the one Mann displays with his Bildungsromane and biofictional novels, where failure functions as a way to trouble

perceptions of genre boundaries. Here, Mann is not working against a specific generic boundary, but is leaning into the experimental properties of modernist writing to create works that enact failure structurally through a narrative that repeatedly cuts short and cuts away. These novels, like their characters, exist in pieces, and because Mann does not allow any one piece either to take centre stage or to fall into oblivion, the works that gather the pieces – while never reassembling a singular whole – are symbols in themselves for how, faced with crisis, the individual and the forms in which they exist can survive precisely in their undoing.

Where Mann's Bildungsromane and biofictional works, despite their thematic and formal innovations, remain largely linear in structure, *Treffpunkt* and *Der Vulkan* are made up of interspersed vignettes of their various characters, creating a multi-plot narrative that often seems to move sideways in time, rather than straight forwards, presenting stories that overlap and co-occur. The effect of the arrangement of plots that are spliced and reattached purposefully to create contrasts and comparisons between different stories and characters is essentially that of literary montage.[259] In making clear that the novel is not a flawless whole, but rather a collection of pieces, Mann's use of montage is inherently linked to his project of queer failure when measured against norms of literary form in the traditions Mann works with and against, where unity and coherency, prior to modernism, at least, have always been idealized, if not consistently evidenced.

Mann's choice of montage is driven by his aim to document, and to do so in a form that reflects the matter of what he is documenting. This aim is analogous to that

[259] Cf. Lutz Winckler, 'Artist und Aktivist. Zum Künstlerthema in den Exilromanen Klaus Manns', in *Klaus Mann*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (text + kritik, 1987), pp. 73–87 (p. 81), and Nicole Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler: Studien zu seinen Romanen 'Der fromme Tanz' und 'Der Vulkan'* (Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995), p. 87.

expressed by the character Martin in *Der Vulkan* when he sets out to chronicle his immediate experiences:

> Deshalb will ich von den Ruhelosen und Heimatlosen erzählen. Mein Ehrgeiz ist es, der Chronist zu sein ihrer Abenteuer und Niederlagen, ihrer Aufschwünge und Zusammenbrüche, ihrer Trostlosigkeit und ihrer Zuversicht. […]
> Mir ist es aufgetragen, die tausend Formen und Gebärden, […] die Aufschreie und das Gespräch, die Gelächter und das Gebet, das Stöhnen und noch das trostlose Verstummen, aufzuzeichnen und festzuhalten. (*DV*, 106)

What Martin describes as a project of chronicling is in fact what Mann is undertaking with *Der Vulkan*, and the same approach is already present in an earlier incarnation in *Treffpunkt*.[260] Martin's ambition to write a chronicle of the restless and displaced people around him that displays, in its varied forms, the fragmented and fragmentary experiences of these people, reflects the impulse of Mann's book, within which this character operates. Like *Der Vulkan*, *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* is structured as a montage that follows multiple characters and plotlines, inspired directly by Mann's own immediate and contemporaneous experiences. Although the dissolution in this earlier work is less marked – after all, at this point, 'forced' exile is not yet part of Mann's experience, even if extensive travel and constant displacement are – there is already the same sense that things, and people, are falling apart in the face of their realities, which are also crumbling, and that there are opportunities to survive in different forms enabled by these processes of undoing as a form of reconceptualized reconstitution. Through documenting in montage, the present moment survives into the future, beyond merely being assimilated into it. The nature of the present moment in question, in which crisis and disorder are immediate realities, means that documenting in montage is the only way to accurately render fragmented experiences into text.

[260] Connection also made by Winckler, 'Artist und Aktivist', p. 83.

Although, for Mann, montage is intrinsically tied to documenting the geopolitical climate of the 1930s, its practice in a German-language context is most closely associated with Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.[261] Döblin's text intersperses narrative with news articles and other textual fragments, creating a cacophony of voices that seem to come at the reader from all sides. Walter Benjamin focusses on Döblin's novel in his essay 'Krisis des Romans', stating:

> Stilprinzip dieses Buches ist die Montage. Kleinbürgerliche Drucksachen, Skandalgeschichten, Unglücksfälle, Sensationen von 28, Volkslieder, Inserate schneien in diesen Text. Die Montage sprengt den 'Roman', sprengt ihn im Aufbau wie auch stilistisch, und eröffnet neue, sehr epische Möglichkeiten. Im Formalen vor allem. Das Material der Montage ist ja durchaus kein beliebiges. Echte Montage beruht auf dem Dokument.[262]

From Benjamin's perspective, the montage technique incites an explosive dismantling of the novel from the inside out, but never at random: the surface-level collapse of comprehensibility is always a movement towards documentation, towards incorporating extra-textual reality into the text itself. Thus, what may look like distortion on the surface is, in this sense, in fact aimed at producing a more accurate picture of reality. The distortion is precisely what makes it realistic.

Mann's use of montage is also based on reality, but his approach focusses less on the documents Benjamin praises as part of Döblin's text, and more on the principles of representation he saw in the work of other modernist writers. In a 1928 essay discussing

[261] Klaus Mann knew Döblin and was familiar with his work; cf. diary entry dated 13 March 1934 in Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. II: 1934–35, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 23.
[262] Walter Benjamin, 'Krisis des Romans', in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften, vol. III: Kritiken und Rezensionen*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 230–36 (p. 232).

André Gide's *Die Falschmünzer* (*Les faux-monnayeurs*), Mann claimed that in the novel we see 'den *fugenhaften Ideenroman*'.[263] Terming the novel 'fugenhaft', Mann focusses on the way the book is constructed: out of pieces, strands and themes, which, in their dynamic interplay, create a whole without ever fully coalescing. As well as playing on the idea of (visible) joinery, this reflects the type of musical composition called 'fugue', in which contrapuntal voices both imitate and contrast with one another.[264] Accordingly, the 'Fugen' part of 'fugenhaft' suggests at once seams and splices, marking connections that nevertheless remain visible boundaries between constituent parts. Without using the term, Mann is describing in Gide's novel a montage technique, less radical, perhaps, than Döblin's overt intertextual cacophony, but still denoting a structural approach that allows a novel to exist in pieces loosely tied into a whole, rather than as a thematic and formal monolith. Mann goes on to say that, as a reader,

> Sich in das komplizierte und anmutig strenge Gewebe dieser geistigen und menschlichen Beziehungen und Verwicklungen zu vertiefen, bedeutet erregendste Unterhaltung. Wie musikalisch alles ineinandergreift! Leidenschaften und Philosophien, erotische Anziehungen, Feindschaften, vielfältige Schicksale fügen sich sinnvoll zur Figur.[265]

The use of the verb form, 'sich fügen', in comparison to the earlier adjective 'fugenhaft', implies not just a project of joinery of the parts, which still remain individual, but also an acquiescence to an overall 'Figur'. This acquiescence is active rather than passive, however, with the 'Ineinandergreifen' of the pieces denoting their

---

[263] Klaus Mann, 'Der Ideenroman' [dated 1928], in *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Aufsätze* (Transmare Verlag, 1931), pp. 151–58 (p. 154). Original emphasis.
[264] 'fugue', *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, ed. by Joyce Kenedy, Michael Kennedy, and Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 6th edn (Oxford University Press, 2012), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-3627> [accessed 24 March 2026].
[265] Klaus Mann, 'Der Ideenroman', p. 154.

ability not just to sit side by side, but to interact with and affect each other. Such joining is perhaps a more accurate description of what montage means for Mann than Döblin's approach: in Mann's work, montage is not only the incitement for cacophony but also, at the same time, for multi-perspectival harmony in disjoined parts.

Mann makes similar comments in a 1929 essay discussing Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the plot of which takes place over a single day in London. Here, the story components making up the novel are, for Mann, an example of the force created by overlapping and interchanging voices:

> Ein Roman wie dieser scheint vielleicht nachlässiger, willkürlicher gearbeitet als der herkömmliche 'Geschichten'-Roman. In Wahrheit ist er mit einer Exaktheit komponiert, die Meisterschaft ist. Er ist nichts anderes als Fuge; Fuge ineinandergreifender Schicksale, Stimmungen, Töne.[266]

Again, Mann returns to the word 'Fuge', with musical imagery once more appearing. Mann appears to have developed his concept of 'Fuge' by this point, recognizing the form's potential for a project aimed at deliberate accuracy even in what may appear to be a chaotic approach. What may seem to be randomness in the selection of material is in fact a calculated decision aiming to be realistic to the experience of living, in this instance, in the context of the modern city, and constructed in a deliberately multi-perspectival structure.

Montage, as Mann sees it used in the works of Gide and Woolf, is merely a different approach to realism, and specifically a modernist one. In its lack of a single, unified voice or plot, such montage is designed to mirror the discordances of life, rather than assimilate them into an oversimplified depiction. The idea of montage as a more

[266] Klaus Mann, 'Zwei europäische Romane (Virginia Woolf und Jean Cocteau)' [dated 1929], in *Auf der Suche*, pp. 227–34 (p. 229).

accurate way to portray reality in literary form is picked up by Erich Auerbach in his work *Mimesis*, where he comments on another of Woolf's novels, *To the Lighthouse*. Addressing its multi-perspectival construction, he argues:

> Aus der Vielheit der Subjekte ist zu entnehmen, daß es sich doch um die Absicht auf Erforschung einer objektiven Wirklichkeit handelt […]. Die Absicht auf Annäherung an echte objektive Wirklichkeit vermittelst vieler, von verschiedenen Personen (und zu verschiedenen Zeiten) gewonnener subjektiver Eindrücke ist wesentlich für das hier ins Auge gefaßte moderne Vorgehen: dies unterscheidet sich dadurch grundsätzlich von dem einpersonigen Subjektivismus, welcher nur einen einzigen, meist sehr eigenartigen Menschen zu Wort kommen und nur seinen Blick auf die Wirklichkeit gelten läßt.[267]

From Auerbach's perspective, the refusal of a single subject signifies already that the work is intended to present a more objective reality, through the literary means of multi-subjectivity. Auerbach makes the generalization that modern authors 'scheuen […] sich dem Leben, ihrem Gegenstand, eine Ordnung aufzuerlegen, die es selbst nicht bietet'.[268] Through choosing to mimic the disarray and multiform experience of modernity in textual approaches that highlight multiple perspectives and intersecting, interacting fragments, the authors of modernism are creating a version of rendering life into text through the means of montage. For Mann, this endeavour takes on an increased sense of urgency: in his works, it is not just that, for the modern subject, everything exists in disarray and multiplicity, but also that historical crises are actively enacting the breakdown of any stability that might have previously been available as an anchoring for the fluid individual. Mann borrows the modernist strategy, but his montage is conceived specifically to reflect politically urgent moments in time.

[267] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 11th edn (Narr Francke Attempto, 2015), pp. 498–99.
[268] Ibid., p. 510.

The historical crises Mann's use of montage works specifically to portray are intrinsically tied to experiences of emigration. Even in 1932, *Treffpunkt* is a text partially about the early experience of exile, even if exile is voluntary at that stage, and *Der Vulkan* is concerned with exile above all else. As Mieke Bal has argued,

> Migration […] is the exemplary situation of the experience of time as multiple, heterogenous. The time of haste and waiting, the time of movement and stagnation; the time of memory and of an unsettling present not sustained by a predictable future. The phenomenon considered from the outside I call *multi-temporality*; the experience of it, *heterochrony*.[269]

The heterochrony Bal discerns is a reality for many of the characters of Mann's novels, particularly in exile, but also beyond it, reflecting Mann's concern with experiences of displacement across his oeuvre. Through embedding the characters in a montage construction, Mann goes a step further and sets up texts of *multiple* heterochronic experiences for his varied characters. The resulting novels are still intended as documents, but documents of many experiences, both imitating and contrasting with one another in the loose shape of the fugue, all at once. It is because they exist in pieces that they are able to exist at all.

Chronicling Reality

In presenting the book-within-a-book in *Der Vulkan* as a chronicle that clearly describes what the actual book is doing, Mann explicitly connects his montage approach to the project of chronicling. The chronicle is, for him, a way of documenting, but without imposing a simplifying, purely linear structure that would detract from the real-life

[269] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* 4th edn (University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 103. Original emphasis.

complexity of the experiences he portrays. Seemingly a very traditional form of documenting history, consisting of, essentially, a list of historical events, the chronicle in fact represents an early writerly mode. In the choice of which events to list, and which to omit, a certain plot and perspective are always already implied. Because of its lack of explicit narrativization – because it does not pause to explain how and why one event relates to another – the reader of the chronicle is necessarily roped in to the construction of the text's meaning. Having assembled its paratactic jumble of chronological events,

> the rest of the work is done by the reader. The reader brings the hypotaxis and the syntaxis to his reading […]. He becomes, in other words, a fundamental part of the interpretative process.[270]

The reader is the connection that transforms a list of events into a story; chronicles become narratives as soon as they are read. In its parataxis, the chronicle is always already composed of parts that do not neatly fit together, and so, in making a novel in imitation of a chronicle, montage highlights the existing multiplicity of the text(s). For the chronicle, and for montage, the 'whole' of the text, or the closest approximation of it, exists in the mind of the reader, rather than on the page. As such, not only is Mann dismantling literary forms by structuring them in pieces, but the breakdown of form also extends beyond the written text to the reader's experience.

Both the chronicle, as a way of documenting history, and montage, as a method to convert heterochronic experiences into text are, for Mann, aspects of the same approach, concerned with bringing reality onto the page. At the same time, these texts remain literary, real names and details are changed, there is no first-person narration,

[270] David Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?', in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Rodopi, 2002), pp. 1–27 (p. 24), doi:10.1163/9789004487659_004.

and *Der Vulkan* even has a 'Roman'-subtitle, meaning that fictionality remains part of both novels. Where Mann's biofictional novels trouble the boundaries between fact and fiction by taking existing historical figures and transplanting them into new spatial and temporal (non-)dimensions, in his montage-chronicles Mann is instead documenting specific spaces and times – even as these prove to be ephemeral – and populating them with fictionalized figures. The singular development of any one character, as suggested in his Bildungsromane, is no longer possible in these texts. In their different approach to reality, *Treffpunkt* and *Der Vulkan* demonstrate Mann's concern with portraying a collective, the members of which share little more than time and space, rather than showing individuals rising above their context. There is no rising above it here. Caught in the textual pieces that mirror their point in time, the characters of these novels face recurrent personal and historical failures and are never able to access coherency, either within themselves or as literary products. Conversely, the montage-chronicle approach which aims to document the pieces without understating the importance of each one is precisely the means by which Mann's characters are not sidelined by history, but survive, in the collectives within the texts and in the texts themselves. In these montage-chronicles, Mann shows us how dissolving into pieces can be a way of surviving anyway, even if in an altered form, such as the forms of the novels which transmit the experiences they document from the past towards the future and into the present.

***

Montage practices worry at the boundaries of any assumed wholes, already a queering activity, and chronicles subsume individual affairs into the currents of the times they aim to document without ever erasing them in the process. Combined, the montage and

the chronicle illustrate ways in which texts, and the figures within them, both dissolve formal boundaries and are reconstituted by new, more expansive ones. In this process of dissolution and reconstitution, the literary mirrors the concept of queer survival, as put forward by Benjamin Bateman and briefly discussed in the introduction to this study. This concept recognizes that the individual is less important as an individual than as a component of a community, through which we survive even as we, as individuals, cease to be – a survival 'in which the self expands by losing and lives by dying'.[271] What survives of the individual are the traces left behind in others; what survives, in terms of literary texts, are the traces that constitute the text itself and which scatter into pieces rather than remaining whole. Through failing to live on in a given form, the text – and the individual – are able to access preservation, new forms of expression, new identities, and new hope, in a version of survival that allows for what survives to be other than what it once was. Survival represents a coming together of disparate pieces that never insists on remaking the original whole.

This chapter addresses *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* and *Der Vulkan* in turn, using the lens of the montage-chronicle as a method of writing failure that is also about queer survival. Both texts are highly non-linear, so there is no way to trace a single line through them. As such, I will be following individual threads through each novel, through which the patterns of their overall weave become apparent. The component parts of these texts are never fully congruous, but are nonetheless held together by the form of the texts and by the reader who interprets their parataxis. The texts exist in parts, in crisis, as do the characters, and survival is possible only because of the traces left behind beyond the characters, and indeed beyond the texts. Like Mann's

[271] Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 4, doi:10.1093/oso/9780190676537.001.0001.

Bildungsromane and biofictional novels, the formal and thematic aspects of Mann's montage-chronicles are defined by a process of unbecoming that involves reaching for something beyond one's own boundaries, but in these montage-chronicles those boundaries are not just troubled, but often blown to pieces. What was in his other novels a way of expressing growth and desire and the undoing and reshaping of forms and identities these processes incite becomes here, in the face of crisis, a way of expressing the survival of a still changing, still desiring whole, which exists only in pieces.

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen

According to Mann, writing retrospectively, *Treffpunkt* 'foreshadow[s] the grief of future homelessness' (*TP*, p. 246). As such, it is a kind of exile novel before exile, and indeed a good portion of the action takes place outside of Germany. The book has no single protagonist; among its key characters, who are followed in largely separate strands of narrative, it features Sebastian, a writer; Sonja, an actress; Gregor Gregori, an actor; Richard Darmstädter, another writer and bohemian; and many others in supporting roles. Fredric Kroll has argued that, in its portrayal of the 'Einsamkeit und Ratlosigkeit junger Menschen', *Treffpunkt* is 'eines der persönlichsten und aktuellsten Werke Klaus Manns', suggesting that this book is more personal to Mann than others, and, in this increased closeness to the author, also closer to the time it represents.[272] Its characters are lonely and disjointed, the structure consisting of a 'Vielfalt nichtassimilierter Personen und Episoden'.[273] The novel begins when Sebastian leaves Berlin, with the gathering of most of the novel's main characters at the train station to see him off standing as the most literal example of a 'Treffpunkt' in a story which otherwise follows the outward movement of individual characters, suggested by 'im Unendlichen' as a direction beyond any mappable space. In its use of narrative voices, *Treffpunkt* shifts between past and present tenses and direct, indirect and external perspectives,[274] meaning that it is not just a montage of different characters, stories, and places, but also a stylistic mash-up.

Fritz Strich argues that, in Mann's later novels, among which he appears to include *Treffpunkt*,

---

[272] Fredric Kroll, '*Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1979)', in *Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bouvier, 1984), pp. 82–118 (p. 82).
[273] Ibid., p. 100.
[274] E.g. with the character Sylvester Marschalk (*TiU*, pp. 64–65).

> [es] handelt sich […] um ein Nebeneinander isolierter und doch sich suchender Menschen, vieler Schicksale und Milieus, um Parallelen vieler Lebenswege, die sich nur im Unendlichen treffen. Sie werden in raschem Wechsel dargestellt, sodaß sie tatsächlich in ihrer Gleichzeitigkeit erscheinen. Aber […] die Zeitgenossenschaft wandelt sich nicht in menschliche Gemeinschaft. Manchmal finden Begegnungen statt, und manchmal sprüht es bei Berührungen wie von elektrischen Funken – bloße Augenblicke, auf die bald der Abschied folgt, und wieder laufen die Parallelen nebeneinander fort. So bildet sich eine Form, die man nicht mit einem Mosaik vergleichen darf, aber mit einer Fuge, deren Tonreihen wie in moderner Musik nicht aufeinander abgestimmt sind, sondern in schmerzlicher Einsamkeit und dissonierender Fügung nebeneinander ablaufen.[275]

This 'Nebeneinander' highlights the multi-strand construction of the text, with stories existing alongside one another rather than succeeding each other. Strich highlights the fact that there is no true meeting to be had, other than in the unreachable space of the infinite. Nevertheless, stories touch on one another, sparking 'Funken' of connection that suggest it is possible to find meaning, at least occasionally, even in fundamental isolation. Despite Strich's insistence that this is not a mosaic, but a fugue, the two art forms share characteristics that become central to Mann's work: both represent pieces that exist as wholes, but in which the lines between the individual pieces remain always visible and, indeed, are part of the overall effect of the artwork, reflecting the 'Fugen' Mann sees in Gide's work.

Treffpunkt already exists along multiple axes, following multiple characters. This impression is furthered by the fact that some characters appear to spring their bounds, echoing or foreshadowing figures in other works of Mann's, and so dissolve the limits of the work itself. Certain themes and figures in *Treffpunkt* are reminiscent of Mann's earlier work, particularly *Der fromme Tanz*. Sebastian's backstory is similar to that of Andreas in *Der fromme Tanz*; the narrative summarizes, in *Treffpunkt*, how Sebastian

[275] Fritz Strich, in *Klaus Mann zum Gedächtnis* (Querido, 1950), pp. 152–166 (pp. 163–4).

‘war in einer süddeutschen Kleinstadt bei einer alten Verwandten erzogen; mit sechzehn Jahren nach Berlin gekommen’ (*TiU*, p. 48). Departing from Southern Germany to Berlin as a teenager, Sebastian is framed in the same Bildungsroman scenery as Andreas. This demonstrates how fragments of more traditional narrative forms are dissected and interwoven into *Treffpunkt*: the traces of the Bildungsroman are present but no longer attain the structural linearity we would expect of the genre. With the character Gregor Gregori, we see a preview of Hendrik Höfgen in *Mephisto*, whose presence brings with it the same interrogation of success. Gregor is described as coming to the city ‘mit keinem anderen Willen geladen als dem: zu siegen. Für was – blieb eine andere Frage’ (*TiU*, p. 109), hinting at a Nietzschean ‘Wille zur Macht’. The narrator calls into question his principles as someone for whom success on its own is goal enough. Gregor also represents a view of art that pre-empts the more pointed critique of ingratiation to the fascist regime that we see in *Mephisto*. He claims: ‘[…] Unsere Zeit des produktiven Wiederaufbaus braucht gesunde Kost. Die Kunst ist da, um zu erfrischen, nicht um zu zersetzen. Der Mime ist da, um zu tanzen, nicht nachzudenken’ (*TiU*, p. 225). Klaus Mann’s artistic project in this novel counteracts Höfgen’s slogan for art, offering not so much refreshment as ‘Zersetzung’. The artist is supposed to think as well as to perform. The incorporation of echoes of earlier works and the precursors of what would be included in later works into *Treffpunkt* suggests a process of psychological collection and curation during Mann’s writing that offers an additional explanation for his montage technique as the documentation of a process. As a technique, then, montage does not even stop at the edge of the text, and indeed troubles the idea that it has edges at all.

