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Contents/Indice

Special Topic:

I linguaggi della poesia: prosa, musica, pittura.

Guest Editor: Valerio Cappozzo

Articles/Articoli

VALERIO CAPPOZZO: *Introduzione. La lunghezza delle parole*..... 10

VALERIA DANI: *“Adesso tornerai a scrivere poesie.” Antonia Pozzi’s Unfinished Prose and the Lyrical Vocation* 17

ROBERTA ANTOGNINI: *Amelia Rosselli e l’esperimento di Diario Ottuso*.... 38

ALESSANDRA GRANDELIS: *“Avrei voluto / essere / un poeta.” Sui versi nascosti di Alberto Moravia* 66

MARCO CARMELLO: *Verso e narrazione ne Il mondo salvato dai ragazzini di Elsa Morante*..... 86

NICOLA LUCCHI: *The Art of the Critic: Notes on the Margins of Eugenio Montale’s Pastelli & disegni*..... 113

ANDREA MIRABILE: *Valentino Zeichen e Alberto Burri fra poesia, narrativa, e arti visive* 135

STEFANIA BERNARDINI: *“Cercavo soltanto di gettare un ponte tra la poesia e la canzone”. L’intertestualità poetica di Fabrizio De André*..... 152

Special Topic:
Austro-Italian Encounters
Guest Editor: Saskia Elizabeth Ziolkowski

Articles/Articoli

<i>SASKIA ELIZABETH ZIOLKOWSKI: Austro-Italian Encounters: An Introduction</i>	182
<i>SANDRA PARMEGIANI: Claudio Magris' La mostra: A Carnevalesque Finale</i>	197
<i>SALVATORE PAPPALARDO: Trieste 1912: Habsburg Italianness in Scipio Slataper and Angelo Vivante</i>	215
<i>ELIZABETH SCHÄCHTER, Arthur Schnitzler and Italo Svevo: Two Jewish Writers</i>	241
<i>SUSANNE C. KNITTEL, 'Dall'altra parte': Language, Memory and Identity in Südtirol/Alto Adige</i>	262
<i>MIMMO CANGIANO, Between the Cracks of Tragedy. Sprachkritik as a Social Act: Hofmannsthal vs Michelstaedter</i>	287

Unpublished Texts/Testi inediti

<i>ERNESTO LIVORNI: Marco Beck, ovvero, la precarietà eternata</i>	310
<i>MARCO BECK: Il Sorriso di Lalage</i>	315
<i>ERNESTO LIVORNI: I Folli Voli di Peter Carravetta</i>	332
<i>PETER CARRAVETTA: Notturmo Voto</i>	334
<i>ERNESTO LIVORNI: Monica Guerra, ovvero, poesia come sguardo oltre il limite</i>	338
<i>MONICA GUERRA: Fuoricampo</i>	341

Translations/Traduzioni

<i>ANAKA ALLEN: Nota della Traduttrice: Cinque Poesie di</i>	
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“Dall'altra parte”: Language, Memory and Identity in Südtirol/Alto Adige

“Ogni identità è un aggregato e ha poco senso scomporlo per arrivare al preteso atomo indivisibile”
— Claudio Magris, *Microcosmi*

“Es gibt Zusammenhänge, die sind so einfach, daß es wehtut.”
— Sabine Gruber, *Stillbach oder Die Sehnsucht*

In his travelogue-essay-memoir-novel *Microcosmi*, Claudio Magris presents a seemingly random assemblage of places whose connections become apparent only through the observing eye and the memories and meditations of the narrator. Beginning in Trieste, the reader follows the narrator on a meandering journey to Grado and along the Venetian coast, to the islands of the Gulf of Quarnero off the coast of Croatia, to a forest in Slovenia, to a village in Südtirol/Alto Adige, and elsewhere. The narrator presents a biography of each place, constructed out of bits and pieces of its history, geography, flora and fauna, portraits of its literary figures as well as other prominent and unknown local individuals, and his own personal connections to them. His narrative emerges out of the combination of these manifold discourses, voices, and life stories that intersect and intermingle with his own, creating echoes and mirrorings throughout the various parts and across the different temporal layers of the text. The most resounding of these echoes is the image of the border: geographically and metaphorically, the microcosms presented reside in the spaces between countries, cultures, or languages, between past and present, between history and memory.

Of all the different borderlands visited in the text, it is the region of Südtirol/Alto Adige that emerges most prominently as a mirror image of Magris's native Friuli-Venezia Giulia and as a prism through which he examines more general themes such as identity, belonging, memory, language, and writing. Südtirol/Alto Adige is presented as having an identity “problem” analogous to that faced by Trieste and its environs. In both cases this problem results from the desire to claim the region for one or the other side and deny its heterogeneity, in “over-remembering” one aspect of its history and forgetting or repressing another.¹ In both regions the Habsburg legacy can still be felt and remains an object of nostalgia. Both were annexed by Italy after the end of World War I and, during Fascism, were subjected to a ruthless campaign

of Italianization, which attempted to erase all things German or Slavic. All languages other than Italian were forbidden and schools, newspapers, and cultural institutions were censored or closed, and geographical and proper names supplanted by Italian ones. Then, during the Nazi occupation, both regions were converted into so-called Operation Zones, directly administered by the German Reich, and underwent brutal ethnic cleansing. Now it was Jewish culture that was to be erased, and in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Slovenes and Croats were included in the persecutions.² After World War II, both regions were returned to Italy: Südtirol/Alto Adige immediately in 1945, and Trieste and the surrounding region in 1954. This return to Italy was in both cases fiercely contested: in the 1940s and 50s and up until the 1970s, the “*Questione di Trieste*”—i.e. where Italy’s Eastern border should be drawn—became one of the flashpoints in Cold-War politics.³ Similarly, the “*Südtirolfrage*,” which was marked by domestic terrorism, was not officially resolved until 1972, when Austria and Italy signed a treaty granting the region semi-autonomous status.⁴

Both regions thus form a nexus of multiple socio-political, linguistic, cultural, and mnemonic constellations, where questions of what constitutes “Italian” and “Austrian” or “German” identity are in a constant state of re-negotiation. Magris writes about Südtirol:

Dovunque corrano confini, che si oltrepassano senza accorgersene: quello antico fra Rezia e Norico, quello fra bavaresi e alemanni, fra tedeschi e latini. Tirolo e tutta una frontiera, divide e unisce; il Brennero separa due stati ed è al centro di una terra sentita quale unità. Pure i nomi cambiano identità. Un tempo Südtirol [...] era un paese che vantava tre nazioni: tedesca, italiana e ladina. Ma il Brennero, dice la geografia, è lo spartiacque fra l’Adriatico e il Mar Nero, fra le acque che con l’Adige scorrono nel mare di ogni persuasione e quelle che tramite la Drava confluiscono nel Danubio. Adriatico e Danubio, mare e Mitteleuropa continentale, i due scenari opposti e complementari della vita; il confine che li separa, e che durante una gita si varca senz’ accorgersene, è un minimo buco nero che conduce da un universo a un altro.⁵

Südtirol is situated at the confluence of multiple invisible borders—historical, geographical, geological, political, cultural, and linguistic. These borders have been invoked, emphasized, even violently enforced at specific historical moments. The central idea that emerges from this passage is that the border simultaneously divides and connects, is always both a limit and a bridge, a marker of the intersection between two or more, often arbitrarily

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

drawn, spaces. Moreover, Magris suggests, something happens suddenly, and almost imperceptibly, when one traverses this "tiny black hole," which serves to transform one's perception of the spaces on either side.

