

Edith Simon

“ON TRANSLATING THOMAS MANN”
Edited with an Introduction and Commentary
by Henry I. MacAdam

After all, every translator knows that translating is a sort of trick, a device like the sleight-of-hand operator's to attract attention to something in order to distract it from something else.

Lowe-Porter 1966, 196.

Without her [Lowe-Porter's] translations, the name of Thomas Mann might well be as little known to the English-speaking world as that of his brother Heinrich.

Thirlwall 1966, vi.

Introduction

Among the literary papers of the late Edith Simon (1917–2003) is a typescript essay entitled “On Translating Thomas Mann.” Internal evidence suggests that it was written in the late 1960s, approximately 40 years after Mann’s monumental *Der Zauberberg* (1924) was translated into English as *The Magic Mountain* (1928) by Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter. Simon’s essay is critical of the quality of Lowe-Porter’s translation of *The Magic Mountain* and is full of suggested re-translations as well as a closer look at several images embedded in German culture, e.g. language; literature, mythology/folklore – that Mann drew upon for “special effects” in the epic novel that ensured his nomination for and acceptance of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 (the politicized head of the Nobel Committee cited *Buddenbrooks* as the reason for the award). Simon wrote her essay at a time when Lowe-Porter’s rendition of Mann’s major works was still garnering plaudits from reviewers.

That essay by Simon, published here for the first time, and another shorter essay on writing historical fiction, are part of her creative legacy now archived within her art studio in Edinburgh, Scotland. I know of only one article (Koch-Emmery 1952–1953) in print before “On Translating Thomas Mann” was written that takes issue (obliquely) with Lowe-Porter’s credentials as the exclusive translator of Mann (from 1926 until his death in 1955) for the prestigious American publishing firm of Alfred A. Knopf. Unfortunately a more wide-ranging critique of Lowe-Porter as translator was never published and to this day remains little utilized although available to scholars (Hayes 1974). Not until David Luke wrote the “Introduction” to his translation of several Mann stories was the reading public aware that those “official” translations were

deeply flawed in several ways (Luke 1970; republished with the addition of his translation of *Death in Venice* 1998; 2008).

Simon's essay on Thomas Mann is 33 pages in length, double spaced on A-4 sheets. In places there are words crossed out and a correction either typed or handwritten in the space above. Sometimes words, and once a whole sentence, are crossed out as extraneous. On the bottom of one page she added a handwritten sentence, on another page an explanatory sentence was typed at the bottom. In both cases she indicated with an *asterix* (*) where the addition should be inserted.

In certain instances, and only for the sake of clarity, I have supplied a missing word or an explanatory remark inside square brackets []. Where Simon herself replaced a word, or where she added a phrase or sentence, I have indicated the revision or addition in **bold** print. In the two places where she added a sentence indicated by an *asterix* I have bolded each sentence. I have combined two or more brief paragraphs into one whenever the second or third is a natural extension of the first. The joins are indicated by a + sign.

Lengthy paragraphs have been sub-divided; that is indicated by a # sign where I thought a break most natural. In the last paragraph of the penultimate page there is an inadvertent over-typing of one line, but I have been able to read with certainty the overstruck portion. In only one instance did I discover Simon's use of an English word ("bush") the exact meaning of which in context eluded me until I turned to a lexicon. Since that particular meaning is now obscure in British as well as American English I left the word *in situ* but added an explanatory note in brackets. At the end of the essay is a hand-written postscript by Simon: *Note: Indulgence is requested for the present writer's off-the-cuff translations.* This is a clear indication that she planned a revision of her essay.

The essay itself I subdivided into five parts, indicated by square-bracketed headings, e.g. [*Excursus. Thomas Mann's Use of German*]. Edith Simon may not have approved of my editorial modifications; I beg her pardon *in absentia*. My commentary follows the transcription of Simon's essay, and that in turn is followed by an appendix exploring Arthur Koestler's appraisal of Thomas Mann. That was the result of an exchange of letters followed by an interview of Mann by Koestler in the summer of 1937, a meeting surprisingly overlooked or simply underutilized in the standard literature on the two writers.

Though there is no need to explore it in detail here, there is a thread of European Jewishness that runs through the lives and literary careers of these four individuals. Thomas Mann, though of Lutheran background (his Catholic Brazilian/German mother converted to Lutheranism), married Katherina (Katia) Pringsheim, daughter of a wealthy family of assimilated German Jews. Mann's tetralogy based on the biblical story of Joseph, although intended to be (as much of his writing was) a modern allegory, shows profound interest in the nature of Jewish identity. Completed during WW II and on the eve of the creation of Israel from British Mandate Palestine, it has even more enhanced significance now (see Stern 1966, esp. 245–249). For Mann's alleged anti-Jewish bias in his writing and his personal life see the important new study by Kontje (2008, esp. 119–120).

Edith Simon was the daughter of German Jews who left that country a year before the Nazis were voted into power in late 1932 (Simon returned briefly to complete her *Reifezeugnis*). Koestler was the son of Austrian-Hungarian Jews from Vienna/Budapest. According to a demonstrably hostile biographer (Cesarani 1999), Koestler's career was that of a chronic "homeless mind." Homeless or not, it was an *extraordinary* mind. We must not forget Mann's "sanctioned" or "official" translator between 1926 and 1955, Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter. Though the conventionally Protestant daughter of a Pennsylvania American family, she later (without a distinguished USA "Ivy-League" [= Oxbridge] educational background) moved to Europe, married a Jewish-born British scholar of classics at Oxford (Elias Avery Lowe), and through a series of accidental and contrived events became the sole literary intermediary (for English-only readers) of Thomas Mann for 30 years.

Only Mann, Simon and Koestler were part of the Nazi-induced diaspora of continental Europeans – Jews *and* Gentiles – who relocated either to the U.K. (as did Simon and Koestler, who became British citizens) or to the USA (Mann and his family, who became naturalized Americans). Simon and her family had no political or ideological identity that would have made them a target of Hitler's proscriptions; their Jewishness was a death sentence in and of itself. For Mann it was a combination of factors: his published suspicion of (dating back to 1921), and then his public alarm at (after 1933), the agenda of German National Socialism, and his wife's Jewish identity, forced him into exile. For Koestler it was a similar situation: membership in the anti-fascist German Communist Party from 1931–1938, and his Jewish heritage. He narrowly escaped deportation to the Nazi death camps. Lowe-Porter and her family moved from the UK to the USA before the outbreak of WW II when her husband accepted a faculty position at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ.

I am indebted to the family of Edith Simon, in particular to her daughter Antonia Reeve and Simon's sister Inge Goodwin, for providing a copy of this essay, for help in clarifying certain details about it, and most importantly for permission to publish it. I'm also grateful to *SJC* editor Edward Dąbrowa for encouraging me to find a "home" for Edith's essay in his journal. My thanks also to my university colleague Rose Vydellingum for checking the German transcriptions. Had Edith Simon succeeded in publishing "On Translating Thomas Mann" I'm sure she would have undertaken a thorough revision. She may have expanded its focus to embrace Lowe-Porter's translations of other Mann novels. Whatever shortcomings there may be in any other portion of this article, they are *my* responsibility and not hers.