Enacting Time

Although this novel does not have the book-within-the-book self-styling of 'chronicle' that *Der Vulkan* does, its thematization of time and incorporation of it into its structure mean that it still reads as an attempt to document the present that pushes the boundaries of individual moments like it does those of individual characters, plotlines, and places. Its enactment of time is based on highlighting what is happening across multiple experiences at given moments, rather than focussing on chronology. The back cover of the 2020 edition calls the book a 'Zeitroman', suggesting that it has largely been received as an attempt to capture the Zeitgeist, and it has been described as 'der Roman, der das Lebensgefühl und den Alltag dieses Autors und der Menschen um ihn am unmittelbarsten wiedergibt'.[276] Whilst a kind of chronicle in this sense, it differs from the long chronology typical of the genre, instead homing in on a short period of time in which things overlap rather than follow one another. Simultaneity is the temporal organizing principle of Mann's version of chronicling, of documenting the montaged experiences of multiple characters. This contrasts with the handling of time as singular, subjective displacement we see in Mann's non-montage works. Simultaneity is also mentioned by name at various points in *Treffpunkt*.[277] Sebastian's thoughts as he sits in a bar late at night alight on the term: 'Während er trank, dachte er plötzlich: Was geschieht jetzt gleichzeitig in Berlin? (Mysterium der Gleichzeitigkeit.)' (*TiU*, p. 107). The narrator, momentarily bound to Sebastian, adds what feels like more of a

[276] Arwed Schmidt, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre: Untersuchungen zu Klaus Manns Emigrationsromanen* Flucht in den Norden *und* Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten (Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p. 21.

[277] Worth noting is that, although ideas of simultaneity would shortly afterwards be taken up by Ernst Bloch in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, Mann could not have read Bloch's work prior to *Treffpunkt*'s publication (although he did read the manuscript of *Erbschaft* in Autumn 1933, before its eventual publication in 1935). (Cf. Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol I: 1931–33, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller, (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 170, p. 173.)

parenthesized editorial note than it does a continuation of Sebastian's train of thought. Immediately afterwards, the novel begins a new section focussing on Sonja – in Berlin. As such, it prompts the narrative onwards as a kind of meta-commentary on the montage-structured document the book offers. Further emphasizing the sense of montage is the fact that the narrator seemingly pops their head up in the seam between segments, as if to draw attention to the glue holding together the various parts.

By moving between characters the way it does, *Treffpunkt* highlights that what is happening in a given moment is never singular, but plural, an experience of simultaneity that consistently asks what *else* is also happening. Although anchored, to some extent, in their own stories, Mann highlights that his characters exist in timelines that do not belong entirely to themselves, and experience always exists multiply, not singularly. Later on in the book, Sonja, reading a news report about three young men being executed in America, wonders:

> Was tat ich während der 'vorgeschriebenen fünf Minuten', welche die 'fürchterliche Prozedur' dauert? Lag ich in der Badewanne? Hatte ich Morgentraining? Lernte ich eine neue Rolle? Schlief ich gerade? (Grauen der Gleichzeitigkeit.) (*TiU*, p. 160)

Sonja is on the other side of the simultaneity noted by Sebastian earlier. Here, there is already a sense that the reflecting 'ich' and the reflected-upon 'ich' are two entities; there is seemingly little continuity across time, but there is, on the other hand, across space in the present moment, in the simultaneous. Now, although the phrasing and the graphic arrangement of parentheses echoes the previous instance, the 'Mysterium' has become a 'Grauen'. The parallel drawn between mysterium, with its notes of divine truth, and horror by the identical phrasing and parentheses suggest that simultaneity is composed of equal parts of the two; the individual cannot know what else is happening

in someone else's life at a given moment, and thus is at constant risk of behaving incongruently to that distant moment when it arrives in their awareness. Time is inaccessible to any individual in its fulness, and our perceptions of it are thus doomed to failure. The unmarked first person of this second passage demonstrates the narrator's tendency to focalize through different characters at will, making them interchangeable on a narrative level that draws further attention to the interspersal of their stories. By homing in on single moments, but also pointing out that 'single' moments do not really exist, Mann's approach rearranges the chronicle form on a vertical rather than horizontal axis that allows him to ask 'what else?', rather than 'what next?'.

This sense that everything is always happening at the same time is also a way of resisting time as a linear, progressive onward flow. Prior to Richard's suicide, as he is walking along the promenade in Nice, where he is staying with Tom, a young man whom he loves unrequitedly, his impressions are relayed as:

> Geräusch des Meeres. Anschlag der dunklen Wellen an die Felsen, dort unten. – Das Geräusch des Meeres hebt die Zeit auf. Auf unserer Erde das einzige Geräusch, in dem der Atem der Ewigkeit ist.
> Die Zeit – aufgehoben. Freiheit.
> Ich sollte ihm [Tom] alles lassen. (*TiU*, p. 215)

This unmarked internal speech presents death as a way of stopping time, highlighting that, for both Richard and the narrator currently focalizing through him, time is a subjective experience, with each person's experience of time ceasing with their death, which offers some illusion of freedom in this cessation. In a similar vein, by the end of the novel, Sonja and Sebastian have met for the first time in the unlikely setting of a hotel in Fez, Marocco: 'Sie waren seit vier Wochen in Fez, aber beiden kam es vor, als seien sie nie woanders gewesen. Die Zeit hatte aufgehört' (*TiU*, p. 269). Again, time is stopped, here apparently because time as they know it has lost its sense of objective

reality. Chronology becomes inadequate for their experience, which occupies a moment in time so fully that, by the weight, as it were, of that occupation, the moment is prolonged to the extent that its place in the forwards chronology of time becomes less important than its immediate value. As with the novel's montage approach to chronicling, the focus on intensely-lived moments collaged together creates a layered and overlapping arrangement of times, rather than a horizontal, constant movement forwards. Time exists only as it is experienced, and the documentation and enactment of it in this montage-chronicle is what allows us, the readers, to experience it second-hand.

Decentring Space

Time is enacted in overlapping, but separate, non-linear structures in *Treffpunkt*, and space operates analogously. Rather than providing order for the characters' experiences, space is consistently a decentred and decentring force affecting the narrative. In spatial terms, the various lives the story presents may connect only tangentially, with at most the prospect of some ill-defined future prospect of intersection, possibly not until after death. However, through the non-linear montage form, the fleeting moments of connection acquire a significance that a teleological, linear structure would obscure.

There is a sense throughout the novel that things are not fixed to any location, resulting in a constant changing of space that disorients both the characters and the readers. The book's opening scene frames a moment of moving away, describing, at the train station, how:

> Viele Taxis fahren vor; dazwischen, seltener, ein eleganter Privatwagen. Aus einem Auto steigt ein Mann, aus einem anderen eine Frau; aus diesem dritten ein Paar mit Kindern, aus dem vierten ein Paar, kinderlos. Auf dem Dach dieses fünften liegt ein großer Koffer. Er wird heruntergehoben. Es steigen aus: eine sehr große Dame mit einem blassen jungen Gesicht; ein kleiner Herr mit

> hängendem schwarzen Schnurrbart; ein junger brünetter Mann, ohne Hut, mit offenem Trenchcoat.
> Sie wollen zum Pariser Morgenzug. (*TiU*, p. 5)

This sets up a constellation of most of the main characters at a location rich with symbolism – the train station which would go on to be such a key motif in exile literature over the following years. The platform may stand for the 'Treffpunkt' of the novel's title, and is certainly the point where the most characters, who subsequently branch off into their own interrelated plotlines, are together in one place. It is a meeting point that is really a transient point of intersection, only able to hold the characters in place for a brief moment as Sebastian, the young brunet, leaves for Paris, reflecting the continuous process of disengagement and reengagement for the characters at a point where their world seems to be splitting apart, but also for the reader following their various departures, and the narrative's departures, seemingly, from one story to another throughout the book. In its montage construction, *Treffpunkt* reads more like an anthology than a teleological novel.

As the collective that defines the shared space of the station breaks apart, Sebastian's departure marks the end of a moment in space and time that echoes across his story where it comes up against those of others. As he bids farewell to the group on the station platform, the novel describes how:

> Die fünf Personen, denen Sebastian winkte, standen auf dem Pflaster nebeneinander, plötzlich ein dickes und kompaktes Häufchen Menschen, das zusammengehörte. Er, über ihnen, schon ganz isoliert, schon ganz fern, losgelöst und entschwindend. Welcher Schriftsteller – dachte Sebastian – hat gesagt, bei jeder Abreise verwandelt sich der, welcher am Coupéfenster steht, in einen Pfeil, der gefiedert ins Ferne zielt; der aber, der am Bahnsteig zurückbleibt, in ein Ei, aus dem die Bewegung noch nicht geboren ist. Stolz du Scheidens, du Bald-nicht-mehr-da-seins; Stolz du Sterbens. (*TiU*, pp. 8–9)

The collective is a ‘Häufchen’, so already consists in a kind of montage that fits together into a heap, a fleeting but transient and fluidly mobile agglomeration. The ‘du’ in the list assimilates the passage into Sebastian’s voice addressing his own life, the narrator seeming to infiltrate the character even as he is breaking apart from the collective, once again highlighting the increased permeability of the individual as everything begins to fall apart and become queer. Sebastian, in leaving, is untied and propelled away from them, an arrow shot into the distance. Mann treats the lives of the characters as parallel lines that, despite brushing up against each other, intersect only at a vanishing point in infinity, resulting in simultaneity that rarely directly touches, but which becomes thinkable as a collective through montage. The arrow shooting into the distance, and loosening its connections to a centre in the process, moves away from the egg, a symbol of potential and futurity. This unhatched egg implies that those remaining will be propelled into motion as well in the future, foreshadowing the collapse of their social scene under National Socialism that Mann could spy on the horizon in 1932. Sebastian, leaving, is both free and isolated, encapsulating the juxtapositions of exile even as his departure is, for now, one of choice rather than necessity. To leave nevertheless creates a caesura in identity that might as well be a small death, the ‘Sterben’ placed parallel to the ‘Scheiden’; as such, the departures scattered across the whole novel might be read as little deaths everywhere, mirroring and mirrored by the montage structure that cuts off stories at will to arrange them into one overarching chronicle.

The initial ‘Treffen’ at the train station, and the subsequent dissolution of the group into their semi-separate plot strands, establishes this motif of decoupling from the known which reflects, and is reflected by, the continuous coupling and decoupling of the montage-structured prose. On the day he leaves Berlin, Sebastian gives his sometimes-girlfriend Do a poem which begins:

Abschied ist das ewige Motiv
Aller Lieder, die wir singen – – – (*TiU*, p. 40)

This emphasizes that goodbyes are a constant. Additionally, we have here a writer within the book, tracking his own motif, which we in turn can track across the novel, creating a montage marked by these farewells that works on a metatextual level. Motifs, as a technique, serve to emphasize and connect the disparate parts of a montage structure, acting as the 'Fugen', the grout occupying the gaps – as much as an occupation of a gap is possible – between the multiple pieces of the mosaic. Similar ponderings on the constancy of leaving appear as Sonja and Sebastian, towards the novel's end, experience the aftereffects of hashish which they have taken in far greater quantities than recommended to them. Sonja 'nannte es "die große Abreise", und es war jedes Mal, als wenn man den Tod erlebte. Sie erlebte den Tod jede Nacht' (*TiU*, p. 307). As we saw in the opening scene, life is comprised of a series of deaths; the story, the novel, is comprised of a series of fragments that similarly begin and end without resolution or coalescence with a whole. As such, formal dissolutions mirror theme.

With time proving to be a subjective experience rather than an objective structure, and constant comings and goings destabilizing both the spatial lives of the characters and the coherence of the novel's overall emplotment, there is a corresponding sense that things are, in general, moving towards greater chaos, and that characters are increasingly finding themselves on the edge of a precipice far from any sense of a centre. The back cover of the 2020 Anaconda Verlag edition describes the characters as existing 'nah am Abgrund', retrospectively situating the story in the historical context of the year prior to Hitler's rise to power. The characters of the novel experience this

‘Abgrund’ on a more personal level. After Sebastian departs Berlin in the opening scene, the friends on the platform anticipate the effects of his absence:

> ‘Ja, nun wird unser netter Kleiner Kreis ganz auseinanderfallen’, bemerkte Frau Grete betrübt – worüber Massis spöttisch lächelte. Do aber musste aufschluchzen.
> ‘Er war doch das Zentrum’, sagte sie und schnupfte die Tränen; Frau Grete und Richard nickten. Beide überlegten einen Augenblick, was oder wie viel sie eigentlich von Sebastian gehabt hatten, genau berechnet. Es war nicht sehr viel, sie hielten ihn, bei all seiner Liebenswürdigkeit und Weichheit, eher für eine kühle Natur. Trotzdem hatte er, so passiv und nachlässig er war, die geheime Kraft, Menschen zusammenzuhalten. Sie fühlten alle, dass nun, da er fort war, Dinge geschehen könnten, die seine Gegenwart nicht geduldet hätte. (*TiU*, p. 15)

Evidently, Sebastian’s leaving creates the sense of a centre falling away, reflecting anxieties about a fundamental loss or change indicated by this early precursor to exile that Mann evidently foresaw. At the same time, the change opens up possibilities, the things Sebastian’s presence would not have tolerated but which are now able to occur, for better or worse. It seems that, when one piece of the collective changes, all the other pieces are changed too, which both emphasizes the power of individual action and the fact that even seemingly separate identities – ones we may experience ‘nicht sehr viel’ of – still affect one another in sometimes oblique and unpredictable ways. This establishes the novel’s the montage structure at the start, where separate stories nevertheless stretch beyond their own boundaries to affect one another.

Alongside groups and individuals, places seem to lose their physical anchorage, such that they become liminal rather than inhabitable spaces. Sonja, who, along with Sebastian, is sometimes considered to be one of the ‘main characters’ (due to a comparison drawn between Sonja and Erika Mann, and between Sebastian and Klaus), remains in Berlin, and as such is geographically closer to the ‘Abgrund’ that the novel

anticipates than the characters who have already escaped to France or elsewhere. Berlin itself becomes a menacing entity:

> Sonja tat gelegentlich, als ob sie diese große Stadt verachtete; in Wahrheit fürchtete sie sich vor ihr. Sie kam sich wie von tausend Seiten angegriffen, bedrängt vor, kaum dass sie morgens aus ihrem Hotel auf den Kurfürstendamm getreten war. […] Aus dem Äther schienen unendlich viele aggressive Reize, feinste Schwingungen, die bissen und enervierten, auf sie zuzukommen. Kraftfelder, gegen Kraftfelder tanzend. Strömungen, hin und wider. Wir, immer inmitten, Einflüssen ausgesetzt, von denen wir nichts ahnen. In unseren Leibern, unseren Hirnen verdichtet sich's zum intensivsten Gewebe. Unser Herz, ein bebendes Zentrum von geheimen Kräften. Wer weiß, welche Strahlen es seinerseits aussendet? Wer weiß, was wir wirken, indem wir leben? (*TiU*, p. 123)

The city is a symbol of danger and compression; Sonja, even as she is positioned as the small individual in the face of the city's hugeness, nevertheless drifts into the narrator's 'wir' that implies a collective experience. Just as the individual, Sonja, spirals outwards in this manner, the effects of all single lives spiral outwards, with the unknown of 'was wir wirken, indem wir leben' inviting a further sense that any actions taken, by anyone, have the potential to impact other lives in ways we cannot know. At the same time, the spiralling outwards is a drifting together towards collectivity. There remains an essential unknowability, as we saw with simultaneity, in the lives that touch ours but are not ours; but, because of that touching, somehow *are* ours too. Through the dissolution of the individual, the collapse of social groups and the menacing manifestations of space itself, a reconstitution is enacted that, while remaining unknowable, suggests the connectedness of all things: an ongoing deconstitution, and reconstitution, and deconstitution. There is no centre, perhaps, upon which the strands of the stories depend, but the montage manages to chronicle the ways in which they nevertheless hold together.

Rewriting the Author

The movement away from a centre that cannot hold and the increasing experience of time as simultaneous rather than progressive mean that the characters of the text are displaced both spatially and temporally. This displacement is enacted further by the permeability of the boundaries of the text itself that becomes increasingly apparent. Sebastian is generally critically perceived as a self-insert character representing Klaus Mann, with Sonja representing his sister, Erika, based on Sebastian being a writer and resonating with the widely held image of Klaus Mann.[278] However, the text itself suggests that the case is far less straightforward. In particular, if being a writer is taken to be a signal that the character is a Mann-alias, then multiple characters in the book share parts of this alias, suggesting a dissolution of authorial identity, and identity more generally, and creating a further level of self-conscious structural fragmentation. Certainly, Sebastian does bear resemblances to Mann in his approach to writing:

> Das Schreiben fiel ihm sehr leicht; so leicht, dass er diese Beschäftigung niemals völlig ernst genommen hatte. Ernster nahm er schon das Lesen, da es ihm schwerer fiel.
> Mehrere Romananfänge hatte er wieder vernichtet. 'Ich bin noch zu jung', pflegte er zu sagen. 'Erst muss ich Stoff sammeln.' (*TiU*, pp. 48–49)

In the description of his creative process, it is clear that expression is not the problem, and neither is inspiration: it is closure that presents a challenge, which is constantly hampered by his destruction of his drafts that would otherwise be steps to finishing. At the same time, failure to complete drives him to continue to participate in the collectivity necessary to generate material, and to continue attempting to express it, with

[278] For example, the back cover of the 2020 Anaconda Verlag edition of *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* claims: 'Die Vorbilder für seine Helden waren leicht gefunden: Klaus Mann selbst und seine Schwester Erika finden sich in Sebastian und Sonja gespiegelt.'

the failure of these attempts merely prompting the process to continue. Like Mann, Sebastian writes a lot, but reads even more. With the phrase 'Stoff sammeln' – the prerequisite for a story – Sebastian hints also at the Mann of the moment as he writes, with the collation-focused approach echoing the montage styling of the novel in which Sebastian operates.

In writing writers, Mann creates characters who trouble the boundaries of the texts in which they operate as they seek to create texts beyond it. Besides Sebastian, Richard Darmstädter is also a writer, and a similarly emotive, intelligent and unmotivated figure – much like Mann is held to be by popular criticism.[279] Focalized through his father's dislike of him (conceivably a reflection of Klaus's relationship with his own father), the novel describes Richard as:

> übertrieben in allen seinen Reaktionen und Gefühlen, bald depressiv, bald auf eine forcierte Art ins Leben verliebt; sehr intelligent, aber fahrig; ausschweifend sentimental und zynisch; mit einem Hunger nach Abenteuern. (*TiU*, p. 178)

A hunger for adventures harks back to the subtitle of *Der fromme Tanz*, 'Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend', which might lead us to read Richard as another version of Andreas Magnus. As previously discussed, Sebastian's backstory also reads like Andreas's, further suggesting that the characters have some overlap. While Sebastian appears to be heterosexual – which would argue against his being a reflection of Mann – Richard is homosexual. Despite knowing that Klaus Mann handles sexuality across his oeuvre with a great deal more fluidity than can be expressed in a homosexual/heterosexual binary, and never as the sole, defining feature of a character, the clearer parallel between Richard's desires and Klaus Mann's lends itself to a reading that suggests

[279] Peter T. Hoffer recognizes that both Richard and Sebastian carry autobiographical elements of Klaus Mann (cf. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann* (Twayne Publishers, 1978), pp. 75–6).

autobiographical undercurrents to Mann's construction of the character. Richard's desires are linked to suicidality from the outset, as we see in the comment:

> Der Fünfzehnjährige machte seinen ersten Selbstmordversuch um irgendeines blonden Knaben willen, der in seine Mainzer Klasse ging. Damals kam er in eine Freie Landschule im Odenwald, wo er sich eine Zeit lang wohler fühlte. (*TiU*, p. 179)

This references the 'Odenwaldschule' that Klaus Mann himself attended, and echoes passages from Mann's first autobiography, *Kind dieser Zeit*, also published in 1932. Here, he discusses his own first infatuation with another boy:

> wo fände ich Worte, um die Zartheit und Heftigkeit dieses ersten Erglühens deutlich zu machen, ohne sie zu entweihen? – Grüblerisch schon halb, und doch noch von unmündigster Oberflächlichkeit, wie es war, wurde mein unerfahrenes Herz von der Zuneigung zu dem Jungen, der in der Klasse ein paar Bänke hinter mir saß, ergriffen wie von einem Feuer und von einem Sturm. (*KdZ*, p. 148)

Similarly tumultuous, Mann, like Richard, fell in love with a classmate. Richard, by the time of the novel's action, is in love with Tom, whom he takes on a trip to Nice, where, despite sharing a hotel room, the relationship is clearly doomed by Tom's apparent lack of interest. Richard writes to Doktor Massis from the hotel, describing how

> Täglich versenke ich mich tiefer und inniger in Toms Wesen, als es mir möglich wäre, wenn ich jede Nacht mit ihm schliefe. Seine unergründliche Einfachheit, seine Reinheit erschüttern mich jeden Morgen aufs Neue. […] Ich liebe ihn grenzenlos – und ich danke Gott, dass ich diesem Menschenkind begegnen durfte. Solange uns Begegnungen von solcher Tiefe und so lebensförderndem Reiz vergönnt sind, ist es herrlich, auf dieser Erde zu sein, und der Tod ist mir ferner, unvorstellbarer, ja absurder als jemals. Für Tom zu leben – – – (*TiU*, pp. 208–9)

Richard frames his life as having meaning only insofar as it is lived for another – for Tom. Desire – and specifically, queer desire, the 'grenzenlos' echoing the experience of

the protagonist of *Alexander* – is life-affirming even as it removes the agency of that life from the individual and they become *for another*. Richard kills himself shortly after this passage, seemingly as a direct result of Tom not reciprocating his interest; without the 'Tiefe' and 'Reiz' granted by hopeful love, life is no longer worth living.