If one emphasizes only its divisive role, the border, according to Magris, exerts a "potere letale,"⁶ by which he means the violent urge it inspires in people to enforce it as a bulwark against otherness and as a justification for a policy of purification. Such ideals of purity can only be put into practice through acts of simplification and negation, by ignoring, excluding, or even eliminating any and all forms of difference. Thus, as Magris writes, "La purezza etnica, come ogni purezza, è il risultato di una sottrazione ed è tanto più rigorosa quanto più radicale è quest'ultima—la vera purezza sarebbe il niente, lo zero assoluto ottenuto dalla sottrazione totale."⁷ This gesture of ultimate separation also negates the other, affirmative function of the border, which is to bridge and connect. The only way to overcome the deadly power of the border, Magris writes, "è sentirsi e mettersi sempre dall'altra parte,"⁸ to focus on its function as a bridge, to cross it, and adopt the perspective of the other side. Such an act is not only affirmative but also imaginative and creative in that it invites us to consider the other as having a point of view concerning ourselves, and to imagine how things could be (seen) otherwise. It is perhaps for this reason that literature and art are uniquely equipped to transgress boundaries. This is especially the case in regions such as Trieste or South Tyrol, whose literary production, especially in the twentieth century, has revolved around the figure of the border and on issues of identity and memory.

At the same time, there is always a danger that writing that is too fixated on the border and its significance will ultimately serve only to reify that border and to accentuate the very boundaries it appears to be transgressing. This is why, for Magris, it is not self-evidently productive that authors in places such as Südtirol and Trieste should be obsessed with the figure of the border and with the difficulty of overcoming it:

Gli scrittori tirolesi sono ossessionati dal confine—dalla necessità e difficoltà di varcarlo—e dall'identità, e ricercano quest'ultima nella negazione dell'identità compatta cara al potere culturale del loro paese. Con la sofferta ma abusata e facile retorica frequente negli scrittori di frontiera, per esempio quelli triestini, si collocano anch'essi volentieri dall'altra parte, addolorati ma pure compiaciuti di sentirsi italiani fra i tedeschi e tedeschi fra gli italiani, avidi di essere brutalmente attaccati dai custodi delle memorie patrie per poter dire, con declamata sincerità, che soffrono di non saper dire a quale mondo appartengono.⁹

These forms of literary border crossings have, Magris notes, historically provided an important alternative to the powerful hegemony of the *Heimat* over Tyrolean literature and culture. In part precisely because the national and cultural identity of the region was in question well into the 1970s, Tyrolean literature was, for longer than any neighboring literature, dominated by idealized and romanticized depictions of the region as wholesome, bucolic, timeless, and authentic.¹⁰ In that cultural climate, works by authors who did not eschew alterity and heterogeneity provided a necessary counterpoint, but nevertheless tended to rely on the trope of displaced national identity—of being a solitary Italian among the Germans and vice versa, which of course perpetuates the binary opposition between Italian and German as inherently distinct identity positions. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Magris writes, it is time to stop pretending that it is only those living in the periphery who need concern themselves with the border, and instead recognize that the question of the border and of liminality is of central importance to all cultures and identities. Or, to quote a phrase by Martin Heidegger made famous by Homi Bhabha: the border is not the point at which something (a nation or identity) ends but rather “the place from which something *begins its presencing*.”¹¹ Once the border is conceived of as the starting point for something new, it becomes an opportunity to create new connections in a dynamic, non-essentialist manner that is not dependent on a mutually exclusive, zero-sum logic.

Bhabha’s discussion of borders and bridgings must be seen in relation to his concept of the “third space,” which he derives from speech act theory, where it describes the intermediary point through which any linguistic or cultural utterance must inevitably pass in order for meaning to be created. Crucially, this third space, which might also be described as the socio-political, historical and cultural context in which an utterance is made and received, cannot be derived from the *énoncé*, i.e. the content of the utterance itself. Thus, meaning is always contingent upon external factors and cannot be unilaterally determined by the speaker or the recipient. Put differently:

The intervention of the third space of enunciation [...] challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. [...] It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or “purity” of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity.¹²

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

In other words, it is not even necessary to find specific historical evidence to contradict theories of racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural purity, and nor is the influence of the third space limited to geographic border regions like South Tyrol. Rather, it is a structural attribute of all discourse. This is analogous to Magris's insistence that the question of the border is not limited to the physical borderland, but rather concerns us all.

In what follows I will explore the notion of the borderland and the figure of the bridge through an analysis of two recent novels about Südtirol/Alto Adige, Francesca Melandri's *Eva dorme* (2010) and Sabine Gruber's *Stillbach oder Die Sehnsucht* (2011). Both novels adopt a wide historical scope that encompasses a century of traumatic events in and around South Tyrol from the break-up of the Habsburg Empire to the present day, but far from seeking to integrate them into one cohesive metanarrative, they instead allow these different memories and histories to resonate with each other, giving rise to often uncanny or disturbing echoes. For Bhabha, the concept of the "unhomely" is of crucial importance in the process of cultural rearticulation that begins at the border, because it unsettles the stable and essentialist vision of national identity as something that is structured around a coherent center rather than being continually produced in the margins. Similarly, the principle of unhomeliness or uncanniness—of making the familiar seem strange—is central to the poetics of both authors, and one key strategy for maintaining this uncanny sense of otherness also with regard to oneself is the perpetual willingness to adopt a perspective "dall'altra parte." These novels reveal how clear-cut binaries, such as Italian and Austrian, Fascist and anti-Fascist, Nazi and anti-Nazi, are powerless to account for the complex reality of the region and its history and of the relationship between Italy and Austria more generally. Both authors as well as their protagonists cross multiple borders, build bridges between the past and the present, between Austrian and Italian culture. Like the identities of their protagonists, the novels themselves are assemblages grouping together multiple heterogeneous discourses and partial perspectives. Sabine Gruber is a native of South Tyrol, though she now lives in Vienna. Francesca Melandri, by contrast, was born in Rome but lived for many years in South Tyrol, and so has a personal connection to the region. Both novels center on female protagonists who travel from South Tyrol to Italy in search of the past and, in the process, draw a portrait of the entangled histories and memories of both places. Repeatedly confronted with the inevitable question, "Do you feel more Austrian or Italian?," both protagonists reject the idea that one must be either one or the other in favor of a more "uncanny" and "multidirectional" conception of their identity and their relationship to the region's memory and history.