Edith Simon, "On Translating Thomas Mann" [c. 1968]

[Introductory Comments]

The Magic Mountain first appeared translated into English in 1928, four years after the original German publication.+ More than forty years passed before there was any suggestion made in public that the English version might be wanting. True, the translator's prefatory note said as much, with handsome humility: but who was there to

endorse her terse disclaimer? The English reader had to take the statement, like the text itself, on trust. He could only read what was laid before him, and there was then no occasion to go into elaborate detail as to precisely in what manner the translation failed.

The book's matter as such quickly proved sufficient to establish it as an international classic. In 1939 the author wrote a special introduction to it in the form of an address to students at the University of Princeton having *The Magic Mountain* on their syllabus. By that time, then, there *was* occasion to go into detail; and the author did recall that sundry eminent pundits of 1924 had roundly declared "this intensely German novel" forever unsuitable to translation. He mentioned this with ill-disguised if wholly pardonable triumph, but himself had no idea what he was talking about.

For he had to compose his English speech in German, the one language he could handle with absolute command, and it had had to be translated for him to recite. Oh, he could speak and could read English right enough: but he remained unable to apprehend English as a language and culture-medium in its own right.+ How could it have been otherwise, since evidently it took all of forty years for a truly bilingual generation – brought up in an English-speaking environment though of German-speaking descent – to mature and produce its own crop of literary practitioners capable of taking both Shakespeare and Goethe neat and unadulterated, without loss? They of course perceived and could not but mourn the sad loss which the monolingual English reader suffered by *The Magic Mountain* as against *Der Zauberberg*: some went so far as to deplore the very title, which lacks the immediate overtones of enchantment and transmutation adhering to it in German.

This at all events is irrevocable. Names will stick. So much has *The Magic Mountain* become part of the universal literary heritage, that many readers would feel robbed, cheated of the inadequacies which, as it were, make up the novel's familiar face – were those inadequacies to be remedied.+ And indeed they would hardly recognize the thing. The ponderous style, the laborious accumulation of minutiae, which the English reader associates with the author, are utterly at variance with the gliding elegance and significant pointillism of his German performance. The comparison springs to mind, of an Olympic skating champion as against a marathon exponent of the stomping folk dance known as *Schuhplattler*. So would one's heart bleed to see some rustic furniture represented as Chippendale in the catalogues of a credulous foreign nation, even though both articles may provide equally serviceable seating.

The enormous basic differences in syntax are not the only reason. Surely it will not surprise anyone to learn that the lengthy, meandering, laden German sentence can be used with an effect of airy grace as well as one of heavy plodding, in the right hands. So much is a matter of juxtapositions, of delicate contrasts in point of thought and sound, content and form, key and rhythm, ulterior mood and overt expression; careful exactitude in the choice of words and of detail. Neither is it news that a translation must aim at recreating particular effects rather than at verbal accuracy: a knotty problem but by no means insoluble – given perfect understanding on the one hand and commensurate skill on the other. It is only that these qualities have seldom been combined in one translator.

A really comprehensive knowledge of the language in question is not all. There needs to be pretty thorough acquaintance with the whole culture ambiances in question, too – never more necessary than with Thomas Mann. +There has never been a more allusive writer – apart from James Joyce, perhaps, who however did not, like Thomas Mann, confine himself to an existing vocabulary and an *a priori* realistic actuality, distilling requisite surrealist effects from observable, concrete everyday phenomena (as witness the whistling pneumothorax [of Hermine Kleefeld] or the instant recognitions borne on wings of song).

Almost every word, every turn of phrase is loaded with reference, charged, electrified with gamuts of coded meaning and sure-fire triggering devices. Thus the seemingly exhaustive text is very often a form of shorthand writing, the 7[0],000-word tome a kind of microdot. +And this is an important factor. For the emotive and aesthetic essence of art resides in what is circumscribed rather than pinned down: the essence of artistry is leaving out.

The German reader steeped in his own culture gets the message without trying. The English reader must miss out in this respect – unless his pleasure and his concentration were to be vitiated by a supplementary tome, [i.e.] of footnotes. Again, **in principle** nothing is impossible. But it would be a life work to attempt to recreate the same complex structure of pregnant assonances transposed into another medium. The best that can be done, manageably, is to point or underline specially meaningful passages now and then, so as to pick up certain throw-away effects that are too good to evanesce unmarked.

But there is something that need not be absent, a thing particularly commending itself to the English reader: the element of humour. “The irony of Thomas Mann” is well enough attested to have served as a title for [a?] critical work on the subject. Yet how many English aficionados will be aware that this irony comes clad in actual wit, of the merriest sort and with positively dancing light-footedness moreover? [Or] that one of the writer’s foremost characteristics of style is an implicit self-mockery – side by side with that confidential snigger at the expense of the fictional characters, which may bolster up the reader’s complacency concerning his own moral fibre but which is therefore something of a meretricious trick, though dear to many authors and so likewise employed by Thomas Mann.

Since such self-mockery is virtually obligatory in the English-speaking world and indispensable for maximal literary esteem, it is the greatest pity that this should not come across. Here it is just incomplete knowledge of the German language itself under which the *Ur*-translator laboured, rather than initial lack of technical information such as the author finally supplied in the Princeton foreword, which one could wish might have been to hand before ever Mrs. Lowe-Porter embarked on her admittedly gigantic task.

[On Translating *The Magic Mountain* – Part 1]

One symptom of her unsureness is a curious inability to decide when to be literal and when to depart from the letter. This can be seen in evidence on the novel’s [*The Magic Mountain*’s] first page, even in the opening paragraph. (The opening paragraph,

as everybody knows, is commonly the object of an author's most strained regard, pared and polished over and over within an inch of its life).

Compare then:

Ein einfacher junger Mensch reiste im Hochsommer von Hamburg, seiner Vaterstadt, nach Davos-Platz im Graubündischen. Er fuhr auf Besuch für drei Wochen.

What could be plainer?

An unassuming young man was traveling, in midsummer, from his native city of Hamburg to Davos-Platz in the canton of the Grisons, on a three weeks' visit.

Not so. For a start, *einfach* is not *unassuming*. **Unassuming would be *schlicht*.** *Einfach* equals *simple*, in all the connotations of that word, i.e. plain, uncomplicated, naïve, foolish, guileless, innocent, etc. Although in German it can additionally mean "working class," this latter possibility is excluded by the situation in which the hero is presented to us. That he is generically a hero – *ein simpler* (sic) *Held* as emphasized in the Princeton foreword – becomes immediately clear from the traditional evidence of the opening.

#A translator is presumed to have read the whole book beforehand, and here should be in full possession of the understanding that Hans Castorp – "for that (**not** 'such') was his name" – is a modern incarnation of Parsifal, seeker of the [Holy] Grail, as well as a spiritual kinsman of Young Werther, protagonist of the prototypical *Bildungsroman*. It does not require the author's explicit avowal at Princeton, to tell the informed reader that Wagner and Goethe are quasi-evangelists to Thomas Mann – a factor of utmost importance to any interpretive approach.

A young man without guile traveled in midsummer from Hamburg, his home town, to Davos-Platz in the canton of Graubünden, Switzerland.

The first half of the sentence now is a practically literal rendering, stressing that stark plainness (or simplicity!) of the key signature and vaguely reminiscent of the folk- or fairy-tale. The English atlas has "Graubünden," not the clumsy form of "the" Grisons, and the amendment of "Switzerland" helps to reproduce both the rhythm and gentle humour of the original.

