

1913/2017

Is it possible to look at the present as if it were already in the past? This is precisely what Andreas Mühe does. And this is precisely how he inscribes his photographs with such an unsettling and enthralling message. Whether photographing politicians, animals, landscapes, or buildings, it always seems as if someone from the future is looking back at us.

At first, I was confused when Andreas Mühe asked me if I could imagine passages from my book about the year 1913 becoming part of the catalog for his exhibition at the House of Photography in Hamburg. He wrote me that he and I are both interested in the eternal awakening and advent of Modernism, and that the process of combining the real, the probable, the impossible, and the possible was very close to his heart. Then, when I saw for the first time how Andreas Mühe wanted to interweave my collages from 1913 with his photographs, my initial confusion turned into enthusiasm: It seems that this tying together of very different threads from 1913 and 2017 could create an entirely new tapestry, one whose patches ultimately depict the same utopias, which we can see failing; similar supposed 'heroes'; and unavoidable catastrophes.

When he read 1913 and imagined his pictures along with it, Andreas Mühe felt that, some 100 years later, perhaps we are once again confronted with a similar situation. This hadn't occurred to me yet. But since Andreas Mühe apparently looks back at us from the future and can thus create timeless pictures of politicians, refugees, buildings, and people whose pathos arises from this very distance, I was delighted to have my stories from 1913 overrun by the flickering flood of images in this catalog.

Florian Illies

It's a beautiful August day in 1913. Or, to be more precise: 'There was a barometric low over the Atlantic; it moved eastwards towards a high-pressure area situated over Russia, not yet showing any inclination to bypass that high by heading northwards. The isotherms and isotheres were functioning as expected. The air temperature was in the appropriate proportion to the mean annual temperature, to the temperature of the coldest and the warmest months and to the aperiodic monthly temperature fluctuations. The rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the changing phases of the moon, of Venus, of the rings of Saturn and many other significant signs all corresponded to the forecasts in the astronomical almanacs. The water vapour in the air was at its highest buoyancy level, and air humidity was low. To sum it up more briefly in a way that corresponds to fact, despite being a little old-fashioned: it was a lovely August day in the year 1913.'

These are the opening lines of Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities*. Alongside Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, this was the third classic of the modern era, saturated with the explosive power of the year 1913. But what was the weather really like in Vienna during these August days of 1913?

There was not one single beautiful August day in the year 1913. No, in Vienna the average temperature was 16°. It was the coldest August of the entire twentieth century. Perhaps it's a good thing that people didn't know that back in 1913.

Harry Graf Kessler, dressed, as always, in a white three-piece suit, travels by train from glittering Paris to turbulent Berlin, falling for Westphalia's charms en route. 'Journey through Westphalia', he notes in his diary on 3 June. 'Fields of flowers, green rye and corn as far as the eye can see; softly swelling hills, a golden-blue summer haze over mountain and valley. There's something voluptuous, heavy, expansive, maternal to the mood, a stark contrast to the intimate beauty of the French countryside. This Germanness of the German countryside will have to invent a style for itself, just like the French countryside made Impressionism its own.'

These were the words of Harry Graf Kessler - exactly a week after *Die Brücke* disbanded in Berlin, a group of artists who had spent eight years capturing the voluptuous, heavy, expansive and maternal qualities of the German landscape in German Expressionism. And a group to which Kessler paid no attention whatsoever.

In an article about first-aid instruction the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna writes on 6 September 1913, as if it were the most natural thing in the world: 'Just as the fate of the injured man on the battlefield depends on the quality of the first bandage, so first aid is of the greatest importance to the prognosis in everyday accidents.'

On 4 March there is a big dinner at the German Embassy in London. Among those present is, of course, Harry Graf Kessler, that German snob in the white three-piece suit whose address book has 10,000 entries, friend of Henry van de Velde, Edvard Munch and Aristide Maillol, who founded the Cranach Press in Weimar and had to clear his desk as museum director there over some supposedly salacious Rodin watercolours.

That same Graf Kessler who commutes between Paris, Weimar, Brussels, London and Munich as one of the great catalysts of modern art and Art Nouveau. It is through him that we become a little better acquainted with the queen of England. At this particular reception he had just introduced the German ambassador, Von Lichnowsky (whose artistically minded, Picasso-collecting, wife liked him), to George Bernard Shaw. Now, at this dinner, she pays him back: Kessler is introduced to the English queen. 'She looked reasonably good, in silver brocade with a crown of diamonds and big turquoise stones.'