Multidirectionality is a term proposed by Michael Rothberg (2009) to describe cultural memory as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing: as productive rather than privative.”¹³ Rather than conceiving of the memory landscape as a zero-sum struggle for scarce resources, multidirectionality reveals how diverse memory complexes interact with each other in a dynamic process of inter-cultural inspiration, re-inscription, and reconstitution. Emphasizing the constructed and impermanent nature of memory as embedded in and functioning according to present concerns, Rothberg problematizes the relationship between memory (individual and collective) and identity, which has more often than not been seen as a one-to-one correspondence. Rather than as a straight line connecting the past with the present, where our relationship to the past inevitably results in some sort of ‘natural,’ ‘authentic’ identity in the present which would necessarily exclude any form of otherness, we should think of this relationship as inherently transversal and associative, “never without unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider other.”¹⁴ If we think of memory production and identity formation as dialogic and intercultural processes, they become acts of bridging, involved in a shifting back and forth of perspectives that has “the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice.”¹⁵ Both novels I discuss promote such new forms of solidarity that transcend national, linguistic, and ethnic lines and address questions of Austro-Italian memory, history, and identity in a way that does not seek to resolve the internal ambiguities but rather to *inhabit* them. Both authors have conducted extensive historical and archival research, which they acknowledge in the paratext and which anchors their fictional narratives in historical fact. As Rothberg demonstrates, the multidirectional approach depends on drawing comparisons and making connections between disparate memories and histories, but in so doing, it must pay careful attention to the historical specificity of each in order to avoid oversimplification and facile equivalences. At the same time, history and memory are inherently multidirectional and so the first step is to take seriously the “messiness” and interconnectedness of people, events, and memories. And in the process, previously un-acknowledged connections and coincidences will become apparent.

Historically, South Tyrol has had a matrix of binary oppositions imposed upon it, often violently.¹⁶ The idea of the borderland as a site of “Volks-tumskampf,” the violent clash of ethnicities and cultures that is a “zeitloses, unabänderliches, ja naturnotwendiges, geistig-politisch-biologisches Völker- ringen”¹⁷ has not only dominated the political or historical discourse on the region during large parts of the twentieth century, but also its cultural and

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

especially literary production until relatively recently. From the beginning, language was at the center of this battle. It became the key instrument of a cultural violence that was directed against the German majority under Fascism (more than 90% of South Tyroleans were German speakers in 1919).¹⁸ The promise of being able to speak, write, and teach (in) German subsequently contributed strongly to the South Tyroleans' enthusiasm for Hitler and the National Socialists. In this, support for Hitler was paradoxically construed as an act of resistance against Mussolini.¹⁹ The imposed binary logic received an additional twist in 1939, when Hitler and Mussolini signed the South Tyrol Option Agreement, which forced the South Tyroleans to decide between emigrating to Nazi Germany or remaining in Fascist Italy and forever renouncing their German culture and heritage. The result was a deep and traumatic split within the community itself, between those who wanted to remain and those who opted for leaving. The ensuing propaganda pitted "Dableiber" (remainers) against the "Optanten/Geher" (opters/goers) and assumed violent dimensions: the "Dableiber" were denounced as traitors to the German *Volk*, their reputations besmirched and their property vandalized. In the end, more than 80% opted for leaving.²⁰ When many of those who had emigrated returned after the end of the war, these "Rückkehrer" (returnees) in turn were seen as traitors to the South Tyrolean *Heimat*.

The tensions in the region did not end in the post-war period: German was made an official language again, but South Tyrol remained under Italian rule and was integrated into the region of Trentino. This meant that Italians were the majority in the combined region and the promised autonomy of the German minority became unrealizable. All through the 1950s and '60s Austria and Italy continued to negotiate the *Südtirolfrage*. Because of Italy's uncompromising attitude the situation came to a head in a series of bombings, carried out by the Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol (BAS, Committee for the Liberation of South Tyrol). The BAS were variously seen as terrorists or freedom fighters, depending on the perspective and national allegiance of the speaker. At first only public buildings and Fascist monuments were the targets of these bombings, but the movement then radicalized and began targeting the Italian police and military forces sent to South Tyrol to restore order. These attacks can be seen as a pre-ambule to the violent right-wing and left-wing attacks in Italy during the *anni di piombo*, particularly because of the separatist movement's association with ultra-nationalist and Neo-Nazi groups from Germany and Austria. In response to these attacks, Italy's secret service and the paramilitary force Gladio worked behind the scenes to escalate the tensions further in order to weaken South Tyrol's negotiating position.²¹ A new statute of autonomy, called the "Paket" (package) because of its many

different components, came into effect in 1972, but it was not until 1992 that its various provisions were fully implemented and Italy and Austria officially ended their dispute.²² With the creation, in 1995, of the trans-border association European Region Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino the three parts that historically formed the land Tyrol have been reunited. It presents itself as a land of spectacular natural beauty, quaint rustic traditions, and “the harmony of opposites,”²³ but just below this idyllic façade, the region proves to be a melting pot of twentieth century conflict and identity politics.²⁴

In recent decades, a new generation of authors have begun to explore the region’s complex heritage and history. There have been attempts to define South Tyrolean literature as a category in its own right, namely as works written in three main languages (German, Italian and Ladin, a language composed of different dialects mainly spoken in the Dolomite Mountain region) by authors who either live in the region or are otherwise culturally affiliated with it.²⁵ In keeping with its intrinsic heterogeneity, the literature of South Tyrol tends to orient itself according to traditions outside its own borders (mainly Austrian, German, and Italian literature). For this reason, South Tyrolean literature written in German has been regarded as a subset of German or Austrian literature and hence been claimed for German studies. Conversely, texts written in Italian and Ladin have been examined mainly within the framework of Italian studies.²⁶ This status quo is perhaps understandable in light of the actual divisions that existed between German-speaking and Italian-speaking authors and in South Tyrolean society more generally until the 1990s. From the 1970s onwards, a number of South Tyrolean authors began to oppose the dominant culture of segregation and formed groups across linguistic and ethnic lines and deliberately made use of multiple languages in their works (e.g. Gerhard Kofler and Norbert Kaser). The situation is similar with regard to a literary coming to terms with the past. With a small number of important exceptions, Klaus Gatterer’s 1969 *Schöne Welt, Böse Leut* prime among them, it was not until the 1990s that any kind of literary *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* became possible.²⁷ Nevertheless, such critical and experimental literature remains at the margins of South Tyrolean culture. Some of these authors are also forced to publish in foreign presses, which in turn reinforces the division according to national languages.²⁸