By seeming to split shared characteristics across multiple characters, Mann emphasizes both the overlappings of identity even in people who never meet, but who are simultaneous and part of the overall mosaic, and the collapse of the concept that any one identity could be stable and clearly delineated enough to hold together characteristics without them spilling over. Sonja's younger brother, 13-year-old Peti, is a marginal character for much of the novel, but one with a key role despite limited on-page appearances. Where Richard has a schoolboy crush in his past, Peti has one in his present:

> Natürlich hasste er die Schule, wo man ihn nicht verstand. Aber in der Schule war Elmar. Elmar, mit dunklen, runden Augen im braunen, schmalen Gesicht; Augen, die manchmal pfiffig, manchmal melancholisch schauten; mit kurz geschorenem seidig-weichen Haar. Elmar, der sich nur für Fußballspielen und Briefmarkensammlungen interessierte, aber einem oft den Arm so um die Schulter legte, dass es wie elektrische Funken durch den Körper ging. Elmars Name, nachts ins Kissen geflüstert; Elmars Name dem Wind mitgegeben, der nachts durch den Englischen Garten kam, in Sommernächten und in Herbstnächten, über die dunkel fließenden Gewässer, durch die Gebüsche. Sein Name, sichtbar oder unsichtbar, als Widmung über allen Gedichten und Romanfragmenten. 'Für Elmar – Elmar gewidmet – Im Gedanken an Elmar – Wem sonst als dir?' (*TiU*, p. 187)

Peti seems almost to be reenacting Richard's schoolboy crush, but this is also a further borrowing from Mann's autobiography, where he uses the same pseudonym, Elmar, for the real-life object of his affection. In *Kind dieser Zeit*, Mann describes how

> Elmar hatte seidig glattes, kurzgeschorenes, dunkles Haar, pfiffig-melancholische braune Augen und ein braunes, glattes Gesicht. Er war ein sehr

> guter Turner. Während der ganzen Zeit, die ich ihn liebte – es waren mehrere Monate – habe ich noch keine fünfzig Worte mit ihm gesprochen. Einmal schickte ich ihm eines der Gedichte, die ich für ihn gemacht hatte, anonym und mit der Schreibmaschine abgeschrieben zu. Ich habe nie erfahren, was er sich dabei gedacht hat, und ich möchte es heute noch so gerne wissen. (*KdZ*, p. 149)

Peti, reenacting Mann's adolescence, links his desire for Elmar to the act of writing in dedicating all his creations to his classmate. As Richard lived for another, Peti writes for another, suggesting an ongoing theme of self-sublimation, driven by desire, to the other, as a positive, chosen act that gestures towards the 'grenzenlos'. Peti's importance to the overall project of *Treffpunkt* is emphasized by the fact that the book ends with a passage 'Aus Petis Tagebuch' (*TiU*, pp. 319–20), culminating in the sentence 'Ich muss aufhören, denn ich habe wirklich *unbeschreibliche* Angst, dass mit Elmar etwas Ernsthaftes los ist' (*TiU*, p. 320, original emphasis). The novel ends with this completely uninvestigated, not to mention the fact that Peti is unaware, at this stage, that Sonja, his sister, has died. With these uncertainties, Peti is left oriented firmly towards the future, and the 'Abgrund', that takes place beyond the page: an opportunity for resolution that does not come. As such, the novel closes without closure, and ends only in another story to be told.

In the construction of writers and texts within his own text, Mann reaches beyond the novel to a metatextual level. The final writer figure in *Treffpunkt* is the intellectual Maurice Larue – generally, again, a peripheral figure in the novel's plots – who is presented in Paris, as he begins writing a book about the European salon in the twentieth century. Crucially, Mann would later describe *Treffpunkt* as an 'attempt to survey in an extensive tale the complexities of the modern bohemia' (*TP*, p. 247), which sounds like much the same project. Therefore, in the same way that, in *Der Vulkan*, the writer Martin's cited book-within-the-book is also, to some extent, the actual book in

front of us, Maurice's work describes a state of affairs that could equally be describing the novel in which he is a character:

> Die ersten Sätze des Buches lauteten:
> 'Der Anblick des Meeres, der Wüste und des Urwaldes würden uns, selbst wenn wir die Menschengeschichte nicht richtig zu lesen verstünden, darüber belehren, dass die Zivilisation auf diesem Planeten nichts Endgültiges, vielmehr nur etwas sehr Vorübergehendes bedeutet; ein Phänomen, von dem man wohl behaupten kann, dass es auf höchst schwanken Füßen stehe. Urwald, Wüste und Meer werden die Städte wieder verschlingen, in denen wir heute leben, und wo eben jetzt noch Kinopaläste, Fabriken und Banken ragen, werden sich einst Büffel tummeln oder Riesenkrebse ihre Nahrung suchen. Wenn ich, alter und umgetriebener Kenner, Liebhaber und Genießer unserer Zivilisation, mich also daran mache, einige ihrer Kuriositäten zu beschreiben, tue ich das im vollen Bewusstsein der völligen Bedeutungslosigkeit alles menschlichen Treibens, das in der Tat nicht mehr ist als eine Laune, welche die große Natur sich leistet.'
> (*TiU*, p. 298)

What Maurice describes – a situation in which everything is fleeting, changing, dying, moving forward, and coming back to life in different ways, in which there is no meaning inherent to anything, only the whims of nature – characterizes Mann's novel, in which Maurice is a character. The boundaries of Mann's book are failing to hold, as Maurice's book stretches beyond the world within the text to become the text itself. Maurice is ostensibly writing a non-fiction book to document a period in time and a social circle within it, suggesting that Mann's book, too, straddles the line of fiction and non-fiction, much as is done by the chronicle in general. Everything is falling apart – falling into the fragments of montage – but there is also a certain freedom and pleasure in the curiosities of the breakdown. Maurice's version of failure sounds more cyclical than collapsing, reaffirming that success and failure are not fixed positions, but positionalities that entail a constant movement which refuses linearity.

Through his portrayal of various writers, Mann seems to split elements of his own autobiography across several characters, appearing in the guise of a schoolboy, a

writer remembering being a schoolboy, and a writer writing a book that may well be one and the same as *Treffpunkt*. Equally, through the representation of writers, Mann suggests that writing, like living, has purpose only insofar as it is directed towards other people: that we live for, through, and because of one another. Everything falls apart, but there is a beauty in documenting the dissolution and in knowing that, in dissolving, the remains of the individual become indistinguishable from the remains of others, a survival beyond death: in others, and in writing. This is a novel about falling apart, but also a novel about writing about falling apart, and a novel about writing about falling apart that, itself, disintegrates and disperses, while still forming, in that dissolution, a piece of literature that reconstitutes itself.

Dissolving the Self

As in the writer figures of the novel, identities and experiences of selfhood, along with the body (more or less) attached to it, are caught in perpetual states of flux and dissolution. Even as the novel is structured to highlight simultaneity, the fact that the separate parts of the story never fully cross over into one another means that there is a formal sense of isolation, albeit troubled at the edges by the temporal and spatial overlaps that are clear to the reader assembling the text in their head, if not the characters. Thematically, characters in *Treffpunkt* are often concerned with a feeling of profound loneliness, a concept that the more intellectual figures, such as Richard and Dr Massis, are attempting to work on, but which all the characters experience. Sebastian muses about the (im)possibility of bridging the gaps between individuals:

> Nicht zueinander hinkönnen – ewig voneinander getrennt sein – – Ob das nur an unseren Körpern liegt? Ob unsere Körper die Mauern sind, die uns voneinander trennen? Ach, wenn man nur einmal so zusammenwäre mit einem anderen, dass

> man mit ihm das Gefühl des eigenen Körpers verlöre – und körperlos eins mit ihm würde – und mit ihm singen, tanzen und fliegen könnte, ganz ohne Schwere, ganz ohne Ich, ganz identisch mit ihm und mit aller Schöpfung – (*TiU*, pp. 156–7)

Perhaps it is physical rather than emotional barriers separating people – and only by being one with another entirely could the boundaries imposed by corporeality be shaken off. There is the potential for a positive reclamation of dissolution as a pathway to freedom and, ultimately, understanding oneself not as apart from others, but existing in tandem with them. To be one with another is to lose yourself – the 'Ich' gone, any differences between you gone. As such, Sebastian suggests that loneliness is a material problem, and so is identity: in uniting with another, there is a chance to become free of both. There is greater living in giving up one's *own* life.

Formally, the focus on simultaneity allows for characters to become adjacent to one another on a textual level that overcomes isolation, even while marking the gaps between the component parts of the narrative. The paragraph immediately following Sebastian's train of thought above begins 'Nebenan, auf Zimmer dreizehn, schlief ein Geschäftsmann aus Dresden', and the paragraph after that states: 'Auf Zimmer vierzehn schlief Sonja' (*TiU*, p. 157). The narrator is crossing through walls in much the same way that Sebastian wishes people could do, where the 'walls' in question are bodies. This implies that the act of narration, as well as that of becoming one with another, is a way of transcending the fundamental loneliness that is part of physical existence. Immediately after this, we are told: 'Sonja musste am Vormittag um halb zehn zur Probe. Sebastian schlief fest bis zum Mittagessen' (*TiU*, p. 157). With the narrator further seeping through the walls between the rooms as they cross over from one to another, we reach a point of near-narrative convergence on the page long before Sebastian and Sonja actually meet each other. Further to this, Sonja wonders at a later

point in the novel, ‘sind unsere Körper die Mauern, die uns voneinander trennen?’ (*TiU*, p. 262). This echoes Sebastian’s phrasing above, with the irony enabled by the narrator pointing to the fact that, in debating the causes of fundamental separation, these two characters are in fact bridging that separation, for us as readers, even if they themselves do not realize it. However, the separation remains, since each character is unaware that the other has the same thoughts. The relationship between the characters is therefore caught in the tension between separation and simultaneity, that divine truth beyond human comprehension and (therefore) horrifying at once. Again, it is the narrator, in the act of narrating, who retains the power to bring people together who are otherwise physically separated. Dissolution of the individual remains the ultimate goal, and perhaps the only way to conquer loneliness, but this can be achieved through two modes of disembodiment: free narration, and full union with another. Since the latter is not in fact practicable in reality, it exists only as a desire to work towards, and the former, the vessel of narration, remains as the only available way of rendering the dissolution representable and productive of stories.

Similar near-convergences engineered by the narrator also appear between other characters, as we see in a passage that moves from Sonja and her trainer to Frau Grete and Froschele:

> ‘Halten Sie die Arme gerade!’, warnte Sportlehrer Müller. ‘Sonst schlingert das Seil!’
> ‘Du musst das andere Bein nehmen’, sagt Frau Grete gereizt und herrschsüchtig zu Froschele, die ihr die Nadel in den rechten Schenkel stoßen will. (*TiU*, p. 162)

These scenes are taking place in different physical spaces, but are narrated as if on a split screen; their use of similar bodily terms further invites a confusion of the two spaces. On the other hand, one scene is about physical exercise, the other about taking

drugs: the narrator's placement of the two side-by-side consequently draws a contrast between the two, while likening them at the same time. This is also an example of how simultaneity is formally enacted in the novel, to the extent that scenes interrupt each other even when the only perspective that could possibly see both scenes is the narrator's. Through the narrator's montage-style interspersions, meaning is chopped up and reassembled, with the distinct stories colouring the significance of each other through their arrangement alongside. At the same time, writing itself remains the only means of holding together things that are otherwise being scattered apart.

To return to the idea of loneliness, Richard's philosophical writing project relating to the 'Einsamkeitsproblem' does give us a clearer idea of what this problem means in the world of the novel. He notes:

> Solange aber das Einsamkeitsphänomen (das Phänomen der Spaltung, des Nicht-zueinander-Hinkönnens) primäre Voraussetzung bleibt: Utopie, deren Erfüllung metaphysische Veränderungen unserer Existenz vorausgehen müssten. […] – Bis dahin: *die Liebe* der einzige wesentliche Versuch, das tragische Phänomen der Isolierung zu überwinden. Wie jeder andere Versuch zum Scheitern verurteilt (Einsamkeit unser Teil); aber das einzige Surrogat, das wenigstens auf Minuten über die sonst unerträgliche Wahrheit hinwegtäuscht. Und Tom will nicht einmal mit mir schlafen – (*TiU*, pp. 209–210)

Evidently the problem of loneliness is that of the fundamental division between people – physical or otherwise. Utopia is not a state that can be manifested, as I discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, but even the reaching for it, which is the truest version of its existence, requires a fundamental rethinking of the ways we can and cannot reach union with the other. Richard's 'Nicht-zueinander-Hinkönnen' echoes Sebastian's words above, suggesting once again that, through the eyes of the narrator collaging the various stories into one whole, the disparate parts are more connected than the characters within them believe or can know. Richard also posits love as the only chance of conquering

loneliness, much as Sebastian does, but emphasizes that love is doomed to failure. Clearly, however, it is still worthwhile; the short-lived nature of its comfort is nevertheless the closest one can come to another. Shortly before his suicide, not long after the passage above, Richard thinks:

> Nun muss ich ja doch weinen. Ist die Freiheit Schwindel? Bin ich fester gebunden denn je? Solange die Atome meines Leibes aneinanderhalten, werden sie dir zustreben. Aber ich löse den Bann, der sie hält, ich löse ihn eigenmächtig. Ich löse, ich steige. Mag sein, dass ich wieder gebunden werde, aber nie wieder in diese Form. (*TiU*, p. 220)

According to this, the physical body, again, controls the individual while they live, with physical desire pulling towards its object. Suicide, for Richard, offers a kind of freedom from this control, from the body which pulls us together and yet always keeps us separate. In this light, death is both a pulling apart from one another and the only chance we have to truly unite – even in forms that are as yet unimaginable. The tension of 'lösen' and 'binden', the ongoing falling apart and coming together, loosening and retying meaning and identity, is what the montage-chronicle mirrors formally, and what makes the characters able to survive, on some level, even as they dissolve.

The overcoming of the (bodily) walls between individuals which seems to happen only through the powers of the narrator or, temporarily, through love, does seem possible to a certain extent in the novel through one other route: when the characters are under the influence of drugs. These experiences are not positive. After they overindulge in hashish together, having finally met, Sonja and Sebastian experience reality as apocalyptic, with Sebastian thinking 'die Welt geht unter. Die Welt – geht – unter' (*TiU*, p. 282). For Sebastian, the sense that the world is ending runs parallel to the sense that his body and identity have separated away from him, suggesting that the two entities are one and the same. In his panic, he perceives that

> Sein Körper war weg. Das Ich gehörte nicht mehr zu ihm. Das Ich, keineswegs besinnungslos; vielmehr in einem Zustand schmerzlich trockener Klarheit, gaukelte irgendwo in den Winden. […] Die Bindungen, auf denen unser Dasein basiert, waren aufgehoben. Der Zusammenhang zwischen Ich und Körper dahin. Das Individuum – eine Täuschung. Urspaltung, Zerspringen ins Chaos. Der Sturz ins Chaos, die endgültige Katastrophe. (*TiU*, p. 287)

With the loss of the body, there is no vessel to embody the 'Ich', which thus floats away elsewhere; all ties are broken. The individual ceases to be a meaningful entity. Rather than leading to a union with another, however, this dissolution incites disorder as everything falls apart. Mirroring the fragmented montage form of the novel, meaning is broken into pieces and may never resolve into a more comprehensible form than that of 'catastrophe'. Consequently, although Mann elsewhere presents the dissolution of the individual as a relief and a chance – perhaps the only chance – of truly being able to reach beyond one's self to another, there is also a very real risk that the dissolution leads simply to nothingness. Although the physical effects of the drug are temporary, there is a sense that the experiences it has allowed the characters are enduring in a sinister manner:

> Das ist zu viel, er empfand es ganz klar, während er hüpfte. *Dieses Erlebnis, das das Leben aufhebt, wird das Leben uns nie verzeihen.* […] Sechs Löffelchen braunen Pulvers genügen, und als Spuk zerspringen die Voraussetzungen, alles geht in die Luft. Das große Zerspringen.
> Ich bin nicht ich. Du bist nicht du. Weltuntergang. Nichts ist so, wie es ist. Die Illusion hält nicht. (*TiU*, p. 288, original emphasis)

The illusions of identity are dispelled; having 'seen through' life, as it were, there is no way to unsee this or reverse the disillusionment. It is not only that nothing is as it seems, but nothing is as it *is*; the reality of life itself is brought into question. Conversely, if life is not real, then life and death cease to have any meaning. There is no dying if there is

no life; perhaps death, in this scheme, represents only what Richard hoped of it – a reconstitution in a new form, a survival in non-survival.

The hashish episode closely mirrors an experience in Klaus Mann's own life in Fez with his sister Erika in 1930.[280] In *The Turning Point*, Mann describes:

> First my arms flew away; then the legs; then my neck, my head, my body. I burst literally asunder. I exploded, dissolved; I broke into a thousand pieces. My identity cracked: the fragments of my organism fluttered throughout the park. (*TP*, p. 193)

The experience of the drug is one of complete dissolution, physical as well as psychological. The fragments of identity seem to float outwards, but, crucially, in this experience, there is no sense that these fragments are reconstituted in a new way, or that they join with any other entity. As such, the portrayal of the episode in *Treffpunkt* suggests that while dissolving boundaries between selves is positive, dissolving the self into nothingness is not, because it suggests permanence. There is a tension between wanting and not wanting dissolution, loosening and binding, but really it rests on whether there remains hope for reforming in a new way of being, of surviving as a now-queered entity, or whether the dissolution erases all traces.

Forming the Infinite

In *Treffpunkt*, by dissolving the clear boundaries of individuals, via montage techniques and narrative arrangement, the conditions are provided in which identities can be reconstituted in different relationships to one another in an inherently queer formulation

[280] See diary entry dated 21 April 1936, which sums up the period of Mann's life between the end of the years covered by *Kind dieser Zeit* and the start of his surviving diaries in 1931 (Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. III: 1936–37, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 44).

of non-self-sameness that stretches beyond all boundaries and towards the 'Unendliche'. Individuals converge on one another, a community possible only because of the initial dissolution. This layering acts like the dust Sebastian notices on his train to Paris as he leans his head against the seat cushion:

> Er dachte: Nach tausend Leuten, die ihren Kopf hier angelehnt haben, nun also auch ich. Ekelt mich das? Nein, eher tut es mir wohl. Man gehört immer in einen Zusammenhang; bleibt immer Glied einer Reihe und ist niemals allein. (*TiU*, p. 11)

There is a comfort in being part of a whole, a layer between layers, even if we do not know the other parts of it and are insignificant as individuals. The dust that is partially our own discarded cells touches all of us. Everything seems to overlap with everything else. As Greta and Sebastian speed in her car around Paris,

> Drüben öffnete sich die von Bogenlampen umglänzte Weite der Place de la Concorde – die Bogenlampen waren auf ihr verstreut wie die Sterne im All, sie gaben ihre Grenzen nicht an, die Grenzen schienen zu kreisen, sich immer weiter ins Unendliche hinauszuwirbeln. (*TiU*, p. 98)

The lights, like man-made stars, are strewn across the streets, their boundaries unclear as they merge with one another. Invoking the title's image of the 'Unendliche', the puddles of light act like the parts of the montage, spinning out infinitely, merging, crossing one another. Only through letting individual reality spin away like this does the infinite become accessible.

I have discussed Richard's death in its relation to dissolution, but his suicidality also offers more hope than might be expected. As he thinks about the worth of death, he reflects:

> Oh, könnte ich mit diesen Rhythmen und Akkorden mein Blut verströmen, damit die Erde es tränke und ihre Blumen schöner blühen lasse. Ein wenig Glück mehr auf dieser Erde: wie gern, wie gerne verströmte ich dafür mein Blut. (*TiU*, p. 202)

Richard seems to suggest that dying is merely a sacrifice made in order for other things to go on living; one survives death in the flowers, for example, that are nourished by the spilled blood, although the spilling and dispersal of blood is clearly symbolic rather than literal, not reachable only through the act of sacrificing one's own life. Whereas we saw Sebastian and Sonja facing death as nothingness and the collapse of all things, Richard offers a marginally more positive view: that by willingly meeting one's failure – one's death – new meanings can be created. One part fades, and another takes its place, and the continuous loosening and reconstituting continues, like Mann's version of montage; all things are happening in tandem, processes overlapping, the documentation of which – by the narrator who retains the only perspective that can survey all the images – constitutes this deconstituted chronicle.

Der Vulkan. Roman unter Emigranten

Der Vulkan clearly follows the thematic and formal blueprint set out in *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, but dissolution becomes an even greater concern by the end of the 1930s, by which time Mann had been in exile, in various countries and cities, for several years. The title of *Der Vulkan* is has been picked up on as an expression of the political situation Mann found himself in in the late 1930s. Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann argue that:

> the rupture in German history represented by the years 1933 and 1945 was also an eruption. […] Klaus Mann's exile novel *The Volcano* represents Germany as an exploding volcano spitting fire and smoke into the atmosphere. If Weimar culture had been the precarious dance on that volcano […] then what followed and brought an end to the Weimar dance was an explosion in which German – read: Weimar – culture was flung to the furthest parts of the world.[281]

For Mann, the volcano as a symbol is somewhat more complex than this enticingly neat reading suggests. It does symbolize Germany, but it also remains a haunting presence in the lives of the novel's characters, one that constantly reminds them that they have not escaped to safety; the explosion is not only a past event which has expelled Mann's characters into exile, but is continually happening. The volcano is not merely what the characters are escaping from, but also something that political exiles – which most of the novel's characters are – have to face in order to fight. This marks the central difference from *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* and its outward-bound movement: in *Der Vulkan*, the outward movement has to also include looking back. Mann's version of

[281] Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephan Brockmann, 'Introduction: Weimar Today', in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephan Brockmann (Camden House, 1994), pp. 1–18 (p. 4).

exile is politically responsible, meaning his characters are not merely running away, but fighting for change for what they leave behind, from outside of it.

Klaus Mann appears to have started conceptualizing *Der Vulkan* in 1936, the same year *Mephisto* was published, with its 1939 publication date meaning he likely spent more time writing it than any other of his novels. In a diary entry dated 4 May 1936, he writes: 'denke plötzlich an mein nächstes Buch. Vielleicht wird es mein schönstes. *Ganz* offen, schamlos lyrisch, aufgewühlt, verzweifelt –'.[282] Evidently, the novel was conceived from the outset as despairing, lyrical, open, and in turmoil: both a novel of confusion and one with some kernel of hope and beauty. In August 1936, he writes again of

> Mein nächster Roman. Grosse Komposition aus Emigranten-Schicksalen: 'Die Verfolgten', oder so. Laufen nebeneinander her, jedoch durch irgendeine Klammer miteinander verbunden. In vielen Städten: Paris, London, Prag, New York, Hollywood, Zürich, Amsterdam, Palma, Florenz, Nice, Sanary u.s.w. Salzburg. Wolfgang. E. Treuberg. Sundheimer. Junger Prolet. Brentano. Regler. F. Ferdinand Lion. Kommunisten. Katholiken. Gründung einer neuen Partei. Pass-Schwierigkeiten. Geldnot. Sexualnot. Der Hass. Die Hoffnung. Das Heimweh. Kriegsangst (und Hoffnung…) Politik: Saar; Spanien, Olympiade. Verbindung zu Illegalen im Reich. Melancholie. Les sans-patrie…. Das werde ich können.[283]

This more detailed conception shows that a montage approach was baked in from the start with the 'Komposition' of parts structured in an overlapping 'nebeneinander,' both temporally and geographically. Naming various real people he aims to incorporate into his novel in some form, Mann makes clear his documentary aims. Accordingly, critics have treated the book as 'vielsträngig',[284] a 'dokumentarische Montage'[285] presenting

[282] Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher,* vol. III, p. 49, original emphasis.
[283] Diary entry dated 20 August 1926, in Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. III, pp. 69–70.
[284] Rolf Schneider, 'Klaus Mann', *Aufbau*, 12.12 (December 1956), pp. 1105–19 (p. 1115).
[285] Winckler, 'Artist und Aktivist', p. 83.

