



The novel's protagonist, his vicissitudes, his ambitions and his whole life revolve around one of the greatest intellectuals of the 20th century, Pier Paolo Pasolini. This is a curious situation of indirect knowledge: the protagonist works at the Pasolini Foundation together with Laura Betti - a close friend of the great author and actress in many of his films. His research focuses on *Petrolio*, the intriguing book Pasolini worked on from 1972 until his death; a hidden story in the book becomes the protagonist's guide to the mysteries of life.

Thomas Mann, fascinated with the concept of genius and with the richness of German culture, found in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe the embodiment of the German culture hero. Mann's novelistic biography of Goethe was first published in English in 1940. *Lotte in Weimar* is a vivid dual portrait—a complex study of Goethe and of Lotte, the still-vivacious woman who in her youth was the model for Charlotte in Goethe's widely-read *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Lotte's thoughts, as she anticipates meeting Goethe again after forty years, and her conversations with those in Weimar who knew the great man, allow Mann to assess Goethe's genius from many points of view. Hayden White's fresh appraisal of the novel reveals its consonances with our own concerns.