Otherwise she was rather a trial: 'I couldn't leave her standing on her own, and she couldn't find a way out of the conversation, and you have to keep winding the poor thing up like a run-down watch, but that only works for thirty seconds at a time.' Incidentally, as he confides to his diary, there is no threat of war, or so he has heard: 'The European situation has been completely reversed for a year and a half. The Russians and the French are forced to be peaceful, as they can no longer rely on England's support.' Well, then.

In March 1913 Albert Schweitzer graduates as a doctor of medicine. His thesis, 'The Psychiatric Assessment of Jesus', was unsettling but satisfactory. The next day he sells all his goods and chattels. Then on 21 March 1913 he takes his wife, Helene, and travels to Africa. In French Equatorial Africa, he founds the jungle hospital of Lambaréné, on the Ogooué.

In early May, Rudolf Steiner writes to his mother: 'And the war keeps threatening to come.' But he has no time to worry about it. He wants to set up an Anthroposophical Centre at last, known as the Johannesbau. And after his plans to erect this building in Munich are dismissed by the building commission, he speaks to his devotees in Stuttgart on 18 May and tells them to avoid trying to do anything new in Munich, as something about the city was dying. So Steiner explains: 'New cultures have never been able to settle in this dying place.' For a long time he has sensed that Dornach, near Basel, is the place for anything new and flourishing. But it was still too early for that.

When Georg Trakl comes back from Venice to Austria, the declining city becomes a source of retrospective inspiration. In the last months of 1913 poetry assails him with unanticipated force, so much so that his skull almost shatters. A linguistic frenzy reveals his internal inferno.

You can see him dragging motifs around with him, trying to capture them verse by verse and, if it still doesn't work, crossing them out again and then carrying them on to the next poem, to the next year. 'In an elevated sense unimprovable', Albert Ehrenstein wrote of Georg Trakl. But that is incorrect. Even he still needed improving. But only by himself. His poems are montages of things heard and things read (above all, Rimbaud and Hölderlin), and things sensed. But it may also happen to him, as in the poem 'Transfiguration' from November 1913, that what begins as a 'blue spring' that 'breaks from the dead rocks' turns finally into the 'blue flower', 'which sounds quietly among the gilded rocks'. Romanticism is always the starting-point, but it is also the longed-for destination of Trakl, the quiet musician.

Nine times the blue flower blooms in Trakl's poems in autumn 1913 alone. But in his inscription for the grave of the nineteenth-century poet Novalis it already blossoms in an early version. But no sooner has the 'blue' faded and been crossed out than many new verbal experiments follow. Then the flower can be anything: first 'nocturnal', then 'radiant' and finally 'rosy'. In their bid to sound prophetic, Trakl's poems lack concision. Instead, what glimmers here in all its magnificence, in all its power, is the vocabulary of the German language of the Salzburg late Baroque, before Trakl opens the door to the engine room of his inspiration and allows the pestilential breath of death to blow over it, the icy breath of his soul. Everywhere flowers are dying, the forests darkening, the deer fleeing, voices falling mute.

A new man takes to the stage of 1913: Heinrich Kühn. A middle-class intellectual from Dresden, born in the house 'Nine Muses'. Thanks to his father's financial support, he lives as a gentleman of independent means in Innsbruck, dedicating himself entirely to photography. Kühn is a deliberate eccentric, who wears either a Tyrolean costume or English suits, with a long, rumpled coat over them while he takes his photographs - this can be seen on his bookplate, in which it's hard to tell which is more crumpled, his overcoat or his folding camera. He had an old-fashioned and naïve aura to him. And yet he managed to take photographs of the utmost modernity. His pictures from 1913 are fresh and full of innocence, grace and strength.

The cover of this book shows Mary and his eldest daughter darting across the crest of a hill, the heavy August clouds pressing down from above. White is one of the few choices available to them for their clothing, along with blue, red and green - the father buys the children special 'photography clothes', which are suitable for the pure colour tones of the three layers of the Autochrome plate.

Heinrich Kühn is a loving father, but a radical artist. If one of the children accidentally hogs the painting, destroying the balance of the image, he rigorously airbrushes them out, even if it took him hours to

get all the children in position in the first place. What Kühn wants to depict in his photographs is nothing less than paradise. Children at play, children resting, women in swirling clothes, the innocence of nature. 'The Fall of Man', he writes in a letter 'takes two forms: Social democracy. And Cubism.'