“I figli di N.N.” – Francesca Melandri’s *Eva dorme*

Francesca Melandri’s *Eva dorme* (2010; translated into English as *Eva Sleeps*, 2016) narrates the twentieth century history of Südtirol/Alto Adige through the prism of the fictional Huber family, focusing on Gerda Huber

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

and her daughter Eva. Part historical novel, part travelogue, *Eva dorme* not only offers an alternative, female perspective on the historical events, it also presents, in the figure of Eva, a third-generation South Tyrolean who refuses the binary logic of either German or Italian and instead assumes a more cosmopolitan and relational identity position which she describes as South Tyrolean, and which prompts her to feel a greater kinship with immigrants and minorities than with those who are content to self-identify as either Italian or Austrian. Eva's and Gerda's narratives are set apart not only through a distinction in narrative voice (Eva's part is narrated in the first person, Gerda's in the third), but also through the two different temporal layers at work in the novel. The frame narrative, Eva's story, is set in the present and relates her train journey from South Tyrol to Calabria to see Vito Anania, a surrogate father to her when she was growing up, whom she has not seen in decades. The news of his imminent death has made her realize that she must see him one more time. This journey along the entire length of the Italian peninsula takes twenty-four hours, during which time Eva reflects on her childhood and youth, her relation to the Italian language and culture, to Carlo, a married man with whom she is having an affair, and to Uli, her cousin and best childhood friend, whose homosexuality made him an outcast in their closed-minded village, which eventually led to his suicide.

The second narrative layer, which is interspersed with Eva's narrative, begins in the 1920s and traces Gerda's life and that of her family up to the 1990s. The third person narration is focalized principally through Gerda whose life story proves to be intimately bound up with key moments in the region's history and that of Austro-Italian relations. This imbrication is accentuated through occasional departures from Gerda's viewpoint to incorporate that of other characters, both fictional and historical, whose individual trajectories intersect with Gerda's at various points. The first of these is Gerda's father Hermann whom we follow as he joins first the Fascist and later the National Socialist party and who, as a member of the Waffen-SS, opts for leaving South Tyrol after the Hitler-Mussolini Option Agreement. Another focal point for the narrative is Gerda's older brother Peter, who is active in the movement to restore Südtirol to Austria. In the 1960s he joins the BAS and participates in the bombings until he is killed when a bomb he is placing detonates prematurely. The reader is also introduced to Vito Anania, a *carabiniere* from Calabria who, along with thousands of other police and military personnel has been stationed in South Tyrol. Vito wants to marry Gerda, but mixed marriages between Italians and Germans are seen as problematic, and the code of conduct for the *carabinieri* forbids the marriage also because Gerda has a child out of wedlock, namely Eva. Forced

to choose between Gerda and his career as a *carabiniere*, Vito reluctantly chooses the latter at Gerda's insistence and returns to Calabria. Gerda's relationship to Vito represents a microcosm of Austro-Italian relations. Finally, we also meet Silvius Magnago, who, in contrast to the other characters, is an actual historical figure. Magnago was the *Landeshauptmann* (governor) of South Tyrol between 1960 and 1989 and led the negotiations surrounding the autonomy agreement. Gerda comes face to face with Magnago and with the Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro when a diplomatic meeting is held at the hotel in which she works.

Gerda's part provides its readers with a perspective "dall'altra parte" in two different ways: while it portrays the historical events mainly from the perspective of the South Tyroleans, it is careful to include the viewpoints of Italians such as Vito Anania and to present a balanced portrait, emphasizing how the coming together of Italian and Austrian culture was also an enrichment for the region, not least in terms of its cuisine, an aspect that assumes central importance, given Gerda's profession as a chef. In an amusing dialogue between the delegates convened at Gerda's hotel to resolve the *Südtirolfrage*, the food becomes a topic of debate onto which the political tensions of the region are displaced, e.g. when an Italian delegate asserts that "le cotolette panate, come tutte le cose buone che esistono al Nord, in realtà gli austriaci le hanno copiate dall'Italia."²⁹ The German speakers protest that *Wiener Schnitzel* is a quintessentially Austrian dish, to which the Italians reply: "Cotoletta alla Milanese, *viner snizzel*, che differenza vi fa? Ormai tanto siete italiani!"³⁰ Thus, an argument about provenance and inherent, authentic national heritage is ended by reference to *Realpolitik*.

Despite the novel's efforts to see the story from both sides, the manner in which the historical sections are presented leaves no doubt about its critical stance vis-à-vis the complacent and auto-exculpatory narratives that pervade public and scholarly discourse in Italy about Fascism, the war, and its aftermath. Thus, shortly after the argument about *Wiener Schnitzel*, governor Silvius Magnago reflects on the Italians' tendency to see themselves as historical victims: "quando agli italiani dai la scelta se identificarsi nel ruolo della vittima o in quello dell'aggressore, sceglieranno sempre il primo. Anche contro la verità storica, se necessario."³¹ There is even a word, *vittimismo*, to describe this phenomenon, which, as Magnago observes, has no equivalent in German and so even when speaking "la lingua di Goethe," he uses the Italian word.³²

At the same time, it is through a shared sense of mourning and of the need for commemoration that those affected by the violence in the region on both sides of the cultural and linguistic divide may find grounds

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

for solidarity. Thus, in a poignant scene set in 1967, the reader encounters an old unnamed South Tyrolean woman who prays at the coffins of four *alpini* killed by one of the bombs of the BAS. The woman does not know these soldiers, she doesn't even know their names, but to her they serve as a reminder of the four sons that she lost in the war. They were the same age as these soldiers and she was never able to bury them. This is why she has come to say goodbye to these four men instead:

I quattro giovani uomini erano morti, come i suoi figli, cosa importava che non si chiamassero Sepp, Gert, Manfred e Hans ma Francesco, Mario, Olivo, Armado? Anche il nome del posto dov'erano caduti contava poco: Porzescharte, Cima Vallona, che importanza aveva? Erano morti loro, erano morti i suoi figli, e per i morti si può solo pregare.³³

In death, the differences between these soldiers who died in service of their country are elided and replaced by a uniform humanity. Moreover, from a South Tyrolean perspective, there was a far greater continuity between the violence of the 1960s and 70s and that of the 1930s and 40s than was perceivable in Italy at the time, in a climate where Fascism was seen as a lamentable "parenthesis" in recent Italian history,³⁴ thus obscuring any latent connections between that period and the domestic terrorism that marked the 1970s. The culture of *vittimismo*, in claiming victim status for oneself and conversely branding the other as aggressor, serves ultimately to deny victim status to that other and to disavow any responsibility one might have for the other's suffering. In this way *vittimismo* represents a steadfast refusal to view past traumatic events "dall'altra parte."

