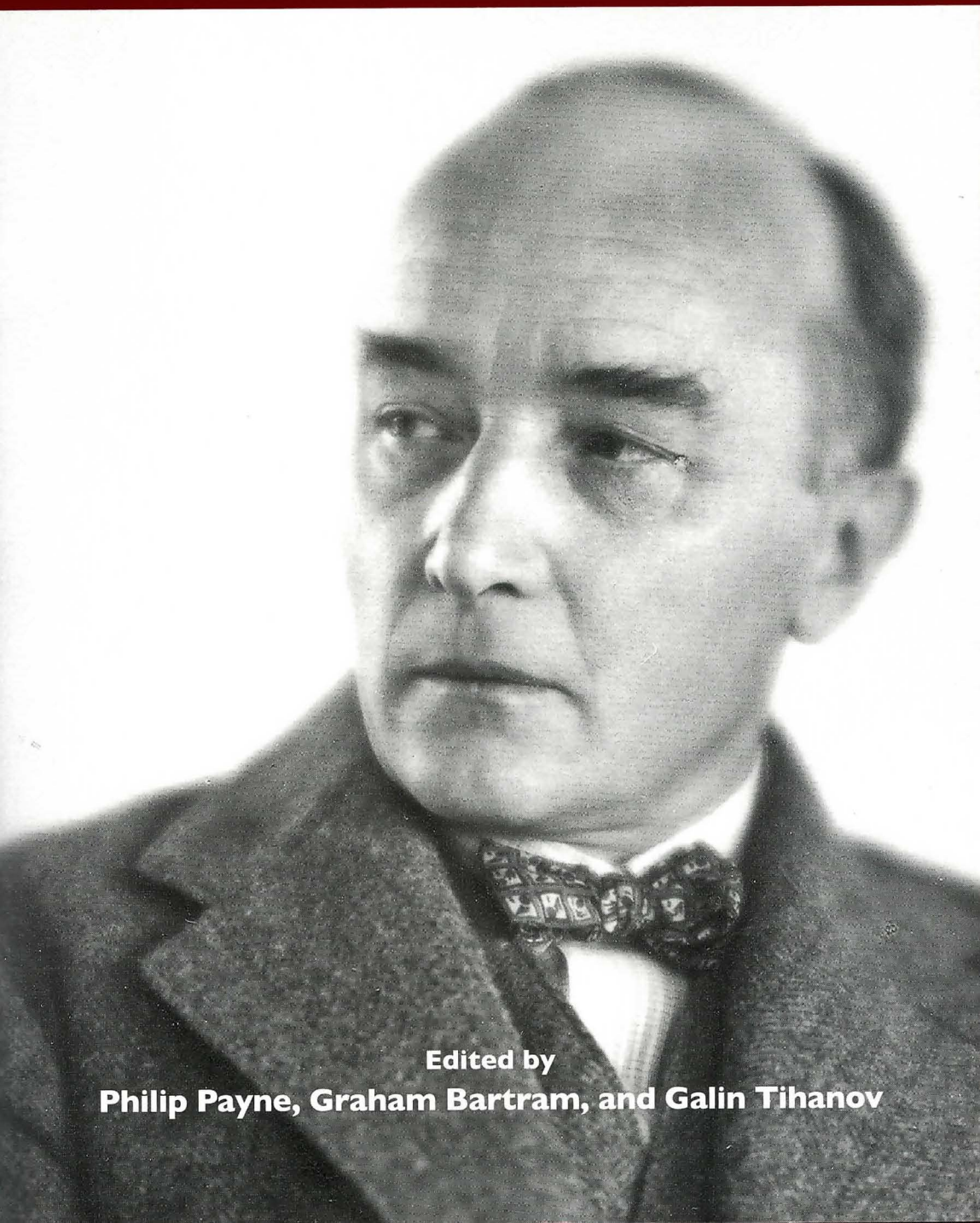


A Companion to the Works of Robert Musil



Edited by
Philip Payne, Graham Bartram, and Galin Tihanov

A Companion to the Works of Robert Musil

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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*The editors and contributors dedicate this book
to the memory of Adolf Frisé (1910–2003)*

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Preface

THIS BOOK ADDRESSES both experts and a more general audience. It brings together scholars from Austria, Germany, France, Italy, North America, and the United Kingdom who have collaborated to offer an overview of, and fresh insight into, Robert Musil's life and works. When Musil died in exile in Switzerland in 1942, he was largely forgotten, his reputation dimmed by his failure to complete his major novel. But he did leave behind a substantial body of creative work published during his lifetime and a vast collection of manuscript material. Over the sixty-five years since his death this literary heritage has helped to restore and indeed enhance his status as a writer. His works have been translated into many languages, including English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Scandinavian languages, Hungarian, Turkish, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Japanese, and others. Now, in the early years of the new millennium, Musil is ranked with Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and Günter Grass among the foremost German-language authors of the twentieth century and belongs in the canon of great writers of European literature.

It is Musil's language that reaches out to us today; accordingly, Musil's German has, in this Companion, been given the prominence that it deserves, as will be seen in the considerable scope provided for quotations in the original. English translations are furnished for those not fluent in German. Those who read Musil in languages other than German may derive some comfort from his own observation: "Der Schriftsteller im Verhältnis zum Leser schreibt eine Fremdsprache" (The writer, in relation to the reader, writes a foreign language). Whether one approaches Musil through one's own or through another language, a spark of creative understanding must leap the gap between author and reader. We hope to help to generate that spark.

The editors
May 2007

Acknowledgments

THE EDITORS AND THE CONTRIBUTORS wish to thank a number of institutions: the Austrian government for resources and other material assistance; the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, the German Academic Exchange Service, and Lancaster University for funding research visits to libraries and archives; the University of the Saarland for its hospitality and for establishing and funding for several decades the Robert Musil Research Centre; and the staff at the Manuscript Collection of the Austrian National Library, Vienna. Thanks are also due to the Metzler Verlag for allowing us to reproduce a revised version of work by Matthias Luserke-Jaqui that they published originally, and to the following publishers for permission to quote from books that have appeared with them: Rowohlt Verlag, Penguin Books, Knopf, Basic Books and Macmillan. (In a few cases, it has been necessary to make a minor alteration in a published translation — for example, by exchanging an English word in a given translation for another that we felt rendered the original German word more accurately — but where we have done so this is clearly indicated by the placing of such words in square brackets.) We are collectively indebted to individuals too numerous to mention, but we wish in particular to thank the following: Klaus Amann and Walter Fanta for making available to the contributors a pilot version of the new electronic edition of Musil's Collected Works with extensive *Nachlass* materials, facsimiles, and a scholarly apparatus; Christa Sauer for her support and promotion of the project; Burton Pike, the major force behind Musil Studies in the English-speaking world, for his support and generous hospitality; Marie-Louise Roth, Annette Daigger, Pierre Béhar, Patrik Feltes, Korinna Teschner, and Isabelle Dalaudière at the Research Centre for Austrian Literature and Culture at the University of the Saarland for their help in the preparatory work that has gone into this *Companion*, and indeed for their constant support over many years beforehand as well; Helmut Schneider of the University of Bonn for kindly hosting an extended research visit by one of the editors; Karl Corino for placing parts of his pioneering biographical research into Musil at our disposal for this volume; Matthias Luserke-Jaqui for his initiative in helping the editors to fill a gap in coverage at a late stage in the genesis of the work; Anne Payne for acting as honorary research assistant and for her preparation of the manuscript for publication; Jim Walker and James Hardin of Camden House for their valuable criticisms, suggestions, and painstaking corrections to that

manuscript and their support of the project since its inception; Jacqueline Whiteside, David Barron, and Louise Spence of the Lancaster University Library and the staff of the library of the Germanistisches Seminar, University of Bonn, for all the help they have given.

It remains for us, on behalf of all those who read Musil in the original — or indeed in translation — and all those who conduct research into Musil, to place on record our debt to Adolf Frisé, to whom this *Companion* is dedicated.

Abbreviations

<i>Briefe</i>	Musil's correspondence, edited by Adolf Frisé. 2 vols. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981.
<i>Diaries</i>	<i>Diaries, 1899–1941</i> . Selected, translated, annotated, and with a preface by Philip Payne, edited and with an introduction by Mark Mirsky. New York: Basic Books, 1998. The English translation of extracts from Musil's diaries.
<i>GW</i>	<i>Gesammelte Werke</i> . Edited by Adolf Frisé. 2 vols. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978.
<i>MoE</i>	<i>Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften</i> . Vol. 1 of <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> , edited by Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978.
<i>MwQ</i>	<i>The Man without Qualities</i> . Translated by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike. 2 vols. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. The latest and most authoritative English translation of <i>Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften</i> .
<i>Nachlass</i>	Musil's literary papers (literary remains).
Heft	Notebook, as found in the <i>Nachlass</i> .
Mappe	Folder, as found in the <i>Nachlass</i> .
<i>PS</i>	<i>Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses</i> , edited and translated by Burton Pike and David S. Luft. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P, 1990.
<i>T</i>	<i>Tagebücher</i> . Edited by Adolf Frisé. 2 vols. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976.
<i>YT</i>	<i>The Confusions of Young Törless</i> . Trans. Shaun Whiteside, introduction by J. M. Coetzee. London: Penguin Books, 2001. Most recent translation of Musil's first novel, <i>Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß</i> .