Albert Schweitzer is in Strasbourg, working on his third doctorate. He has already been a D.Phil. for some time, ever since completing his philosophical dissertation 'The Religious Philosophy of Kant from the Critique of Pure Reason to Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason'.

He's a doctor of theology too: 'The Problem of the Last Supper: A Study Based on the Scientific Research of the Nineteenth Century and the Historical Accounts'. After becoming a lecturer in theology in Strasbourg and even vicar of the Church of St Nikolai, he decided to become a doctor of medicine as well, receiving his licence to practice in 1912.

But the Doctor and Vicar and Lecturer and D.Phil. and Lic.Theol. aren't enough. His doctoral thesis 'The Psychiatric Study of Jesus' has yet to be completed. With the burden of threefold roles tiring him out, the secondary literature threatens to defeat him. To make sure he doesn't fall asleep while reading, he develops the habit of putting a bucket of cold water under his desk.

When he can't follow the explanations in the books any more, he takes off his socks, puts his feet in cold water, then goes on reading. He's almost finished now. And he has his next great goal in sight: Africa.

Kaiser Franz Joseph doesn't want to be alone. Arm in arm with Frau Katharina Schratt he walks through the extensive parkland of Bad Ischl, for many years his resort of choice. And Frau Schratt has been his companion for many years too: they know each other from the days when Sissi was still alive. And yet - and this is the imperial wish - she will never become his lover, only ever his companion. So the two of them, separated by an age difference of thirty years, spend their days together. At night the Kaiser would like to be alone. However, at about seven o'clock in the morning he leaves his imperial villa and walks over to see Frau Schratt in her villa 'Felicitas', where they take tea together. Then he mingles with the spa guests.

He generally goes unrecognised, because he doesn't wear his decorations on holiday, dispenses with his bodyguard and looks like any knobbly old retired officer. He wants to be entirely ordinary. But sadly he is the Kaiser. So he goes along with that. But he writes letters of wonderful ordinariness to Frau Schratt. Oh, he laments at one point how his bunions hurt when he has to stand up at the banquet and raise a toast to the king of Bulgaria.

There couldn't possibly be another war, Norman Angell was sure of that. His 1911 book *The Great Illusion* became a worldwide bestseller. In 1913 he writes a well-received 'Open Letter to German Students', through which his theories reach an even greater audience. At the same time the fourth edition of his book is published. As ever more vexing noises push their way northwards from the Balkans that early summer, the intellectuals in Berlin, Munich and Vienna are able to calm their nerves by reading the British publicist's book. In it Angell expounds his theory that the era of globalisation renders world wars impossible, because all countries are now economically interlinked to such a high degree. He also says that, alongside the economic networks, close international ties in communication and above all in the world of finance mean that any war would be preposterous.

He argues that, even if the German military wanted to pit its strength against England, there is 'no establishment of significance in Germany which would not suffer greatly'. This, he claims, will prevent war, because 'the entire German financial world would exert its influence over the German government, thereby putting a stop to a situation which would be ruinous for German trade'. Angell's theory convinced intellectuals all over the world. David Starr Jordan, the President of Stanford University, utters these great words after Angell's lecture in 1913: 'The Great War in Europe, that eternal threat, will never come. The bankers won't come up with the money needed for such a war, and industry won't support it, so the statesmen simply won't be able to do it. There will be no Great War.'

Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, who was in Leipzig for the inauguration of the Monument to the Battle of the Nations, has just achieved the Serbians' withdrawal from Albania in the Second Balkan War through an adept diplomatic initiative. This relieves and impresses the German Kaiser Wilhelm so much that he visits the heir in his castle in Konopišt. The two men get along magnificently. Franz Ferdinand organises a two-day hunt, on which Kaiser Wilhelm II, believe it or not, shoots 1,100 pheasants. Unfortunately, he only eats one for dinner.

At the very same time Wilhelm Bölsche's epic three-volume work *Die Wunder der Natur* is published, with the lovely title *The Triumph of Life* in the 1913 English-language edition. Bölsche, a divine writer, toned down Modernity, or more specifically the findings of modern science, for the bourgeois public, sprinkling on a fine dusting of sugar to make it more palatable. Instead of providing supporting evidence for Darwin, his intention was to depict the 'Mysteries of the Universe's Splendour'.