The gesture of "mettersi dall'altra parte" as conceived by Magris is still ultimately beholden to a binary logic, even though he stresses the need to overcome such oppositional thinking. In Eva's narrative, set in the present day, we can observe how the willingness to imagine the other's perspective moves beyond such binaries towards something more inclusive and multidirectional. As she travels across Italy, Eva feels solidarity with all those who are in one way or another in between two cultures: those who, like her cousin Uli, struggle to find their place in a society that rejects their sexual orientation, and those who, like the immigrants, guest workers, or even the tourists she meets, have left their homes behind, by choice or by necessity. As a child of Südtirol, Eva grew up in the shadow of a border that pervaded all aspects of culture and daily life, but now the border seems to have lost its monumental status. When a Sicilian fellow traveler on the train asks Eva the (in)famous question "Do you feel more German or Italian?" Eva replies

with a carefully crafted and well-rehearsed answer:

Il mio passaporto è italiano, la mia lingua è il tedesco, la mia terra è la parte Sud del Tirolo le cui altre parti però, il Tirolo del Nord e dell'Est, sono in Austria. Noi la chiamiamo Südtirol ma in italiano si dice Alto Adige, visto che la differenza è sempre stata quella, da dove la si guarda: da sopra o da sotto.³⁵

This answer has the desired effect: the woman falls silent and then exclaims, "Che posto complicato!" Eva's need to emphasize the entangled complexity of her identity and that of her region mirrors the novel's own efforts to deconstruct simplistic binaries and essentialisms. In a place like South Tyrol there is no necessary correspondence between nationality, language, and territory, and no single one of the three, and perhaps not even all three together, determine someone's identity. The impossibility and absurdity of such assumptions of and desires for homogeneity are illustrated also by the example of the *Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung* (declaration of language group membership). Originally a component of the 1972 "Paket," the declaration served to ensure that German-, Italian- and Ladin speakers received social benefits and employment opportunities in equal measure (the so-called *Ethnischer Proporz/proporzionale etnica*).³⁶ Thus, in every census, the inhabitants of Südtirol/Alto Adige were (and still are) required to declare which language group they belong to. The form, however, offers only the three options, German, Italian, and Ladin, and it is not possible to declare oneself multi-ethnic or belonging to any other language group. This is how it happens that Eva's Chinese neighbors, Signor Song and his family, are registered as belonging to the Italian language group.

Benché sia poliglotta (italiano, inglese, mandarino e ormai anche un po' di tedesco), la sua lingua madre è il dialetto di Shandong: una lingua tonale e, soprattutto, monosillabica. [...] [N]on avrebbe mai potuto dichiararsi parlante di una lingua che con trentasei lettere e undici sillabe può formare una parola sola.³⁷

Even if the *Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung* (thirty-six letters, eleven syllables) included Mandarin as an option, it would still be inaccurate, since the language he considers his own is a specific regional dialect. And, similarly, while Mister Song's reluctance to identify with the agglutinative excesses of bureaucratic German forces him to self-identify as an Italian speaker, his children, having grown up in Trieste, do not in fact speak standard Italian, but rather a regional dialect, which, moreover, is reproduced in the

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

text, thus emphasizing that the label "Italian" is also a fiction imposed on a heterogeneous multiplicity, even for people born and raised in Italy.

The novel quite clearly aspires to a sense of community and kinship that transcends political or national divisions. This becomes especially clear when Eva misses her connecting train in Rome and is forced to spend several hours at the train station. It is early in the morning on Easter Sunday and amidst the shuttered storefronts she stumbles upon a gloomy, makeshift chapel where an Easter service is in progress. The congregation consists of migrants, homeless people, street vendors, and travelers like Eva. The priest delivers a sermon on the monumental significance of Christ's resurrection and concludes with an anecdote about Giorgio La Pira, the influential mayor of Florence who, in the 1950s, overcame a fractious political dispute by invoking the miracle of the resurrection, compared to which the party-political quarrels must appear entirely insignificant. Confronted with this message of hope and unity, Eva finds herself, much to her surprise, overcome with a sense of happiness and kinship, but, as she takes pains to emphasize, this is not so much a spiritual awakening as a profoundly secular, interpersonal sentiment: "mi viene spontaneo unirmi a quelli che ho intorno, qui in questa brutta cappella. Mi sembrano tutti anche loro, come me, figli di N.N."³⁸ On a personal and literal level, Gerda had always insisted that Eva's father was "nessuno,"³⁹ but, of course, at a metaphorical level, this experience inaugurates a new community that is not based on paternity but on affinity. The Easter service marks a key waypoint on her journey to Vito, the man who is not her father, but who is nevertheless "l'unico uomo che mi abbia mai fatto sentire a casa."⁴⁰ Upon arrival in Reggio Calabria, she is met by Vito's son Gabriele, who takes her to dinner. He does not ask her whether she feels more German or Italian and when she points this out to him, he reacts with astonishment: "Perché dovrei? Come se tu chiedessi a me se mi sento più calabrese o italiano. Anzi, più normanno, arabo, greco o albanese," he says, alluding to the no less turbulent, if less recent history of his own region.⁴¹ When she and Vito are finally reunited, Eva learns that he did not in fact abandon her but rather continued to send letters and cassette tapes, all of which Gerda intercepted and kept from her. At first, Eva is furious and hurt, but she is ultimately able to forgive her mother. Thus, the novel ends with the re-constitution of a family unit split asunder by history and politics. As such, *Eva dorme* can be characterized as a redemption narrative: Eva's journey allows her to move beyond the impasses and constraints of the history of the region and of her own family, and she ultimately achieves a degree of autonomy whereby she is free to construct her own identity and her own affiliations. In the epilogue, Eva announces her intention to put her ethnicity as Chinese on the next

Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung. After all, she quips, her mother was born in “Shanghai”—the colloquial name for the part of town allocated to the returnees after World War II, like the Hubers.

“Zwischen den Stühlen” – Sabine Gruber’s *Stillbach oder Die Sehnsucht*

At one point toward the end of her journey, Eva reflects on the question of home and belonging and wonders “Come si dice *Heimat* in italiano?”⁴² The equivalent term would be *patria*, but this is too laden with patriarchal, nationalist, and imperialist connotations, she finds. *Heimat* is similarly problematic and historically overdetermined. Ultimately, she rejects both terms in favor of the ostensibly more neutral and less politically problematic *paese*. This gesture of rejecting *Heimat* and *patria* is simultaneously an attempt to resolve the uncanny or unhomey aspects of her identity and to liberate herself from the burden of history and instead look toward the future.