Musil's Principal Works

Philip Payne

Introductory Remarks

IN THE COURSE OF HIS LIFE Musil saw much of his writing in print: in 1906, he published a novel that dealt with his experiences at school, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (The Confusions of Young Törless); in 1921 an important play, *Die Schwärmer* (The Enthusiasts); in 1924 a farce, *Vinzenz und die Freundin bedeutender Männer* (Vinzenz and the Girlfriend of Important Men); a number of powerful stories — the most significant of these published in 1911 (in the collection *Vereinigungen* [Unions]) and 1924 (in the collection *Drei Frauen* [Three Women]); in 1930 and 1932/3 long sections of the unfinished novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The Man without Qualities); in 1936, a collection of short sketches entitled *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten* (Posthumous Papers of a Living Author); over the years, short prose pieces appeared in a wide variety of publications and included essays, speeches, and book and theater reviews. But these make up only part of his output. He left behind an extensive literary estate (*Nachlass*)¹ containing many *Hefte* (notebooks) that incorporated literary drafts, notes on reading, diary entries, plans for essays, etc. He spent an inordinate amount of time in preparations for *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, leaving behind at his death many thousands of manuscript pages, organized in *Mappen* (folders), and including chapter drafts rewritten and refined many times. Musil wrote and received a considerable number of letters, many of which survive. Parts of the *Nachlass* have appeared at different times; of these the most important are as follows: in 1976, the *Tagebücher* (Diaries; namely the majority of the *Hefte* referred to above); in 1981, the *Briefe* (Letters); in 1992, major portions of the manuscript material in the form of a CD. (For further details, see below.)

The publishing history of his work is further complicated by his switching publishers on several occasions as a young writer. In 1924, the

¹ Following the German spelling reform rules introduced in 1996, we will use the spelling *Nachlass*; on a few occasions we quote works that use the old spelling *Nachlaß*, and in such cases we shall retain that original spelling.

publisher Ernst Rowohlt acquired the rights to all Musil's previous works from other publishers and continued to support the writer with a monthly stipend until 1937 when the Bermann-Fischer publishers of Vienna took over all the works from Rowohlt.² In 1938, Ernst Rowohlt was banned from continuing work as a publisher by the National Socialists. In 1945, the American military authorities in Germany restored to Rowohlt the rights to all Musil's published works. The publication of Musil's works has since been closely tied to this publishing house. In 1952, Rowohlt published an edition of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, edited by Adolf Frisé, that caused controversy for what was seen as its unorthodox treatment of hitherto unpublished manuscript material which Frisé had adapted to provide a version of the continuation of the novel from the point at which the narrative had broken off in the 1932/33 volume; despite the criticism of this edition (some of which was acknowledged by Frisé himself), it played an essential role in reviving Musil's reputation in German-speaking countries and in providing a basic text for researchers. It was only superseded in 1978 when a new edition of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* by Adolf Frisé appeared that contained a considerable amount of manuscript material that had not been published previously; this edition was widely praised for its editor's detailed and precise knowledge of Musil's *Nachlass*, and for his untold stamina and unswerving dedication over many years. This version of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* appeared as the first volume in a two-volume hardback edition of Musil's *Gesammelte Werke* (Collected Works); the second volume contained *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, *Vereinigungen*, *Die Schwärmer*, *Drei Frauen* and *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten*, essays and essay drafts, addresses, reviews, and much other material. (This edition also came out in a widely used paperback version in nine volumes with identical pagination.) Frisé had already published an outstanding edition of Musil's *Tagebücher* in 1976, and in 1981 added an edition of Musil's *Briefe* (Letters); both editions have exceptionally detailed notes.

Works Published in Musil's Lifetime

These are listed in chronological order of original publication during Musil's lifetime, together with the later German editions of the works in question and the first and any subsequent English translations. References in square brackets after each title are to the two-volume hardback edition of Musil's *Gesammelte Werke*, referred to below.

² See Paul Mayer, *Ernst Rowohlt in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967).

Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß. [= GW II, 7–140] First published in Vienna and Leipzig by the Wiener Verlag in 1906. English translations: *Young Törless*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. London: Secker & Warburg, 1961; *The Confusions of Young Törless*, trans. Shaun Whiteside; introduction by J. M. Coetzee. London: Penguin Books, 2001.

“Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Mach’s.” Dissertation, Berlin, 1908. Republished as *Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Machs und Studien zur Technik und Psychotechnik*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980. Translated as *On Mach’s Theories*, trans. Kevin Mulligan, introduction by G. H. von Wright. Washington, DC: Catholic U of America P; Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1982.

Vereinigungen. [= GWII, 156–223] Munich and Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1911. Translated into English with other stories by Musil — see below under *Drei Frauen*.

Die Schwärmer. [= GW II, 309–407] Dresden: Sibyllen-Verlag, 1921. Translated as *The Enthusiasts* by Andrea Simon; introduction by Martin Esslin. New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1983.

Drei Frauen. [= GWII, 234–306] Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1924. Translated as *Tonka and other Stories*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. London: Pan Books in association with Secker & Warburg, 1965. Republished by Secker & Warburg in 1988. [Contents: *Vereinigungen*, including “The Perfecting of a Love” and “The Temptation of Quiet Veronica”; *Drei Frauen*, including “Grigia,” “The Lady from Portugal,” and “Tonka.”] Also available as *Five Women*; trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser; preface by Frank Kermode. Boston: D. R. Godine, 1986.

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften (*MoE*). Musil’s major work, originally published in two volumes or “books” in Berlin by Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1930 and 1932. Book 1, published in 1930, contains the first two “parts” of the novel, *Erster Teil* (chapters 1–19) and *Zweiter Teil* (chapters 20–123); book 2 was published in 1932 (with chapter numbers starting again from chapter 1 on.) This second volume contained not the complete parts 3 and 4 as Musil had originally intended, but only the first thirty-eight chapters of part 3. These two volumes comprise volume 1 of the 1978 edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* by Adolf Frisé (see below); references to this work will, following common convention, use the abbreviation *MoE* followed by a page reference (thus the original book 1 comprises *MoE*, 7–665, while book 2 is *MoE*, 669–1041). Unless otherwise stated, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* refers to the 1978 Frisé edition of the novel. The partial duplication of chapter numbers in the two original books of the work can bring about confusion, and for that reason the page number is always provided. For detailed information on the novel and the history of the publication of the German edition see particularly the two chapters in this *Companion* by Walter Fanta.

CD version:

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Frankfurt am Main: “Zweitausendeins,” 2004. A reading by Wolfram Berger of the whole of the first two parts of the novel.

English translations of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*:

The Man Without Qualities. Trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. 3 vols. London: Secker & Warburg, 1953–60. Today somewhat rare, this edition gave early access to English readers of Musil's major work but did not provide any selections from the *Nachlass*.

The Man without Qualities. Trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike, editorial consultant Burton Pike, 2 vols. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. Considered more faithful to the original than the first translation, containing a wide selection of some of the most important extracts from the *Nachlass*. (Pike's translation of sections of the *Nachlass* was based on the text as established by Frisé in his 1978 edition of the novel; however, in consultation with Frisé, he made alterations to the arrangement of some of the earlier chapters in order to produce a version that makes it easier for the reader to follow the narrative as it might have developed.)

Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten. [= GW II, 471–562] Zurich: Humanitas, 1936. Translated as *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, trans. Peter Wortsman. Hygiene, CO: Eridanos Press, 1987. Extract from *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten: The Blackbird*, trans. Thomas Frick and Wilhelm Wiegandt. Cambridge, MA: Simba Editions, 1981.

A Note on Musil's *Nachlass*

The *Nachlass* is the sum of unpublished manuscripts and other literary papers that Musil left behind after his death; all of these are henceforth referred to under this term. Musil organized his writings in groups of *Mappen* (folders) and *Hefte* (notebooks). Some of the *Nachlass* has been made available in various publications since Musil's death, notably material from the *Mappen* in Adolf Frisé's 1978 edition of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (see reference above and further details below — the *Nachlass* material in question is found in GW I, 1045–2160) and other material from the *Mappen* and the majority of the *Hefte* in Frisé's editions of Musil's diaries (1976) and correspondence (1981). Where specific reference is made to *Nachlass* material as such it will be in a form of which the following are two examples:

- “*Nachlass*, Mappe II/1, 146” (the Roman numeral relates to the group of *Mappen* concerned, the first Arabic number is the number of the *Mappe* itself, the second Arabic number is the page number within the *Mappe*);
- “*Nachlass*, Heft 8, 4” (*Heft* number 8, page 4).

The *Nachlass* has also been published on CD-ROM:

Der literarische Nachlass. CD-ROM-Edition. Ed. Friedbert Aspetsberger, Karl Eibl, and Adolf Frisé. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1992.

An updated, corrected, and expanded version of both Musil's collected works and the *Nachlass* will appear within a few years' time, containing an electronic transcription and facsimiles of Musil's manuscripts and other valuable material. This major undertaking, which enjoys strong support from the Austrian state, is the work of a team at the Musil-Institut in Klagenfurt, Musil's birthplace in Austria, under the leadership of Klaus Amann and Walter Fanta. The advantages of such a resource, and not only to researchers and scholars but also to the interested lay public, are manifest. A prototype version of this new edition has been made available in the form of a CD to those who have contributed to this *Companion*; it has provided vital assistance with their work and has proved most user-friendly; those who have had access to this can only hope that it will soon be published for use by the general public.