He was going on a visit, for three weeks. Why, when there will always be an overall tendency, in English, to break up the looped and knotted German sentence – why add the intended three-weeks' visit as a sub-clause, seeing that the German author made it stand alone, short and tolling as the stroke of a deep-toned bell? He [Hans] was (only) going on a visit, (only) for three weeks: in other words: Yah, that's what he thought. At the end of Chapter II it comes again, still more abrupt: *He went for three weeks.* That makes it official.

To proceed:

Von Hamburg bis dorthinauf, das ist aber eine weite Reise; zu weit eigentlich im Verhältnis zu einem so kurzen Aufenthalt. Es geht durch mehrerer Herren Länder, bergauf und bergab, von der süddeutschen Hochebene hinunter zum Gestade des Schwäbischen Meeres und zu Schiff über seine springenden Wellen hin, dahin über Schlünde, die früher für unergründlich galten.

From Hamburg to Davos is a long journey – too long, indeed, for so brief a stay. It crosses all sorts of country; goes up hill and down dale, descends from the plateau of southern Germany to the shore of Lake Constance, over its bounding waves and on across marshes once thought to be bottomless.

Where is the still lingering echo of *faux naïveté* proper to the continued leitmotif; what has become of the suggestive switchback rhythm of railway travel “up hill and down dale”? Travel by rail is firmly indicated; and here it is needful to remember that the time is pre-1914. Translator’s licence therefore is now in place, to exchange the present tense in which this glorified aside is couched, for the past. For it no longer “is” such a long journey, out of all proportion to the stay envisaged, today when it is known that there are persons who think nothing of commuting between London and New York.

Upon Hans Castorp’s practical mind, inherited from generations of canny merchants ever concerned to get their money’s worth, the notion that “when you care to think of it” (= *eigentlich*), it was too far to go for a mere three weeks, would already be obscurely working: an admirably planted germ of future events. But to retain the punch of its psychological validity for us today, that notion has to be relegated to the past where it belongs.

In a sense, *The Magic Mountain* was what I called a historical novel even in 1924 (as the translator might have noted from the original, shorter foreword), treating of an era already past and a society already changed out of recognition by the First World War which brings the novel, and the spell of Hans Castorp’s seven years’ enchantment, to an end. +Incidentally, the route “spanned several sovereign lands” (a further touch of wide-eyed mock-astonishment), definitely not “all sorts of country.” *Schlünde* are “chasms,” not “marshes” – depths stressed by the plunging vowel which in its sighing repetition *früher für unergründlich* onomatopoeically mimics undulating country followed by the waves of the Swabian Sea alias Lake Constance, i.e. *hin, dahin*.

So perhaps:

But from Hamburg all the way up there – that was far to go, too far really for so brief a stay. One passed through a series of countries, up, up and across the south-German plateau, and down again, down and across Lake Constance with its choppy waves masking chasms that had once been held to be unfathomable.

“Up, up and... down again, down” recreates that *hin, dahin* together with the familiar lilt of travel by rail; and failing [to find?] no fewer than six *ümlauts* with a short *u* thrown in, we can make up the number of correspondingly descending “a”s to almost nine. In any case, “unfathomable” is closer to the writer’s intention that “bottomless,” being the literal translation of *unergründlich* which at that, quite consciously symbolises the unplumbed reaches of the psyche:

Von da an verzettelt sich die Reise, die so lange grosszügig, in direkten Linien vonstatten ging. Es gibt Aufenthalte und Umständlichkeiten. Beim Orte Rorschach, auf schweizerischem Gebiet, vertraut man sich wieder der Eisenbahn, gelangt aber vorderhand nur bis Lanquart, einer kleinen Alpenstation, wo man den Zug zu wechseln gezwungen ist. Es ist eine Schmalspurbahn, die man nach längerem Herumstehen in windiger und wenig reizvoller Gegend besteigt, und in dem Augenblick, wo die kleine, aber offenbar ungewöhnlich zugkräftige Maschine sich in Bewegung setzt, beginnt der eigentlich abenteuerliche Teil der Fahrt, ein jäher und zäher Aufstieg, der nicht enden zu wollen scheint. Denn

Station Lanquart liegt vergleichsweise noch in *mässiger Höhe*; jetzt aber geht es auf wilder, drangvoller Felsenstrasse allen Ernstes ins Hochgebirge.

The chatty, semi-Baedeker style of the foregoing passage is designed not accidental[ly], subservient to the literary device of the “innocent eye” to which all things are fresh and new. It also “proves” the transition of Hans Castorp (frequently referred to as “the plainsman” thereafter) into congenitally alien territory. The blow-by-blow itinerary is a pretext, used with a discernible smile.

This is how it goes (one can hardly say runs) in the authorized [Lowe-Porter] English translation:

At this point the route, which has been so far over trunk-lines, gets cut up. There are stops and formalities. At Rorschach, in Swiss territory, you take train again, but only as far as Lanquart, a small Alpine station, where you have to change. Here, after a long and windy wait in a spot devoid of charm, you mount a narrow-gauge train; and as the small but very powerful engine gets under way, there begins the thrilling part of the journey, a steep and steady climb that seems never to come to an end. For the station of Lanquart lies at a relatively low altitude, but now the wild and rocky route pushes grimly onward into the Alps themselves.

For heaven’s sake! Even on foot the journey would never have been that pedestrian – or no author worth his salt, not to mention champing editors, would have let it stand. This is to write of boredom a great deal too faithfully. +Let’s try something else: *However, at this point the route, hitherto proceeding by leaps and bounds, sank into a slough of petty tedium. There were delays, there was fuss, there was bother.*

Verzetteln is more like “to dissipate,” “to erode,” than “to cut up.” *Grosszügig, in direkten Linien* means actually “by generous sweeps.” The word *Aufenthalt* does service for “halt,” “sojourn,” and “delay” – all three. As there would have been stops aplenty since Hamburg, it is clear which one is meant here. “Formalities” (for *Umständlichkeiten* = “fuss and bother”) Hans Castorp from Hamburg, Germany, would have been used to; and if anything he would rather approve of them, as subsequent flashbacks to his early life abundantly show.

Since the atmospheric purpose of the passage can’t be honored in literal translation, I would be inclined to cut much of the rest, notwithstanding the now pleasing psychiatric associations of *Rorschach*. Obviously the author was beguiled by the quaint names of Rorschach and Lanquart which therefore he desired to share with his readers, but which to the English ear sound no more outlandish and no less than, well, Hamburg and Davos. Otherwise, in English or in German for that matter, it is not really necessary at this point to account for every step:

Forced to change once more at a lone, windy, charmless little Alpine station, one next mounted a narrow-gauge train. But now, the moment the surprisingly high-powered little engine set itself in motion, thrills abounded on its steep, relentless climb that seemed to have no end. Now you knew you were really, seriously in the Alps, the highest altitude of Europe.

This catches the spirit of the original with all of three lines to spare. +The next paragraph settles down to introducing Hans Castorp, largely through a list of his paraphernalia, from which his character and circumstances are limpidly deducible. While the English version has not the casual smoothness of the German, it will serve – except that one misses the amusing implications of the fact that the young hero sports

an *English* book to while away the journey: decidedly a status symbol even though **the subject** falls in his sphere of interest, and manifestly rather heavy going. How would it be if one appended: “in English, with the English title *Ocean Steamships*?” The implications are retrieved. The sly, glancing, dead-pan thrust is back.