This gave rise to some unusual biological and moral theories. The public responded enthusiastically in 1913 to Bölsche's reasoning, for example, that all higher beings are, in essence, nice to one another.

He claimed that conflict only arises in the animal kingdom when an opponent is deliberately provoked. So not only would countries no longer wage war in the future, but animals wouldn't either. This, at least, was Wilhelm Bölsche's comforting message.

Small wonder that his book was prominently displayed on all respectable imperial bookshelves. Kurt Tucholsky described the basic configuration of the upper-class library as follows: 'Heyse, Schiller, Bölsche, Thomas Mann, an old book of verse ...'. In essence, Bölsche's work was a book of verse as well - in that he inscribed peaceful verses into the album of Modernity, dreaming up a world in which the animals behave as peacefully and affectionately as they do in Franz Marc's paintings.

On the Sunday morning when Hitler leaves Vienna, the city is frozen with shock: one of the most senior military officers and secret service personnel in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Colonel Alfred Redl, has been convicted of espionage during the night and has shot himself in his hotel room at 1.45 in the morning. Strangely, the pistol had been placed in his room, room number 1 at the Hotel Klomser, where he always stayed, in return for his signature on the paper in which he confessed his guilt. And the dishonoured Colonel Redl asks the secret service staff to leave the room quietly, before pulling the trigger.

When Kaiser Franz Joseph, on getting up at four o'clock in the morning, learns the extent of Redl's military espionage, he sighs deeply: 'So this is the brave new world? And these the creatures that it brings forth? In the old days, that wouldn't have been imaginable.' An announcement is placed in the newspapers which tries to maintain appearances: 'The General Chief of Staff of the Prague Army Corps, Colonel Alfred Redl, has taken his own life in an attack of mental confusion. The talented officer, who had a great career ahead of him, had been suffering from insomnia for some time.' In that way they attempted to package the terrible news that one of the most influential generals in Austro-Hungary had betrayed all their military plans to the enemy as suicide caused by insomnia.

But Vienna hadn't reckoned with Egon Erwin Kisch, the young reporter with the newspaper Bohemia. That Sunday, Kisch is waiting in vain, at the away game between his own football team, Sturm, and Union Holeschowitz, for their most dangerous striker, the fitter Hans Wagner. Then, on Monday, when Wagner explains himself to the captain and hems and haws, Kisch learns that on Sunday morning he had been recruited by the military to break into a private apartment in the Army Corps headquarters. He had seen strange things there: ladies' tulle dresses, perfumed draperies, pink silk sheets. Kisch deftly placed an article in a Berlin newspaper about the true background to the death of Colonel Redl, which he had researched thank with the help of one of his team-mates.

So by Thursday 29 May the War Ministry's military review has to reveal the whole truth: 'In the night of Saturday the 24th to Sunday the 25th of this month, the late Colonel Redl took his own life. Redl carried out the deed when he was about to be accused of the following serious shortcomings, proven beyond all doubt: 1. Homosexual intercourse, which caused him financial difficulties. 2. Sale of classified official information to agents of a foreign power.'

Colonel Redl - ironically awarded the 'Order of the Iron Crown Third Class' for his services to counter-espionage, the army's brightest hope, who reported to the Kaiser in person and was in close contact with the General Staff of the German Reich, General von Moltke - this Colonel Redl was suddenly exposed as a character out of an operetta.

And letters like this: 'I long for the day when the soul will no longer wish, no longer be able to dwell in this ill-omened, gloom-plagued body, when it will abandon this figure of mockery, of filth and foulness, nothing but an all too true reflection of a godless, cursed century.' This is a letter to Ludwig von Ficker, his patron, father-substitute, even his friend, if one can use such a word about Trakl. His publisher, too, because Der Brenner, his magazine, will be the first place in which Trakl's desperate litanies appear.

This year he wanders aimlessly and hopelessly between three places: Salzburg is the 'rotted city', Innsbruck the 'most brutal, vulgar city' and Vienna, finally, 'the city of filth'. He can't sit in the train, because it would mean having someone directly opposite, facing him, and he can't bear that. So he always stands in the corridor, his expression shy and hunted. If someone looks at him, he sweats so much he has to change his shirt.

But then, in March 1913, he suddenly receives a letter from Leipzig, from the Kurt Wolff Verlag. They would like to publish a volume of his poems in their new series, 'Der jüngste Tag' ('The Day of Reckoning'). Will things turn out for the best after all?