'kulturelle Zentren und politische Schauplätze des Exils der Jahre 1933 bis 1939'.[286] It is perceived to use 'die besonderen Erzähltechniken der Montage oder der Simultaneität, die den stofflichen Varianten der politisch-sozialen Verfallserscheinungen entsprechen',[287] in which 'die verschiedenen Formen, die der Einsatz des Geistes für den Humanismus einnehmen kann, als verbindendes Element der zahlreichen Handlungsstränge [fungieren]'.[288] Structurally, Mann notes the necessity of a 'Klammer' of some sort to hold the disparate pieces of his novel within some approximation of a whole, even while embracing turmoil as a structural principle, as he first proclaimed to be his intention with the foreword to *Der fromme Tanz.* In his first book, the confusion he identified in his book was about feeling detached from the world around him and embracing the non-normativity offered by the scene of youth around him. Here, the turmoil is structured to allow multiple characters access to the narrative, to represent the collapse of clear-cut meaning more generally, and to reflect experiences which are defined by a sense of things that were once certain beginning to fall apart. In describing *Der Vulkan*, Mann sets up the thematic importance of crisis, difficulty, sadness, homelessness, fear – and hope, named twice. Peter Hoffer has noted that *Der Vulkan* 'borrows its main structural elements from Klaus's earlier novels of emigration and from *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, with its network of loosely connected plots which unfold simultaneously'.[289] At the same time, *Der Vulkan* goes further than *Treffpunkt*, both in stretching the geographical locations of its characters and plotlines beyond Europe, and in investigating simultaneity over a number of years, rather than only in an

[286] Ibid., p. 81.
[287] Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler*, p. 87.
[288] Karina von Lindeiner-Stráský, '"... der harte Glanz des Hasses": Satire und Humanismus im Exilwerk Klaus Manns', *Oxford German Studies*, 46.1 (2017), pp. 106–20 (p. 111), doi:10.1080/00787191.2017.1282662.
[289] Peter Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 18.

isolated moment, meaning that everything disperses yet further from a centre – a Germany that no longer exists – and the form of the novel traces the same movement.

Mann only landed on the title 'Der Vulkan' in March 1938, almost two years later.[290] The change from the initial draft title 'Die Verfolgten' suggests a shift in focus from persecuted individuals to the simmering unrest underlying their various stories, diverging from its historically specific frame in favour of something much more elemental and timeless – and yet it is still an unrest expressed entirely *through* the lives of the persecuted individuals. He intended the book to be both politically incisive and poetically long-lived; also in 1938, he writes that

> in dem großen Roman, den ich jetzt vorbereite, sollen die aktuell politischen Themen sich mit denen vermischen, die wir 'zeitlos' nennen: mit den ewig menschlichen Themen – Liebe, Tod, Schmerz, Einsamkeit, Hoffnung.[291]

This combination of capturing the precise, charged nature of the present moment and inscribing it in a form aimed at long-term survival and documentation demonstrates Mann's intention to translate his reality directly into chronicle and to renegotiate its form to stretch beyond the immediate moment and towards some future point.

Like *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, *Der Vulkan* follows the storylines of multiple loosely connected characters, but it is structured over a much longer period of time and a wider area of geographical dispersal. The subtitle 'Roman unter Emigranten' already suggests a shared ownership of the novel by this group of emigrants – framed as such, interestingly, rather than as the 'Verfolgten' of the draft title – laying the groundwork for the montage approach. Among the emigrants, key characters include Martin Korella, a

[290] Cf. diary entry dated 31 March 1938, in Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. IV: 1938–39, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller (Rowohlt, 1995), p. 31.
[291] Klaus Mann, 'Lebenslauf 1938', in *Woher wir kommen und wohin wir müssen: Frühe und nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Edition Spangenberg, 1980), pp. 157–65 (p. 162).

writer; Marion von Kammer, an actor and performer; her mother and sisters, who emigrate to Switzerland, including her sister Tilly, who kills herself; Marcel, a writer and later a soldier, who marries Marion before his death; Kikjou, Marcel's brother and Martin's lover; Benjamin Abel, a professor who ultimately marries Marion in America; 'die Schwalbe', who runs a pub in Paris where the recent emigrants gather, the initial point of contact between most of the disparate threads of the novel; and the angel of the homeless, who appears to Kikjou twice in the latter stages of the book. Various critics have noted that what the characters have in common is, primarily, failure: the book follows characters 'die vor den Herausforderungen der Zeit gänzlich versagen und ihrer Todessehnsucht nachgeben',[292] tracing 'eine Vielzahl von Einzelschicksalen, und den meisten ist das Scheitern gemein'.[293] Indeed, 'bis auf Marion von Kammer, Benjamin Abel und Kikjou scheitern letztlich alle übrigen Protagonisten an den spezifischen Anforderungen der Zeit'.[294]

Providing a meta-analysis of the community that the novel itself is following, the character David Deutsch, a cultural critic and economist, at one point muses on the 'Soziologie der Emigration':

> 'Ein sehr faszinierendes Thema', behauptete er. 'Faszinierend gerade deshalb, weil die Menschengruppe, um die es sich hier handelt, durchaus kein einheitliches Gebilde, keine Gruppe also im eigentlichen Sinn des Wortes darstellt; vielmehr ein höchst zufälliges Gemisch von Individuen, denen durch sehr verschiedenartige Umstände ein ähnliches Schicksal aufgezwungen wurde.' (*DV*, 59)

This description of the emigrants encapsulates the novel's approach to them and their stories: there is not one monolithic and common plot, but rather an accidental

[292] von Lindeiner-Stráský, '"... der harte Glanz […]"', p. 112.
[293] Alexander von Bormann, 'Das Werk als Auftrag. Formsemantische Hinweise zu Klaus Manns Romanen', in *Klaus Mann*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (text + kritik, 1987), pp. 62–72 (p. 69).
[294] Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler*, p. 152.

community of individuals, each moving in different ways and different directions, shepherded together by fate. Documenting this group – as the chronicle aims to do – necessitates an approach shaped by montage in order not to oversimplify the diversity of the collective. Indeed, the novel exists 'unter Emigranten', a shared property, so no one character can truly be positioned in the centre. The ongoing decentring of any single, stable perspective manifests in the montage structure.

The novel is separated into five sections: a prologue; 'Erster Teil: 1933-1934'; 'Zweiter Teil: 1936-1937'; 'Dritter Teil: 1937-1938'; and an epilogue. Missing out 1935 for reasons that are never explained, the structure of the novel very literally features an absent centre and an unanswered, perhaps unanswerable, question. The prologue and epilogue might be viewed as the 'Klammer' containing the various plots within, a structural tool Mann had recognized as essential from the outset, and are made up of letters from a young man named Dieter to his friend Karl, firstly in 1933 and disapproving of Karl's decision to abandon Germany for Paris, and lastly in 1939, when Dieter has himself emigrated. Dieter barely appears in the narrative between these two framing passages, and thus acts as an illustration in the simplest terms of the historical changes over the years covered.

The epigraph to the whole novel, taken from Nietzsche's 'Menschliches Allzumenschliches,' reads: 'Unsre Bestimmung verfügt über uns, auch wenn wir sie noch nicht kennen; es ist die Zukunft, die unserm Heute die Regel giebt'. Mann chose this quotation in December 1938,[295] clearly after most of the novel was written, and so I choose to read it less as something he had in mind while writing, and more as an indication to the reader of what the novel is supposed to do. It expresses the hope that even what seems meaningless will, in the future, turn out to have had meaning – both an

[295] Cf. diary entry dated 9 December 1938, in *Tagebücher*, vol. IV, p. 76.

encouragement to keep living even if all one sees is chaos, and, perhaps, a request not to judge the novel while it is 'happening', but with the benefit of hindsight at some future time. Beyond this, each of the three main parts also has its own epigraph, taken from Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heine, respectively, choices clearly made for the sake of their impact as German classics, opening out the boundaries of Mann's novel intertextually to incorporate the fragments of a culture that, his novel shows, is in the midst of dissolution. The title page of Part One features part of Hölderlin's 'Hyperions Schicksalslied':

> Doch uns ist gegeben
> Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhen,
> Es schwinden, es fallen
> Die leidenden Menschen
> Blindlings von einer
> Stunde zur andern,
> Wie Wasser von Klippe
> Zu Klippe geworfen,
> Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab. (*DV*, p. 15)

This verse imparts themes of wandering, suffering, and uncertainty; it very literally presents the experience of standing at an abyss, into which one may fall; and it emphasizes the probability of a long-term exile. It highlights community as well, with its use of 'uns', and thus establishes the mood at the start of exile: anxious and unknowable, dangerous, uneasy, and communal still. The title page of Part Two quotes Nietzsche again, this time from his poem 'Vereinsamt':

> Wer das verlor,
> Was du verlorst, macht nirgends Halt. (*DV*, p. 107)

Here, Mann chooses lines from a poem about losing a home and being exposed to the elements; an earlier line of the poem, not cited by Mann, reads 'Wohl dem, der jetzt

noch Heimat hat!'. There is no place to rest for the homeless. This characterizes the 'middle' of exile as presented in the book: no longer pushing away from the shore of home, but marooned asea.

The epigraph for part three offers a greater sense of optimism than those at the start of the previous parts. Quoting Heine, it reads:

> Das goldene Zeitalter, heißt es, liege nicht hinter uns, sondern vor uns; wir seien nicht aus dem Paradiese vertrieben, mit einem flammenden Schwerte, sondern wir müßten es erobern durch ein flammendes Herz, durch die Liebe; die Frucht der Erkenntnis gebe uns nicht den Tod, sondern das ewige Leben. (*DV*, p. 205)

This extract points towards the future, and a potential golden age to come; at the same time, it is a call to arms, emphasizing the action required to bring this golden age into being, and that the weapon of this fight is to be love. Death, in this framing, is merely a guise for eternal life. For Part Three, this indicates both the increasing intensity of the personal and political struggles the characters face, and the possibility of there being a better tomorrow to fight for. Equally, Heine's words sum up the attitude of Mann's novel as a whole: a collective effort towards progress, driven by love, in which death gives life of a different sort, a hope that transcends failure while, at the same time, being born of it.

Writing (for) Hope

As in *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* – and in various of Mann's other works – writers and writing form key figures and themes in *Der Vulkan*. The ability to enact time in literary form, to document and to share stories, increasingly comes to offer a sense of hope: this is, after all, Klaus Mann's main way of offering resistance to the fascist regime. The frame of *Der Vulkan*'s story consists of two letters, one at the start of the book and one

at the end, which already foreground the centrality of the written word. The opening line of the book thus reads: 'Ein junger Mensch saß in einem Berliner Pensionszimmer und schrieb einen Brief' (*DV*, p. 11). In this single sentence, Mann establishes that Berlin is the origin point of the narrative; that this representative of the characters to come is young; and that the task of writing inevitably precedes the story to follow. The epilogue then begins: 'Ein junger Mensch saß in einem Café an der Canebière und schrieb' (*DV*, p. 293). Youth, again, is emphasized, as is writing – the most continuous theme of the book – but the location has changed to Marseille, indicating the outwards movement from Berlin that has taken place across the novel. As such, the letters offer reinforcement to the novel's themes, whilst forming a story around the story that, near the end of the novel, actually converges with the framed narrative when the letters' author – Dieter – appears during a scene following his escape from Germany. The framing narrative functions as the structural bracket that Mann recognized the story needed – a bracket within which the rest of the novel is free to follow a montage-structure that highlights simultaneous experiences of the time period and which enacts an outwards-and-yet-backwards-facing motion. Even so, the frame itself evidently remains permeable: there can be no full holding on to all the disparate parts without them seeping into, and beyond, one another.

Within the text, writing is not always a straightforward task, and this relates back to the challenges of portraying something that will not stand still. When Martin attempts to write while on drugs, he laments:

> ach, es sollte gelingen, wenigstens einen Teil der zärtlichen und originellen, tiefen und überraschenden, wahrscheinlich ungeheuer wichtigen Einfälle, die jetzt wie eine Schar von wundersamen Vögeln durch mein Haupt ziehen, auf dem Papiere fest zu halten. Es sollte gelingen. Hier ist weißes Papier…Martin bedeckt es mit Zeichen. Seine Hand zittert. Er schreibt mit zitternder Hand. Und am nächsten Nachmittag, wenn er aus abgrundtiefem Schlaf erwacht, weiß er

> selber nichts mehr anzufangen mit den mystischen Chiffern, die er nächtens, oder zur frühen Morgenstunde, aufs Papier geworfen hat. (*DV*, p. 129)

Martin is hampered at three stages of the writing process: firstly in expressing anything of the chaotic ideas flitting through his head; secondly in physically writing with a trembling hand; and lastly in later deciphering the words he has written. This final hurdle proves unclearable. It is as though words are inadequate to the experience, the body inadequate to the process, and the mind inadequate to understanding. Failure is encoded at every level of writing, but he writes nonetheless, convinced that, someday, 'es sollte gelingen'. In contrast, Marcel, previously a successful writer, laments to Marion at one point:

> Ach Marion, wenn du ahnen könntest, wie widerlich mir die Worte sind! Es ist mir, als müßte ich schmutziges Wasser saufen und wieder ausspucken. Die großen Begriffe sind schal geworden, abgenutzt – und keine neuen in Sicht, an die wir uns halten, an denen wir uns aufrichten könnten! Alles ist schon gesagt, alles ist schon verbraucht. Das Neunzehnte Jahrhundert war enorm redselig, durchaus rhetorisch, ins Wort verliebt, ihm vertrauend wie einem Fetisch. Nun ist alles entleert. (*DV*, p. 139)

For Marcel, words are not only inadequate, but repulsive in their inability to express meaning. This inability seems to rest upon the sense that everything has already been said, and with each utterance, the meaning of a given word wears away; there are, apparently, no new words to replace them and salvage language. Of course, however, even Marcel's disparagement of words is expressed in words. Despite their fallibility, words are the only means of expression available; failure of expression is expression in itself. The writer Elizabeth Bowen stated that 'language seldom fails quietly, it fails noisily'.[296] When words must be spoken, then that noisy failure is unavoidable.

[296] Elizabeth Bowen, *A Time in Rome* (Vintage, 2010), p. 72.

Although words are inadequate and unwilling to come for the novel's writers, it remains the case that writing in general offers hope. When Marion starts performing a programme of readings from classic German authors, first in Europe and later in the USA, her performances leave the audiences notably and positively affected:

> Die im Saale unten begriffen: Weder unsere Leiden noch unsere Erkenntnisse sind so unerhört und so neu, wie wir in der ersten Aufregung oft meinen wollten. Andere vor uns haben schon gelitten und schon nachgedacht, und sind von den gleichen Problemen berührt worden wie wir. Aus ihren Erkenntnissen und Schmerzen aber ist Schönheit geworden. Uns hinterließen sie das große Erbe ihrer Weisheiten und der gestalteten Schmerzen. (*DV*, p. 104)

While Marcel lamented that everything now is empty because it has been said before, the impact of Marion's readings suggests that precisely because the experience of the present moment has been put into words before, it can offer a unique, transhistorical hope. Because things have been survived before, they can be survived again; because the previous hard times have become beautiful in what survives of them – the writing – there is hope that present hard times will become beautiful in the future, through writing. This view is supported by Mann's use of epigraphs for his novel and its individual sections, reinforcing the sense that previous writings play into current utterances, with times beyond our own augmenting the present moment. On a metatextual level, this points back towards the project of chronicling at large, preserving a time with reference to some future value. Writing, bracketing experience, allows moments to persevere beyond themselves. This contrasts the novel once again with the earlier *Treffpunkt*, in which simultaneity prevails to the extent that there is no reality beyond the present moment. Here, despite the prevalence of the present moment, there is a past counted within the present, and a future already reckoned with.

Documenting Pieces

Writing for posterity, and for hope, as things seem to fall apart, means documenting the pieces and thereby demonstrating, on the textual level, their interconnections, overlappings, and parallels. The most important of the novel's various writer figures, in respect to the lens of chronicling-as-montage that I am using, is of course Martin, given that 'die "*Chronik der Heimatlosen*", die Martin Korella zu schreiben beginnt und die Kikjou fortsetzt, ist nichts anderes als die Selbstannonce des "Vulkan"'.[297] It is worth exploring in more detail Martin's concept of the chronicle as presented within *Der Vulkan*. Intending to write a great novel, Martin in fact has only a few notes for it when he decides to go ahead and write the foreword. That foreword, which ends Part One of the book, includes:

> Das Herz eines jeden Menschen in dieser Zeit ist berührt und ergriffen von der großen Unruhe. Mein eigenes Herz ist berührt und ergriffen; es schlägt angstvoll in meiner Brust.
> Deshalb will ich von den Ruhelosen und Heimatlosen erzählen. Mein Ehrgeiz ist es, der Chronist zu sein ihrer Abenteuer und Niederlagen, ihrer Aufschwünge und Zusammenbrüche, ihrer Trostlosigkeit und ihrer Zuversicht. […]
> Mir ist es aufgetragen, die tausend Formen und Gebärden, in denen diese Frage sich ausdrückt, die Aufschreie und das Gespräch, die Gelächter und das Gebet, das Stöhnen und noch das trostlose Verstummen, aufzuzeichnen und festzuhalten.
> …Für wen schreibe ich diese Chronik der vielen Wanderungen und Verirrungen? Wer wird mir zuhören? Wer wird Anteil nehmen? Wo ist die Gemeinschaft, an die ich mich wenden könnte… Unser Ruf geht ins Ungewisse – oder stürzt er gar ins Leere? Bleibt ein Echo aus? Irgend etwas wie ein Echo erwarten wir doch – und sei es auch nur ein undeutliches, weit entferntes.
> […]
> Die Horizonte unseres Daseins sind verfinstert. Die drohend geballten Wolken künden schon lange das Gewitter an. Es könnte ein Gewitter ohnegleichen werden. Die Katastrophen aber sind kein Dauerzustand.
> […]
> Irgendwo werden sie – von denen wir uns so gerne vorstellen, daß sie glücklicher sind als wir – auf Spuren stoßen, die von unseren Leiden und Kämpfen zeugen – diesen Kämpfen, die uns heute ganz in Anspruch nehmen,

[297] Winckler, 'Artist und Aktivist', p. 83.

> von deren Gewicht und Bitterkeit jenen Knaben aber wahrscheinlich die Vorstellung fehlen wird. Dann werden sie, für eine ganz kurze Weile, innehalten in ihren Spielen und in ihrem Werk. Ein paar gerührte Sekunden lang beschattet Nachdenklichkeit ihre Stirne, einer Wolke gleich, die schnell vorüber ist. Sie blättern, nicht ohne Mitleid und vielleicht nicht ganz ohne Achtung, in dieser Chronik von den vielen Wanderungen und den vielen Fragen. Dann kommt ihnen wohl eine Ahnung, was von uns gesündigt und bereut, durchkämpft, gelitten worden ist – und wir sind nicht vergessen. (*DV*, pp. 105–6)[298]

The emphasis on 'Unruhe' as the prevailing experience of the time points towards the general sense of uncertainty and disruption that, to Mann, characterizes his point in history; its mention also harks back to the 'Ungewisse' in the Hölderlin epigraph to the first section, of which this passage forms the end. Describing how the chronicle aims to document the 'Abenteuer und Niederlagen', the 'Aufschwünge und Zusammenbrüche' of the homeless and restless, Martin's foreword sketches out the structural principles of the novel in which he is an actor, where upwards and downwards arcs, wins, losses and collapses all work against a straightforward teleological shape. This use of form echoes what Martin calls the 'tausend Formen und Gebärden' in which cries, conversations, laughter, prayer, moaning and even silence can be brought into being on the page. Martin's view of his times and his assessment of the immediate future are bleak; the horizons are dark, the storm threatens. However, in his emphasis on the catastrophe being temporary, and his wish that, in his chronicle – which, interestingly, uses the first-

[298] Parts of Martin's foreword are almost identical with material from Mann's 1938 essay 'Die Kriegs- und Nachkriegs-Generation' (in *Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1969), pp. 206–28) – where, for example, he writes: 'Wir werden nicht vergeblich gekämpft haben, auch wenn es uns nicht mehr bestimmt sein sollte, den Tag des Sieges zu erleben. Das flüchtige Lächeln einer Dankbarkeit, mit der die jüngeren Kameraden unser gedenken werden, wird uns belohnen. Irgendwo werden sie – von denen wir uns so gern vorstellen, daß sie glücklicher sein mögen als wir – auf Spuren stoßen, die von unseren Kämpfen zeugen, diesen Kämpfen, die uns heute ganz in Anspruch nehmen und die dann vergangen sein werden. Dann werden diese Knaben – für ein paar Augenblicke nur – innehalten in ihren Spielen und in ihrem Werk. Ein paar gerührte Sekunden lang werden sie nachdenklich sein. Vielleicht kommt ihnen dann eine Ahnung, was gesündigt, was bereut, durchkämpft, gelitten worden ist – und wir sind nicht vergessen' (pp. 227–28). The crossover of Mann's essay and Martin's chronicle perhaps adds value to the view of Martin as a self-insert character, and certainly points towards Mann creating a montage of his own material in writing *Der Vulkan*.

person plural ‘unser’ in its formulation, distancing it from any single author, and which is really Mann’s chronicle – some piece of the time might live on and one day be read, there remains a sense of hope. As such, the chronicle project is linked directly to a form of queer survival, going beyond the individual lifetime and looking to what remains of us in what we leave behind and what others remember.

Of course, Martin dies before writing any more of his chronicle; and subsequently, it is no longer his alone. Kikjou, his ex-lover, takes over Martin’s project, explaining to the angel that visits him that

> er [Martin] hat es nur bis zum Vorwort gebracht, und ein paar Notizen sind da, ich habe alles bewahrt. Auch Marcel hat es schreiben wollen, oder hat es zu Teilen geschrieben. Alles, was er hinterlassen hat, sind Bruchstücke unseres Buches. (*DV*, p. 276)

Rather than merely assisting with Martin’s work posthumously, it becomes a collective exercise, claimed in the first-person plural. Interestingly, Marcel is also suggested to be a possible co-author, despite never actually working on Martin’s book – rather, the book is clearly intended to be written by everyone who is part of its story, again dissolving the framing/framed boundary of the novel. Its documentary aims negate any single authorship – within the book. Mann’s novel is, of course, his own work; but arguably he also has unnamed co-authors, in the real-life stories incorporated into the fabric. Kikjou’s mention of ‘Bruchstücke’ points to the text’s montage construction, in which fragments are all that exists of any individual character’s story, but together they form a whole.