Sabine Gruber’s *Stillbach oder Die Sehnsucht* (2011; translated into English as *Roman Elegy*, 2013) by contrast, focuses on the impossibility of coming to terms with the past and deliberately negates any possibility of closure or redemption. The difficulty and necessity of recovering the past and of tracing its aftereffects in the present, the unreliability of memory, and the interconnection of personal and historical events are all thematized in this novel and embedded in a multidirectional framework, at the center of which stands South Tyrol. The novel revolves around two key historical events: on the one hand, the Fosse Ardeatine massacre on 24 March 1944, carried out by the Nazi occupiers as a reprisal for a partisan attack on the German SS Police Regiment Bozen the previous day; and, on the other hand, the 1978 kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. These events are not narrated directly or completely. Rather, the novel circles around them, presenting bits and pieces of these and related events, through the memories and conversations of the characters. The historical events are tightly interwoven with the personal histories of two women, Emma and Ines. Their stories, in turn, are contained within a third narrative layer set in Italy under Berlusconi, which centers on another woman, Clara. A complex web of connections links the stories of these three women together: they all come from the fictional South Tyrolean village of Stillbach, and they all go to Rome, albeit for different reasons and at different times. Clara and Ines are childhood friends and they are both writers. And both fall for the same man, the historian Paul. Clara comes to Rome after Ines’s sudden death to clean out her friend’s apartment. There she finds a manuscript which tells the story of Ines’s first arrival in Rome in 1978, to start a summer job as a maid

in a hotel. The hotel is owned by Emma, who had come to Rome in 1938 to work as a maid, had become pregnant by the hotel owners' son, married him and taken over the hotel after his death.

Ines's manuscript contains passages written in the first person recounting her own experiences in Rome in the late seventies, particularly her acquaintance with Antonella, a fellow chambermaid at the hotel who is involved in left-wing terrorist activities, including, allegedly, the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, and Paul, a German historian specializing the history of Fascism and Nazism, who lives at the hotel and who becomes her lover. Through her conversations with Paul and Antonella, Ines acquires a consciousness of political and historical issues and the continuities between the past and the present. These are further emphasized in the manuscript by passages in which Ines creates a narrative about Emma, describing, in the third person, Emma's thoughts and memories of the period before and during the war, particularly of her fiancé Johann from back home, who was one of the soldiers killed in the partisan attack on Via Rasella in March 1944. Clara is drawn into Ines's narrative and likewise becomes obsessed with the mysterious figure of Emma. She tracks down Paul, who is still in Rome and working as a tour guide, and together they try to find the missing pieces of the story, falling in love in the process. Clara encounters some resistance in the form of Emma's son Francesco, a left-wing politician, who, having constructed an image of his mother as a victim of circumstance, objects to the idea that she was engaged to a Nazi soldier and wants to prevent Ines's manuscript from seeing the light of day.

Emma emerges as the central figure of the novel, but we are denied any direct access to her experiences. Even when, towards the end of the novel, Clara actually seeks out Emma at the nursing home in order to get some answers that corroborate Ines's story, we discover, along with Clara, that Emma is suffering from dementia and that she is unable to give any clear account of the past. The novel consists of a series of attempted interpretations and reconstructions carried out by Ines, Clara, and Paul, all of whom belong to a generation born fifteen to twenty years after the war. This makes them the same age as the author, who, in a metafictional gesture, is mentioned by Clara as having been a friend of Ines's. On the surface, this appearance by the author seems somewhat gratuitous, but it does nevertheless serve to complicate any too easy identification of either Ines or Clara as fictional alter-egos of Gruber's. The novel ends with a conversation between Clara and Paul in which they discuss whether to send Ines's manuscript to Gruber in the hopes that she will edit and publish it. Although this is not stated explicitly, it appears that the novel we have just read is in fact the product of Gruber's reworking

of Ines's manuscript. This serves two functions: it anchors the fiction more firmly in our own historical reality, and at the same time it re-emphasizes the incompleteness of Ines's manuscript and hence of the ongoing process of working through the past.

Given that the entire action of the novel takes place in Rome, it may seem surprising that it bears the title *Stillbach oder Die Sehnsucht*. On the one hand, Stillbach is the childhood home of all three protagonists, and as such is a concrete object of longing and nostalgia in the novel. Emma, who, through her marriage with an Italian, has become a *persona non grata* in the family and the village, incessantly returns there in her imagination. (Or rather, Ines incessantly returns there via the figure of Emma.) Clara, in turn, is devastated by Ines's death, which marks the loss of her only connection to her childhood in Stillbach: "Mit ihr verschwindet meine Jugend. – Seit sie nicht mehr ist, habe ich das Gefühl, daß ich mir selbst abhanden komme, daß etwas von mir wegbricht, weil sie sich jetzt nicht mehr miterinnert."⁴³ But, as the subtitle announces, Stillbach also becomes a name for a more general desire for an absent point of origin, a sense of unity and wholeness, which can never be recaptured because it is always already lost; the longing that is at the heart of conceptions of the utopian space of *Heimat* as a safe and innocent place outside history and politics. The reason that this yearning can never be satisfied is that Stillbach is in fact inextricably linked to the terrible events of the 1940s and 70s, which have marked the protagonists' lives. If anything, the novel's title gestures toward the kind of rose-tinted *Heimat* literature that dominated South Tyrolean literary production for decades after the war, however, both in terms of its content and in its form, the novel insists that the yearning announced in the title must always remain unsatisfied. Through its multiple narrative layers that place the reader at an ever-increasing distance from the central events, the novel erects a series of barriers to any kind of facile reconciliation or satisfactory conclusion.