Ernst Jünger is bored during his summer holidays in Rehburg, on the banks of Lake Steinhude. Tall oaks rustle next to the family's country house in Brunnenstrasse, the view stretches for miles. But Jünger feels imprisoned in the house, with all its little turrets and alcoves. Dark wood panelling from Germany's industrial era set the tone for the entire property; the windows hardly allow any light in through their stained-glass panes. Magnificent wood-carvings sit enthroned on the door frames. The hunting room is always gloomy, the windows painted over with the scene of a belling stag and a skulking fox. This is where Ernst's father sits with his friends, smoking fat cigars and hoping to shut the world out.

Ernst Jünger feels his room is suffocating him, he lies on his bed up in the loft and goes back to reading adventure stories set in Africa.

It's raining. But as soon as the sun appears, its sheer summer-like energy warms the air outside in minutes. Jünger opens the window. His parents are setting off on an excursion. The water rolls down the hard leaves of the huge rhododendron bushes in the garden and drips heavily on the ground. He can hear it. Plop, plop, plop. Other than this, it's deathly quiet this August lunchtime.

Eighteen-year-old Ernst walks down the wide, dark brown steps to the cloakroom and searches for his warmest winter coat, the one that's lined with fine fur. He takes the fur hat down from the hat rack too, and then sneaks out of the house. It's a humid 31° outside. Jünger walks through the rhododendron bushes along the narrow path leading to the greenhouses. This is where his father cultivates his tropical plants and vegetables.

As Jünger opens the door to the cucumber house, musty, stale heat hits him in the face. He quickly shuts the door behind him, pulls on the fur cap and winter coat and sits down on a wooden stool next to the flowerpots. The cucumber shoots snake wildly up in the air like darting green tongues. It's two o' clock in the afternoon.

The thermometer inside the greenhouse is showing 42°. Jünger smiles. It can't be much hotter than this even in Africa, he thinks.

On 9 March the profoundly depressive 32-year-old Virginia Woolf sends the manuscript of her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, to her publishers. She has worked on it for six years. In *The Voyage Out* Woolf has her male protagonist give a startling account of the situation in 1913: 'Just consider: it's the beginning of the twentieth century, and until a few years ago no woman had come out by herself and said things at all. There it was going on in the background, for all those thousands of years, this curious, silent, unrepresented life. Of course we're always writing about them, abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from women themselves.' But that 'silent, unrepresented life' went on. Barely fifty copies of the book were sold in 1913, and by 1929 it was only 479. *The Voyage Out* was a difficult journey for Virginia Woolf.

The year 1913 sees the publication not only of the first volume of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* but also of a work of revolutionary force for twentieth-century philosophy: Edmund Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*.

Husserl's great paradigm shift for philosophy was a turning away from the positivist realities of the surrounding world and a move towards

the facts of consciousness. And 1913 was the year in which every aspect of the world within became a reality: as a picture, as a book, as a house, as an illusion.

The Innsbruck publication *Der Brenner* carries out a survey on Karl Kraus. In June, Arnold Schönberg writes these fine words in response: 'In the dedication with which I sent my *Theory of Harmony* to Karl Kraus, I said something along these lines: "I have, it seems, learned more from you than one really should if one wishes to remain independent." That sums up, not the extent, but certainly the level of the appreciation that I have for him.' A very rare record of silent admiration, high regard and eloquence from this overheated year.

After days of rain, the sunshine is causing mushrooms to shoot up from the ground all over the place. Sigmund Freud, visibly relieved that he managed to handle the gathering of psychoanalysts with dignity and good grace (and with a nice defeat for Jung), goes mushrooming on Sunday with his family. They all have their little wicker baskets with them, covered with checked cloths, and their eyes are fixed on the mossy ground of the Vienna Woods.

Sometimes they go to the Semmering mountain too, where everyone whispers about the love nest that Mahler's widow, Alma, is building out there for herself and the chaotic painter Kokoschka. But Freud and his family are drawn to the woods, not the summer residences. The children slip into their dirndls and shorts, Freud into his lederhosen, his green jacket and the hat with the gamsbart, and then the hunt begins. Freud leads the mushroom hunters - and it is always he who, with his eagle eye, finds the best mushrooms in the most hidden of spots. He then takes a few steps forward, pulls off his hat, throws it over the mushroom and whistles shrilly through his silver pipe, bringing his fellow hunters storming out from the undergrowth.