The chronicle is what allows the fragments to survive and continue to exist beyond the fleeting moment of the present when it becomes the past. In this task, Kikjou realizes that what he is now writing is destined to be a long book: ‘Vieles ist

einzubeziehen, eine Menge von Themen machen die Symphonie. Ich darf nichts vereinfachen, auch nichts weglassen; umständlich und aufrichtig muß ich sein' (*DV*, p. 277). In comparing the book to a symphony, Kikjou further suggests the formal fluidity of the project while reiterating the collectivity of the book's thematic construction. This collectivity is vital in the book's attempt to offer an accurate chronicle of the times, with Kikjou exclaiming

> '[…] es muß doch alles festgehalten werden! Man vergißt doch so schrecklich schnell!' Nun lief Kikjou durchs Zimmer, aufgeregt wie alle Autoren, wenn von ihren literarischen Projekten die Rede ist. 'Sogar wenn heute wenig Interesse da sein sollte –: die Nachwelt will doch Dokumente, Rechenschaft. Sie verlangt unsere Beichte …' (*DV*, p. 277)

The need for 'festhalten' of the characters' fragmentary experiences suggests the necessity of a very particular type of chronicle to do justice to holding together the pieces, while the pieces remain pieces, and do not coalesce: the type offered by the montage. Kikjou's claim also reminds us of Mann's own note that the novel would need a 'Klammer' to hold its disparate parts together. Part of fixing the montage into a complete form is tied up with the documentation that motivates it at base – a necessary en-chronicling that provides the time and space axes within which the fragmented parts of narrative come together. In keeping with chronicle tradition, the purpose of the documentation is oriented towards the future, the 'Nachwelt'; it is something that survives beyond the things it documents, both as a document, and in memory, but that has to be allowed to rest in pieces.

With its concern with what is left behind and what might be inherited in some later time, the influence of Bloch's *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (published 1935) becomes apparent. Mann was reading this work by late 1933, and he reviewed it in 1934. In his review, he states:

> Wie ein Goldsucher geht dieser Rote Magier durch den Irrgarten der Probleme und der Figuren, die oft nur zeitgenössisch ('gleichzeitig') *scheinen*, während sie eigentlich ganz anderen, vergangenen Zeitgeschichten zugehören oder doch mit Teilen ihres Wesens verbunden sind; und noch im Wunderlichen, Verstaubten, seltsam Demodierten will er den Zukunftsgehalt als die edelste Qualität erraten. So sehen wir, was alles da ist und trächtig ist, und wie reich wir sein könnten – wenn dieser Reichtum nicht mißbraucht würde; daß die Zeit nicht leer ist, sondern nur schlecht verwaltet; daß die schließliche Revolution nicht nur viel zu zerstören haben wird, sondern auch viel Erbschaft anzutreten.[299]

Mann is struck by Bloch's concept of people and problems that seem to exist in the present moment but are actually composed of layers of the past, but with the substance of the future already embedded. Every new movement or revolution is not solely destructive, but constructive in its inevitable position after, and thus containing, the past. Everything in the present will thus, in a sense, exist still in the future, offering another suggestion of survival beyond the self that coincides with Mann's queer themes of individual dissolution. This sense of a hope embedded in the present is another indication of the development of Mann's thinking since writing *Treffpunkt*, where the only directionality was into the infinite; the future is also a fluid, as-yet imaginary thing, but its ability to be incorporated into current experience enables a political commitment in which there is something to live for. Bloch is also offering a challenge to traditional concepts of time as a whole, a deconstruction that Mann can then implement to further the chronicle form he had already begun working with in *Treffpunkt* – here, in the narrative's self-consciousness as a project of documentation, the overlappings of simultaneous stories and their preservation for posterity take on a political as well as artistic role. By documenting the present, there is perhaps a chance for the future to recognize in itself the layers of the past that, at present, are apparently going largely

[299] Klaus Mann, '[Ernst Bloch: 'Erbschaft dieser Zeit']', in *Mit dem Blick nach Deutschland: Der Schriftsteller und das politische Engagement*, ed. by Michel Grunewald (Edition Spangenberg, 1985), pp. 50–53 (pp. 52–53). Original emphasis.

unnoticed; and thus, through documenting, our lives not only continue after our deaths, but continue to have purpose, too.

As the chronicle shifts away from Martin's exclusive ownership, the overlap between it and Mann's novel itself becomes increasingly evident. Kikjou describes the process of putting the parts together, saying

> Ich werde beobachten, sammeln, eins zum anderen legen. Und wenn die Kraft mir ausgeht, werden die toten Brüder mir ein wenig soufflieren: die lieben Toten flüstern mir die Worte zu, die sie verschwiegen haben. Mit unsichtbaren Händen führen sie mir die Feder, wenn meine eigenen Finger ermatten… Ich schreibe den Roman der Heimatlosen! (*DV*, p. 278)

With the process of 'eins zum anderen legen', Kikjou summarizes the process of collaging pieces into a whole, a process undertaken by Mann in the novel. This metatextual reflexivity is also invoked by Kikjou's description of the chronicle as the 'Roman der Heimatlosen', echoing *Der Vulkan*'s subtitle, 'Roman unter Emigranten', and further suggesting that the two are one and the same. In a sense, Mann is chronicling the construction of his own chronicle. The chronicle is the form and the form within the form, the permeable bracket that allows the montage to become narrative, while also signifying a powerful wish for queer survival – living on beyond one life, through the writing that preserves us, into an unknown future in which, despite everything, something of us still exists.

Remembering the Dead

The individual characters of the book become gradually less individual – either their separate existences end suddenly with death, or they seem to fade out as their lives are stretched and re-shaped in new ways – but the individuals do not disappear from

existence, but rather into one another. In the same way that the chronicle as an undertaking aims to preserve the transient in a form that survives beyond the immediate, the characters of *Der Vulkan* preserve in their fragmented forms the traces of those people and things which are left behind. Potentially, to die and to exist in others are synonymous, as both mark the point where the individual ceases; as such, survival is possible after death, through the memories and traces of us left behind in others. In die Schwalbe's eulogy for Martin, after his slow death from the effects of heroin, she states:

> Ich kann keine Worte machen, und das hätte unser Kamerad auch nicht von mir verlangt, unser Freund, von dem jetzt nur noch dieses bißchen Asche übrig sein soll. Aber seine Gedanken und die Anmut seines Wesens, und alles, was er gewesen ist, das darf doch nicht einfach so verloren gehen, das muß doch nachwirken – in uns, in uns nachwirken, meine ich; wir bewahren es doch. (*DV*, p. 168)

Although physically, all that remains of Martin is his ashes, a more meaningful part of him lives on. His thoughts and his identity survive through the 'Nachwirken' they perform on those who knew him; he remains 'bewahrt' in this sense. Crucially, his continuing existence is not a passive event, but one his friends must actively perform, as expressed in the phrase 'das *darf* doch nicht'. Die Schwalbe gets to say all this because of her role as a kind of social glue, or collector of souls: it is her pub that offers the closest sense of community for many of the exiles. Martin cannot be allowed to be lost to history; through choosing to preserve him, his community becomes a continuation of him. As Martin wanted to, expressed in the foreword to his chronicle, he lives on in an immediate 'Nachwelt'. Marcel's death has a similar character. Although he dies in Spain, his death is witnessed by Kikjou and the angel who has flown him away to visit various characters of the book. The novel describes how, in death,

> Er ist einer von Tausenden, von Zehntausenden – Marcel Poiret, ein Soldat –, er gehört zum Ganzen, zum Kollektiv: dies hat er sich immer gewünscht, es ist seine Sehnsucht gewesen, erst im Tode soll sie sich erfüllen. (*DV*, p. 189)

This presents death as a way of dissolving the painful individual, offering with it a communality that acts as a comfort. Marcel 'wollte Einer sein unter Vielen, zum Ganzen gehören, zum Kollektiv; nicht mehr auffallen, nicht mehr herausfallen; leiden und kämpfen mit den anderen; mit den anderen sterben' (*DV*, p. 190). In death, he achieves his goal: to be part of the group, one of the many. This suggests not only a collectivity in death that may not be present in life, but that self-sacrifice is an integral part of achieving this collectivity.

There are other senses in which things dissolve and collapse beyond literal deaths scattered throughout the novel, echoing the many partings seen in *Treffpunkt*. This is the case during, for example, the character Tilly's violent and traumatic abortion after her one-night affair. During this scene, Tilly laments:

> Weh mir, ich falle…Mit mir stürzt das Kind…Niemand da, um uns aufzufangen. Wie tief ist die Tiefe –: bodenlos…Niemald hält mich, ich sinke, weh mir, ich sinke hin…
> Mallorca – höchst liebliches Eiland, mild beglänzt und beschienen von einer gnädigen Sonne (*DV*, p. 150).

The abrupt narrative intervention that switches the scene away from Tilly to Mallorca enacts the trauma of Tilly's sense that she is disappearing on a formal level; in a sense, she falls from the page. Although the abortion is her choice, it happens in a highly dangerous environment, and ultimately leads to long-term medical complications that contribute to Tilly's suicide not long afterwards. Through the narrator's sudden switch to Mallorca, the simultaneity of the novel's various scenes is emphasized, the chronicle form jumping about in an attempt to document as much as possible; it also highlights

the span of geographical foci, and the disorientation whereby some of the characters are dissolving, some thriving. The novel is constantly conscious that it is telling more than one story; that it exists only 'unter Emigranten'. Tilly's abortion remains a secret until revealed in her suicide note, and she becomes increasingly isolated; as such, her dissolution comes with less of a sense of surviving through losing, as there is no community around her to pick up the pieces, though even she survives through writing, in the letter she leaves behind.

Despite how profoundly the novel's characters deal with loss in many guises throughout their stories, there is an equally persistent sense that what is lost is not entirely gone. Marion's affair with the hotel window-cleaner Tullio, once she arrives in New York, after Marcel's death and before meeting Benjamin, is motivated significantly by the degree to which Tullio reminds her of Marcel, who has now died. During one encounter,

> Sie zog den Jungen an sich, damit sie ihn wiedererkenne, ihn nicht verwechsle. Wir verwechseln die miteinander, welche wir lieben müssen. Es ist immer das selbe Antlitz, dem wir verfallen. (*DV*, p. 223)[300]

The narrator has moved into the first-person plural, increasingly becoming unbound from Marion and taking on a collective identity. The concept of the same face appearing again and again suggests that the boundaries of characters are fluid, and they spill out across one another, mirroring Mann's choice of a range of similar co-protagonists and the overlaying structure of simultaneity. It is not only that Tullio reminds Marion of Marcel but, in a sense, he *is* Marcel – at least to her, and despite her attempts to hold him to one identity. Remembering someone involves a recolouring of the present moment such that the past exists within it, the layers of simultaneity borrowed from

[300] Cf. this passage from *The Turning Point:* 'He [Uto] had the face I love. You may be smitten with many faces when you live long enough and possess a responsive heart. But there is only one face you love. It is always the same. You recognize it among thousands. And Uto had that face' (*TP*, p. 83).

Bloch (though also, as we see in *Treffpunkt*, predating the relevant Bloch text) meaning again that survival exceeds the borders of the human body, queerly disrupting identities and times. Across the various strands of death, dissolution, loss and reconstitution that Mann interweaves in *Der Vulkan*, it becomes clear that we may split, fail, die – but we are remembered, and thus we live on in some shape that is queer to our current selves. The chronicle is a work of memorialization to this end, conveying the montage-moments beyond themselves to survive in a world yet to be imagined.

Losing Position

In the processes of documentation, dissolution, remembrance, and reconstitution, the characters of *Der Vulkan* are captured in constant movement, literal and figurative, and this experience of fluidity means they lose any sense of stable position. The loss of home and associated impossibility of returning echoes the motifs of transport, arriving, and departing seen in *Treffpunkt*; but here the departures feel more permanent. This can partly be explained by the seven-year gap between the novels' publication: what was conceivably a temporary emigration in 1932 appears far less so by 1939. On the page, the permanence is underlined by the fact that several key characters die over the course of the narrative, including Martin, Marcel, and Tilly, whereas, in *Treffpunkt*, the only main character to die is Richard. In *Der Vulkan*, for many of the characters, there is no chance of ever going home alive.

In the first months of exile, where we see the majority of Mann's characters still in Paris before they disperse more widely, there are already hints that what seems like a temporary exile may be more permanent. One voice for this is Marion's friend Anna Nikolajewna, a long-time Russian exile in Paris, who proclaims:

> ‘Auch ich habe von Rückkehr geträumt. Wer hätte nicht von Rückkehr geträumt? Aber man kehrt nicht zurück. Wer sich von der Heimat löst, hat es für immer getan. Für immer, Marion: verstehst du mich?’ Ihr Blick wurde plötzlich fast drohend. ‘Die Entwicklung in der Heimat geht weiter; wir haben keinen Anteil mehr an ihr. Wir sind Fremde geworden. Wie können nicht mehr heim, weil wir keine Heimat mehr haben.’ (*DV*, p. 36)

In Anna’s view, it is not just those who die who cannot go home, but everyone. The home that one left is gone forever, and if one did return, it would no longer be home. ‘Home’ marks a point in time as well as space, and as such cannot be returned to later. Consequently, the emigrants of Mann’s novel are not just dispersed in space, but in time, as well, a situation which speaks both to the need for a chronicle to fix these stories in some way and to the need for a montage as the most accurate structural representation of these disparate narratives. That there is no going back means there can be no resolution, in a normative sense, to the stories of the emigrants, only a movement gesturing outwards in space and beyond itself in time.

On the non-linear temporal and spatial journeys the characters find themselves taking, departures are the only markers of the journey’s edges – arrivals remain uncertain and unachievable. Each new movement over the uncertain ground undoes the ties between identity and place. After Marcel’s death, Marion is relieved to be able to leave on her US tour. Once her visa comes through,

> Die Abschiede konnten beginnen. Marion, wehmütig und empfindsam gestimmt, hatte nur das eine Wort im Herzen: Abschied… Abschied von den Gräbern; Abschied von den noch Lebenden. Ich bin die Überlebende. Ich bin die Abreisende. Ich bin die, welche etwas Neues beginnt. Ich reise nach Amerika und mache mich in Clubs wie auch in Universitäten bemerkbar. Dieses ist Abschied – eine Realität; die Realität unseres Lebens. Das ganze Leben ist Abschied. Abschied auf Bahnsteigen, auf Flugplätzen, Landungs-Stegen; Abschied in Schlafzimmern, Cafés, Hotelhallen, auf der Straße, an einer Haustür. Adieu, schreib mir mal, machs gut, vergiß mich nicht – ach, vergeßt mich nicht, und adieu! (*DV*, p. 199)

Marion's departure and her round of goodbyes reminds us of Sebastian's in *Treffpunkt*. In both novels, goodbyes are a constant motif, here as a matter of survival. However, goodbyes are also forward-facing, rather than simply backwards; Marion's leaving enables her new beginning, a future in which those people and things who represent her past can remember her. This links to the distinction between the 'noch Lebende' and 'Überlebende': Marion is not just still alive, but surviving, a shift in feeling that emphasizes the precarity central to the exile experience and suggests a space without a clear position, beyond both death and time. For Marion, this survival is linked once again to being remembered; and if we consider that, in emigrating, characters become strangers both spatially and temporally, then the versions of us that are remembered are distinct from those we currently inhabit. Therefore, through those who remember us, we exist in multiples, expanding and queering the potential of the individual and their experiences. Each goodbye creates a new self, a further reflection of the process of creating new narratives through the juxtapositions – the constant departures – that come with the movement from one piece of the montage to another.

Marion's New York lover, Tullio, in turn, ultimately bids goodbye to her when he decides to go to Europe to fight and thereby to sacrifice himself for his beliefs. The stability offered by a positionality in relation to the other is removed once again. The narrator, borrowing Tullio's perspective, describes how

> Wir umarmen uns, und das Glück ist heftig, weil es flüchtig bleibt. Leb wohl, und vergiß mich nicht! Wir sind Emigranten, du und ich, das Böse hat uns die Heimat gestohlen, die Heimatlosen kennen keine Treue. En somme, Madame, vous êtes sans patrie. Hatten Sie sich denn ein stilles Eheglück mit mir erwartet, chère Madame? Ich bin ein anarchistischer Fensterputzer –: Sie wußten doch, wem Sie sich hingaben, in diesem Hotelzimmer, wo es etwas übel riecht. Adieu adieu: dieses ist Abschied – eine Realität; die Realität unseres Lebens. (*DV*, p. 225)

The more fleeting the joy, the more intensely it is experienced; another justification, perhaps, for the use of a montage technique as a way of intensifying individual moments by artificially shortening them. While the narrator adopts the first-person position, character-bound to Tullio, it also incorporates a fragment of prose from the Marion-focalized passage above, echoing 'dieses ist Abschied – eine Realität; die Realität unseres Lebens' (see *DV*, p. 199). Voices are crossing over through the narrator, as are languages, with the formal stopping, starting and intermingling reflecting the lack of fixities that can only on a meta-textual level be overcome, through the processes of chronicling in montage form and putting together a whole in reading it.

Constantly changing place and reorienting oneself in a space that has no clear boundaries, that indeterminate space itself becomes something closer to familiarity than any physical location can offer. Once Marion's US tour is actually underway, its constant movement creates a new dimension to her experience of place: 'wieder auf Tour: sie empfand es wie eine Heimkehr. Die Ruhelosigkeit war der vertraute Zustand und hatte fast beruhigende Wirkung. Wir sind Vagabunden, Zigeuner, total entwurzelt, heimatlos, sans patrie' (*DV*, p. 226). The space she is entering is an extension of her state as an emigrant, except that here, it is a state she has consciously chosen. It therefore represents a 'Heimkehr', though never a return to a 'Heimat', and it is the 'kehren', rather than the 'Heim', that most accurately describes her changing positionality. There is a certain comfort in restlessness, a familiarity in travelling that reflects the sort of spatial relationship usually tied to a concept of 'home'. Once again, the borrowing of the French 'sans patrie' emphasizes its meaning by itself being a different language to the rest of the text; like the characters, the language fragment is 'total entwurzelt' in the context in which it finds itself. Even without roots, however, there is a sense of being placed – if not in a literal space, then in movement itself.

Reinforcing the fact that travelling is Marion's new version of home is a discussion between her and Benjamin Abel, to whom, at this point, she is engaged:

> 'Ich werde das Reisen nie ganz aufgeben können,' erklärte sie, kummervoll aber entschieden – als setzte sie dem Bräutigam auseinander: Auf mir liegt ein kleiner Fluch, ich bin eine Reisende, es läßt sich leider nicht ändern. (*DV*, p. 248)

It is worth remembering that however 'at home' the characters come to feel in their ongoing loss of home, their constant motion is still characterized as a curse. Marion, like many of the other characters, has incorporated movement into her very sense of self, showing again the different versions of identity that proliferate in different times and spaces. With the idea of a stable home increasingly distant and irrecoverable, the characters of *Der Vulkan* know that there is no returning, even if they survive their exile; that their stories, as well as their identities, exist in pieces scattered across space and time, loosely agglomerated by the overarching chronicle they inhabit. Departures are constant, offering new beginnings along with an enduring sense of loss. Leaving everything behind, the characters are able to move onwards – and perhaps never stop.

Observing the Homeless

Death and danger are always hovering just beyond the characters, and there is always a sense that some otherworldly force is overseeing or even orchestrating the chaos of their lives, rather than the characters themselves being able to direct their stories towards personal meaning. This sense manifests on the page in the form of an angel who appears towards the end of the story, another version of a character Mann returns to often, as previously mentioned in relation to *Alexander* and *Symphonie Pathétique*. In his position, in *Der Vulkan*, above the mish-mash of stories that make up the novel, the

angel here almost functions as another writer figure. He appears only to Kikjou – at least visually; he goes on to visit several other characters, although they cannot see him. Appearing to Kikjou first while the latter is praying, the angel is described as a 'großer Vogel, der auffliegen möchte; dem der irdische Aufenthalt nicht behagt', and he tells Kikjou 'Komm!' (*DV*, p. 188). Kikjou is then taken to witness Marcel's death in Spain, and then to inform Marion, now Marcel's widow, of his death, as well as Marcel's mother. As such, the angel demonstrates his knowledge beyond that of any one character's perspective, positioning him on the same level as the narrator. Kikjou is elevated to this position, also, through the angel's flight, establishing him as the appropriate final writer of the chronicle that, after all, has to encompass everything, and more than he can possibly know from within his own life.

While the characters throughout the book are troubled, and trouble, clear ideas of temporality or spatiality, it is the angel who has the power to dissolve context entirely, a power that might initially seem to contradict the political necessity of facing the present moment seen elsewhere in the text, but which does in fact face the moment, only from a perspective and a position not accessible to the characters within the story that the angel hovers on the boundaries of. At the reappearance of an angel at a later point in the book,

> Kikjou freute sich sehr; wollte es aber nicht zugeben, sondern erkundigte sich, beinah mißtrauisch: 'Bist du der, den ich kenne? Warst du schon bei mir? Hast du mich schon mal entführt?'
> Der Gesandte versetzte: 'Ich entführe niemanden. Im Gegenteil: meines Amtes ist es, solche zu begleiten, die sich ohnedies schon rastlos unterwegs befinden. – Ich bin der Engel der Heimatlosen.' (*DV*, p. 274)

The angel has now announced its name as the angel of the homeless. Its moniker suggests that it must be watching over all the book's characters who have lost their

homes, again situating the angel in a narratorial position. Crucially, the angel is identified as the 'Engel der Heimatlosen', therefore tied specifically to those who are without temporal or spatial homes, like the novel's characters. As such, the angel is both the overseeing authority in a position to enable, through Kikjou, the overarching chronicling of his cares, and, through this, the bracketing wholeness that allows the fragmented montage of experiences to achieve some kind of narrative. On this second visit, the angel again takes Kikjou flying to look upon other characters of the novel, visiting Marion with her new baby, her old friend David Deutsch in Paris shortly before he leaves for the French Colonies, and Hans Schütte, one-time pen pal of Tilly von Kammer, in Spain, as the international brigades are disbanded. The flight itself remains mysterious: 'War die zauberische Reise kurz, oder war sie lang? – Weder kurz noch lang. Die Dimension der Zeit galt nicht mehr, da die Dimension des Raumes überwunden war' (*DV*, p. 279). Only outside of the main narrative can time and space be dissolved. When space is overcome, time is too, pointing towards the narrative montage that disrupts the text's temporality as reflecting the spatial uncertainties of multiple experiences of exile. Rather than being disrupted, as they are elsewhere, time and space in the hands of the angel cease to have meaning at all, making the angel's scenes feel like more of a metanarrative than part of the stories within it, a part of the collaging where the glue takes centre stage.