Far from aiming for unity and closure, the novel opens a space for multidirectionality, where certain historical and personal connections may become visible that otherwise would remain obscure. As Paul remarks at one point with regard to the memory culture in Italy: "Es gibt Zusammenhänge, die sind so einfach, daß es wehtut."⁴⁴ Paul is commenting on the Italian left's tendency to celebrate the resistance to the Nazi occupation, which, as he correctly points out, has had the added consequence of blocking out the crimes of Fascism and the Italian people's complicity in them. We can thus take Paul's comment literally in the sense that these historical connections are painful, which is why people go to such lengths to disavow or repress them. Paul in general functions as the voice of history in the novel, sup-

plying, frequently in a rather mechanical and didactic way, the historical background. It is through him that the novel sheds light on a little-known aspect of the immediate post-war history of South Tyrol and on the involvement of the Catholic Church more generally in aiding the escape of Nazi officials after the war. Because South Tyrol was the only German-speaking area not directly under Allied governance, many high-ranking Nazi officials, among them Adolf Eichmann and Erich Priebke, were able to hide there. The Franciscan monastery in Bozen, along with other monasteries in South Tyrol, functioned as a safe house and place of transit for these criminals on their way to Argentina. In Rome, the Austrian Bishop Alois Hudal helped them further by procuring transit papers.⁴⁵

Ultimately, the novel's primary objective appears to be to lay bare these painful and uncanny historical connections. This is evident in the story of Emma's fiancé Johann, which forms the emotional core of the novel. Johann, a South Tyrolean boy growing up under Fascism, was drafted into the Italian army and sent to fight in Abyssinia and thus became implicated in Italy's colonial endeavor. After his return to Südtirol, the region was annexed by the Third Reich and he was sent to Rome as part of the occupation forces where he was killed as a Nazi soldier in Via Rasella by the Italian partisans. In the case of Johann it is too simple to say unequivocally that he was a Nazi or a Fascist. And it is difficult to decide whether he should be considered a perpetrator or a victim. As Paul explains, the Nazis were suspicious of the South Tyroleans because many had fought for the Fascists, and thus he would have been barred from rising in the ranks and would have been assigned to guard duties and other menial tasks. As such, Paul says, one might describe Johann as a victim amidst potential perpetrators.⁴⁶ Thus, simplistic binary denominations don't apply; the story is always more complicated. Nonetheless, various groups are heavily invested in constructing just such a simplistic memory—Francesco, Emma's son, being one of them. When Clara tells Paul that she suspects the love story between Emma and Johann to be Ines's invention entirely, Paul responds that it does not matter whether it is true or not. In the context of this conversation, Paul means that it doesn't matter for Francesco, since the mere possibility that his mother loved a Nazi is enough to threaten the stability of his worldview.⁴⁷ But seen in the context of the novel as a whole, this statement serves as a more general commentary on the relationship between history and memory, reality and fiction. After all, it is impossible for us, the readers, to determine whether Johann existed at all, but it is a virtual certainty that there were others whose stories closely resembled his. Ultimately, in its excessively convoluted structure, the novel does not traffic in absolute certainties, but rather is concerned to provide a

space in which the uncanny multidirectional connections between individual and collective history and memory may become visible.

Conclusion

Unlike Melandri's Eva, the characters in Gruber's novel don't have a well-rehearsed answer to the question of whether they feel more German or Italian. In general, Clara, Ines, and Emma don't seem to know who they are. To Antonella's question "Aber wenn du keine Deutsche bist, was dann?" Ines does not have an answer: "Ich wußte nicht, was ich war. Nie hatte ich es gewußt. Und je mehr man es von mir wissen wollte, desto weniger Ahnung hatte ich. Für viele Italiener war ich eine Deutsche, und für die meisten Deutschen weder eine Italienerin noch eine Deutsche."⁴⁸ It is clear that Antonella holds Ines implicitly responsible for the Germans' crimes during the Nazi occupation: "Du kannst nichts dafür, aber du bist auch eine."⁴⁹ In the face of the essentialism at the root of Antonella's opinions, Ines considers it futile to point out that her father was Italian, her mother's maiden name had been Annesi, and that she had an Italian passport, because to Antonella she would always represent the Germans. Even insisting on her Italian heritage would not ultimately mean anything, Ines muses, given that "es doch Menschen in diesem Land hinter der Klause gab, die einen italienischen Familiennamen trugen und trotz dieses Namens deutschnationales Gedankengut verbreiteten."⁵⁰ This leads Ines to reflect on the Haderburg, the medieval fortress overlooking Salorno/Salurn, which, for centuries has marked the boundary between the Italian and the German linguistic sphere: "Und was hätte es genützt [...] [w]enn ich hinzugefügt hätte, daß nicht nur jene Burg, die das Ende der einen und den Anfang der anderen Kultur markierte, eine Haderburg war, sondern die gesamte Region ein Kampf- und Zankland der Uneinsichtigen und Unzufriedenen?"⁵¹ Here again, we see the difference between an understanding of the border as an absolute and unified limit between two discrete entities and of the border as a zone of indeterminacy, as a space where such distinctions are continually being renegotiated. Antonella's binary conception of Italians versus Germans furthermore exemplifies not only the *vittimismo* that pervades Italian memory culture, but also Magris's assertion that the question of the border affects not only those living near it but rather everyone.

These competing notions of homogeneity and heterogeneity also make themselves felt at the level of language, which has been at the heart of the *Südtirolfrage* and the battle for purity. Thus, the South Tyrolean authors' border obsession frequently finds expression in reflections on language and on the different words people use to describe the same things, particularly when it comes to food. The argument about the provenance of *Wiener Schnitzel*

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

is just one example. Indeed, as Melandri's novel in particular emphasizes the strict oppositions between the German and the Italian language break down in the kitchen, which in the region is equally infused with the culinary traditions to the North and to the South. Gruber's novel also comments on this cultural and linguistic admixture, but here it is not purely a question of Italian versus German, but also of different regional variations of German and the significance that is attached to one's use of one word over another. Ines at one point explains how she was criticized for using the German word for cream, "Sahne," in one of her early radio plays instead of the Austrian "Schlagobers," which was perceived as a capitulation to the German market. Evidently, it is not just the Austro-Italian border that is in question in the literary production of the region, but also the Austro-German border. But, as Ines goes on to say, this binary also fails to capture the linguistic and cultural diversity of Südtirol and of Stillbach where, as she puts it, the "Karotten" grow next to the "Erdäpfelacker" and the "gelbe Rüben" lie next to the "Kartoffelfeld"—in both cases, the vegetables in question are carrots and potatoes, which are variously known as "Karotten" and "Kartoffeln" in standard German and "gelbe Rüben" (yellow beets) and "Erdäpfel" (pommes de terre) in various Southern dialects including Austrian—but "zu den Chips sagten ohnehin alle *patatine*."⁵² In practice, therefore, the language spoken in Stillbach is an assemblage of all these neighboring linguistic traditions:

Das Stillbacherische sei zwischen den Stühlen zu Hause, [hatte Ines geschrieben], da sitze man ohnehin besser und bequemer. Die österreichische Monarchie, der Faschismus mit seinem deutschen Sprachverbot und schließlich die Schulbücher und Touristen aus der Bundesrepublik hätten ihre Spuren hinterlassen.⁵³

Rather than trying artificially to police the boundaries between languages, Ines is more comfortable inhabiting the in-between, embracing the hybridity of the region and its language, culture, and cuisine.