Then, once he has the whole family's rapt attention, he finally lifts his hat and lets them admire the booty. Anna, his beloved daughter, is usually granted the honour of laying the mushroom in her basket.

On 8 November in the Residenztheater in Munich the unfinished drama *Woyzeck*, written in 1836 by Georg Büchner, who was born in 1813, is given its première, after years of lobbying by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. It belongs wonderfully in this year and has chosen exactly the right moment to enter the public consciousness. What a play, what language, what pace! Almost eighty years old, and still quite contemporary.

It is a parallel story to Heinrich Mann's novel *Man of Straw*, except much more violent and archaic. *Woyzeck* is abused by a doctor for medical experiments, and then by the army captain, who humiliates him. When his beloved Marie betrays him with the brash 'drum major', he can no longer control his aggression and stabs her. The victim becomes the

perpetrator. 'The central point becomes', in the words of the critic Alfred Kerr - 'tormenting humanity, not the tormented human being.'

It is a proletarian drama, a play of revolt and rebellion. Rilke is speechless with enthusiasm: 'It is a play like no other, that abused human being standing in his stablejacket in the universe, malgré lui, in the infinite procession of the stars. That is theatre, that is what theatre could be.' But it is above all the celebration of a unique kind of language that runs around between hallucination and fairy tale, the gutter and poetry, and comes down on you like a buzzard. At the end of the play a fairy tale is told about a lonely child: 'And since there was no one left on earth, it wanted to go to heaven, and the moon looked down on it so kindly and when at last it came to the moon it was a piece of rotten wood and then it went to the sun and when it came to the sun it was a withered sunflower. And when it came to the stars, they were little golden flies, stuck on the way the shrike sticks them on the blackthorn and when it wanted to go back to earth, the earth was an upturned pot and the child was all alone.'

This was a fairy tale very much in line with the taste of 1913. Unconsoling, beyond any utopian thoughts but full of poetry.

When Heinrich's forty-second birthday approaches, Thomas invites his brother and his wife over for an intimate dinner. Other than that, he spends most of his time working on his big book *Man of Straw*. He is disciplined, filling page after page of his small, square notebooks with delicate handwriting. His merciless analysis of German society under Kaiser Wilhelm II is almost finished. Now and then he sketches nudes, mostly stout women in risqué poses, rather reminiscent of George Grosz's brothel sketches. Later, after his death, they will be found in the bottom drawer of his writing desk.

Heinrich Mann negotiates with different journals about an advance publication of *Man of Straw* and strikes a deal with the Munich magazine *Zeit im Bild*. Publication is set to begin on 1 November 1913. In exchange for a payment of 10,000 Reichmarks, Mann consents to 'undertake the deletion of sections of an overly erotic nature' where necessary. Fair enough, Mann may have thought to himself, in this case it's more a question of scenes of an overly socially critical nature.

The idea had come to him a few years before, in a café on Unter den Linden in Berlin, when he witnessed the sight of crowds of bourgeois pressing curiously up against the windowpanes to see the Kaiser pass by. 'The old inhumane Prussian military spirit has been joined here by the machine-like, massive scale of the metropolis,' wrote Mann, 'and the result is the lowering of human dignity below every known measure.' Mann quickly comes up with the idea for a paper factory which prints nothing but postcards glorifying the Kaiser; he engages in thorough research, travels to paper mills and printworks, makes fas-

tidious notes, talks with the workers, acting like a reporter. Richard Wagner - particularly his vexingly narcotic effect on the spirit of protest - is such a puzzle to him that, for the first time, and in the interests of research, he goes to see Lohengrin. So while his brother is preoccupied with 'Royal Highness' and the con-man Felix Krull, Heinrich Mann is in search of German subservience - and establishes with horror that it is, in fact, everywhere. He has a judge explain the legal implications of the crime of 'Offence against the Sovereign' to him in minute detail. But that is precisely what it will be, his book *Man of Straw: an insult to His Majesty*, to the German bourgeois spirit.

In April, S. Fischer publishes the biggest best-seller of 1913: *The Tunnel*, by Bernhard Kellermann. Within four weeks 10,000 copies have been sold, and after just six months 100,000.