One of the angel's key actions in this second appearance is visiting Dieter, the writer of the book's opening and closing letters, who is otherwise absent from the novel. As such, the angel is the only figure with the power to straddle the framing and framed narratives, Kikjou being only along for the ride, which further situates the angel in an narratorial role. Dieter, who in the opening letter expressed his disapproval of exile, is

now himself a deserter, crossing a mountain to escape Hitler's Germany. The angel explains to Kikjou:

> Zu Anfang war er für die Nazis, mit gewissen Vorbehalten. Er schimpfte auf die Emigranten; an Freunde, die das Land verlassen hatten, schrieb er ziemlich kränkende Briefe. Das war 1933. Damals wollte er sich dem neuen Staat zur Verfügung stellen, er war voll guten Willens, sehr unwissend, und zu allem bereit. Wie lange hat es gedauert, bis ihm die Augen aufgegangen sind! Welch zäher, komplizierter Prozeß – und wie peinvoll es war! Enttäuschungen ohne Ende; eine Qual, die niemandem anvertraut werden durfte; Ernüchterung, Beschämung, schließlich Ekel, Zorn und Aufbegehren –: eine lange Geschichte. Sie trug sich zu, während ihr Heimatlosen durch die Kontinente gejagt wurdet. Ihr wart beschäftigt mit dem eigenen Schicksal: der Roman eures Lebens war kompliziert und schmerzlich genug. Die Grenzen, die euch von Deutschland trennen, sind unübertretbar. Dahinter ist für euch verfluchte Gegend; nur in Albträumen werdet ihr hinversetzt. Es atmen aber dort Menschen, viele von ihnen leiden, sind heimatlos in der Heimat, man nennt sie 'die innere Emigration'. Ich, Schutzpatron der Expatriierten, kümmere mich auch um sie. (*DV*, p. 285)

The angel is referencing content from the letter that opened the book, increasingly positioning himself as the only real narrative authority, since the letter is outside of the regular narrator's purview. Perhaps the angel is very literally made up of the 'Heimatlosen', an amalgamation of the stories told by many voices, rather than a patron for them. Similarly metatextual, the angel refers to the characters' stories as 'der Roman eures Lebens', associating the form of their lives with the novel in which they exist. Dieter offers an example of someone not convinced to act against National Socialist rule at the outset who ultimately recognizes that he must, a choice by Klaus Mann that presumably enacts the development he hopes to incite in any readers who are not yet on his side. Likewise, in mentioning inner emigration, Mann appeals to another group peripheral to the exiles who were prepared to leave at the outset, as he himself did, thus working to expand an understanding of what 'good' anti-fascists may look like. In this vein, the angel continues:

> ‘Wenn ihr zurückkehrt, werdet ihr auf den Gesichtern eurer daheim-gebliebenen Kameraden Zeichen finden – jenen sehr ähnlich, die ihr selber tragt.’ – Der Engel schien zu vergessen, daß dem Jüngling an seiner Seite keinerlei Heimkehr bestimmt war. Der Gespiele und künftige Chronist der Emigranten war so gänzlich ohne Bindung und Vaterland – wie der Engel, der ihn geleitete. (*DV*, p. 286)

Once again, a parallel is drawn between the angel and Kikjou. The angel clearly believes a return from exile is possible, speaking to an unspoken drive in all the emigrants; the narrator, however, separates from the angel here in knowing that no return ‘home’ is possible. Hope and impossibility form an uncomfortable coexistence, but an existence nonetheless. The narrator and the angel both possess knowledge that the regular characters of the novel do not, but they are not identical; mirroring the montage structure of the novel overall, they exist alongside and in contrast to one another, destabilizing a perspective that is already split through the focalization of multiple characters. Kikjou is referred to as the future chronicler of emigrants – the author of the very book we are reading, that book being situated in a future time period; living for the future, not the present, is both the impulse for the act of chronicling and an attitude that prevents the volcano the characters must live on from ending their stories along with, perhaps, their lives.

Although, in a sense, the angel is positioned as a narrator and thus observes and keeps hold of all the novel’s various ‘Heimatlosen’, this keeping hold also consistently troubles the text’s formal boundaries. Remaining invisible and inaudible, the angel nevertheless communicates a message to Dieter:

> ‘Du sollst nicht untergehen!’ versprach er – inständig, wenngleich lautlos – seinem neuen Schützling. ‘Ich atme dich freundlich an, ich gebe dir neue Kraft! Du vollendest die riskante Gletschertour, du gewinnst die Freiheit, ich will es. Die Schluchten, voll schwarzer Schatten, locken dich. Du wiederstehst. Du bist

> tapfer. Dein Roman ist noch nicht zu Ende, nur der erste Teil ist abgeschlossen –: der war lang genug, fast sechs Jahre lang. Du und ich kennen seine bitteren Kapitel –: eines Tages werden sie der Welt bekannt, vorher muß viel geschehen. Die Geschichte all deiner Irrtümer und ihrer langsamen Überwindung ist stumm und rätselhaft hinein verwoben in den Roman der Heimatlosen. […]' (*DV*, p. 286)

Here, the angel is addressing characters much as the narrator has done regularly. Unlike when the angel speaks to Kikjou, the 'Heimatlose' who alone can directly hear the angel, this is not an exchange; but unlike the narrator's addresses to other characters, such as the warnings directed to Marion, Dieter does receive some sense of the message, even if he cannot hear it. The angel refers to the 'Roman der Heimatlosen' which is, presumably, the very novel he is in, again positioning himself as an alternative metanarrative authority, and describing the characters' mistakes and their overcoming woven into the story. Once again, the book exists in the future, and it exists as a collection of the stories of everyone who, amalgamated, comprise the angel: as such, what survives is collectivity, meaning reconstructed from dissolution, the chronicle a vessel for the fragments of stories.

Creating Purpose

Throughout *Der Vulkan*, everything, for everyone, is dissolving, becoming lost, becoming transitory and strange – but these processes are not unilaterally negative interventions in the characters' lives. In the dissolution, there are pieces of hope, purpose, and survival to be gathered, as this chronicle does. There is a certain positivity even in the opening scene of the main narrative, when the new exiles congregate in Paris:

> Eine neue Herzlichkeit stellte sich her, so etwa wie nach Naturkatastrophen; die Bewohner eines brennenden Hauses, die sich auf der Straße vor den Trümmern ihrer Habe zusammenfinden, oder die Passagiere eines sinkenden Schiffes im Rettungsboot, vergessen Unterschiede, die noch vor Stunden bedeutsam waren. (*DV*, p. 20)

Interestingly, this beginning point is already compared to an aftermath, setting up from the start a non-linear chronological approach that speaks to the montage structure of the text, even as the documentation of this single moment – this Treffpunkt, even – is driven by the task of chronicling. Already, it is as if a natural disaster has already happened – presumably symbolizing Hitler's rise to power – but, at the same time, the disaster is not over: the volcano of the title brews across the narrative, its discontents meaning that the characters are always positioned at the precipice. Although bad things have happened, afterwards, there is a new communality, a levelling of differences; as bad things continue to happen, therefore, there exists the hope that in the aftermath, again, people will be drawn together. As such, every threat of dissolution, of irreversible change, of catastrophe, holds also a hope for a brighter future, somehow, someday. Although this community seemingly breaks apart over the course of the novel, as the various strands move further away from each other, some ceasing altogether with characters' deaths, it does set up a situation where the very nature of the montage-chronicle itself is a preserver of community; even if the characters no longer experience it, we, the readers, do, and do in a way that would not be possible without the form of simultaneity enabled by the combination of the vertically-structured montage and the time-bound force of the chronicle with the result that the book itself is the thing that lives on beyond what it documents. Community opens up times and spaces beyond those experienced by the individual, offering a kind of queer immortality in the process.

More than just the positive impact of community, ultimately this book suggests that via the failure of everything once solid in the worlds of the characters, they are able

to find purpose – a purpose that often stretches beyond the individual lifespan, enabling a sort of 'eternal life' through the ideas and ideals we fight for, even if our physical bodies are temporary. After Martin's death, Kikjou resolves:

> Ich will handeln.
> So ehre ich am besten Martins Andenken. (*DV*, p. 181)

Kikjou decides on the necessity of acting as synonymous with honouring the memory of the dead; in this way, the dead continue to be a part of the present, and the future, driving the decisions of those still alive. Many of the emigrants follow their strongly-held beliefs as far as death. For these figures, 'die Möglichkeit, das Leben in den Dienst der sozialen Verantwortung zu stellen, erweist sich […] als einziger adäquater Versuch, das Leiden an den Grenzen der eigenen Individuation zumindest vorübergehend zu bewältigen, wobei besonders der utopisch-revolutionären Gemeinschaftserwartung eine stabilisierende, identitätsbildende Funktion zukommt, durch die die Todesnähe entweder gebannt wird oder aber einen Sinn erhält'.[301] For others, there is less of a sense of turning towards the fight, but of offering resistance – action through deliberate negation of the given norm. In this vein, Marion states: 'Unsere Generation empfindet: Lieber das Chaos als die permanente Ungerechtigkeit' (*DV*, p. 222). Through Marion's voice, Mann points to the chaos that has structured the generation whose stories he has collaged into a chronicle here. Whether through fighting or resistance, there remains an emphasis on the future. When Marion decides to keep Tullio's baby – which she thinks of as Marcel's baby – she is torn: 'Ich will das Kind nicht bekommen. Ich muß es bekommen. […] Wir sollen Kinder bekommen, ich weiß es. Damit es nur weitergehe… Es soll weiter gehen' (*DV*, p. 241). Despite her personal uncertainties, she decides to

[301] Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler*, p. 133.

invest in the child as a symbol of the future. Rather than the child Lee Edelman describes as the centre of an oppressive and restrictive reproductive futurity,[302] the child here offers hope and 'becomes a symbol of continuity':[303] not as a way to shirk responsibility in the present, but rather to motivate it.

At the same time, not everything can be oriented towards a future when our experiences are always anchored in the present. Summarizing the situation among the emigrants in early 1938, the narration tells us:

> In ihren Gesprächen kommt das Wort 'Heimkehr' kaum noch vor, und selbst in Gedanken vermeiden sie die süße und gefährliche Vokabel. Auf die Dauer ist kein Mensch geneigt, alles, was er tut oder läßt, auf eine Zukunft zu beziehen, von der niemand Genaues weiß – weder was den Termin ihres Kommens, noch was irgendwelche andere [*sic*] Details betrifft. Der Alltag versteht keinen Spaß und duldet nicht, daß du ihm mit vagen Wunsch-Träumen ausweichst. Geduldig und wachsam tue deinen Dienst – deinen Lebens-Dienst! Er ist überall gleich streng, gleich ermüdend, gleich beglückend, in der Fremde, oder in der Gegend, die du Heimat nanntest. (*DV*, p. 250)

It is difficult to be oriented solely to the future, when the nature of that future is completely unknown and unknowable; rather, the drudge of the everyday comprises most of the exiles' experience. In addressing an ambiguous 'du' – perhaps pointing towards both the characters and the reading audience – the narrator emphasizes that despite the impossibility of existing based on the future, the actions of the present nevertheless have meaning, and will have meaning, in whatever follows. Additionally, there are positive parts of exile:

> Anderen freilich war die harte, angespannte Existenzform gut bekommen. Die Fremde hatte sie kühner, klüger und besser gemacht. Ihre mitleidende Phantasie, ihr prüfender Verstand, ihr Glaube und ihr Zweifel hatten sich entwickelt. Früher waren sie vielleicht weichlich und faul, unwissend und sentimental gewesen.

[302] Cf. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2, doi:10.1515/9780822385981.
[303] Peter Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, p. 101.

> Das Exil – die harte Schule, durch die sie gingen – hatte sie zu Menschen geformt. (*DV*, p. 251)

The trials of the experience have allowed some to flourish; exile can in itself be a formative experience, even as it exists in the *ex negativo* space of being away from somewhere. In the everyday failures of hard living, disappointment, doubt, and drudgery, there remains a reconstitutive power.

Kikjou, by the end of the novel, has the clearest sense of purpose among the characters as he takes on responsibility for the chronicle, for the loose holding of all the disparate parts of the experiences around him. He expresses his final resolve:

> 'Die Ereignisse und Zustände sollen verändert werden, darauf kommt alles an.' Er wartete auf ein neues Zeichen der Bestätigung; der Engel lauschte und schwieg. 'Wie soll man sie verändern,' fuhr Kikjou fort, 'wenn man nicht einmal wagt, sie zu benennen? – Ich wage es!' rief er ungestüm und warf kühne Blicke. 'Das Verwirrte übersichtlich zu machen; den Schmerz zu lindern, indem man ihn analysiert – welche Aufgabe! Welches Abenteuer! Viel schwieriger und viel schöner, als einen neuen Apparat zu konstruieren, einen Ozean zu überfliegen, eine Schlacht zu gewinnen!' (*DV*, p. 278)

Kikjou recognizes that things have to be changed, and in order to make that possible, they have to be named and written about. In this, he is a version of Johanna from *Flucht in den Norden*, committed to bringing about political change, but the resolve is crystalized in him: there are concrete steps to be taken, consisting in his writing of the chronicle, which is also the concrete step Mann himself has embarked upon. Things have to be documented – as a chronicle – in the confusion in which they exist – as a montage. Writing, in this context, becomes an explicitly political act. Kikjou locates a sense of purpose in his dedication to acting, in his case through writing. Similar views are expressed by Hans, having fought in the Spanish Civil War, who says: 'Die Fascisten [*sic*] sind keine Helden, im Gegenteil. Nur unser Versagen – Uneinigkeit und

Verzagtheit in unseren Reihen – gibt ihnen die Sieges-chance' (*DV*, p. 284). The failure to be avoided is one of morale; evidently running towards, or at least facing, the volcano is inherently likely to lead to failure, but it must be done anyway. Failure to fail bravely is what ensures victory for the enemy, because failing bravely is, in itself, a success, when the polarity ceases to have ultimate meaning. And Dieter, the deserter, even while seemingly running away, shares the drive to fight for his beliefs; the angel, explaining his motives, summarizes: 'Sein Leben wäre gefährdet, auch wenn er im Lande und gehorsam bliebe. Lieber riskiert er es für die Freiheit' (*DV*, p. 286). We know that Dieter's life will be risked either way; the only choice that matters, therefore, is what to risk one's life for, and in Dieter's case, he chooses freedom. Across all these characters, it becomes increasingly clear that only in defending one's beliefs – with literal weapons or verbal ones – is there a sense of purpose, hope, and a future worth surviving to see, or worth dying to bring about.

The letter from Dieter that opens the novel's epilogue includes the line: 'Man geht nicht kaputt – wenn man noch eine Aufgabe hat' (*DV*, p. 294). Purpose keeps the emigrants going. As the novel closes, Dieter is wandering through Marseille:

> Wie lange steht der Jüngling – Dieter, ein Deserteur – auf der Klippe, über dem Meer? – Das Wasser, das geleuchtet hat, erbleicht, und der Wind wird kälter. Ein Tag ist zu Ende, die Sonne will Abschied nehmen, sie sendet ihr Abschieds-Licht. Es ist golden und rot, wie das Licht der Frühe –: nicht nur letzter Gruß eines scheidenden Tages, sondern auch das Versprechen des kommenden. (*DV*, p. 295)

What seems like an ending is also a beginning; just as each failure sets up a new opportunity to succeed, or fail again. There is a future beyond the volcano. In the final lines of the book, Dieter watches the sunset:

> Diese brechenden Strahlen, die, zärtlich und streng zugleich, seine Stirn berühren –: meint ihre Botschaft Anfang oder Ende? Sind sie das glühende Vergehen einer Herrlichkeit, die sich verbraucht hat und zur Ruhe will? Oder bringen sie den harten Segen der Morgenröte, Gnade und Befehl des neuen Tages? (*DV*, p. 295)

With this series of questions, the narrator shifts into a rhetorical mode that seems to prompt us, the readers, to reflect on the image presented. Is it a beginning or an ending? Like the volcano itself, is it both at the same time? Is he – this emblematic fighter who has chosen freedom as his cause – spent, or ready for the new day? Mann provides no final answer. Perhaps it is both together, and only by being spent – by giving everything, and still not reaching an end – can the new day be embarked upon.

Nicole Schaenzler argues that, in *Der Vulkan*,

> Die Möglichkeit, das Leben in den Dienst der sozialen Verantwortung zu stellen, erweist sich […] als einziger adäquater Versuch, das Leiden an den Grenzen der eigenen Individuation zumindest vorübergehend zu bewältigen, wobei besonders der utopisch-revolutionären Gemeinschaftserwartung eine stabilisierende, identitätsbildende Funktion zukommt, durch die die Todesnähe entweder gebannt wird oder aber einen Sinn erhält.[304]

The boundaries of the individual are dissolving, and this is often positive, a way of existing beyond ourselves, through and in others. Precisely because of this, the dissolution does not absolve us from individual responsibility. There has to be a purpose, and there has to be something to hope for. In a diary entry dated 20 June 1937, at which point he was in the process of writing *Der Vulkan*, Mann wrote:

> Alle reiferen Menschen wissen, dass die Welt zwar sehr schlecht, unendlich traurig und wahrscheinlich auch *niemals* völlig zu verändern ist; Dass wir aber trotzdem alles dazutun müssen, sie relativ etwas erträglicher zu machen. Daher unser politischer Einsatz.[305]

[304] Schaenzler, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler*, p. 133.
[305] Klaus Mann, *Tagebücher*, vol. III, p. 141. Original emphasis.

This statement seems to sum up the attitude put forward in *Der Vulkan*. Even if certain to fail, we have an obligation to ourselves to act, to make the changes in the world that have to happen someday – even if we are long dead by then. The goal is simply to make life more liveable. Our obligations are beyond ourselves and our times; as such, the documenting of our stories in chronicle form allows them to exist after our bodies are gone, and, in montage, allows them to exist as they are – were – in pieces come together; there is no perfection, only trying. There is purpose through community and through sacrifice, and there is survival through the traces we leave behind for – and in – others. In this collectivity, *Der Vulkan* goes further than the intersections formed in *Treffpunkt*: here, it is not merely that characters crossover into one another's lives, but rather that they increasingly constitute the lives of others.

Conclusion

Treffpunkt im Unendlichen and *Der Vulkan* are documents of intense moments in time, arranged around simultaneity at specific points rather than linearity across a single story. They chronicle their time, and they do so via montage. There is no simplification for the sake of coherence, and indeed these texts only gain something like coherence when considered beyond their own boundaries, in the eyes and minds of the readers.

In *Treffpunkt*, we see other texts by Mann mixing into the stories, suggesting the potential of viewing Mann's entire oeuvre as one big montage project, and that he himself may have thought of it in this way. The simultaneity of experience is beautiful and terrible, a way of forcing us to acknowledge time other than our time, lives queer to our lives. In this dissolution of the single subject, characters exist with and of others.

Movement is constant, but in no particular direction. Community becomes a crucial endeavour, a way for the individual to be deconstructed queerly and productively.

Der Vulkan brings with it an increased sense of urgency, even as it chronicles a longer time period, albeit in the same structuring of simultaneous moments rather than singular chronology. It is a novel about holding the disparate together without tightly suturing the boundaries between the constituent parts. Writing itself is thematized within and beyond the text as a way of holding together the past, present and future, allowing a form of survival in the inscriptions left behind on, and for, the world, as well as a political act. Dying, in this context, is merely a chance to keep on living in another form, with each transformation further queering the individual. There is no going back, only carrying on, and the hope that allows us to do so. Chased by the fire of the volcano, we might as well let facing it prompt the dissolution that turns out to be a positive and productive force and allow purpose to become the orienting point of whatever remains of our lives.

To fail, to fall to pieces, is in these texts a consequence of inhabiting a space and time that no longer feature the markers for orientation, and these processes enact precisely the undoing and unbecoming that allows forms of survival beyond the self, and beyond the text, to become possible. In Mann's Bildungsromane, we saw that failure as going wrong prompts the protagonists to keep growing, and, in his biofictional novels, failure as unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires displaces his characters from the limits of history and into a positionality defined by hope and longing. Here, in these montage-chronicles, the failure of all things to stand in place means that the disparate parts of a self in development, of desires that stretch beyond oneself, come together in a collection of pieces, both bound to, and unbound from, their time and place of origin,

and so able to survive beyond their contingent positionality in space and time and into the unknown of the future.

Conclusion: Turning and Re-Turning

Across his novels, Klaus Mann explores processes of undoing and unbecoming, formally and thematically, which are presented as ways of failing that renegotiate what success looks like beyond the normative. Failure becomes a way to expand opportunity, to resist and refuse imposed limits, to unpack the accepted, and to encourage hope. Mann's novels refuse to present queer characters and desires as solely positive or negative, instead using the portrayals of such characters and desires as ways to expand understandings of past, present, and future worlds. In this, despite being early examples of queer German literature, his novels anticipate the more nuanced discourses of the decades following. They intervene in the genre of the novel, neither fully subverting nor stabilizing its already unclear parameters, but rather exploiting the opportunities it has already always offered, in a technique borrowed from Mann's immediate context of literary modernism but going further in his emphasis on failure. His works present different versions of undoing form and unbecoming identities, recognizing the incongruity and interconnectedness of all things, and the freedom and potentiality that can be gained through making these processes intentional.

In his approach to the Bildungsroman, Mann makes clear that failing to develop into a successful, fully-formed product is itself a generative process, opening up new ways of being and becoming that take shape precisely through unbecoming. This failure is a necessity of the subgenre that Mann merely highlights: either the protagonist fails to develop, thus meeting the societal norms that are set out in advance to mark an end point, or they do develop, and fail to meet the norms. It is this second option that Mann's protagonists take. There is no 'Vollendung' to reach. Rather, there is desire as

motivator in itself, desires that are specular and routed through others, and the development takes place in this space between self and other, the limits of which are constantly troubled. In *Der fromme Tanz*, multiple failures combine in the telling of a story framed from the outset as a confused attempt to portray confusion. The protagonist, Andreas, reaches no resolution; his 'success' is oriented away from norms and fixities, and instead unfolds through the non-directional movement embodied by dance. Self-expression, and the comprehension by others of that expression, do not always line up, and this incongruity propels further growth. There is never a position to take up, and only positionality in relation to the other, or to the specular self, through which to orient oneself. *Flucht in den Norden* contends with exile as an additional disruptor of spatial paradigms. It represents an attempt to integrate, in its protagonist Johanna, contradictory desires. Her choice, ultimately, in favour of the desire that does not preclude her own development or sense of purpose, prevents any reintegration associated with a Bildungsroman ending. Romance is not enough if the routing of one's own identity through the desired other leads not to expansion, but heteronomy. Instead, at the end, Johanna's self-driven development is only just beginning. Place increasingly fails to provide stability, and Johanna's movement lacks directionality, but here it is because Johanna is passive; such directionlessness, for Mann's Bildungsroman, needs to be active and an end in itself, because to arrive would cut off onwards movement.