In Melandri's novel, Eva remembers taking part in a demonstration against the *Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung* in 1981. She and Uli, and a large number of young South Tyroleans, led by the Green Party politician Alexander Langer, had gathered to voice their dissatisfaction with the fact that every South Tyrolean would now be required to identify as either German, Italian or Ladin speaking and that it was impossible to declare oneself multi-ethnic. Here, too, food serves as a metaphor for these segregationist policies promoted by Silvius Magnago: "Proprio lui, figlio di una tedesca e un italiano, aveva preso a dire: '*Nicht Knödel mit Spaghetti mischen*', canederli e spaghetti non vanno mescolati."⁵⁴ Eva describes how the protesters had set up two cages

on either end of a bridge in her hometown, one labeled DEUTSCHE and the other ITALIANI. Passers-by were encouraged to place themselves in the appropriate cage, whereupon they would be prohibited from communicating with the people in the other cage. This is a powerful image of how the binary oppositions imposed on the region block all interaction and, above all, serve to negate the principal function of the bridge as a means of connection. As Eva is remembering this episode, from the window of the train, she sees an old railway bridge parallel to the one she herself is crossing over and which prompts her to reflect on how the old tracks are preserved only where they pass through the air and do not impose on anybody's territory, or else where they could be integrated into a new structure. Thus, we see that a bridge can only fulfill a function if it forms part of a network. Perhaps, Eva muses, the same is true of personal identity: "o resta immutata fuori dalla Storia, o si trasforma, o muore."⁵⁵ Identity, like history and memory, is not static, but rather a dynamic and ongoing process and this is also why any attempt to arrest it, or fix it in some pure or permanent form, is always an act of violence, which leads inevitably to stagnation and death. Even though Gruber's novel is less explicitly redemptive than Melandri's, they both offer a hopeful outlook by sketching a fluid, relational, and anti-essentialist form of identity.

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L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

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Notes

- 1 I discuss the complex case of Trieste and its "borderline memory disorder" in my book *The Historical Uncanny* (2015).
- 2 See Villani (2005), Wedekind (2003), and Di Sante (2001).
- 3 The decisions on the border between Italy and the former Yugoslavia were finalized in 1975 with the Treaty of Osimo. See Sluga (1994, 2001).
- 4 See Steininger (1997, 1999).
- 5 Magris (1997, 194-195).
- 6 Ibid. 76.
- 7 Ibid. 202.
- 8 Ibid. 76.
- 9 Ibid. 224.
- 10 See Foppa (2003, 62) and Grüning (1992, 5-11).
- 11 Bhabha (1994, 5), cf. Heidegger (1971, 152).
- 12 Bhabha (1994, 37).
- 13 Rothberg (2009, 3).
- 14 Ibid. 5.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 See Grote and Obermair (2017).
- 17 Steurer (1980, 13).
- 18 Steininger (1999, 7).
- 19 Verdorfer (1990).
- 20 The official result of the *Option* communicated to Heinrich Himmler was 90.7%, but historians agree that this was a falsified number in order to make the *Option* in South Tyrol resemble the plebiscite in the Saarland in 1935. Between 1939 and 1943, approximately 75,000 people left South Tyrol. The war slowed emigration down considerably until it stopped completely with the German occupation. See Mock et al. (1989, 168). On the history of the *Option*, see also Eisterer and Steininger (1989), and Romeo (2003).
- 21 See Peterlini (1993, 2011) and Flamini (2003). See also Steininger (1999, 2012) and Fasser (2009).
- 22 For a detailed account of the administrative and legislative aspects of the autonomy, see Bonell and Winkler (2010).
- 23 South Tyrol tourist information website: <http://www.suedtirol.info/en/>.
- 24 Regarding the persisting tensions between the different ethnic groups see for example Pallaver (1997, 2014).
- 25 Grüning (1992, 5-6).
- 26 See for example Holzner (1995) and Kleinert (2012). There have been attempts to overcome this divide, for example the anthology *Grenzräume. Eine literarische Landkarte Südtirols* (Simonsen 2005), which includes contributions of Italian and Ladin authors translated into German, but unfortunately does not feature translations of the German texts into Italian. Another example is Waltraud Mittich's bilingual essay *Topographien/Topografie* (2009).

- 27 Foppa (2003), Costazza (1998), and Kleinert (2012).
- 28 Foppa (2003, 65-90).
- 29 Melandri (2010, 199).
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid. 201.
- 32 On the culture of victimhood in Italy see De Luna (2011).
- 33 Melandri (2010, 221).
- 34 On the “parenthesis” theory of Italian Fascism, first articulated by Benedetto Croce, see Fogu (2006) and Knittel (2015, 157).
- 35 Ibid. 260.
- 36 See Bonell and Winkler (2010, 123–32).
- 37 Melandri (2010, 23).
- 38 Ibid. 156.
- 39 Ibid. 191.
- 40 Ibid. 188.
- 41 Ibid. 322.
- 42 Ibid. 188.
- 43 Gruber (2011, 71). “It’s like my youth has died with her.—Now she’s gone, it feels like I’ve lost myself, like a part of me’s been torn away, because she and I can’t reminisce together anymore” (2013, 46). All translations are from the English edition, entitled *Roman Elegy*, translated by Peter Lewis. Henceforth, references to Gruber’s novel will give the original page numbers first, followed by page numbers in the English: (71 / 46)
- 44 Ibid. 326 / 221. “Fact is, some connections are so straightforward and self-evident, they hurt.”
- 45 For a comprehensive account of the so-called Ratline (*Rattenlinie*) see Sands (2020).
- 46 Gruber (2011, 358).
- 47 Ibid. 327.
- 48 Gruber (2011, 124–25 / 82) “‘So, if you’re not a German,’ demanded Antonella, ‘then what are you?’” “Truth is, I wasn’t sure what I was. I never had been. And the more people wanted me to tell them, the less idea I had. To lots of Italians, I was a German, while to most Germans I was neither an Italian nor a German.”
- 49 Ibid. 111 / 72. “That’s not your fault, but you’re one of them all the same.”
- 50 Ibid. “when there were people up in South Tyrol who had Italian surnames but still peddled German nationalist propaganda.”
- 51 Ibid. “But what good would it have done [...] if I’d added that it wasn’t just that castle on the border between the two cultures that had been the subject of bitter quarrels and fighting, but that down the ages the entire region had been one big bone of contention between bigots with a chip on their shoulder?” The narrator is playing untranslatably on the resemblance between the name Haderburg and the German word “Hader,” which means dispute or quarrel.
- 52 Ibid. 311 / 211.
- 53 Ibid. “The Stillbach dialect fell firmly between two stools, a place where it felt

L'ANELLO CHE NON TIENE

safe and comfortable. The Austrian monarchy, Italian fascism with its proscription of the German language, and finally schoolbooks and tourists from Germany had all left their mark on it.”

54 Melandri (2010, 262).

55 Ibid. 263.