Other Translations of Works by Musil

Selected Writings. Ed. Burton Pike, foreword by Joel Agee. New York: Continuum, 1986.

Three Short Stories. Ed. Hugh Sacker. London: Oxford UP, 1970. School edition with introduction in English and text in original German.

Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses. Ed. and trans. Burton Pike and David S. Luft. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P, 1990. Translations of several essays and addresses contained in the *Gesammelte Werke* (GW II, 975–1291).

"Robert Musil: Letters on 'The Man without Qualities.'" Trans. Peter Constantine, commentary by Philip Payne, ed. Burton Pike. *Fiction* 16, no. 1 (1999), 87–107. These are the only translations of Musil's letters to have been published.

Main Publications of Musil's Work since 1976 Arranged Chronologically

Tagebücher. Ed. Adolf Frisé. 2 volumes. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976. The first volume contains many of the Hefte from the *Nachlass*; references will be abbreviated thus: *T*, 333. The second volume contains extensive notes by Frisé and a large quantity of relevant *Nachlass* material; references to this volume will be as follows: *T* II, 454. A translation of just over one third of the diaries in the first volume of the above German edition of the diaries is published as *Diaries, 1899–1941*, selected, translated, annotated, and with a preface by Philip Payne, ed. and with an introduction by Mark Mirsky. New York: Basic Books, 1998. (This translation is referred to in the *Companion* as *Diaries*.)

"Further Extracts from Musil's Diaries." Ed. and trans. Philip Payne. *Fiction* 18, no. 1 (2002): 54–104. Additional materials from the Frisé edition.

Gesammelte Werke. Ed. Adolf Frisé. 2 vols. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978. The standard edition of Musil's collected works in German; followed by a second slightly revised edition in 1981 with minimal changes. This edition was also published in a nine-volume paperback version that, though now out of print, is still available in libraries and widely used. In some works of secondary literature this edition is referred to by using a volume number (GW 3, or GW 8, for example, followed by a page reference); however, the paperback follows exactly the pagination of the two-volume hardback edition referred to above, with paperback volumes 1 through 5 continuously paginated and identical in pagination to hardback Volume I, and paperback volumes 6 through to 9, numbered sequentially from page 1 to 1958 and identical in pagination to hardback Volume II. An example of references given in this *Companion* to the hardback edition is: GW II, 1179. This reference would be equivalent to GW 8, 1179, with respect to the nine-volume paperback — however, the paperback reader will have no difficulty in finding the appropriate place in the text from the reference to the hardback, since the page numbers are the same. All the literary works apart from *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* will be found in the second volume of the *Gesammelte Werke*. (References for all these works in this *Companion* relate to this edition; *Die Schwärmer*, for example, is to be found in GW II, 309–407; where continuous references are made to one or other of these works in a given chapter, after an initial note explaining the referencing, page numbers will be given without the abbreviation GW II.)

Briefe. Ed. Adolf Frisé. 2 vols. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981). References to the first volume of this edition, containing the letters themselves, will be abbreviated as follows: *Briefe*, 242; references to the second volume of notes and explanations will be as follows: *Briefe* II, 134.

Briefe: Nachlese — Dialog mit dem Kritiker Walther Petry. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Saarbrücken/Vienna: Internationale Robert-Musil-Gesellschaft, 1994.

De Angelis, Enrico. *Der Nachlaßband von Robert Musils "Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften"*. Pisa: Jacques e i suoi quaderni, 2004. Selections from and commentary on the *Nachlass* in German.

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Urfassung (1922). Ed. Simona Vanni. Pisa: Jacques e i suoi quaderni, 2004.

Paraphrasen. Ed. Enrico de Angelis. Pisa: Jacques e i suoi quaderni, 2005.

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Musil in Zurich, 1939. Courtesy of Austrian National Library (ÖNB).

Introduction: The Symbiosis of Robert Musil's Life and Works

Philip Payne

Robert Musil's Published and Unpublished Work: An Overview

ROBERT MUSIL STANDS OUT among other prominent writers of the twentieth century for the subtlety of his perception of modern life, for his ability to perceive connections between seemingly disparate aspects of culture, for his creative imagination, his formidable intellect, and for the clarity and brilliance of his prose. He is considered, with Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann, one of the foremost novelists writing in German in the twentieth century. His work is stylistically and intellectually challenging, his major work immensely long and incomplete, and for these reasons has never attained the popularity of the other great German writers of the period. Musil is thus an "acquired taste," but those who delve into his works are rewarded with an incomparable literary analysis of the sociological and philosophical currents of the time just before the outbreak of the First World War and beyond.

Musil was born in Klagenfurt, Austria, in 1880 and died in Geneva in 1942. We have access to his writing over a span in excess of forty years, from before the turn of the twentieth century until the last day of his life: tens of thousands of manuscript pages have survived. But given Musil's commitment to releasing only work of the highest quality, the quantity of writing that was actually published during his lifetime is much less extensive than the extant manuscript material, and even this represents only part of his output since some was destroyed in a repository toward the end of the Second World War. Musil wrote essays, reviews, and short prose pieces for newspapers and the like that appeared in a variety of publications particularly in the years immediately after the First World War, but his main works¹ were as follows: a short novel, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (The Confusions of Young Törless, 1906), based on his experiences as a

¹ A list of Musil's works, together with their English translations, precedes this introduction.

boarder at two secondary schools whose function was to educate future officers for the Austro-Hungarian army; *Vereinigungen* (Unions, 1911), a book containing two short stories concerned with two young women, both of whom were based on experiences by Musil's wife at different stages in her life; *Die Schwärmer* (The Enthusiasts, 1921), a play, performed only once during Musil's lifetime in a production that he tried to ban, in which a plot of studied banality involving seduction and elopement was matched with a critique of contemporary culture, the whole formulated in demanding, non-realistic language; *Drei Frauen* (Three Women, 1924), three novellas each derived from vital episodes from Musil's own life; *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten* (Posthumous Papers of a Living Author, 1935), a collection consisting primarily of short pieces that had appeared over the years in various newspapers, representing some of the best of his prose and intended to keep his name in the public eye. But by far the most significant of all his works was his novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The Man without Qualities), the first two volumes of which appeared in 1930 and 1932. Musil continued working on this opus to the end of his life, but he was unable to complete it.

Other writings by Musil include a doctoral thesis *Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Machs* (Contribution to the Evaluation of the Teachings of Mach, written in 1908, published in 1980) and the voluminous unpublished manuscript estate that he left behind at his death, much of it material for *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, but also containing diary notebooks, letters and letter drafts. This material is held at the manuscript collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna; significant portions of it have been published in Adolf Frisé's edition of most of Musil's notebooks under the title *Tagebücher*, which appeared in 1976. Extracts of this edition came out in 1998 in English translation as *Robert Musil, Diaries, 1899–1941*. Frisé's 1978 edition of Musil's *Gesammelte Werke* contains a wide selection of materials from the *Nachlass*, particularly those relating to *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Portions of the German edition have been included in the translation of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike published in 1995. Much of the *Nachlass* has been made available on a searchable CD-ROM edited by Friedbert Aspetsberger, Karl Eibl, and Adolf Frisé.² An updated, corrected, and much expanded version of both Musil's collected works and the *Nachlass* will appear in digital form in late 2008. Currently in preparation by a team under the leadership of Klaus Amann and Walter Fanta at the Musil-Institut in Klagenfurt, it will also contain a commentary and facsimiles of the folders and notebooks in which Musil organized his writings. A prototype of this new edition was made

² Friedbert Aspetsberger, Karl Eibl and Adolf Frisé, *Robert Musil: Der literarische Nachlaß* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992).

available to the contributors to this Companion as a CD-ROM; we have thus been able to anticipate the arrival of a new era in Musil research.

From Austro-Hungarian Empire to Austrian Republic: The Fate of Musil's "Kakanien"³

In an entry in Musil's diary in 1931, a lad rides past on a horse on the streets of Vienna and is shouted at by someone who criticizes his relaxed and unorthodox riding style.⁴ This incident demonstrates *in nuce* that this was a different age, not only with respect to the mode of transport, but also in the sense of a broadly accepted hierarchy in society and a shared belief that there were right and wrong ways of behaving and that those of higher status need not hesitate to express criticism of their social inferiors. Although in some respects a man of his time — he was, for example, highly sensitive to dress as indicator of social rank⁵ — Musil seems to have belonged more to our age than to his own owing to his awareness of the direction in which things were moving and the extent to which much of his thinking anticipates that of later generations. In view of his modernity, it seems strange to recall that the Austria into which he was born was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire under Franz Joseph I, where life moved at a much slower pace than life in Austria today. But change was underway, marked by the rapid growth of cities, technological advances, the continued rise of the middle class and, now, of the proletariat, by conflicting ideologies of capitalism, socialism, nationalism, pan-Germanism,

³ Among the most valuable biographical sources are as follows: the second volume of Robert Musil, *Tagebücher*, ed. Adolf Frisé, two volumes (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976); Karl Corino, *Musil: Leben und Werk in Bildern und Texten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988) and Karl Corino, *Robert Musil: Eine Biographie* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2003); Sibylle Mulot, *Der junge Musil: Seine Beziehung zu Literatur und Kunst der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1977); Marie-Louise Roth, *Robert Musil: L'homme au double regard* (Paris: Balland, 1987); David Luft, *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture, 1880–1942* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1980); Hannah Hickmann, ed., *Robert Musil and the Literary Landscape of his Time* (Salford, UK: Department of Modern Languages, 1991); Silvia Bonacchi, "Robert Musils Studienjahre in Berlin, 1903–1908," *Musil-Forum*, Beilage 1 (Saarbrücken, 1992).