The paragraph which follows is significant in that it adumbrates a generalization, of a sort that will increase and multiply, crescendo, throughout the novel. It therefore should be left in the present tense, as it stands. +The German text begins, in effect: *A two day journey constitutes a stark separation for a man’s wonted environment, from all his normal everyday concerns, dues, and prospects – and how much more so for a youngster as yet tenuously rooted in life...*, etc. It does not read: *Two days’ travel separated the youth – he was still too young to have thrust his roots down firmly into life – from his own world, from all that he thought of as his own duties, interests, cares and prospects...* absolutely not!

#As the paragraph continues in the same dogmatic vein, at some length, it makes sense for the ensuing section to corroborate the generalization with an even more leisurely stream of data concerning the particular experience of Hans Castorp. It being the constant object of the author to relate universal truths to a mass of specific, subjective factors, and continually to test them on each other, the distinction between the two should never be allowed to blur.

Unfortunately the English language, incomparably rich in synonyms though it is known to be, has trouble with the word *Man* as denoting species [rather than] gender. It would be awkward to speak of “a human being” in the above passage, let alone of “the young human being” (i.e. see *entfernen den Menschen – und gar den jungen... Menschen*). A host of English humorists from Dickens down has disqualified “the young person” from any serious, objective context: while “human” as a noun belongs in scientific treatises or to the dialogue of non-human creatures in the realm of science fiction. Furthermore, *der junge Mensch* can (and here does) also mean “young fellow;” *menschlich* – Clawdia/Clavdia Chauchat’s pet adjective, is balanced between *human* and *humane*.

While we are on the subject, it would probably be better to render Mme Chauchat’s plangent, slavonic pronunciation of the word (*mänschlich*) as “yuman” – since this squares with occasional phonetic usage – or even “youman,” a spelling which would subtly carry a likely, sympathetic-sensuous thrill for Hans Castorp. “Hu-man,” the choice of Mrs. Lowe-Porter, is a device which she employs indiscriminately for peculiar accents in general (e.g. of Dr. Krokowski), and it simply is not good enough.

[Excursus: Thomas Mann’s Use of German]

Peculiarities of speech play no inconsiderable part in Thomas Mann’s characterization – Mann and boy, if we may say so-seeing that the tendency was already well-developed in his early [novel] *Buddenbrooks*. +Artistically *Buddenbrooks* is a much more tightly wrought work than any of the later novels – despite the author’s contrary claims for the latter – comparable to, say, *Adam Bede* in relation to *Middlemarch*. The operative difficulties of translation there were not offset by grandeur of design and

subject matter, as happened with *The Magic Mountain*, so that what looks deceptively like just another family chronicle remains comparatively neglected.

What's called "Received Pronunciation" has not the significance in German that it has in English. Grammar rather than accent figure as a mark of social recognition; regional colouration as such being immaterial. In theory the Hamburg accent with its meticulous syllabic purity, of Hans Castorp's uncle-cum-foster-brother James Tienappel, stands for "Received German." But in practice it is considered slightly ridiculous, almost on a par with the accent of Saxony, which reverses "d" and "t" [as well as] "g" and "k," performing similar tortures upon certain vowels, and which represents *the* stock-comic pronunciation.

Now, Dr. Behrens, Rhadamanthus himself, is burdened with a thick Saxon accent which, together with his notable waffling (the verb "to waffle," exact counterpart of *kohlen*, had not yet arrived in 1928 – English being changeable as German is stable even in its slang and idiomatic forms – hence the translator consistently evaded that particular issue) ought to make Behrens a figure of fun. That Behrens (gargoyle rather than cartoon) rises above these liabilities, is a measure of the author's intellectual finesse. Even so, the author is careful to *tell us* about Behrens' accent without actually *reproducing* it in the doctor's spoken dialogue.

With the sinister Krokowski no such scruple was incumbent. Provided grammar and vocabulary are correct, exotically accented German is not lowering either; and Krokowski's command of the language is if anything hyper-literate, with the odd archaic turn of phrase sometimes. Dr. Krokowski's characteristic *Ich gdiesse* (= grüsse) *Sie*, being of that order, might therefore profitably be transposed straight into English, the more as the dental "r" has an equally foreign sound in both languages: "I gdeet Thee" would not be amiss; or at [very] least "Gdeetings!"

Only Settembrini's, the voice of sanity and light, of humanism in its every connotation, is explicitly declared completely accent-free, with an element of foreignness betrayed only in the man's exceeding, orotund fluency. Which is an appropriate moment to mention that *pace* popular belief, the German is generally more inclined to admire than to despise the foreigner. +The point of it all is that Thomas Mann's observation of sound effects adds the literary convention of an "innocent ear" to that of the "innocent eye" – the more as sound-associations perform an important function in his novels. Therefore speech-devices may not be dismissed as gratuitous stage directions, but rather, form vital **components** in the delineation of character, parallel with the physical descriptions. A little extra thought and trouble in finding suitable equivalents is well worth while.

[On Translating *The Magic Mountain* – Part 2]

Meanwhile here are some further examples where more literal than liberal translation is called for. *Seelenzergliederung*, for instance, Dr. Krowkowski's special contribution to the amenities of the sanatorium (as recounted by Joachim to his cousin) should on no account be rendered as "psychoanalysis." In the context of the period-setting, ca. 1907, neither the word nor the practice had yet become commonplace – else

the author with his fine ear for dialogue would have availed himself of the straight noun *Psychoanalyse*. No – neither Joachim nor Hans Castorp from the provinces had ever heard of *that*. In reality, on hearing that Krokowski practiced “psychoanalysis,” Castorp’s only credible reply would have been: “what’s that?,” requiring an interpolated explanation. It is in reaction to the term [*Seelenzergliederung*] as “soul-dissection,” “soul-raking (or -racking),” or possibly “psychical anatomy” that our Guileless Hero cries out: “How revolting!” and promptly goes into hysterics.

Similarly, his mounting hilarity would hardly be stimulated to fresh excess by the information that the local waitresses are known as “dining-room girls.” Even if *Saältöchter* (literally “hall-daughters”) itself may not be as funny as all that either, something like “house-daughters,” “dining-room daughters,” “dining-(room) daughters,” “serving-daughters,” or any other compound preserving the familial portion, would at least offer a reasonable modicum of absurdity to act as an excuse for laughter. A giggling-fit sparked off by anything so unremarkable as “dining-room girls” only feeds the Englishman’s proclivity of regarding foreign characters, in and out of novels, as somewhat below human kinship-level.

Having to “keep a straight face” at Frau Stöhr’s malapropisms is better, and shorter, as well as more accurate (*ohne das Gesicht zu verziehen*), than “take it all without cracking a smile”. Hermine Kleefeld’s whistling appears to Hans Castorp to come out of her *belly* (or *stomach*, or *tum*), not just from her *inside* – or, since it does indeed come from inside her, Joachim would not feel obliged expressly to deny that. The female half of the goatish Russian couple wears a *grubby* (or perhaps *tired*) feather boa, not a positively *soiled* one. It all makes a difference. Every little [bit] helps.

On the young man’s right at breakfast sat *ein unansehnliches Wesen in Schwarz mit flaumigem Teint und matt erhitzten Backen*, i.e. “an insignificant creature (or soul) in black with downy, dully glowing cheeks,” rather than “a plain-looking woman in black, with a dull flush on her cheeks, the sin of which was downy-looking, *as an older person’s often is*.” The words I have put in italics are an emendation entirely off the translator’s own bat, as if to make well and truly sure that a clumsy, halting [English] sentence becomes quite pedantic.