The *Tunnel* tells the story of the construction of a tunnel from New York to Europe. Deep under the Atlantic, hordes of people burrow towards one another. It's a crazy story: science fiction mixed with realism, social criticism with engineering romanticism, capitalist belief in progress with wearily apocalyptic fantasy. The tunnel collapses, leading to strikes, rage and misery below the earth, and stock market flotations, dreams of marriage and disillusionment above. Then, after twenty-four years, the workers from Europe and America reach out their hands to one another thousands of metres under the Atlantic. Success at last. Two years later the first train travels under the earth between the continents. It takes twenty-four hours, but no one wants to board it. By then development has raced on, and the tunnel, which was once the technological utopia, is now a sentimental piece of history - people are flying from America to Europe by plane, and in half the time.

And so Kellermann succeeds in creating a great novel - he understands the passion for progress that characterises the era he lives in, the faith in the technically feasible, and at the same time, with delicate irony and a sense for what is really possible, he has it all come to nothing. An immense utopian project that is actually realised - but then becomes nothing but a source of ridicule for the public, who end up ordering their tomato juice from the stewardess many thousand metres not under but over the Atlantic. According to Kellermann's wise message, we would be wise not to put our utopian dreams to the test.

Hitler and Häusler pay 3 Marks a week in rent for their spartan room. He lives exactly as he did in Vienna: no drinking, no truck with women, a watercolour every day, sometimes even two. Instead of St Augustine's Church he's painting St Mary's. Otherwise it's the old routine. After only two days he's found an easel and set it up in the city centre.

When he's finished a few views of the city, he walks through the big Munich beer halls and tries to sell his views to tourists in the evening at the Hofbräuhaus. The jeweller Paul Kerber sometimes sells his paintings too, as does the Schell perfumery on Sendlinger Strasse.

As in Vienna, Adof Hitler, the painter who failed to get into the art academy, has no contact with the artistic avant-garde of the city. We don't know whether he saw the exhibitions of degenerate art by Picasso or Egon Schiele or Franz Marc, which caused such a furore in Munich in 1913. The artists of his generation who had made a career for themselves were alien to the art-school reject throughout his life, and he eyed them with suspicion, envy and hatred.

Throughout 1913 he never gets a single visitor. He paints by day, and until three or four in the morning he reads political pamphlets and instructions on how to become a member of the Bavarian parliament. The tailor's wife sees that at one point, and tells him he ought to give up those silly political books and paint pretty watercolours instead. Hitler replies, 'Dear Frau Popp, do we know what we need in life, and what we don't?'

On 9 November, the German day of destiny, the two of them meet for a second time in Berlin. Again it is a tragedy. In the late morning they walk through the Tiergarten for an hour. Then Felice has to go to a funeral, after which she says she will call at Kafka's hotel, the Askanischer Hof. She doesn't. It rains slowly and incessantly. Again Kafka sits in the hotel, as he did in March, waiting for news from Felice. But nothing happens. At 4.28 p.m. Kafka boards the train for Prague. And he informs Grete Bloch, the intermediary: 'I departed from Berlin like someone who went there quite without justification.'

On the same 9 November in Berlin, the well-known psychoanalyst and author Otto Gross is arrested by Prussian police officers in Franz Jung's flat and extradited to Austria. There his father declares him insane, and he is committed to the sanatorium at Tulln. It is a battle between father and son, a generational conflict of a very different kind. Controlling the uncontrollable son by declaring him unfit to handle his own affairs.

At the end of May the poet Stefan George comes to Heidelberg and stays, as he always does, in the boarding-house at 49 Schlossberg. He wants to gather all his disciples around him there at Whitsun. But for now it's very hot, so George goes to the swimming pool. Not to swim, of course: the prophet, who is already walking through life like a portrait bust, would never do that. No, to see a beautiful boy with curly hair: Percy Gothein, the schoolboy and teacher's son, barely seventeen, who will become the prototype for the poet's disciple.

But one afternoon in 1913, when Percy is in the lido without his tie and without his velvet trousers, he spots Stefan George lying in the grass by one of the bathing huts. The conversation, Percy trustingly reports, 'soon came back to the ancient Greeks, whom one likes to imagine like that, and even more in the altogether'. And so on. In the evening Stefan George continues to work on his big book *The Star of the Federation*, disguised as a swirling mystery, myth-heavy, somnambulist verses in praise of boy-love.