⁴ See Robert Musil, *Tagebücher*, ed. Adolf Frisé, vol. I (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976), 844–45. The English translation is *Diaries: Robert Musil, 1899–1941*, ed. Mark Mirsky, trans. Philip Payne (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 47.

⁵ See, for example, the intense scrutiny to which the young Musil subjects the appearance of a woman with whom he is engaged in conversation: *T*, 83 (*Diaries*, 47).

and Christian Socialism, to mention only the major currents. Set against these disruptive influences was the inertia of the hierarchical state, the aristocracy, and the military, whose conservatism was embodied in the person of the ageing emperor. In insisting on being a “father” to his peoples, Franz Joseph wanted them to obey him without questioning his authority or the structures in place in his empire. In the decades before the First World War Austria-Hungary muddled through the numerous political and ethnic irruptions of the period (which persist to this day) and Musil provided a unique and detailed description of this arcane process in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.⁶ The chapter in question is entitled “Kakanien.”⁷

The First World War brought a number of significant changes: at the Treaty of Versailles the empire was reduced to a rump republic; Versailles also frustrated the desire of many Austrians (including Musil) for political *Anschluss* (union) with Germany; finally, new, smaller nation states were created from the ruins of the empire (including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia), a process which contributed to a political disequilibrium in Central Europe that Hitler would later exploit.

Partly in response to the sense of frustration at the world of politics, early twentieth-century Austria saw an upsurge in cultural activity. Among the most important cultural figures in Austria-Hungary and later in the Republic of Austria were Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Werfel (whom Musil parodies as “Feuermaul” — Firemouth — in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*), Karl Kraus, Hermann Broch, Elias Canetti, and, of course, Musil himself. Though Franz Kafka and Rainer Maria Rilke were both born in Prague, they wrote in German and are inextricably linked with Austrian culture (and both were deeply admired by Musil). Ernst Mach, Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others gave further breadth and depth to Austrian philosophy and intellectual life. However, though he lived in a society of intellectual and cultural dynamism, Musil was critical of the times and of the immediate context in which he spent his childhood, the private setting of his immediate family.

⁶ Subsequent references to the novel are given as follows: *MoE* (except where the source is clear), followed by the page number; references to the English translation, *The Man without Qualities*, are given as *MwQ*, followed by the page number.

⁷ See the chapter entitled “Kakanien” in Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1978), vol. 1, 31–35. The English translation is: *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), vol. 1, 26–31. Kakanien — a term that refers to the two initial letters of the words “kaiserlich und königlich” (imperial and royal), often used by themselves as “k und k,” which in turn recall the term “Kaka,” a nursery word denoting excrement.

Musil's Early Years

Musil's attitude to his parents as an adult was as critical as his relationship to them as a child had been problematical. His father doted on his son, making his bed for him in the early years and being most reluctant to administer a beating when instructed to do so by his domineering wife; he was, however, a man of his times in his obsession with matters of propriety, form, and status, waiting patiently in a chair of engineering at the Technische Hochschule of the Moravian city of Brünn (Brno) for a promotion to Vienna that never came.⁸ One suspects that although some of the features of the portrait of the protagonist's father in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* were fictional, Musil drew many of its negative qualities from his own father. Perhaps the worst feature of the father, from Musil's point of view, was a timidity that led to his willingness to tolerate a permanent houseguest in his household, Heinrich Reiter, who was the clear favorite of his wife, Hermine. And it is likewise the case that Musil hated his father's subservience to the mores of a country that patently needed change: Austria-Hungary was not a place of social innovation, but a stratified and stifling environment where advancement, if it ever came, was only granted to those who served their time and said and did the right things. But closer to home, Musil was never quite able to fathom the *ménage à trois*, and was confused about the relationship that existed between his father's rival and his mother. It certainly left him with a sense of the duplicity of contemporary morality. Hermine passed on to her son a passionate intensity and unpredictability; this made for serious domestic confrontations between her and young Musil, particularly as he entered puberty. Given that *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* contains a record of almost all the major attachments in his life, it is surprising that Musil left no clear image of his mother in the novel though it may be that aspects of their relationship are hidden in the feelings of the hero Ulrich, the "man without qualities," for a number of female figures in the novel, including Leona, Bonadea, Diotima, and Klementine Fischel.⁹ In these relationships, scorn mingles with sexuality. The testimony of "Die Amsel" (The Blackbird), a story based on Hermine Musil, is appropriately ambiguous;¹⁰ the protagonist displays both a deep-seated resentment at how his mother treated him when he was growing up, and an underlying awareness that her love for him, though flawed by

⁸ See Corino, *Robert Musil*, 512–13.

⁹ See Fanta, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte*, 170, 201 et passim.

¹⁰ See Robert Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Adolf Frisé, vol. 2, 548–62, henceforth referred to as *GW II*; the story is translated as "The Blackbird" in Robert Musil, *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, trans. Peter Wortsman (London: Penguin, 1995), 127–45.

anger at her son's failure to fulfill what she saw as his filial obligations, is absolute. In a diary entry, Musil recognizes how powerfully the anniversary of her death affects him.¹¹ There was another female "presence" in Musil's life, namely his elder sister, Elsa, who died before he was born. Musil himself mentions his "cult" of his dead sister in his diaries.¹² This fed into his fascination for the figures of Isis and Osiris from Egyptian mythology and into the relationship between Ulrich and his sister Agathe in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.¹³

Much was expected of the young Musil; small in stature but powerfully built, he was able to defend himself physically in the rough and tumble of life as a schoolboy and he continued athletic pursuits right through into old age, including gymnastic exercises, swimming, all pursued to the point of exhaustion. Young Musil was also intellectually precocious and fully expected fame to arrive by the age of twenty.¹⁴ But one senses that this self-assessment and reputation within the family were partly built on the extent to which he isolated himself as a child and a young man, effectively imprisoning himself in his room in order to reflect and dream. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Musil was indeed a *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon; he was both narcissistic and self-critical. In *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Musil would be concerned to re-establish in his hero the self-love, that proper affection for oneself, the "philautia" that he lost as a child.¹⁵ It would be his ambition for himself and humanity at large to overcome the sense of separation, to go beyond what he sees as the cultivation of individuality and its attendant reality. For most of his contemporaries, however, there was no alternative to reality, and *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* was to put forward the argument that it is not the only way. We shall see below the broad terms of this critique of the contemporary structures of thinking, feeling, and behaving; earlier, unpublished versions of his main work had been radical in some aspects of the plot: the hero was not averse to violence and law-breaking and even tried to help one of the novel's major figures, the murderer Moosbrugger, to break out of prison. Though Musil himself was undeniably a "Bürger" (bourgeois) in the way that he groomed, dressed, and prepared himself each day to appear in public (choosing his seat in cafés with care so that he could see people without

¹¹ See T, 638 (*Diaries*, 306).

¹² See T, 952 (*Diaries*, 468).

¹³ See Götz Müller, "Isis und Osiris: Die Mythen in Robert Musils Roman 'Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,'" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 102 (1983): 583–604.

¹⁴ See T, 8 (*Diaries*, 8).

¹⁵ See the statement by Ulrich, the protagonist: "Ich liebe mich einfach selbst nicht" (*MoE*, 153: "I simply don't love myself"; *MwQ*, 162); later in the novel, Ulrich's sister, Agathe, will be seen as his "Selbstliebe," his "love of self."

first being seen), he hated the theatricality of life in the pre-First World War world, the sense that people of his social class in public were always “on display,” “on stage”; he constantly returns to this hated image in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.

But there are surprising inconsistencies in Musil's behavior. We know, for example, from Adolf Frisé's account, in an interview with Stephan Reinhardt, of his visit to Musil in the early 1930s, how sympathetic Musil could be when out of the public eye;¹⁶ others found him awkward and tense.¹⁷ He was, in other ways too, a typical young man, contracting syphilis in his contacts with the *demi-monde*; but he was unwilling, some years later, to accept his parents' conventional, if harsh, suggestion that he pay off his pregnant mistress (with whom he had a long-standing relationship). He remained faithful to her, supporting her until her premature death. In short, in some ways his behavior was immoral after the pattern of a conventional young man of his times, yet in following the dictates of conscience at decisive moments and overriding what society demanded, he was a moralist; indeed, much of his writing would be concerned with the regeneration of standards of conduct in modern society. He admired Emerson's essays and would have agreed with the principle set down in one of these: “The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it.”¹⁸ Contemporary civilization, in Musil's view, had become moribund in this respect; in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Musil distinguished between the old morality that gave priority to appearance over substance and a new standard, one that would be impelled by the energy of a new social dispensation. In his writing, the old is suggested through the imagery of fossilization, the new through fire or the restless movement of the sea.

He himself refused to be fixed in an image. He saw himself, after the example of Meister Eckhart, as being “*ane eigenschaften*” (ohne Eigenschaften —“without properties”);¹⁹ he did not want properties to stick to him nor he to them. Following Nietzsche, whose influence was crucial to

¹⁶ See Adolf Frisé: “Interview mit Stephan Reinhardt” in *Musil-Forum* 21/22 (1995–96): 5–22, 11.