It matters less, I suppose, that the dining hall “was done up in a variant of the contemporary style which managed to leaven functional austerity with a touch of the light fantastic,” rather than “done in that modern style which knows how to give just the right touch of individuality to something in reality very simple;” nor that, to cause a break in the monotony of “There were all kinds of jam (not merely “pots of marmalade”) and honey, basins of..., platters (not “dishes” – ***unless one made it “great dishes” – the emphasis is on the lavishness of the spread**) of... etc.” The author [Mann] wedged “somebody raised the lid on a weeping Swiss cheese” in between the **barely** listed items, instead of just adding to them with “a Gruyère cheese dropping moisture under a glass bell” as did the translator. But these divergences do show up a lack of familiarity with the respective terms of reference much as can result in graver misreadings elsewhere.

The “English Miss, likewise of mature years” on Hans Castorp’s left, has “bony, chilblained” not “frozen, withered-looking” fingers (without touching her we cannot tell whether they are frozen, while their gnarled appearance is a visible fact); and she is

reading “letters from home in a curvaceous script, drinking blood-coloured tea the while.” Compare [that] with: “She sat reading her home letters, which were written in [a] round hand, and drinking tea the colour of blood.”

#The point about the script is that at the time of composition the vast majority of Germans used a pointed, angular, quasi-Gothic script, many of whose individual letters are quite different from the rounded, “Latin” longhand of other European countries, so that the essential otherness of the Englishwoman’s mail struck Hans Castorp’s goggling eye without any need, or wish, to pry. The author gives an added twist to the description by means of an adjective usually reserved for human bodies – *rundlich* – which corresponds to “curvaceous.” So here, to reproduce the tone of the original, free translation would be more than justified, and I propose “..., immersed in her Britannic mail which she washed down with the blood-coloured tea,” i.e. taking liberties to some purpose.

That whole section [of *The Magic Mountain*] of scene-painting and introductions scintillates with fascinating idiosyncrasies, conjuring up implied case histories and visions of hallucinatory clarity. The last thing it adds up to is fatigue. On the contrary, the imagination boggles in suspense: what next? whatever next? You breathe, instead of feeling moved to groan: “All right, all right – just get *on* with it, Mann!” +Well, let us get on to the climax towards which the chapter has been building up:

Suddenly Hans Castorp jumped with pain and indignation. A door had slammed. It was the one on the left, leading straight into the outer hall. Somebody had let it slam, or even willfully slammed it, a thing he could not abide. He never had been able to tolerate it. Whether by nurture or nature, to him it was a vile offense, and he could have shot anybody who committed it. In the present instance, the door was moreover composed all of separate little pieces of glass, which intensified the shock to his system, with a very flourish of discordance. “Hell and damnation! he raged, how dare you, who are you?” Since, however, at that same moment the ‘seamstress’ addressed a remark to him, he had no time to look and see who was responsible. Still, his blond eyebrows stood rucked in a frown and his face was awry with revulsion as he answered.

This is much closer to the original than

Hans Castorp gave a sudden angry start. A door was slammed – it was the one on the left (etc.) and someone had let it fall shut, or even banged it, a thing he detested; he had never been able to endure it. Whether from his upbringing or out of natural idiosyncrasy, he loathed the slamming of doors, and could have struck the guilty person. In this case, the door was filled above (*obendrian* is not “above” but “moreover”) with small glass panes, which augmented the shock with their rattling and ringing. “Oh, come,” he thought angrily, “what kind of damned carelessness was that?” But at the same time the seamstress addressed him with a remark, and he had no time to see who the transgressor had been. Deep creases furrowed his blond brows, and his face was contorted as he turned to reply to his neighbor.

“Angry” is not the word for what Hans Castorp felt, if we trust the author. It does not approach the loathing and fury with which the grating crash filled the young man; and only short, sharp, clipped **English** phrases can do justice to his instinctive recoil. As for “Oh, come” for *Pfui*, an expression of **extreme** censure and disgust – that is ludicrously feeble. Also, “damned carelessness” hardly meets the case. *Carelessness*, indeed, for *Schlamperei*, the last word in contemptible sloppiness! “**Abominable** bloody-mindedness,” though not exact, might be more like it – especially as Hans

Castorp's over-vehement reaction lays the foundation for his subsequent enslavement to the **culprit**, Mme Chauchat. It is an aspect of that well-known phenomenon, the *Saulus-Paulus* syndrome, that super-heated passion often has its earliest seed in antagonism [or] antipathy.

Hence, too, "How dare you, who are you?" is in the spirit of the original though disregarding the letter. Sticking to the letter is not advisable here, at all. "What kind of..." is too reminiscent of the blustering, caricature German ("What for a...") which invites guffaws with expletives like "pig-dog," "Donner and Blitzen" and so forth. +Taking into account that as late as the [1930s] and beyond some publishers still declined to print the adjective with which Bernard Shaw created a sensation in *Pygmalion*, one can't blame a translator of the twenties for eschewing anything to do with "bloody." Even so, *verdammt* is a sight stronger than colloquial "damned." Neither would "confounded" convey the right impression of blind, shuddering rage in this otherwise mildest of conventional young **men**. A new translation of today [1968?] would have plenty of latitude for rendering his silent apostrophe; but I felt I had in fairness to suggest a form acceptable at the time, and which, had the matter been put to the living author, would I'm sure have got his blessing.

Translating curses and slang in any event raises all sorts of tricky questions. Idiomatic English, as already acknowledged, dates with dangerous speed. So, tackling any save only the most colourless dialogue, the translator always runs a risk of laying up future ridicule upon the characters into whose mouths he puts it and of making them speak anachronistically. Thus, to have Hans Castorp exclaim "Jesus Christ!" or "What fucking bastard did that?" as he might have done fifty years hence, is out of the question for someone like him in the first decade of the century. Who knows but that those might not appear stilted archaisms shortly? In the original language, dialogue dates gracefully, along with the whole: nobody has yet proposed to redo the Bible in the Aramaic and Greek version.

In the German version, it is amazing how accurate Thomas Mann's wonderfully observed, naturalistic dialogue continues to be – barring but a handful of recent coinages all pertaining to things that had no existence when he wrote **and** that could have no conceivable bearing on this novel (any more than aeronautical terms on the works of Thucydides). +By and large, errors and omissions excepted as they say, Mrs. Lowe-Porter did not do badly by Dr. Behrens' highly slang-flavored burst of waffling or burbling, which sends up a colourful smokescreen behind that real climax of the chapter, the portentous banging of the door.

Yet, "Gently does it" or "Oops" would be more like *Achtung, die Herren* than "Take care, gentlemen;" and rather than "Oh, so here you are ... Well, glad to see you," Behrens says "So that's you, is it ... Well, well (or even "Humph"), pleased to meet you." (*So, das sind Sie... na, freut mich*), if we are to get the instant message that there is more to the verbiage than meets the wincing ear. It is a defense mechanism, to salve a hypersensitive dignity, since enabling Behrens subtly to insult the guests to whom he feels himself under contract to pander – note his repeated outbursts later on: "What do you take me for? A lousy pander? A cheap pimp?" and "I only work here!" It helps the artistic unity of a work, if not only vaunted leitmotifs but also unsung motivations are kept well in mind from start to finish.

The description of Behrens also reads anemically, lacking zest. His eyes are blood-shot (**red**) and

What Joachim had said about his cheeks was fully borne out; they were really purple, and set off his head garishly against the white surgeon's coat he wore ... beneath which showed striped trousers and a pair of enormous feet in rather worn yellow laced boots.