When it comes to biofictional novels, Mann positions failure as constitutive of the hope and desire directed towards things, people, times, and spaces that are fundamentally beyond what can be reached or kept. The use of historical figures displaces the characters beyond Mann's novels for the reader, while the multiple positioning of these characters as fictional, historical and autobiographical continually troubles any clear perspective. Just as his Bildungsromane rework what successful

development might look like, his biofictional novels rethink what successful lives might look like. In *Alexander*, the warrior is deconstructed into his conflicting and multi-directional desires, meaning there can be no unilinear progress, and indeed the novel is structured to cast doubt on the teleology of success. In his search for utopia, the protagonist is oriented towards nowhere, longing for knowledge of that which is beyond knowing, for territory beyond any reachable bounds, and for men who do not love him back. Alexander's need for what is outside of himself can be incorporated into his being only as the desire for those things, not ever the achievement. Desire constantly un-anchors and displaces, and is itself un-anchored and displaced, and continually pulls Alexander forwards. There is no end to be reached, and once again no final form to exist in, which points back to the value of using and reworking a historical figure. In *Symphonie Pathétique*, Mann presents his version of Tchaikovsky as aimless and wanting – wanting to be somewhere that does not exist, to flee to somewhere where only the fleeing is really present. The historical figure's identity is displaced, multiple, and uncertain. Beyond the displacement of the biofictional approach, time and space are made malleable and changing, moving into the subjunctive and in and out of past and present, both historicizing and making immediate. Transience is the closest thing to expression, and to identity. Like Alexander, Tchaikovsky's various desires are blurred together so that comprehensive fulfilment is impossible: his desire for his nephew, to follow his mother, to be elsewhere, for death. These desires cloud the character's perception of time and space, mappings only becoming possible via the rerouting through what is desired. These novels are about being undone by time and space, and being remembered across them precisely because of this.

In his montage-chronicles, Mann takes the failure that enables growth, and the failure that is represented by ongoing desire, and transforms it into a failure that

operates in both these ways and is also a way of surviving through crisis, if not in the forms the characters started out in. These novels are situated on the precipice of historical moments, and, instead of reaching into the past, they aim to document the present and thus open it out into the future. The spatial dispersal of exile, even before exile, is enacted formally through the montage, and the documentation of it is achieved through the chronicling perspective. The patchwork texture of the texts makes it clear that a linear portrayal of history is never the full picture. While the parts of Mann's novels make a whole, they are never assimilated into it, retaining their separate identities even as the boundaries between them blur and change. With *Treffpunkt im Unendlichen*, events are structured simultaneously, rather than sequentially, as represented by the montage approach. Space is decentred, and decentres the characters, and can be defined only by the people who occupy it temporarily. Thus, when the people disperse, space does too. Different writer figures and the incorporation of autobiographical material means that perspective is split both within the text and beyond it, a further troubling of positionality that expands on what we see in Mann's biofictional novels. Here, we see selves caught in stop-motion in the processes of dissolution, which is also a breakdown of the boundaries separating people. Narration becomes the fluid bridge between the parts. Reconstitution of identities takes place, and makes the individual other to themselves, caught up with incongruous pieces belonging to the past and the present, the self and others. In trying to loosen the pieces of time and bind them into a text at the same time, there is never a hope for resolution, only an ongoing process. In *Der Vulkan*, the titular volcano represents both a beginning and an ending, the outwards impulse and the inevitable burning, indicating the same circularity of dissolution and reconstitution present in the binding and unbinding of *Treffpunkt*. It is a novel about what happens when the individual moves beyond their known dimensions

of time and space, and beyond the known dimensions of themselves, as necessitated by crisis, becoming a process of atomization that nevertheless offers the potential to be remade as an ongoing process without an end. The characters of the book are pushed away from any of the norms that might once have allowed success to be conceivable, and there is no location to cling to. Nor is there a home to go back to, because home is constituted in both time and space; time having moved forwards, the space it co-constitutes no longer exists as the same point of home. Writing becomes here a way of making form out of what otherwise cannot be held, a way to transmit experiences beyond the individual, as in truth they already always are. This may be a failing proposition, but the attempt is all there is. Words from the past bring value to the present, and the writers of Mann's texts aim to continue this process into the future. In chronicling the montage, *Der Vulkan*, like *Treffpunkt*, attempts to keep hold of the pieces without ever obscuring the seams between them. There is survival to be found in the documents created through these efforts, and survival in the traces each person leaves behind, in writing and in others. There is purpose to be found in collectivity, through which we live on; in action, through which we remember; and in writing, through which we document the present moment for posterity. It is not about achieving a final, perfect form, but about doing whatever is possible to make things better, in the moment, for the future.

Throughout these explorations of Mann's novels, and despite the title of his autobiography, it is clear that there is no single turning point to be located, for example, between Mann's early and exile works. Across his oeuvre, he plays with different formal approaches to the novel, not advancing from one strategy to another, but moving and turning between them. What changes we do see in his later works are escalations of what is already present earlier, as spatial markers that were already uncertain fall away

further with exile, and political concerns that were always underlying become more urgent. In a diary entry from 1941, Mann wrote: 'Each moment is a turning point – not only the fruit of an infinite past but also the bud, the chance, indeed, the promise of an infinite future'.[306] Rather than centring on any any one turning point, then, we might think of Klaus Mann's life and career as composed entirely of turning points, or even just of turning, a constant process which is always already a re-turning – realighting on already used modes, and making them new – but which does not hinge upon some central fulcrum and which refuses to stop. There is always moving out and moving back, dispersion and agglomeration. Klaus Mann turns between generic approaches, between themes, between places and times, never following a single line and never reaching an endpoint.

Mann's version of the queer novel insists on both a formal approach that resists norms and a thematic range that repeatedly brings forth the non-normative desires and identities of his characters. The queer novel, for Mann, is one in which failure is embraced, not as the opposite of success, but as a reworking of it. The line between failure and success is replaced by that same motion of turning, reorienting, rethinking, undoing. The unbecoming of characters, forms, places, and times are failures that highlight the potential inherent in dissolution and that gesture in resistance towards the standards they reject. His own oeuvre is, in the end, one of montage, individual pieces that come together even as they stretch beyond themselves, all concerned with what failure can offer us, and with the traces they leave in us of ourselves, as we leave traces of ourselves in others. This analysis contributes to an understanding of the queering modernist novel, exemplified by Mann's work, as something revolutionary beyond the levels of the individual or form: in its many forms of disintegration, it shows that the

[306] Diary entry dated 22 August 1941, as quoted in *TP,* p. 349.

norm is never enough, and that the hope for something different is a powerful political tool. Beyond this study, the way failure and queerness function in his novels offers up new ways to (re)read Mann's other works, such as his short stories and dramatic works. The analyses of the novels presented here already show that queer failures, understood as queer unbecoming, are precisely what render possible growth, desire, and survival. In Mann's world, where no boundaries hold, there is never an ending.

Bibliography

(i) Primary Sources

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96) (Holzinger, 2016)

Mann, Klaus, *Alexander: Roman der Utopie* (1929) (Rowohlt, 1989)

——*Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Aufsätze* (Transmare Verlag, 1931)

——*Auf verlorenem Posten: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1942–1949*, ed. by Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg (Rowohlt, 1994)

——*Briefe und Antworten 1922–1949*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Rowohlt, 1991)

——*Flucht in den Norden* (1934) (Anaconda Verlag, 2020)

——*Der fromme Tanz: Das Abenteuerbuch einer Jugend* (1926) (Bruno Gmünder, 1982)

—— 'Die Heimsuchung des europäischen Geistes', *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, 17.3 (1949), pp. 131–47, doi:10.5169/seals-758772

—— *Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1969)

—— *Das innere Vaterland: Literarische Essays aus dem Exil*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Edition Spangenberg, 1986)

——*Kind dieser Zeit* (1932) (Rowohlt, 2005)

—— *Mephisto: Roman einer Karriere* (1936) (Hamburger Lesehefte Verlag, 2020)

—— *Mit dem Blick nach Deutschland: Der Schriftsteller und das politische Engagement*, ed. by Michel Grunewald (Edition Spangenberg, 1985)

—— *The Pious Dance: A Classic Coming-of-Age Gay Romance Novel*, ed. by Arthur C. Rauscher, translation uncredited (Ovid Publishing Group, 2024)

—— *Prüfungen: Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1968)

——*Symphonie Pathétique: Ein Tschaikowsky-Roman* (1935) (Rowohlt, 2019)

——*Tagebücher 1931–1949*, ed. by Joachim Heimannsberg, Peter Laemmle and Wilfried F. Schoeller, 6 vols (Rowohlt, 1995)

—— *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in this Century* (1942) (Serpent's Tail, 1987)

——*Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1932) (Anaconda Verlag, 2020)

—— *Vor dem Leben* (Gebrüder Enoch, 1925)

——*Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (1939) (e-artnow, 2021)

——*Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht* (1952) (Rowohlt, 2019)

——*Woher wir kommen und wohin wir müssen: Frühe und nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin (Edition Spangenberg, 1980)

—— 'Woran glaubt die europäische Jugend?', *Recherches Germaniques*, 13 (1983), pp. 237–68, doi:10.3406/reger.1983.1511

——*Das Wunder von Madrid: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1936–1938,* ed. by Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg (Rowohlt, 1993)

——*Zahnärzte und Künstler: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1933–1936*, ed. by Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg (Rowohlt, 1993)

——*Zweimal Deutschland: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1938–1942*, ed. by Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg (Rowohlt, 1994)

——*Das zwölfhundertste Hotelzimmer: Ein Lesebuch*, ed. by Barbara Hoffmeister (Rowohlt, 2006)

Schiller, Friedrich, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans: Eine romantische Tragödie* (1801) (Reclam, 1976).

(ii) Secondary Sources

Abbott, H. Porter, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative,* 3rd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2021), doi:10.1017/9781108913928

Albé, Francesco, 'Choreographies of (Dis)order: Dance and Same-Sex Desire in Thomas Mann's *Unordnung und Frühes Leid* (1925) and Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz* (1926)', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 90.3 (2021), pp. 214–28, doi:10.1080/09593683.2021.1999604

——'Queer (Dis)locations: Klaus Mann's Early Works and Weimar Homosexual Culture (1919–1933)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2023), doi:10.17863/CAM.107266

Amthor, Wiebke, and Irmela von der Lühe (eds), *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Neue Forschungen zu Leben und Werk Klaus Manns* (Peter Lang, 2008)

Anson, Edward M., ‘To the Ends of the World: What the Campaign Was All About’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. by Daniel Ogden (Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 67–81, doi:10.1017/9781108888349.005

Arnold, Heinz Ludwig (ed.), *Klaus Mann* (text + kritik, 1987)

Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 11th edn (Narr Francke Attempto, 2015)

Augé, Marc, *Non-Places*, trans. by John Howe (Verso, 2000)

Baden, Hans Jürgen, *Literatur und Selbstmord: Cesare Pavese, Klaus Mann, Ernest Hemingway* (Klett, 1965)

Bakhtin, M. M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. and intro. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 2011)

—— *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern W. McGee (University of Texas Press, 1986)

Bal, Mieke, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* 4th edn (University of Toronto Press, 2017)

Barasch-Rubinstein, Emanuela, *Mephisto in the Third Reich: Literary Representations of Evil in Nazi Germany* (De Gruyter, 2015)

Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (Fontana, 1977)

——‘Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives’, in *Myths and Mythologies: A Reader*, ed. by Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Routledge, 2014), pp. 290–307, doi:10.4324/9781315475776

Bartram, Graham, ‘The German novel in the long twentieth century’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. by Graham Bartram (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–14, doi:10.1017/CCOL0521482534.001

Bateman, Benjamin, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2017), doi:10.1093/oso/9780190676537.001.0001

Beachy, Robert, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (Vintage Books, 2015)

Beddow, Michael, *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge University Press, 1982)

Benjamin, Walter, *Gesammelte Schriften, vol. II.1-3: Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7th edn (Suhrkamp, 2019)

—— *Gesammelte Schriften, vol. III: Kritiken und Rezensionen*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Suhrkamp, 1991)

Berman, Marshall, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Verso, 1983)

Bersani, Leo, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Birch, Elna, *Der biographische Roman in der neuen deutschen Dichtung: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde einer Hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität zu Heidelberg* (Verlagsdruckerei Ger. Hillje, 1936)

Bloch, Ernst, *Briefe 1903–1975*, vol. II, ed. by Jan Robert Bloch and others (Suhrkamp, 1985)

——*Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Suhrkamp, 2016)

——*Geist der Utopie: Zweite Fassung* (Suhrkamp, 1985)

Boes, Tobias, 'Apprenticeship of The Novel: The Bildungsroman and The Invention of History, Ca. 1770–1820', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 45.3 (2008), pp. 269–88, doi:10.1353/cls.0.0047

——*Formative Fictions: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the 'Bildungsroman'* (Cornell University Press, 2012), doi:10.7591/9780801465659

Boone, Joseph Allen, *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Borcherdt, Hans Heinrich, 'Der deutsche Bildungsroman', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 182–238

Bormann, Alexander von, 'Das Werk als Auftrag. Formsemantische Hinweise zu Klaus Manns Romanen', in *Klaus Mann*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (text + kritik, 1987), pp. 62–72

Bowen, Elizabeth, *A Time in Rome* (Vintage, 2010)

Breger, Claudia, ‘Cosmopolitanism, Controversy, and Collectivity: Zadie Smith’s Networked Narration’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Narrative Theories*, ed. by Zara Dinnen and Robyn Warhol (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 83–98, doi:10.1515/9781474424752

Brittnacher, Hans R., ‘Prinzessin Tebab – die Versuchung des Hendrik Höfgen. Oder: Klaus Manns Pakt mit dem Teufel’, in *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Neue Forschungen zu Leben und Werk Klaus Manns*, ed. by Wiebke Amthor and Irmela von der Lühe (Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 83–94

Bruford, Walter Horace, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: ‘Bildung’ from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge University Press, 1975)

Bullock, Philip Ross, *Pyotr Tchaikovsky* (Reaktion Books, 2016)

Burgess, R. W, and Michael Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time: The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD: Vol. I: A Historical Introduction to the Chronicle Genre from Its Origins to the High Middle Ages* (Brepols, 2013), doi:10.1484/M.SEM-EB.5.106285

Butler, Judith, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (Routledge, 2011), doi:10.4324/9780203828274

——*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2006)

——*Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), doi:10.4324/9780203499627

Carr, Godfrey, ‘“The Golden Age or Nothingness”: Some German intellectuals and the idea of suicide’, in *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Anthony Phelan (Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 92–109

Carter, Angela, *Nights at the Circus* (Vintage, 1994)

Casaretto, Alexa-Désirée, *Heimatsuche, Todessehnsucht und Narzissmus in Leben und Werk Klaus Manns* (Peter Lang, 2002)

Castle, Gregory, 'The Modernist Bildungsroman', in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 143–73, doi:10.1017/9781316479926.007

——*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (University Press of Florida, 2006)

Chamberlin, Rick, 'Coming Out of His Father's Closet: Klaus Mann's "Der Fromme Tanz" as an Anti-"Tod in Venedig"', *Monatshefte*, 97.4 (2005), pp. 615–627, doi:10.3368/m.XCVII.4.615

Choubey, C. A. M. T. W., 'Künstler dieser Zeit: Klaus Mann's Novels of the 1930s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2011) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/künstler-dieser-zeit-klaus-manns-novels-1930s/docview/1442483366/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Corona, Ignacio, and Beth E. Jörgensen (eds), *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre* (State University of New York Press, 2002)

Culler, Jonathan D., *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Basil Blackwell, 1988)

De Groot, Jerome, *The Historical Novel* (Routledge, 2010), doi:10.4324/9780203868966

Dean, Carolyn J., ‘The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender, and the History of Sexuality,’ *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, 33.3 (1994), pp. 271–96, doi:10.2307/2505475

Delhey, Yvonne, Rolf Paar, and Kerstin Wilhelms (eds), *Autofiktion als Utopie // Autofiction as Utopia* (Wilhelm Fink, 2019), doi:10.30965/9783846764060

—— ‘Autofiktion als Utopie. Zur Einführung’, in *Autofiktion als Utopie // Autofiction as Utopia*, ed. by Yvonne Delhey, Rolf Paar, and Kerstin Wilhelms (Wilhelm Fink, 2019), pp. 1–8, doi:10.30965/9783846764060_002

Derrida, Jacques, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge, trans. by various (Routledge, 1992)

Devitt, Amy J., *Writing Genres* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2008)

DiBattista, Maria, and Emily O. Wittman (eds), *Modernism and Autobiography* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), doi:10.1017/CBO9781139177832

——‘Modernism and Autobiography: Introduction’, in *Modernism and Autobiography*, ed. by Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. xi–xx, doi:10.1017/CBO9781139177832.

Dilthey, Wilhelm, ‘Der Bildungsroman’, in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 120–22

Dimock, Wai Chee, ‘A Theory of Resonance’, *PMLA*, 112.5 (1997), pp. 1060–71, doi:10.2307/463483

Dinnen, Zara, and Robyn Warhol (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Narrative Theories* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), doi:10.1515/9781474424752

Dirschauer, Wilfried, *Klaus Mann und das Exil* (Heintz, 1973)

Doctorow, E. L., *Poets and Presidents* (Pan Macmillan, 1994)

Downey, Sharon D, 'The Evolution of the Rhetorical Genre of Apologia', *Western Journal of Communication*, 57.1 (1993), pp. 42–64, doi:10.1080/10570319309374430

Dumville, David, 'What is a Chronicle?', in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Rodopi, 2002), pp. 1–27, doi:10.1163/9789004487659_004

Duncan, Ian, 'Against the Bildungsroman', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 80.1 (2019), pp. 13–19, doi:10.1215/00267929-7247230

Durrani, Osman, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Klaus Mann's Input into Doctor Faustus', *Oxford German Studies*, 34.2 (2005), pp. 173–179, doi:10.1179/174592105x84996

Durzak, Manfred, 'Walter Benjamin und die Literaturwissenschaft', *Monatshefte*, 58.3 (1966), pp. 217–31

Ebermayer, Erich, *Eh' ich's vergesse - : Erinnerungen an Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, Klaus Mann, Gustaf Gründgens, Emil Jannings und Stefan Zweig*, ed. by Dirk Heisserer (LangenMüller, 2005)

Edelman, Lee, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Duke University Press, 2004), doi:10.1515/9780822385981

Ellis, Lorna, *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750–1850* (Associated University Presses, 1999)

Engelhardt, Gabriele, *Die Zeit in Klaus Manns früher Prosa: Untersuchungen zur Geistes- und Ideengeschichte seines Werks* (Dissertations- und Fotodruck Frank, 1982)

Esty, Jed, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford University Press, 2011), doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199857968.001.0001

Ferris, David S., *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), doi:10.1017/CBO9780511793257

Fischer, Kathryn, 'Das Pronomen ist frei vom Körper – aber es ist nicht frei vom Geschlecht,' *Tagesspiegel*, 13 May 2020 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/queerspiegel/das-pronomen-ist-frei-vom-korper-aber-es-ist-nicht-frei-vom-geschlecht-4149826.html> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Foley, Barbara, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Cornell University Press, 1986)

Ford, Alison, 'Klaus Mann and the Weimar Republic: Literary Tradition and Experimentation in His Prose, 1924–1933' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 1999) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-weimar-republic-literary-tradition/docview/301557040/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: The Will to Knowledge,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2020)

——*The History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2020)

——*The History of Sexuality, Vol. III: The Care of the Self,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2020)

——*The History of Sexuality, Vol. IV: Confessions of the Flesh,* trans. by Robert Hurley (Penguin, 2023)

Fowler, Alastair, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Clarendon Press, 1982)

Freeman, Elizabeth, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Duke University Press, 2010), doi:10.1515/9780822393184

Ganani, Uri, and Dani Issler, 'The World of Yesterday versus The Turning Point: Art and the Politics of Recollection in the Autobiographical Narratives of Stefan Zweig and Klaus Mann', *Naharaim*, 8.2 (2014), pp. 210–26, doi:10.1515/naha-2014-0010

Gide, André, *The Counterfeiters*, trans. by Dorothy Bussy (Penguin, 1966)

Goebel, Eckart, and Sigrid Weigel (eds), *Escape to Life: German Intellectuals in New York: A Compendium on Exile after 1933* (De Gruyter, 2012)

Gołaszewski, Marcin, and Dawid Ligocki, '"Ein Schriftsteller, der politische Gegenstände in sein künstlerisches Schaffen einbeziehen will, muß an der Politik gelitten haben." Klaus Mann und die Politik. Mephisto – Roman einer Karriere oder

Karriere eines Romans', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Germanica*, 11 (2015), pp. 121–46, doi:10.18778/1427-9665.11.10

González, Octavio R., *Misfit Modernism: Queer Forms of Double Exile in the Twentieth-Century Novel* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), doi:10.1515/9780271087399

Graham, Sarah (ed.), *A History of the Bildungsroman* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), doi:10.1017/9781316479926

——'Introduction', in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1–9, doi:10.1017/9781316479926.001

Halberstam, Judith [now Jack], *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press, 2005), doi:10.18574/nyu/9780814790892

——*The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), doi:10.1515/9780822394358

Halliwell, Martin, *Transatlantic Modernism: Moral Dilemmas in Modernist Fiction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), doi:10.1515/9781474497121

Halperin, David M., *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford University Press, 1995)

Hansel, Beate, *Die Liebesbeziehungen des Helden im deutschen Bildungsroman und ihr Zusammenhang mit der bürgerlichen Konzeption von Individualität* (Peter Lang, 1986)

Hardin, James N., ‘Introduction’, in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James N. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. ix–xxvii

——(ed.), *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman* (University of South Carolina Press, 1991)

Härle, Gerhard, *Männerweiblichkeit: Zur Homosexualität bei Klaus und Thomas Mann* (Athenäum, 1988)

Hegel, G. W. F., *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II* (Suhrkamp, 1970)

Hermand, Jost, and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1978)

Hill, Amelia, ‘The Titanic, Sinclair C5 and Brexit: the Museum of Failure is coming to the UK’, *Guardian*, 25 December 2025 <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/dec/25/titanic-sinclair-c5-brexit-museum-of-failure-coming-uk> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Hite, Christian (ed.), *Derrida and Queer Theory* (Punctum Books, 2017), doi:10.21983/P3.0172.1.00

Höcherl, Katrin, *Ein Leben im Dazwischen: Klaus Mann nach 1945: Das Scheitern eines literarisch-politischen Intellektuellen* (Bolz, 2003)

Hoffer, Peter T., *Klaus Mann* (Twayne Publishers, 1978)

——‘Klaus Mann’s Mephisto: A Secret Rivalry’, *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 13.2 (1989), pp. 245–57, doi:10.4148/2334-4415.1234

Houe, Poul, ‘Vanishing Points, Turning Points, and Points of No Return: Geographies of Somewhere, Elsewhere, and Nowhere’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 59.1 (2004), pp. 1–22, doi:10.1111/j.0105-7510.2004.00793.x

Huneke, Samuel Clowes, ‘The Reception of Homosexuality in Klaus Mann’s Weimar Era Works’, *Monatshefte*, 105.1 (2013), pp. 86–100, doi:10.1353/mon.2013.0027

Hunt, Lynn, ‘Foucault’s Subject in *The History of Sexuality*,’ in *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*, ed. by Domna C. Stanton (University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 78–93