¹⁷ Hans Mayer wrote: “Musil war anstrengend [...] Anstrengend im Gespräch, in jeder Bewegung [...] Jedes Gespräch mit ihm war ein erzwungenenes Gespräch” (Musil was demanding [...] Demanding in every conversation, every movement. [...] Every conversation with him was forced). In “Erinnerung an Robert Musil” in Mayer, *Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967), 137–54, 138.

¹⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles,” in *Complete Prose Works* (London: Ward, Lock and Co. Ltd., 1898), 75–81, 78.

¹⁹ See Jochen Schmidt on Meister Eckhart as a source of Musil's concept “ohne Eigenschaften” in Schmidt, *Ohne Eigenschaften* (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1975), 48.

his development, he wanted to be a free spirit, a man of *Möglichkeit* (possibility) — this notion would be of seminal significance in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. We see, in the course of his life, as in his self-perception, the sociological multiplicity of roles that can scarcely be pinned down in a description of a single individual. Taking his correspondence as evidence, we meet multiple Musils: the young lover of an unidentified woman; the writer at the start of a promising career that he hopes and expects will include publication of many works; a hard negotiator in matters of business to the extent that his publisher, Ernst Rowohlt, constantly feared that Musil would carry out his threat to shoot himself if the publisher failed to continue financial support for *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*; a loyal friend, giving and receiving compliments; the author of an acclaimed masterpiece; a loving stepfather helping his stepdaughter to improve her writing style; an impoverished émigré in Switzerland, pessimistic about his chance of making a new life in England or America; and many other selves. We could add to this catalogue the complex course of his professional evolution: his early training as a soldier at two military schools; his qualifying as an engineer while living, at night, a separate existence that combined catch-up studies in the humanities (since these had been neglected during his schooling) and an experiment in *fin-de-siècle* decadence; his studies in philosophy and psychology in Berlin; his first attempt at following an independent literary career; his short detour, after this attempt failed, into work as an archivist; a brief but successful period working in a leading literary journal; service in the First World War as front-line soldier and later as editor of a newspaper for the armed forces; after the war a post in the civil service involving the development of training systems for the Army; a period as a literary freelancer writing reviews, essays, short contributions for feuilletons, pieces for the Czechoslovak newspaper, *Prager Presse*, and so on. In the early twenties he picked up again where he had started out after completing his doctorate, living as a single-minded and increasingly penurious novelist forced by the rise of National Socialism to leave his native land in 1938 and to go into exile in Switzerland. In the course of these developments, the libertine of late adolescence became the relatively faithful lover of Herma, then the partner of Martha Marcovaldi, later her husband, though he still had an eye for other women and could not resist several infidelities (just as Martha succumbed to temptation in the early years of their relationship), but ultimately turned himself into the desk-bound, single-minded, monogamous husband working on the novel that would never be finished.

What of the role of writing in this life and the gifts and skills that were applied to the art of writing? When Musil was a child, his father had been delighted to realize that his son had the capacity to observe the outer world with unusual intensity. This was an early indication that Musil was more watcher than doer, and indeed this remained the case in later life: Musil formulated the attitude to politics he saw as characteristic of the

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*Robert Musil in military school.
Courtesy of Austrian National Library (ÖNB).*

writer: “Rolle des Dichters *in politicis*[.] Machtloser Zuschauer” (*T* 420: Role of the creative writer *in politicis*. Powerless onlooker; *Diaries*, 229). Musil’s gift for observation was systematically refined at the time when he was studying experimental psychology in Berlin, where he developed

a mechanical apparatus to help his friend Johannes von Allesch with his research into the perception of colors. In later years Musil would spend much time standing with a pair of binoculars at the window of his flat in Vienna, not only watching the objects that fell under his gaze but also recording the way his brain reacted to the images received through the lens.²⁰ From these personal experiences it is quite a short step to the opening scene of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* in which the hero stands at his window with a stopwatch and attempts to make some statistical sense of images of the city in Kakanien; toward the end of his life Musil was still taking notes on what he saw through the window of his Swiss home, including the love life of the neighborhood cats.

The military boarding schools he attended in Eisenstadt and Mährisch-Weißkirchen furnished an unpromising secondary education for a writer, but Musil would later make good the curricular deficiencies in an astonishingly short timespan, acquiring in the years of early manhood spent in Brünn a knowledge of the classics, of the high canon of German literature, and familiarity with the theater and the humanities in general. He remained, however, always proud of the technological, scientific, and mathematical expertise that his boarding school had encouraged and that distinguished him from most other literary figures.²¹ (His fellow Austrian, the novelist Hermann Broch was a notable exception to this rule; Broch's interests and subject matter were in fact so close to his own that Musil once accused Broch of plagiarism.²²) The regime at these schools had been harsh; bullying was common and initiations into sexuality were often uncompromising. Some of the pupils practiced a form of homosexuality in which tenderness was less common than beatings; they would also visit prostitutes in the local town. Musil's alienation from his surroundings was accentuated by the distance from his family and the gulf between the way he was treated by his parents and the inhumane attitudes of some of the instructors. The schoolboys responded in idiosyncratic ways to the challenge of such treatment: Musil developed his capacities both for introspection and for reflection on how others interacted with the world — these

²⁰ See the literary representation of such observation in "Triedere" (Use binoculars!), *GW II*, 518–22; an English translation of this text can be found in Robert Musil, *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, 81–86.

²¹ See Hans-Georg Pott, ed., *Robert Musil: Dichter, Essayist, Wissenschaftler* (Munich: Fink, 1993). Pott's volume contains three articles relating Musil's work to various areas of "Wissenschaft": Margret Kaiser-El-Safti, "Robert Musil und die Psychologie seiner Zeit" (126–70); Peter Berz, "I-Welten" (171–92), dealing with experiments in psychology; and Bernhard Siegert, "Rauschfilterung als Hörspiel; Archäologie nachrichtentechnischen Wissens in Robert Musils 'Amsel'" (193–207), on the filtering of sounds in broadcasting.

²² See *T*, 826 (*Diaries*, 415).

are clearly seen in *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, which he wrote in his early twenties. Musil's synthesis of the attitudes of several fellow pupils, notably Beineberg and Reiting (both names lifted almost without alteration from pupils at one of the academies) is sometimes seen as anticipating the *Weltanschauung* of National Socialists. Musil's verdict on the second of the schools probably reflects the vocabulary as well the mood of the place: he described it as the "Arschloch des Teufels" (devil's arsehole).²³ The impact on a sensitive adolescent can readily be imagined; perhaps this educational experience helped to make Musil constitutionally suspicious of the motives of other people — perhaps it was here that he developed that thick, protective outer skin that Elias Canetti once described.²⁴ Musil's parents, expecting him to go on from the boarding-schools to a career as an officer in the imperial armed forces, sent him on to a military college in Vienna, but Musil left after only one term — he could not reconcile his sense of the responsibilities of those who were expected to give leadership to others with the frivolity and arrogance of the staff and the trainee officers whom he met there.

In a significant change of direction, Musil moved back to Brünn to live at home and take a degree in engineering at the university department run by his father. As we have seen, he displayed not only a gift for this field, but also a capacity to burn the candle at both ends. He read widely and well beyond the requirements of his studies in engineering: Nietzsche, Maeterlinck, and Emerson, to name only the most important influences. Nietzsche helped to shape his intellectual and emotional life, becoming what one critic described as a "trigonometric point" for Musil.²⁵ (Nietzsche's teaching seems to have been behind Musil's decision to leave abruptly a holiday resort where he had fallen in love with a beautiful pianist to immerse himself in the esoteric experience of *Fernliebe*, of love at a distance — he lost a potential lover but gained insight that would still be a source of inspiration at the end of his life.)²⁶ From Emerson he learned the virtues of a non-systematic, speculative, but rigorous approach to moral issues, and came to respect the essay as a literary form and essayism as an existential perspective — a non-dogmatic, forward-looking, open-ended and experimental approach, suitable for an era in which certainties had

²³ T, 953 (*Diaries*, 469).

²⁴ See Elias Canetti, "Erinnerung an Musil," *Merkur* 39 (1985): 142–47, 142.

²⁵ See Wolfgang Iser, *Musil und Nietzsche: Beziehungen der Erkenntnisperspektiven* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 39.