No [Not so].

What Joachim had said about his cheeks was no more than the truth: they were blue (Bleu is not "purple:" the latter would be purpurn, violett, or lila, just as in English, [their] spelling apart). Thus his head shone like a flag, red and blue against the white surgeon's coat which just cleared striped trousers above a pair of colossal feet stuck in rather shabby yellow boots. (*Und so wirkte denn sein Kopf recht farbig*, etc.)

Incidentally, *Rottenführer* is not "corporal" but of the order of "swashbuckler," "warlord," [or] *condottiere*. Not even Behrens, not even in jest, would mistake Joachim for NCO material: the comparison is so **inappropriate** as to miss fire. *Schinden* may be literally *to flay*, but in idiomatic usage the exact meaning is *to work* (someone/oneself) *to a frazzle*. *Sorgenkind des Lebens*, on the other hand, is ill-served by "life's little child" if only because *Sorgenkind* is a familiar expression in German. Besides, it doesn't scan well; it is anti-rhythmic. There being no outright equivalent in English, this is not easy; but the expression recurs so frequently, so much like a chord of mood-music, that one should have another go at it. Since Settembrini is the one first to apply it to Castorp, a poetically inflated "Child of sorrows, child of care" would, paradoxically, be less awkward. "Life's tender nursling?" [or] "Tender plant?" [might also be considered].

Another difficulty is "Comrade" on the lips of Dr. Krokowski. *Kamerad* in German is non-political; party-members address one another as *Genosse*. *Kamerad* is like *brother-in-arms* and *fellow-worker*, not to mention *playmate* and ***boon companion***; the word also does duty for the cry of surrender, as in *Pax!* Take your choice. +We have Krokow(v)ski and, though Clav(w)dia, not Claudia, we have Hans and Joachim, while *James* Tienappel owns the minor affectation of an English given name; so why is an exception made of Frau (sic) Ziemesen's name, spelled Louise rather than Luise? To be sure this is a petty objection which can't affect the text at all seriously either way. But if we don't strain at a gnat we will swallow the camel in due course: in such a connection as this it is all or nothing.

Robust und spärlich, Hans Castorp says of Mynheer Peeperkorn, apologising in the same breath, "though one can't really use those words together." Wherefore it has to be "robust and slight," not "robust and lean" – the latter does not necessarily hold any contradiction. *Gemeinsame Reisekasse* means "joint traveling exchequer," not "luggage in common." *Schwärmerisch* is not "fanatical" but "fervent," "emotional," "impassioned," "enthusiastic." One prefers a sword to have a *hilt* rather than a *handle*. *Bursch* in a military context is an "officer's batman." *Moor* as a racial qualification is not "moor" but "black man," "negro;" the German for English "Moor" is *Maure* (**English "blackamoor" is ruled out by the context**). *Toller Kerl* equals "young devil," not "crazy chap." Settembrini may be a *dago*, but *turkey-cock* does not fit the bill. "Seven-sleeper" for *Siebenschläfer* is at best obscure; an excellent fit is to hand, in the form of

“Rip Van Winkle.” “Oh, dear,” Mme Chauchat says lamely, hearing of Joachim’s death, *O weh* in her minimal German which would scarcely stretch to “woe, alas” even were the latter in character.

[*The Magic Mountain: Three Elements of Special Consideration*]

There are hundreds more, there are [even] thousands, of such blemishes which distort the infinitely dovetailed fabric of this great work, diminishing it even when its concepts are not actively misconstrued (as also happens sometimes). +Some gaps there are, eliminating a dimension, which one can do little about. The most striking that spring to mind are (1) the name of Hans Castorp’s schoolmate that he had a crush on, Pribislav Hippe; (2) the section-heading *A Soldier, and Brave*, which concludes Chapter VI, and (3) the long analysis of Schubert’s *Lindentree* in the section headed *Fullness of Harmony* in Chapter VII.

[Point 1]: While generally the names of the *dramatis personae* are, as is commonly the case, dictated by the author’s whim, predilections, or personal audio-visual imagery, the name of Hippe is in a class by itself. It is pregnant with stirring assonance, which the author carefully keeps quiet about – a most conspicuous omission in so diligent a milker of semantics as Thomas Mann – the more surely to touch the reader’s subconscious. +It is not a pretty name like Claudia Chauchat, that of the boy’s feminine reincarnation. It has a thin, mean, unprepossessing sound – although of course the “Pribislav” that goes with it, particularly with the odd pronunciation of “r” (again), *Pshibislav*, unmistakably mimics a kiss.

Hippe happens to be antiquated German for *scythe*. *Veit Hippe* (*Veit*, like Hans, in olden days equaled “Tom” or “Dick” or “Harry”), also *Freund* (friend) *Hippe*, also known as *der Sensemann* or scythe-man among other by-names, is “Death.” +In German folklore and literature, “Death” as a personalized representation did not go out with the Middle Ages; the practice survived even unto [the] infiltration of colloquial usage. No doubt this was assisted by the fact that normally nouns in the singular retain the article all the time. Thus it has always to be *der Tod*, “the Death” as with “the Devil” (yes, *Der Tod in Venedig* therefore has a somewhat different complexion from *Death in Venice* – the complexion, one may note in passing, of another golden boy!). Death and Devil both, to coin a phrase, are people. Pribislav Hippe is Death deliciously warmed up.

Like it or not, to Thomas Mann the pull of Death and pull of the exotic and the *daimon* of genius and the pangs of secret homosexuality were all mixed up together. The German in him yearned for alien charms, the talent in him would brook no denial, the hermaphrodite element in him, without which no artist is complete, hankered after the remembered sweetness of juvenile eroticism. If one spelled decadence, they all did. They all were abnormal, that is, against nature: so abnormality whether for good or for ill was by definition unhealthy = pathological = lethal. Foreign flesh and spirit thus embodied the heady toxicity of forbidden fruit; genius was disease; and a *femme fatale*, *la belle dame sans merci*, Our Lady Tuberculosis, must necessarily be a crypto-boy.

#Without Hippe,* no Claudia. *(As his Christian name and facial structure indicate, [he] is of Slavonic ancestry, like a great many East Prussian and Silesian Germans) +That Hans Castorp's death wish is connected with everything that is disorderly, orgiastic, reprehensible, needs no bush [i.e. special emphasis]: the author proclaims it over and over, in every variety of key and context. The name of Hippe is an extra, gilding the lily. One would shrink from inserting some hint for the benefit of the English reader, where the author refrained from so much as nudging his countrymen. All the same, it is a matter for regret.

Point 2, *A Soldier, and Brave*, falls in another category. The title is a quotation. The line from which it is taken runs: *Ich sterbe als Soldat und brav*; and everybody knows it, just as everybody knows "that is the question" is the remainder of a line beginning "To be or not to be." It comes from Goethe's *Faust*, a work teeming with quotations that have passed into the language, and from which derive also the title and much of the substance of the section called *Walpurgisnacht* at the end of Chapter V. "I die (as) a soldier and brave, etc." are, of course, the last words of Valentine, brother to Marguerite, with whom Hans Castorp will in [the] course of time come to identify the departed Joachim (see the two sections *Fullness of Harmony* and *Highly Questionable*, Chapter VII) – an identification thus economically foreshadowed in the title, and in the title only [*A Soldier and Brave*], of the last part of Chapter VI.