Iser, Wolfgang, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* (Wilhelm Fink, 1976)

Iwand, Marc Anthony, ‘Klaus Mann and Europe: Critical Visionary and Disappointed Idealist in the Twentieth Century’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 1999) < https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-europe-critical-visionary-disappointed/docview/304552599/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Jacobs, Jürgen, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Wilhelm Fink, 1972)

——, and Markus Krause, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Gattungsgeschichte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (C.H. Beck, 1989)

Jameson, Fredric, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso, 2005)

Jeffers, Thomas L., *Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), doi:10.1057/9781403979155

Jernigan, Harriett Virginia-Ann, 'The Descending March of Humanity: Masochism and the Modernist Imaginary' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1998) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/descending-march-humanity-masochism-modernist/docview/304457251/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Johnson, Jill, 'The Figures of Narcissus and Faust in Literature and Film' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Texas at Dallas, 2018) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/figures-narcissus-faust-literature-film/docview/2199500470/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Jones, Angela, *A Critical Inquiry into Queer Utopias* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), doi:10.1057/9781137311979

Keller, James Robert, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann* (Peter Lang, 2001)

Kendall, Paul Murray, *The Art of Biography* (Allen & Unwin, 1965)

Kennedy, Joyce, Michael Kennedy, and Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 6th edn (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Kerker, Armin, *Ernst Jünger, Klaus Mann: Gemeinsamkeit und Gegensatz in Literatur und Politik: zur Typologie des literarischen Intellektuellen* (Bouvier, 1974)

Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

Kirst-Gundersen, Karoline Paula, 'Walter Benjamin's Theory of Narrative' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989)

<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/walter-benjamins-theory-narrative/docview/303784070/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Klaus Mann zum Gedächtnis (Querido, 1950)

Koestenbaum, Wayne, *Hotel Theory* (Soft Skull Press, 2007)

Köhn, Lothar, *Entwicklungs- und Bildungsroman: Ein Forschungsbericht* (Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1969)

Kontje, Todd Curtis, *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* (Camden House, 1993)

——'The German Tradition of the Bildungsroman', in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 10–32, doi:10.1017/9781316479926.002

——*Private Lives in the Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992)

Koselleck, Reinhart, *Kritik und Krise: Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Suhrkamp, 1973)

——*Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Suhrkamp, 2022)

Kniesche, Thomas W. and Stephan Brockmann (eds), *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic* (Camden House, 1994)

——'Introduction: Weimar Today', in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephan Brockmann (Camden House, 1994), pp. 1–18

Krafft-Ebing, R. von, *Psychopathia sexualis: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der contraren Sexualempfindung. Eine klinisch-forensische Studie* (Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1892)

Kröhnke, Friedrich, *Propaganda für Klaus Mann* (Materialis, 1981)

Kroll, Fredric, '*Treffpunkt im Unendlichen* (1979)', in *Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bouvier, 1984), pp. 82–118

Kvam, Wayne, 'Gründgens, Mann, and Mephisto', *Theatre Research International*, 15.2 (1990), pp. 141–50, doi:10.1017/S0307883300009238

Lackey, Michael, *Biofiction: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2021), doi:10.4324/9781003159414

——'Biographical Fiction and the Creation of Possible Lives', interview with Chika Unigwe, in *Conversations with Biographical Novelists: Truthful Fictions across the Globe*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 247–58, doi:10.5040/9781501341496

——(ed.), *Biographical Fiction: A Reader* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017)

——(ed.), *Conversations with Biographical Novelists: Truthful Fictions across the Globe* (Bloomsbury, 2019), doi:10.5040/9781501341496

——'Death-Bringing History and the Origins of Biofiction', in *Biofiction and Writers' Afterlives*, ed. by Bethany Layne, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), pp. 12–25

——'Introduction: A narrative space of its own', in *Biographical Fiction: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 1–15

——‘Locating and Defining the Bio in Biofiction’, *Auto/biography Studies*, 31.1 (2016), pp. 3–10, doi:10.1080/08989575.2016.1095583

——‘The Rise of the Biographical Novel and the Fall of the Historical Novel’, *Auto/biography Studies*, 31.1 (2016), pp. 33–58, doi:10.1080/08989575.2016.1092290

Lanser, Susan S., ‘Queering Narrative Voice’, *Textual Practice*, 32.6 (2018), pp. 923–37, doi:10.1080/0950236X.2018.1486540

——‘Till Death Do Us Part: Embodying Narratology’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Narrative Theories*, ed. by Zara Dinnen and Robyn Warhol (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 117–31, doi:10.1515/9781474424752

Lauretis, Teresa de, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1984)

Layne, Bethany (ed.), *Biofiction and Writers' Afterlives* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020)

Lejeune, Philippe, ‘Autobiography in the Third Person’, trans. by Annette and Edward Tomarken, *New Literary History*, 9.1 (1977), pp. 27–50, doi:10.2307/468435

Lindeiner, Karina von [now von Lindeiner-Stráský], ‘Sammlung zur heiligsten Aufgabe: Politische Künstler und Intellektuelle in Klaus Manns Exilwerk’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2006)

Lindeiner-Stráský, Karina von [formerly von Lindeiner], ‘“... der harte Glanz des Hasses”: Satire und Humanismus im Exilwerk Klaus Manns’, *Oxford German Studies*, 46.1 (2017), pp. 106–20, doi:10.1080/00787191.2017.1282662

Lorenz, Dagmar C. G., *Nazi Characters in German Propaganda and Literature* (Brill, 2018), doi:10.1163/9789004365261

Lothian, Alexis, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York University Press, 2019), doi:10.18574/9781479854585

Love, Heather, 'Introduction: Modernism at Night', *PMLA* , 124.3 (2009), pp. 744–48, doi:10.1632/pmla.2009.124.3.744

Lukács, Georg, *Essays über Realismus* (Aufbau-Verlag, 1948)

——[as György] *Der historische Roman* (Aufbau-Verlag, 1955)

——*Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik* (Aisthesis Verlag, 2009)

Malcolm, Fiona, 'The Literary Relationship between Klaus and Thomas Mann' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 2003), doi:10.22024/UniKent/01.02.86427

Mallet, Michel, 'Writing for the Future: "Die Forderung des Tages" as Concrete Utopia in Klaus Mann's Narratives of Exile', *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 61.3 (2025), pp. 151–76, doi:10.3138/seminar.61.3.1

Maltzan, C. von, 'The Author, His Work and His Critics: An Outline and Evaluation of the Controversy Surrounding Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*', *Literator*, 12.1 (1991), pp. 60–70, doi:10.4102/lit.v12i1.747

——*Masochismus und Macht: Eine kritische Untersuchung am Beispiel von Klaus Manns "Mephisto, Roman einer Karriere"* (Heinz, 2001)

Man, Paul de, ‘Autobiography as De-Facement’, *MLN*, 94.5 (1979), pp. 919–30, doi:10.2307/2906560

Mann, Thomas, *Briefe 194–1955 und Nachlese*, ed. by Erika Mann (S. Fischer, 1965)

——‘Der Entwicklungsroman’, in *Essays II: 1914–1926*, ed. by Hermann Kurzke and others (S. Fischer, 2002), pp. 173–76

——‘Vorwort’, in *Klaus Mann zum Gedächtnis* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1950), pp. 7–11

Mao, Douglas, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (eds), *Bad Modernisms* (Duke University Press, 2006), doi:10.1515/9780822387824

Marotta, Chiara, *Klaus Mann: A European-American Author* (Peter Lang, 2019), doi:10.3726/b16022

Martini, Fritz, ‘Bildungsroman – Term and Theory’, trans. by Claire Baldwin and James Hardin, in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James N. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 1–25

——‘Der Bildungsroman: Zur Geschichte des Wortes und der Theorie’, in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 239–64

Marx, Friedrich, ‘Väter und Söhne: Literarische Familienentwürfe in Thomas Manns “Unordnung und frühes Leid” und Klaus Manns “Kindernovelle”’, *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch*, 17 (2004), pp. 83–103 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24744319> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Mattenklott, Gert, ‘Homosexualität und Politik bei Klaus Mann’, in *Sammlung 2: Jahrbuch für antifaschistische Literatur und Kunst*, ed. by Uwe Naumann (Röderberg-Verlag, 1979), pp. 29–38

Mayer, Gerhart, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (Metzler, 1992)

McBride, Patrizia C., *The Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (University of Michigan Press, 2016), doi:10.3998/mpub.8814717

McCallum, E. L., and Mikko Tuhkanen, ‘Introduction: Becoming Unbecoming: Untimely Mediations’, in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. by E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (State University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 1–21, doi:10.1515/9781438437743

—— (eds), *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (State University of New York Press, 2011), doi:10.1515/9781438437743

McKeon, Michael (ed.), *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)

McLaren, Margaret A., ‘Desire’, in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. by Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 99–101, doi:10.1017/CBO9781139022309.021

McHoul, A.W., and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (UCL Press, 1995)

Medicus, Thomas, *Klaus Mann: Ein Leben* (Rowohlt Berlin, 2024)

Mercier, Thomas Clément, ‘Beyond Failure: Queer Theory’s Fallibilities’, in *Routledge International Handbook of Failure*, ed. by Adriana Mica and others (Routledge, 2023), pp.446–67, doi:10.4324/9780429355950

Mica, Adriana, and others, ‘FAIL! Are We Headed towards Critical Failure Studies?’, in *Routledge International Handbook of Failure*, ed. by Adriana Mica and others (Routledge, 2023), pp. 3–22, doi:10.4324/9780429355950-2

——(eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Failure* (Routledge, 2023), doi:10.4324/9780429355950

Miles, David H., ‘The Picaro’s Journey to the Confessional: The Changing Image of the Hero in the German Bildungsroman’, *PMLA* , 89.5 (1974), pp. 980–92, doi:10.2307/461371

Miller, D. A., *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton University Press, 1981)

Miller, J. Hillis, ‘Preposterous Preface: Derrida and Queer Discourse’, in *Derrida and Queer Theory*, ed. by Christian Hite (Punctum Books, 2017), pp. 24–67, doi:10.2307/j.ctv2s0j57v.4

Miller, Meredith, ‘Lesbian, Gay and Trans Bildungsromane’, in *A History of the Bildungsroman*, ed. by Sarah Graham (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 239–66, doi:10.1017/9781316479926.011

Minden, Michael, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

More, Thomas, *Utopia*, trans. by Clarence H. Miller, 2nd edn (Yale University Press, 2014)

Moretti, Franco, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (Verso, 1987)

Morgenstern, Karl, 'Ueber das Wesen des Bildungsromans', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 55–72

——'Über den Geist und Zusammenhang einer Reihe philosophischer Romane', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 45–54

——'Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 73–99

Müller, Götz, *Gegenwelten: Die Utopie in der deutschen Literatur* (Metzler, 1989)

Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2019), doi:10.18574/9781479868780

Naumann, Uwe (ed.), *Klaus Mann: Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Rowohlt, 1984)

——*Ruhe gibt es nicht, bis zum Schluss: Klaus Mann (1906–1949): Bilder und Dokumente* (Rowohlt, 1999)

——(ed.), *Sammlung 2: Jahrbuch für antifaschistische Literatur und Kunst* (Röderberg-Verlag, 1979)

Nelson, David R., 'From Assembled Images to Assembled Texts: Literary Montage in Weimar Germany' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2020) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/assembled-images-texts-literary-montage-weimar/docview/2414773554/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Neumann, Harald, *Klaus Mann: Eine Psychobiographie* (Kohlhammer, 1995)

Nicolai, Elke, *'Wohin es uns treibt-- ': Die literarische Generationsgruppe Klaus Manns 1924-1933: Ihre Essayistik und Erzählprosa* (Peter Lang, 1998)

Nieradka, Magali Laure (ed.), *Wendepunkte-Tournants: Beiträge zur Klaus-Mann-Tagung aus Anlass seines 100. Geburtstages, Sanary-sur-Mer 2006* (Peter Lang, 2008)

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, ed. by André Hoffmann (Andhof, 2017)

——*Der Wille zur Macht: Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werter* (Alfred Kröner, 1930)

Nixon, Timothy K., 'The Homo-Exilic Experience: Queerness, Alienation, and Contrapuntal Vision' (unpublished doctoral thesis, George Washington University, 2005) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/homo-exilic-experience-queerness-alienation/docview/304999170/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Oates, Joyce Carol, 'Notes on Failure', *The Hudson Review*, 35.2 (1982), pp. 231–45, doi:10.2307/3850783

Ohi, Kevin, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), doi:10.5749/minnesota/9780816694778.001.0001

O'Sullivan, Lara, 'Kissing Bagoas', *Greece and Rome*, 71.1 (2024), pp. 22–40, doi:10.1017/S0017383523000219

Oswin, Natalie, 'Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space', *Progress in Human Geography*, 32.1 (2008), pp. 89–103, doi:10.1177/0309132507085213

Palmer, Helen, *Queer Defamiliarisation: Writing, Mattering, Making Strange* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022)

Parini, Jay, '"Fact or Fiction: Writing Biographies Versus Writing Novels" from *Some Necessary Angels: Essays on Writing and Politics* (1997)', in *Biographical Fiction: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 299–312

Pascal, Roy, *The German Novel: Studies* (Manchester University Press, 1956)

Peterson, V. Spike, 'Towards Queering the Globally Intimate', *Political Geography*, 56 (2017), pp. 114–16, doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.01.001

Plathe, Axel, *Klaus Mann und André Gide: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte französischer Literatur in Deutschland* (Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1987)

Plutarch, *Lives, Vol. VII: Demosthenes and Cicero; Alexander and Caesar*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Harvard University Press, 1919)

——*Moralia, Vol. III: Sayings of Kings and Commanders; Sayings of Romans; Sayings of Spartans; The Ancient Customs of the Spartans; Sayings of Spartan Women; Bravery of Women*, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt (Harvard University Press, 1931)

——*Moralia, Vol. IV: Roman Questions; Greek Questions; Greek and Roman Parallel Stories; On the Fortune of the Romans; On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander; Were the Athenians More Famous in War or in Wisdom?*, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt (Harvard University Press, 1936)

——*Moralia, Vol. VI: Can Virtue Be Taught?; On Moral Virtue; On the Control of Anger; On Tranquility of Mind; On Brotherly Love; On Affection for Offspring; Whether Vice Be Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness; Whether the Affections of the Soul are Worse Than Those of the Body; Concerning Talkativeness; On Being a Busybody*, trans. by W. C. Helmbold (Harvard University Press, 1939)

Pozzi, Alessandra, 'Reflections on the Meaning of the Book, Beginning with its Physicality: Instrument or Fetish?', *Italian Sociological Review*, 1.2 (2011), pp. 38–46, doi:10.13136/ISR.V1I2.17

Prince, Gerald, 'Introduction to the Study of the Narratee', trans. by Francis Mariner, in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 7–25

Rancière**,** Jacques, *The Politics of Literature*, trans. by Julie Rose (Polity, 2011)

Redfield, Marc, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the 'Bildungsroman'* (Cornell University Press, 1996), doi:10.7591/9781501723179

Rensen, Marleen, ‘Klaus Mann, Music, and the Art of Transformation in Biofiction’, *Auto/biography Studies*, 38.1 (2023), pp. 55–81, doi:10.1080/08989575.2023.2192048

Riesthuis, Joachim, ‘Blacks and Exiles: African American and German Exiled Authors, 1933–1952’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 2004) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/blacks-exiles-african-american-german-exiled/docview/305098549/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Rodiek, Christoph, *Erfundene Vergangenheit: Kontrafaktische Geschichtsdarstellung (Uchronie) in der Literatur* (V. Klostermann, 1997)

Rosenkranz, Karl, ‘Einleitung über den Roman’, in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 100–19

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979)

Sammons, Jeffrey L., ‘The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification’, in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James N. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 26–45

——‘The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister’s Legacy?’, *Genre*, 14.2 (1981), pp. 229–46

Savietto, Valentina, ‘Intermediales Potenzial und musikalisches Pathos. Zu Klaus Manns Musiker-Roman *Symphonie Pathétique*’, in *Intermedialität – Multimedialität: Literatur und Musik in Deutschland von 1900 bis heute,* ed. by Raul Calzoni, Peter Kofler, and Valentina Savietto (V&R Unipress, 2015), pp. 53–76

Schaenzler, Nicole, *Klaus Mann als Erzähler: Studien zu seinen Romanen 'Der fromme Tanz' und 'Der Vulkan'* (Igel Verlag Wissenschaft, 1995)

Schmid, Helga, *Uchronia: Designing Time* (Birkhäuser, 2020), doi:10.1515/9783035618112

Schmidinger, Veit Johannes, *Klaus Mann und Frankreich: Eine Untersuchung dieser Beziehung* (Tectum Verlag, 2005)

Schmidt, Arwed, *Exilwelten der 30er Jahre: Untersuchungen zu Klaus Manns Emigrationsromanen* Flucht in den Norden *und* Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten (Königshausen & Neumann, 2003)

Schmieder, Falko, 'No Place Yet: Ernst Bloch's Utopia in Exile', in *Escape to Life: German Intellectuals in New York: A Compendium on Exile after 1933*, ed. by Eckart Goebel and Sigrid Weigel (De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 128–41, doi:10.1515/9783110258684.128

Schneider, Rolf, 'Klaus Mann', *Aufbau*, 12.12 (December 1956), pp. 1105–19

Schröder, Peter, *Klaus Mann zur Einführung* (Junius, 2002)

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Tendencies* (Duke University Press, 1993), doi:10.1515/9780822381860

Selbmann, Rolf, 'Einleitung', in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 1–44

——(ed.), *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988)

Sexsmith, Sinclair, ‘Jack Halberstam: Queers Create Better Models of Success’, *Lambda Literary*, 1 February 2012 <https://lambdaliterary.org/2012/02/jack-halberstam-queers-create-better-models-of-success/> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Sitney, P. Adams, *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1990)

Smith, John H., ‘Cultivating Gender: Sexual Difference, *Bildung*, and the *Bildungsroman*’, *Michigan Germanic Studies*, 13.2 (1987), pp. 206–25

Sorg, Reto, and Bodo Würffel (eds), *Utopie und Apokalypse in der Moderne* (Wilhelm Fink, 2010), doi:10.30965/9783846750599

Spangenberg, Eberhard, *Karriere eines Romans: Mephisto, Klaus Mann und Gustaf Gründgens: Ein dokumentarischer Bericht aus Deutschland und dem Exil 1925-1981* (Edition Spangenberg, 1982)

Spotts, Frederic, *Cursed Legacy: The Tragic Life of Klaus Mann* (Yale University Press, 2016), doi:10.12987/9780300220971

Stahl, Ernst Ludwig, ‘Die Entstehung des deutschen Bildungsromans im achtzehnten Jahrhundert’, in *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, ed. by Rolf Selbmann (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), pp. 123–81

Stević, Aleksandar, *Falling Short: The Bildungsroman and the Crisis of Self-Fashioning* (University of Virginia Press, 2020), doi:10.2307/j.ctvzgb7sk

Stockton, Kathryn Bond, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Duke University Press, 2009), doi:10.1515/9780822390268

Stone, Irving, '"The Biographical Novel" from *Three Views of the Novel* (1957)', in *Biographical Fiction: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lackey (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp.115–30

Streitberger, Chiara Nannicini, 'Chronicle, Autobiography or Literary Text? Italian Testimonies of Flossenbürg Concentration Camp', *Life Writing*, 15.1 (2018), pp. 79–91, doi:10.1080/14484528.2017.1239055

Swales, Martin, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton University Press, 1978), doi:10.1515/9781400871315

——'Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman', in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James N. Hardin (University of South Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 46–68

Swindell, Anthony, 'Three 1930s Novels About Satan', *Journal of the Bible and its Reception*, 1.2 (2014), pp. 237–51, doi:10.1515/jbr-2014-0016

Szabo, Lucian-Vasile, 'Utopia and Uchronia: From Thomas More to H. G. Wells', *Revue de Transylvanie* , 27.4 (2018), pp. 126–36

Taruskin, Richard, *On Russian Music* (University of California Press, 2009), doi:10.1525/9780520942806

Theophil, Manuel, 'About the Decapitation of Corpses – Reflections of Ernst Bloch's *Ungleichzeitigkeit* in the Novels of Klaus Mann (Including a Glimpse into the Present)', *Colloquium (Klagenfurt)*, 4.3 (2019), pp. 129–48, doi:10.23963/cnp.2019.4.3.12

Thiel, Marlis, *Klaus Mann: Die Sucht, die Kunst und die Politik* (Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998)

Tompkins, Jane P. (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)

Twellmann, Marcus, 'Gattungsgeschichte als transnationale Funktionsgeschichte literarisch-sozialer Institutionen: Ein Problemaufriss mit Blick auf den Bildungsroman', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 94.3 (2020), pp. 385–415, doi:10.1007/s41245-020-00114-2

Utsch, Susanne, *Sprachwechsel im Exil: Die 'linguistische Metamorphose' von Klaus Mann* (Böhlau, 2007)

Vendrell, Javier Samper, 'Queer Utopia in Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz*', *The German Quarterly*, 94.1 (2021), pp. 83–98, doi:10.1111/gequ.12157

Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina, *Autobiographieforschung: Alte Fragen – neue Perspektiven* (Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), doi:10.30965/9783657787340

—— (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography / Autofiction,* 3 vols (De Gruyter, 2018), doi:10.1515/9783110279818

Wegel, Christina Jessica, 'Klaus Mann and Suicide in a Larger Historical Context' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2004) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/klaus-mann-suicide-larger-historical-context/docview/305215209/se-2> [accessed 24 March 2026]

Weil, Bernd, *Klaus Mann: Leben und literarisches Werk im Exil* (R.G. Fischer, 1983)

Wellek, René, and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature,* 1st edn (Harcourt Brace, 1949)

White, Hayden, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)

White, Richard, 'Walter Benjamin: 'The Storyteller' and the Possibility of Wisdom', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 51.1 (2017), pp. 1–14, doi:10.5406/jaesteduc.51.1.0001

Wilper, James P., *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German* (Purdue University Press, 2016)

Winckler, Lutz, 'Artist und Aktivist. Zum Künstlerthema in den Exilromanen Klaus Manns', in *Klaus Mann*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (text + kritik, 1987), pp. 73–87

——'"ein richtig gemeines Buch, voll von Tücken": Klaus Manns Roman *Mephisto*', in *Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bouvier, 1984), pp. 46–80

Wolff, Rudolf (ed.), *Klaus Mann, Werk und Wirkung* (Bouvier, 1984)

Zenobi, Luca, 'Sadomasochism and Identity Narratives in the Weimar Republic: Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*', *Whatever*, 3 (2020), pp. 5–24, doi:10.13131/2611-657X.whatever.v3i0.66

Zynda, Stefan, *Sexualität bei Klaus Mann* (Bouvier, 1986)