²⁶ On Nietzsche's influence on Musil with respect to this so-called "Valerie-Erlebnis," specifically on "Fernliebe" (love at a distance), see Emanuela Veronica Fanelli, "Als er noch Fräulein Valerie liebte. Musils Valerie-Erlebnis: Eine biographisch-kritische Korrektur," *Musil-Forum* 19/20 (1993/94): 7–30.

been set aside. The “Utopie des Essayismus” would be a central feature of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.²⁷

Although Brünn was a provincial town, it had a vibrant cultural life; in addition to music, opera and the theatre, it was open to influences from outside Austria-Hungary. We find evidence of strong Anglo-Saxon influences there: Ruskin, Emerson, William Morris, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and the Pre-Raphaelites. Musil was inspired to take up creative writing and tried to interest a publisher in what he called his *Paraphrasen*; extracts from this, his first literary venture, have recently been published.²⁸

The shadow side of this phase was his association with actresses and prostitutes and the contraction of syphilis. The medical condition itself, treated with mercury, which made the patient bald and also carried the risk of inducing impotence, took time to heal; it also left a continuing obsession. Musil, as we have seen, took a mistress in his early twenties; he may well have infected her himself but he could not chase away the suspicion that she had been unfaithful to him and that this was the reason she had contracted the disease that would lead to her death a few years later. In later years he would watch for the symptoms of advanced syphilis in others²⁹ and worry about whether this fate was still in store for him. Having taken his engineering degree, Musil moved to Stuttgart, where a distinguished colleague of his father's, Professor Carl Bach, was head of the department of engineering at the Technische Hochschule. At Stuttgart, Musil kept up the demanding pace of his Brünn lifestyle, working with technologists during the day — Bach pioneered methods to determine precisely the properties of metals and other materials for use in technological applications — and catching up with living in the evenings. The outlet for independent reflection was work on the novel about his time at the military schools, which would appear in 1906 as *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*. It was a time when he thought deeply about developing a philosophical approach that would apply the discipline of science to life in contemporary society. The impetus for change, so Musil convinced himself, would not come from establishment figures, and not from the world of politics, business, or commerce. Technology, however, was promising if technologists could examine

²⁷ See Hans-Joachim Pieper, *Musils Philosophie: Essayismus und Dichtung im Spannungsfeld der Theorien Nietzsches und Machs* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002); Annie Reniers-Servranckx, “Robert Musil: Essayismus als Lebensprogramm,” in *Robert Musil: Essayismus und Ironie*, ed. Gudrun Brokoph-Mauch (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1992), 25–36; Birgit Nübel, *Robert Musil: Essayismus als Selbstreflexion der Moderne* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

²⁸ See Robert Musil, *Paraphrasen — aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. Enrico de Angelis (Pisa: Jacques e i suoi quaderni, 2005).

²⁹ See Karl Corino on the characteristic gait of someone suffering from advanced syphilis, in *Robert Musil*, 178.

not only the world of externals but also themselves and the ways they chose to live. Engineers, he speculated, were well placed to overturn conventional thinking and conventional lifestyles; this gave a special edge to his association with such pioneers of technology at Stuttgart. What, Musil seems to have asked himself, would Nietzsche have achieved if he had sat with Musil's companions in the institute, a slide rule poking out of his pocket and a desire to test out new ways of living burning in his mind? Musil envisaged a "Wissenschaft vom Menschen" (*T* 137: Science of Man; *Diaries*, 85); the ambition to test its rigor in actual life lasted for some time,³⁰ though gradually his attitude mellowed as he realized the complications and hazards of such an approach.³¹ Bach and his fellow engineers made significant advances in technology but in other respects disappointed the young engineer. Musil found that they were imprisoned in nineteenth-century attitudes; they were outgoing and lacking in self-criticism, where Musil was introspective and critical of himself, and even critical of the fundamental principles on which engineering was based.³² Thus the experience of a six-month placement in an institute for materials testing in Stuttgart brought to an end his interest in engineering as a career since, for Musil's uncompromising spirit, it did not fulfill its revolutionary human potential.

From Male to Female Personae: Törless to Veronika. Musil in his Mid-Twenties

Musil's first novel, published in 1906, was explicitly concerned with adolescence, with the problematical transition from moral certainties to compromise, from the grounding in the basics of education at primary and secondary school to the ambiguities of the disciplines when they are considered at a higher level. One of the themes that Musil takes up is mathematics: what happens, for example, when the probing mind of an intelligent adolescent expands and tries to make the transition from simple arithmetic to the notion of the infinite? Another is morality: the sensitive,

³⁰ Something of this attitude remains in *MoE* in what Ulrich calls his "Urlaub von seinem Leben" (47: a year's leave of absence from his life; *MwQ*, 44).

³¹ See *MoE*, book 1, chapter 61, on the idea of the "Utopie des exakten Lebens" (244–47; Utopia of Exact Living; *MwQ*, 263–66); Musil looks back on this period with indulgent irony through the eyes of an Ulrich who has grown older since this early period of experimentation.

³² Musil investigates closely some of the principles on which science and engineering rest. See for example "Der mathematische Mensch" (*GW* II, 1004–8: The Mathematical Man) in Robert Musil, *Precision and Soul*, ed. and trans. Burton Pike and David Luft (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 39–43, with its awareness of post-Newtonian physics.

emerging mind of the young intellectual is staggered by the implications for society when a fellow pupil breaks rules and mores that appear absolute to the hero. Yet another is the question of what kind of content is appropriate for a narrative: Musil's first novel attempted to push back the limits of what could be written about. It was condemned by some reviewers as obscene, probably because it looked beneath the surface of the life of the emergent elite of Austro-Hungarian society and saw things that the establishment preferred to keep buried: prostitution, stealing, lying, homosexuality, masturbation. The work could be considered to have been inspired in part by the late nineteenth-century naturalist movement, but it also prefigures Musil's concern with the inner world; it probes the private thoughts, the inchoate emotions, in short, the "Verwirrungen" of the protagonist. The teaching staff, who neither understand what is going on within their pupil Törless's head nor devise ways to deal with him, are relieved when his parents remove him. The novel was praised by Alfred Kerr, a leading critic, who saw in Musil a promising creative writer. Musil would in later years at times of disappointment turn to the words of Kerr that he had so much appreciated: "Kerr's Rezension über Törless wieder gelesen, gab mir einen Stoß. Es heißt: <<Musil's Erzählung ist ohne Weichlichkeit. Es steckt darin keine, sozusagen, Lyrik. Er ist ein Mensch, der in Tatsachen sieht [...]>>" (T, 226: Read Kerr's critique of Törless again — it gave me a jolt. He says: "Nothing about Musil's story is flaccid. There is nothing in it that one might call 'lyrical.' He is a person who sees in terms of facts [...]"; *Diaries* 122). Perhaps Musil the engineer might have made a successful transition to a full-time career as an author at that point. However, instead of turning to novel writing, Musil looked elsewhere; with further financial help from his parents who were anxious to help their brilliant son to find his métier he went through another major career shift.

Having found that engineering was not the appropriate environment for visionaries, Musil moved to the University of Berlin in 1903 to study psychology and philosophy. One might have expected an Austrian to prefer Vienna; but, as we have seen, Vienna was the capital of a society that frustrated change, while Berlin, despite the reactionary politics of its ruling class, was intellectually, technologically, and culturally progressive. This could be seen in the specific areas of knowledge and research that Musil wanted to pursue; later he would praise his *alma mater*, ranking its philosophy department higher than that of the University of Vienna.³³ As the author of *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, he had demonstrated a capacity for sophisticated introspection, but he wanted to learn to think more systematically. He was taught by Professor Carl Stumpf, who had developed pioneering techniques for experimental psychology; Stumpf and

³³ See T, 925 (*Diaries*, 448).

his assistants in Berlin helped to give Musil's spontaneous powers of observation a harder edge. In 1908 when writing his doctorate on what was then hot intellectual property — namely the work of the physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach who inspired the neo-positivist movement in philosophy known as the “Vienna Circle” — Musil would demonstrate his independence of mind. Stumpf required Musil to rewrite his study of Mach since some of the thinking in the first version — which Musil himself considered superior — was not acceptable to his supervisor. Stumpf not only developed some of the laboratory-based methodologies of experimental psychology, but also encouraged his students to study the working of their own minds, and to use them, so to speak, as “private mobile laboratories.”

Musil put this advice into practice, not only during his period of study in Berlin but throughout his later life. A simple example will illustrate the process of self-observation: when leaving his apartment one day, Musil becomes aware of a vague sense of unease. Whereas most other people would have failed to register the feeling, Musil fastened on to it, sought its origins, discovered its source, acted on it, and subsequently wrote down a record of mental and physical operations from start to finish. That the whole episode was triggered by his having forgotten his galoshes on a rainy day does not detract from this evidence of his having remembered the systematic methodology of his university teacher.³⁴ But whereas Carl Stumpf was primarily concerned with the fields of visual and acoustic perception, Musil wanted mainly to explore the relationship within the mind of thinking and feeling; his use of his mind as laboratory extended far beyond the areas that his mentor envisaged. He aimed to probe thoughts and emotions close to the surface and others that were not so accessible. Thus, he discovered that he possessed the capacity to make his mind into a research area to probe not only his own thoughts and feelings but also those of others. How else are we to interpret a curious entry in his diary for 1920 on Moosbrugger, the sex murderer from *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*? Musil writes: “Alle *Verbrecher* loslassen, die man in sich hat. Die Wut Moosbruggers, mit einem krummen Messer in den Bauch zu fahren verständlich, wenn man diese aufgestutzten Gebilde vorüberwandeln sieht” (*T* 400: Unleash all criminals that live within us. The rage of Moosbrugger to plunge a curved knife into someone's belly is comprehensible when one sees these dolled-up forms go wandering past; *Diaries*, 221). Musil was certainly no misogynist; thus it seems likely that in this diary entry Musil was allowing the murderer's way of looking at, and responding to, the women passing by on the street to take over his own mind temporarily. Stumpf would no doubt have considered such experiments taboo, but it may well have been his methods that inspired them. Henceforth, Musil's

³⁴ See *T*, 790 (*Diaries*, 401).

writing was marked by a hypersensitivity to mental phenomena and sought to penetrate the inner world of a whole range of people, some close to him, others known mainly through their writings. Thus, there is a whole hierarchically ordered spectrum of mental experimentation on which the characters of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* are based: he used his own personal experiences for Ulrich; Martha provided much of the raw material for Agathe; Gustl Donath and his wife Alice (née von Charlemont) were used for Walter and Clarisse; many other fictional figures developed from close study of acquaintances; some other figures reemerged in fiction mainly on the basis of Musil's reading of their books and speculation over many years on the predispositions, the "take" on the world, that lay behind the formulation of their ideas; Moosbrugger is in a category of his own, experienced and recreated in Musil's imagination on the basis of records of what was said in court by Christian Voigt, the real murderer on whom he is based. Even though these thought processes and the newspaper texts on which they were based date from the years immediately before the First World War, they would only take on literary shape much later.