Ich sterbe als Soldat und brav: the missing words are automatically filled in by those who know: "I die...," and they are bound to guess that it is Joachim who will die. One may aver that the English reader draws the same conclusion from the title, *A Soldier and* – but no, not *brave*. The title is not just an epitaph with a value judgment in the tail. It contains a prophecy: it is itself a clue to things to come – a pistol on the wall, by Chekhov's dictum, that must and will go off before the play is over.

Brav, stemming from French *brave* (brave, gallant, spruce, worthy, honest, good, courageous, smart, fine, etc., etc.) has long since severed any associations with courage, which are monopolised by the adjectives *tapfer* and *mutig*. A child is *brav* not when it takes a fall without a murmur, but when it is generally well-behaved and nice: "good as gold" gives the meaning perfectly. Where *brav* is applied to an adult, the translator will have to talk of "an honest fellow" or "a decent sort." Applied to a soldier, the primary implication is "doing his duty" (as in "England expects...").

Gentle soul that he is, Joachim's courage is an inalienable part of his military ambition and *persona*. It goes without saying; to mention [it] is to belittle it. It is his goodness (as gold) and his sense of duty, discipline, responsibility, which the *brav* of the title celebrates (though perhaps also his comparative stupidity – as there is always a *souçon* of condescension in calling somebody "an honest fellow" or "a decent sort"). Joachim, after all, will rise again in the disembodied form of guardian angel to his weaker cousin.

It's no use going to an English translation of *Faust*. Not only are there several such, but the dying speech of Valentine has never made it as a quotation. We have to cut our losses and drop the allusion. We have to think again. +*A Very Gallant Gentleman, A Soldier and a Gentleman, Military Honours, Bed of Honour, Last Post, Soldier True*, indeed *Parfit Gentil Knight* – any of these would be quite good Thomas Mann in the circumstances. Remember that it is the author's patent intentions and the particular

techniques of the original which are under discussion. You may like, you may prefer, your accustomed *A Soldier, and Brave* – but that does not make it right.

To repeat, the title was conceived as an economy-device, saving link-ups and explanations which the final scenes of gramophone recital and *séance* would otherwise demand. They *are* demanded in an English translation: for without previous knowledge the connection between Joachim and the aria from Gounod's *Faust* seems arbitrary to say the least, **whimsical**, drained of **integral logic**. An able translator should not find it difficult to produce a few appropriate lines in serviceable *pastiche* and so get rid of loose ends which detract from the characters' right to be taken seriously just as if **English were the native tongue**.

Point 3 is the ultimate teaser. +With the analysis of Hans Castorp's responses to Schubert's *Lindentree* (*Lindenbaum*, known also in its domestic-or-utility form as *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore*, from the opening words of the lyric), the author touches on the core of the "intensely German" quality which once caused critics to opine *The Magic Mountain* would not travel [outside German-speaking cultures]. "Touches on?" [Mann] pierces, nails it, splits it open, lays it bare, that nuclear soft centre. Who is to realize that, without prior knowledge of the fundamental constitution of the material?

The purport may be summed up as follows. At that juncture, our "Guileless Hero," our Grail-seeking *reiner Tor* or pure-hearted fool, himself attains to a sophisticated understanding of his nature and his situation. The prolonged psychoanalytical session is concluded and its object is achieved. At that juncture, too, so late in the day, the young man is unexpectedly revealed as a symbol of his nation – or better, a walking, breathing *exposé* of the national character. Prophetically – for Thomas Mann, unlike his mordant left-wing brother Heinrich **who foresaw it all** – was acting spokesman of what he considered one of the most civilized and humane peoples in the world, *das Volk der Dichter und Denker*, and which so considered itself, "the People of Creative Literature and Thought," rather than of [*Blut und Eisen*] "Blood and Iron," a people whose imminent surrender to a Hitler was unthought-of [as well as] unthinkable – prophetically the author stripped the German death-wish of its principal top dressings, sentiment and *Gemütlichkeit*:

Perhaps in its original form it was not in sympathy with death but on the contrary aligned with certain sturdy, life-affirming, positive impulses. The fact remained that in the intellectual approach it became converted into an outright attraction to death. Indisputably all very pious and proper to being with, the end-product belonged in the sphere of darkness. +Oh, rubbish. What nonsense, you say. But you could not have talked him out of it. Morbid yearnings, sinister results. Torturer's mentality and misanthropy dressed up in Spanish black with dignified, starched ruff, with lust in place of love – and all the product of a seeming, artless sensitivity.

#My translation, admittedly unpolished. But Mrs. Lowe-Porter got some of it wrong, [e.g.] "He would not have listened to it from one of you" for *Er hätte es sich von euch nicht ausreden lassen*; etc.) +Well, then, what is "it" all about? "It" is the significance to Hans Castorp himself of that "world of love, of forbidden love" to which *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore* alias *Lindentree* has given him the master-key. +"Arrant madness! So wondrous fair a song! So pure a masterpiece, born of the sacred springs of national feeling: treasure beyond price, truth and beauty incarnate! What

calumny! ... And yet, and yet – beneath the surface loveliness lurked death, corruption.”

Now *Lied* means simply “song.” There has been more everyday singing in Germany than anywhere outside Italy (the deeper, corporate and spiritual wells of song which one associates with Wales, the [River] Don-basin, or [Stephen Foster’s] Ol’ Virginy are of another order). And where the Englishman in his cups may go for old-time music hall ditties, it is a truism that the German at the height of convivial cheerfulness is given to intoning the most lugubrious songs in the traditional repertoire.

#Among these *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore* [At the Well before the Gate] comes second only to *Lorelei*, which is all about death and destruction, while the former is only about homesickness and euphemistic longing for “rest.” It is true that at a certain stage of conviviality [the song] *Daisy, Daisy*, too, may drown in maudlin tears. But the tears will be irrelevant, unattached to what is expressed in the song: a reflex without verbal rationalization. Also, *Daisy* has no claim to artistic merit and does not, in profounder versions, form a staple item of serious concert programmes. *Daisy* is nothing to be proud of, particularly. *Lindentree* is, very much so.

So *Lindentree* could not have been better chosen as a spot for the author to put his finger on an outstanding national tendency. Again, everyone, *but everyone* speaking the German language, knows that song and has it in his bones. His pulse vibrates to the tune, the words are a part of his whole heritage. The least musical and least musically educated German reader gets the drift of Thomas Mann’s expert exposition of the technical-emotional effects. +The force of the musical effects is, however, inseparable from the words which they augment so poignantly. [That] felicitous union is the secret of their **popular** success.

#For this reason it is an error to resort to the standard English translation of the corresponding verse fragments quoted in the original. Obeying the exigencies of rhyme, metre and synchronization, the English words of course are often at variance with what the author picks out precisely to press his case. Thus that “enchanted turn which one hesitates to pin down in bald (not “bold”) words,” as the author says, has a more positive, resolute ring in English than in the German which stresses the nostalgic pull “back” to the sheltering tree; indeed “Ay, onward, ever onward” does the opposite, one would say. “Facing the tempest” (English), too, is not the same as passively suffering the dramatic blast which blows the hat off the narrator’s melancholy head, as the German text has it; and the strictly repetitious German *Ruhe* with its yearning two syllables is not [adequately] replaced by the monosyllabic “rest,” which moreover is varied by “solace” and “peace.” Issuing from the concerned platform, this perhaps does not matter so much.