And to his brother Heinrich he writes: 'I have only ever been interested in decay, and that is precisely what prevents me from taking an interest in progress.' And then: 'But what nonsense is that. Things are serious when all the wretchedness of the times and of the fatherland weigh down on one, and one does not have the strength to shape it. But that is part of the wretchedness of the times and of the fatherland. Or will it find shape in *Man of Straw*? I look forward more to your works than I do to my own. You are spiritually better off, and that's the crucial thing.' And then, with unusual warm brotherly love: 'It is of course crassly tactless of me to write to you like this, for what can you reply?' But Heinrich Mann, who will conclude his great novel of the times, *Man of Straw*, in the next few months, clearly knows what to reply.

We don't know his reaction. But we do know Thomas's: 'For your intelligent, tender letter I thank you from the bottom of my heart.' And again, a kind of sudden declaration of love to his sibling: 'In my fondest hours I have long dreamt of writing another long and faithful book of life, a continuation of *Buddenbrooks*, the story of us five siblings. We are worth it. All of us.' Never again will he grant his brother so deep an insight into his soul, so tortured by weariness and doubts.

In Berlin, on 13 February, Rudolf Steiner holds one of his great lectures - 'Leonardo's Spiritual and Intellectual Greatness at the Turning Point of the New Age'. Steiner speaks for a long time, almost two hours. The audience hang on his every word. He, just like Oswald Spengler, talks a lot about things falling into ruin, about the decline of an era. But he regards this as necessary to make room for the new: 'For in those dying forces we finally sense, even see, the forces preparing themselves for the future, and in the sunset, the promise and hope of a new dawn moves closer to us. Our souls must always respond to human evolution in such a way that we tell ourselves: All progress is so. When what we have created turns to ruin, we know that out of those ruins, new life will always blossom forth.'

Once the Christmas dinner is finally over and the handing out of presents is due to begin, Papa Corinth asks the children for just a moment's patience. He fetches his easel, a stretcher frame and his paints. Charlotte also slips out of the room, telling the children

she's keeping an eye out for Father Christmas. But it's really so she can dress up as Father Christmas herself. The children, Thomas and Wilhelmine, wait with eager anticipation. Then Father Christmas - in actual fact Mother Christmas - arrives, and the giving of presents can begin. But Lovis Corinth leaves his untouched; he only has eyes for his canvas - and with just a few energetic brushstrokes he depicts the Christmas tree with its glowing red candles. Next to it in the painting is Thomas, completely immersed in looking at his new red-curtained puppet theatre. Little Wilhelmine, in a white dress, has just unwrapped a puppet and is already moving on to the next present. Charlotte, on the left, still has her Father Christmas costume on. In the foreground of the picture, to the left-hand side, is the still uncut marzipan cake. But once Corinth has painted it in the most beautiful shades of brown, he wipes his fingers on a cloth and cuts himself a piece.

New Year's Eve 1913. Oswald Spengler writes in his diary: 'I remember how I felt as a boy when the Christmas tree was plundered and cleared away, and everything was as prosaic as it had been before. I cried all night in bed, and the long, long year to the following Christmas was so long and bleak.' And again: 'Life in this century oppresses me today. Everything redolent of comfort, of beauty, of colour, is being plundered.'

Robert Musil is tired and goes to bed before his wife. But he can't get to sleep, and eventually he hears her going to the bathroom to get herself ready. Then he takes his notepad, which always lies on his bedside table, and his pencil, and simply writes down what he is experiencing: 'I hear you putting on your night dress. But it doesn't stop there by any means. Again there are a hundred little actions. I know you are hurrying; clearly it is all necessary. I understand: we watch the mute gestures of animals, amazed that they, who are supposed to have no soul, line up their actions from dawn till dusk. It is exactly the same. You have no awareness of the countless moves you make, above all those that seem necessary to you, and remain quite unimportant. But they loom widely into your life. I, as I wait, feel it by chance.' Love is also apparent in feeling, marvelling, enthusiastic, tender hearing and observing.

About Florian Illies

Born in 1971, studied art history in Bonn and Oxford, graduated with a thesis on changes in taste in the nineteenth century. In 1997, he joined the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, where he served as editor of the newspaper's Berlin section and the arts section of the Sunday edition, among other responsibilities.

In 2003, along with Amélie von Heydebreck, he founded and served as editor in chief of the art magazine Monopol. In 2007, he became editor of the arts section of Die Zeit. Author of the books Generation Golf (2000) and 1913 (2012). Since 2011, he has been managing partner of the Villa Grisebach in Berlin, where he is responsible for nineteenth-century and contemporary art.