In Berlin, as he studied and worked toward his doctorate in the years from 1903 to 1908, Musil continued to be supported by his parents and he, in turn, supported his mistress, Herma Dietz. His parents' view of this long-standing relationship was, as we saw above, that it should be terminated in the conventional way, by paying off the working-class woman involved. Despite a certain callousness and chauvinism in his treatment of her, which was probably typical of the attitudes of young men at the time to women who were held to be socially inferior, Musil displayed a stubborn loyalty to Herma and would not accept his parents' "solution." The relationship only ended when Herma died from the consequences of a miscarriage. With Herma, then, Musil explored one facet of behavior that did not accord with the accepted mores of the period. His interests in the immoral and amoral extended to deviance. The satirist Franz Blei evidently drew to Musil's attention a figure who submitted women to sexual exploitation. This was Jeanne d'Arc's companion, Gilles de Rais, whose presence has been detected in the plot of one of the stories of *Vereinigungen*. However, the figure in whom Musil was to invest the most long-lived, indeed obsessive, interest was the one whom we briefly encountered above and whom he named Christian Moosbrugger. In earlier Musil scholarship it was assumed that Moosbrugger was a creature of Musil's imagination, but it subsequently transpired that the model for Moosbrugger was based on a living person, Christian Voigt; Voigt spent much of the early twentieth century in Austrian prisons.³⁵ Musil explored the mind and actions of this

³⁵ See Karl Corino, *Robert Musil*, 881–90; see also Corino's chapter below in this *Companion*.

man, searching for the answer to the same implicit question that he asked of so many people he knew well: what is it about the way that they have been shaped by society in its present, highly imperfect constitution that has destroyed their hopes for happiness and for an integrated and emotionally fulfilled life? And, even more crucially, how could conditions be created within civilization that would allow future generations to avoid this fate? It was a question that linked the world of personal experience with those of the characters of his fiction; it established, so to speak, “family relationships” between himself, his father and mother, his friends, Gustl and Alice Donath, and other real people including Walther Rathenau (on whom he based the figure of Paul Arnheim in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*) to characters that people his major novel.

Musil did not pretend to have found an answer in the way that Freud and other psychoanalysts thought they had, but his intellectual activities, his creative efforts, all were ultimately directed to this question. Freud and Musil were both preoccupied with the relationship between thought and feeling; they attempted to synthesize the Enlightenment concern with reason and the Romantic exploration of feeling and the depths of the psyche. Parallels between their thinking are considerable: we might compare, for example, Freud’s later division of psychic drives into “thanatos” (the death instinct) and “eros” with the principles *Gewalt* (violence) and *Liebe* (love) that Musil sets out in one of the crucial chapters of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*; however, Musil presents his pair, attached as they are to the images of the two “trees of life,” as metaphors rather than as psychological theory.³⁶ Musil’s reservations about Freud are derived in part from his awareness that the science on which Freud’s thinking was based belonged to the mid-nineteenth century rather than the early twentieth century. Musil’s studies in Berlin and wide reading had made him more aware than most intellectuals of the shift from Newtonian to quantum physics, from the tyranny of cause and effect to more open systems of functional relations; Freud constantly sought to identify the cause that lay behind an effect, to catch sight of the latent *Traumgedanke* (“dream thought”) behind the explicit *Trauminhalt* (dream content). For Musil human behavior is not susceptible to the kind of detective work that the psychoanalyst carries out, moving over time toward the identification of some core problem within the neurotic individual; in Musil’s understanding, the mind works through *Gestalten*, complex patterns that can more readily be grasped intuitively as a whole when they have been studied over time.³⁷ If Freud’s treatment

³⁶ See *MoE*, book 1, chapter 116: “Die beiden Bäume des Lebens ...” (583–600: The Two Trees of Life ...; *MwQ*, 636–55).

³⁷ See Silvia Bonacchi, *Die Gestalt der Dichtung: Der Einfluss der Gestalttheorie auf das Werk Robert Musils* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998).

took months or years, Musil's work on his "patients," his cast of part-real, part-fictional characters, required decades of thought to arrive at what he called the "systems" that governed their lives.³⁸ Freud and Musil differed too in their respective views of the way forward. Freud, though his overall judgment on civilization (and its discontents) was negative, saw relief for mankind as a whole in the application of psychoanalytic method involving a deepening of self-knowledge and a reassessment of individual and collective needs — and corresponding adaptations in the rearing of the young, the modes of integration of the individual in society, and attitudes to human sexuality, leading to less idealism and greater realism in Western mankind's self-assessment. Musil is at once more tentative and more radical. His view is that the old ways have served their time, that they cannot be mended but need complete renewal. This is not a task for one but for many; it requires a collective effort in which creative authors must take the lead, pointing to the need to harness the full potential of mankind; it involves bringing together the realms of thinking and feeling whose divorce many generations ago has made whole societies sick. It would be this conviction that inspired the proposal, in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, for an "Erdensekretariat der Genauigkeit und Seele" (597: World Secretariat for Precision and Soul; *MwQ* 651).³⁹ This goal is expressed through Musil's critique of conventional morality in the novel and his reaching out to a new dispensation in its latter stages, as revealed in his hope that the relationship of brother and sister will lead "bis zu einer brausenden Gemeinschaft aller" (876: into a resounding universal communion; *MwQ* 950–51). (Musil was brought up by parents who seemed to have had no interest in religion whatsoever, but he himself was fascinated by experiences that brought him into contact with religious feeling — though it is essential to be aware that Musil always kept his reason and wits about him when exploring this realm.)

Musil's penetrating study of his own and other minds is focused on how human beings relate to the world at the most basic level — how they see it, how they register it through their perceptive apparatus. But this interest extends beyond acts of perception and cognition; emotions are also dragged up in the trawl of his researches; as we have seen, Musil was concerned with the reintegration of feeling and thinking. This desire perhaps helps to explain why, after spending so many years in academic study of philosophy and psychology and having received an invitation from a

³⁸ These systems are outlined in *MoE*, book 1, chapter 109, "Bonadea, Kakanien; Systeme des Glücks und Gleichgewichts" (522–30: Bonadea, Kakanian; Systems of Happiness and Balance; *MwQ* 569–77).

³⁹ See also Annette Gies, *Musils Konzeption des "Sentimentalen Denkens": "Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften" als literarisches Erkenntnistheorie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 141.

leading experimental psychologist and philosopher, Professor Alexius Meinong, to join his team at Graz University, Musil turned down the offer. Instead he chose to set out on a precarious life as an independent creative writer; he considered that only that sort of existence would provide the freedom, the breadth of potential that his interests demanded.⁴⁰ (His long-suffering parents must have viewed this development with deep concern, despite the success of his first novel, which he had written under such difficult conditions in Stuttgart.) What, Musil must have asked himself, might he achieve if he devoted himself fully to literary work?

After two and a half years of uninterrupted work on the two stories to be published under the title *Vereinigungen*, he had his answer. This second literary enterprise was as unsuccessful as the first had been successful: Alfred Kerr, who had lauded the earlier novel, refrained from reviewing the new work. Even today's readers with their knowledge of Musil's reputation may be tempted to sympathize with Kerr when he was faced with "Die Vollendung der Liebe" (The Completing of Love) and "Die Versuchung der stillen Veronika" (The Tempting of Quiet Veronika); these stories are dense to the point of hermeticism; they involve Musil taking on the task of self-projection into the inner world of the two female protagonists in the stories, Claudine and Veronika. The majority of readers before the First World War must have been, in equal parts, mystified and irritated by the narratives lacking, as they did, access to Musil's psychological and philosophical knowledge, his awareness of the moral dilemmas and corruption of society. In these works Musil made no concessions to his reading public.

Who had helped Musil to experience the female mind, as it were, "from within"? In 1905, Musil had met the woman who was later to become his wife, Martha Marcovaldi. Born in 1874, she was six years older than Musil, had two children and was still unhappily entangled in the civil and religious ties of her second marriage, to an Italian, Enrico Marcovaldi. Musil would help her to gain her freedom in a protracted legal dispute that involved subterfuge and dissembling. (He would later build some of these experiences into his play *Die Schwärmer*.) Martha had been brought up with boy cousins as part of a wealthy family; she was seduced by one and married another, but this first husband died of typhoid fever within the year. Musil later became obsessed by the intensity of his wife's relationship with her first husband and wrote in his diary: "Wer hat im Jenseits das Vorrecht: Fritz oder ich?" (*T*, 306: who, in the world beyond, has priority: Fritz or me? *Diaries*, 178). Martha read very widely as a child and young woman

⁴⁰ "Dichtung" (creative writing), Musil wrote in the draft of an essay titled "Von der Möglichkeit einer Ästhetik" (On the Possibility of an Aesthetics), is of an importance that towers above "die Wichtigkeit anderer menschlicher Tätigkeiten" (*GWII*, 1327: the importance of other human activities).

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and become a talented painter, but she gave this up to devote herself to Musil and his career; the two quickly became virtually inseparable (though this did not prevent either, in the early years, from being unfaithful to each other); it was Martha who kept Musil's mind free of many of the irritating details of life, such as financial matters — it was she who would pay the bill at coffee houses. Some indication of the intensity of the relationship with Martha is suggested by Musil's diary entry from 1910, a few months before the couple were married: “[Martha] ist nichts, das ich gewonnen, erreicht habe, sie ist etwas das ich geworden bin und das ich geworden ist” (*T*, 266: [Martha] isn't anything that I've gained or achieved; she is something that I have become and that has become “I”; *Diaries*, 122–23). Martha was with Musil throughout the work on *Vereinigungen* — one of the two stories is a record of their domestic life together and of Martha's seduction by a former lover while briefly parted from Musil. Musil married Martha in April 1911.

Expanding Horizons: Musil and the First World War

By this time, Musil's parents had finally insisted that he become financially independent, and his father helped him to obtain a post as archivist at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna. Conditions that might have seemed ideal to another — the working day was over after a morning session of four hours — were a torture to Musil, who had tasted freedom and had intense and as yet unfulfilled literary ambition. Partial compensation for this torture was provided by the experiences around which Musil built his delightful account in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* of General Stumm von Bordwehr's attempt to come to terms with the complexities of a modern library and its impenetrable cataloguing systems.⁴¹ Musil originally called this wonderfully relaxed character, chubby, always with time to talk, and irrepressibly good-humored, “Stumm von Bordsprung” (literally “leaping mutely overboard”)! Much of the time that he should have been working at the library of the Technische Hochschule Musil spent on sick leave. His physician diagnosed a nervous heart condition necessitating months of convalescence; perhaps a modern doctor might have been more skeptical, but there is no doubt that Musil had overworked himself for most of his adult life, and this may have had serious implications for his health,

⁴¹ See *MoE*, book 1, chapter 100, which is entitled: “General Stumm dringt in die Staatsbibliothek ein und sammelt Erfahrungen über Bibliothekare, Bibliotheksdienere und geistige Ordnung” (459–65: General Stumm Invades the State Library and Learns about the World of Books, the Librarians Guarding It, and Intellectual Order; *MwQ*, 500–506).

which had never been robust. His active service in the First World War was interrupted by serious problems of the upper digestive tract and significant weight loss whose most spectacular symptom was the shrinking of his head to the extent that his cap no longer fitted him. After the syphilis and heart complaints of early manhood, in later life, Musil had problems with his teeth and gall bladder, two minor heart attacks in 1929, a stroke while swimming in Vienna in 1936, and high blood pressure (not helped by his heavy smoking, which presumably contributed to his death at the relatively young age of sixty-one). This susceptibility to serious illness contrasts with a cult of the physical that led Musil to train his body like a modern athlete — he proudly displayed the upper torso of a body-builder when swimming — and to subject himself, even in the last years of his life, to a regime of physical exercises that would have challenged men half his age. (Musil's character Ulrich shares his compulsion for home-based physical exercise.)

Musil used some of the leave from his position at the library of the Technische Hochschule to find a more suitable post. Having scarcely returned from his leave, he quit his job as archivist in 1913 and started work for the Berlin publisher Samuel Fischer, helping to edit a literary journal, *Die Neue Rundschau*, where he had the opportunity to develop his technique as an essayist. In his new capacity he unsuccessfully conducted negotiations with Franz Kafka to publish the novella "Die Verwandlung" (translated as "The Metamorphosis") and met Kafka while the latter was on holiday in Berlin. As before, he continued writing in his spare time, concentrating on a play that went through several drafts but would eventually be published after the First World War as *Die Schwärmer* and whose plot eventually would revolve around the relationships between Musil and his wife and their friends and acquaintances, all made more hectic by the pressures of contemporary *Wirklichkeit* — a reality that Musil, as we have seen, felt it his duty to subvert both intellectually and emotionally.

It was about this time that Musil, shaking off the intense introspection of *Vereinigungen*, began to take more interest in the broader world around him, including politics. In 1913, he subjected himself to critical appraisal in an essay titled "Politisches Bekenntnis eines jungen Mannes" (GW II, 1009: Political Confession of a Young Man); he had earlier taken the stance, typical of the conservative views of many of his social class, that politics was a matter for servants; now he grasped the link between knowledge and an open society, writing that "Wissenschaft [ist] ein Ergebnis der Demokratie" (GW II, 1011: science [is] a product of democracy).⁴² From this point on, Musil moved toward a more sophisticated awareness of

⁴² See also Karl Corino on Musil's sense that the bourgeoisie had failed to carry forward social reform: Corino, *Robert Musil*, 785.

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*Musil in the Austrian Army during the First World War.
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politics and society at large and acquired experience that would come into its own in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.

When the First World War broke out, Musil had to leave his congenial and promising position at the *Neue Rundschau*. He was posted as lieutenant to what later became the front line on the Austrian-Italian border. Hostilities in that sector erupted in 1915 and Musil was promoted and served with bravery until he fell ill. After his recovery he was attached to part of the Austro-Hungarian High Command, which gave him further insight into the life of the elite. He was not impressed, and indeed, after the war, planned a satirical novel based on the arrogance, infighting, and corruption in high places that he had seen. Unfortunately, this work, which was to have been called “Panama” (the building of the Panama Canal was considered at the time a case study in corruption), was never written. But at army headquarters Musil met General Max Becher, one of the models for General Stumm von Bordwehr. He edited a newspaper for the troops and then obtained a post in the Press Office of the Department of War. Musil himself would judge the period to have been an irreparable interruption of his development as a writer;⁴³ however, although the war hindered his writing, it had advantages: he had extended his contacts with, and knowledge of, people from different social groups (ranging from the enlisted men, whose letters home he had to censor, up to the aristocrats and generals who were, with more or less success, running the army); his war experience had provided deeper insights into the impact of international relations on the affairs of the common people; it would also give him access to interesting employment shortly after the war, when he helped to set up a training program for officers according to the latest insights of psychology.⁴⁴ The latter experience made Musil think deeply about the way in which ideas might be disseminated through the wider population; this serious concern is hidden behind the study of the work of committees and do-gooders in part two of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.

Musil as Playwright and Short-Story Writer

Like many intellectuals in the years after the war, Musil believed that bourgeois society had outlived its natural span. Writing to Arne Laurin, editor of the newspaper *Prager Presse*, to which he was a contributor, he commented in April 1921 on one of the central issues of the times: “Für uns sind die Friedensverträge unentschuldbarer als es die Kriegserklärungen

⁴³ See T, 527 (*Diaries*, 262).

⁴⁴ See Corino, *Robert Musil*, 605–6.

waren. Denn der Krieg war die Katastrophe einer alten Welt, die Friedensverträge die Verhinderung der Geburt einer neuen⁴⁵ (For us the peace treaties are more inexcusable than were the declarations of war. For the war was the catastrophe of an old world, the peace treaties the prevention of a new one). This letter outlines views that are consistent with Musil's overall verdict on the development of civilization. Later in the letter, protesting against the Treaty of Versailles in the same clear and simple style, he continues to set out his position; with the advantage of hindsight the fate of Europe might have been less bloody if politicians had managed to devise a solution based on such moderate advice:

Uns Deutschen ist ein unerträgliches Unrecht zugefügt worden. Es ist unvermeidlich, daß wir nach einer Neugestaltung Europas streben. Es ist unvermeidlich, daß wir eine Revision der Frieden fordern. Aber sie soll keine restitutio in integrum sein, sondern sie muß aus der Machtpolitik und Revanchekette hinausführen. Statt der Konstitution Europas in rivalisierende Bestialstaaten muß eine Form der Vereinigung der in sich geeinten Völker untereinander gefunden werden, überstaatlich und möglichst unstaatlich. (*Briefe I*, 228).

[We Germans have suffered an intolerable injustice. It is inevitable that we strive for a reshaping of Europe. It is inevitable that we demand a revision of the peace [agreements]. But it should not be a restitutio in integrum but it must lead us out of power politics and the chain of revenge. Instead of setting up Europe in rival bestial states, a form of union among united peoples must be found that transcends the states and is as far as possible not based on a state.]

He goes on to predict the collapse of Czechoslovakia, one of the states that had just been created. Before the war Musil would not have had the political interest or awareness to develop such a penetrating historico-political analysis.

Though he had not had the opportunity to work on his main literary projects during the war, he had developed a terse, epigrammatic style in his diaries and journalistic writings. It seems that the war, even as it restricted his writing, put him on a path that would later lead to his being acknowledged as a great stylist; it also seems to have honed his capacity for incisive and original thinking; henceforth he would not only have the capacity to penetrate to the hidden structures on which society rests but also to detect the shape of things to come. What follows is a sample of his work from an essay, "Die Nation als Ideal und Wirklichkeit," written in 1921, in which he discusses the phenomenon of the individual in society being divorced

⁴⁵ Robert Musil, *Briefe*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981), vol. 1, 227; subsequent references below in the text are to this edition.