#But where the object of the exercise does actually lie in tying up harmony and meaning so that they are one, the above is no mere quibble. (By the way, “what for a” translation is it that will put “tenderest flute-tones” for what should be “gossamer *pianissimo*?”) +Either cut the whole passage altogether – which would make nonsense of the novel’s “happy” ending, where Hans Castorp departs into a shrapnel-ridden sunset with that same song on his lips – or, I’d suggest, print the **relevant** stanzas in full before the decisive analysis gets rightly going. For here again the book would benefit by some *pastiche* interpolations, making the English reader *consciously* aware

that the message of the celebrated *Lied* is that escape, in the sense of longing to give up the struggle altogether, represents an admirable urge: that the wish to creep back into the womb bespeaks nothing less than respectable loyalty; and also alluding to its integral position in the hero's culture-code.

#Ideally the passage should be completely recreated in English so as to make the point, as it were, naturally. +Let no one say it can't be done. Of course it could be done. This is what writing is all about – *communication*. No author would wish to have his every word so revered that, rather than render it intelligibly, the translator should leave it inviolate but obscure, blunted, falsified. The old adage holds: that “if a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing properly,” which means making it as nearly perfect as possible. And the line of least resistance never led to that, nor ever will.

Note: Indulgence is required for the present writer's off-the-cuff translations.

Commentary

What follows are some explanatory notes that may help the reader by illuminating some of the background to the creation of Edith Simon's essay, or to better understand a brief allusion by her that she may have enlarged upon if and when the opportunity came to revise it. I claim no expertise in German or European literature in general, or in the literary *oeuvre* of Thomas Mann in particular. Therefore this commentary is selective and brief, and the bibliography assembled in the process of writing it is also of narrow focus and equally compact. I am grateful for friendly assistance to the library staff of the Robbinsville Township Library (especially the Inter-Library Loan personnel), the Institute for Advanced Study, and Princeton Theological Seminary, all in central New Jersey, USA. Coincidentally Thomas Mann and his family were resident in Princeton, in a house owned by the Seminary, from 1938–1941. Mann taught upper-level modern German literature at the University during the academic years 1938–1939, 1939–1940, and early 1941 (Leitch, 1978: 312–313).

Throughout the commentary L-P refers to Lowe-Porter, ES to Edith Simon, K to Koestler. Mann needs no abbreviation.

Introductory Comments:

“... translated into English in 1928” – The USA edition (Knopf) appeared in late 1927, followed by the UK edition (Secker & Warberg) in early 1928. “Forty years” from that latter date would be 1968, just two years after L-P's essay “On Translating Thomas Mann” appeared (Thirlwall 1966, 178–209). It is not known whether ES read L-P's essay before writing her own.

“More than forty years passed before there was any suggestion made in public that the English version might be wanting...” ES was unaware of the very mild critique (more a cautionary appraisal of the difficulty of Mann's German than of L-P's translations) published by Koch-Emmery (1952–1953). The same might be said of the

comments about L-P in Mandel, 1982 (both articles are described as “weak in their overall assessment of L-P” in Gledhill 1995). The unpublished critique of L-P by Hayes (1974) is stronger. It was not until the acerbic critique of L-P by David Luke (Luke 1970, reprinted 1988; 2008, lix–lxiv) that a full-scale investigation of her credentials as a translator was undertaken.

“... the translator’s prefatory note” – L-P introduced herself as Mann’s translator in American and British publications of *The Magic Mountain* in 1927/1928 and in subsequent reprints. It is worth reproducing this in full because so much of the later criticism (dating from the early 1950s but not serious and sustained until the late 1980s) of her translation of that novel, and of all the other Mann translations she undertook, refers back to it:

The translator wishes to thank, in this place, a number of scholars, authorities in the various special fields entered by *The Magic Mountain*, without whose help the version in humility here offered to English readers, lame as it is, must have been more lacking still. That they gave so generously is not to be interpreted otherwise than as a tribute to a work of genius. But with all their help, the great difficulty remained: the violet had to be cast into the crucible, the organic work of art to be remoulded in another tongue. Shelley’s figure is perhaps not entirely apt here. Yet, since in the creative act word and thought are indivisible, the task was seen to be one before which artists would shrink and logical minds recoil.

But of the author of *The Magic Mountain* it can be said in a special sense that he has looked into the seeds of Time. It was indispensable that we should read his book; intolerable that English readers should be barred from a work whose spirit, whatever its vehicle, is universal. It seemed better that an English version should be done ill than not done at all (Mann 1939, “Translator’s Note,” unpaginated; only the first paragraph of this is reprinted in Thirlwall 1966, 15).

The choice of the terms “version,” “remoulded,” and the allusion to [presumably] Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” are both salutary and apt in light of ES’s essay published here, and prior/subsequent criticisms (on that see below).

“... University of Princeton” – Princeton University invited Mann to teach there, which he did during the academic years 1938 through the early spring of 1941. Mann’s address to Princeton University (which he wrote in German) had to be translated into English before he could read it to his audience. It was printed as a 10-pp. essay “The Making of *The Magic Mountain*” in subsequent editions of that novel (e.g. Mann 1973, 719–729) and as an essay in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Mann 1953). ES appears to be overly harsh here – not so much about L-P’s translation of Mann but rather about Mann himself.

“Der Zauberberg... to deplore the very title” – *The Magic Mountain* as the official English title was something of a compromise; Mann himself thought that *The Enchanted Mountain* would be better, and in a letter to L-P [their correspondence was always in their birth language] dated 16 November 1926 he said so (the letter is reproduced in full in Berlin 1992, 307). In French *Der Zauberberg* became *La Montagne Magique*, and in Italian it was rendered *La Montagna Incantata*.

The most recent scholarly edition of the German original of *Der Zauberberg* is, like its 1924 first edition, in two volumes (Mann 2002). The text alone (Vol. 1) is 1076 pages plus another 14 pp. of editor Michael Neumann’s additional comments.

Neumann's *Kommentar* (Vol. 2) is 400 pp., plus another 110 pp. of *Paralipomena* which includes a bibliography of 40 pp. and two indices totaling 44 pp. The most recent English translation of *The Magic Mountain* (Mann 1996 in a single volume) is 706 pp. of very small print. There is no preface or introduction by the translator John E. Woods, no background essay on the translation history of *Der Zauberberg* over its then 70 year literary history, nor even a postscript. Very disappointing to say the least, and in part perhaps the reason why at least one Mann scholar has given it a very lukewarm reception: "Woods" rendering of *The Magic Mountain* (1996) is likewise marred by a variety of major errors" (Buck 2000, 903; see also Buck 1997).

"... or the instant recognitions borne on wings of song..." – The vagueness of this allusion could apply to any number of scenes. Interested readers may profit from a broader investigation of the role of classical music (especially, though not exclusively, Mann's fascination with Franz Schubert and Richard Wagner) throughout *The Magic Mountain* in *Passage* (1963).

"7[0],000-word tome" – ES's typescript has "7,000 word tome" which appears to be a simple mistake. She seems here to be generalizing and not referring specifically to *The Magic Mountain* (which at 700 pages in the most recent English translation [Woods 1996] is about 350,000 words. The word-number may refer instead to *Death in Venice* which at between 90–140 pages (depending on which English translation (e.g. Mann 1997, 251–343 or Mann 2004, 1–142) is closer to 70,000 words..

"... a life work to attempt to recreate..." – L-P managed to translate *The Magic Mountain* in just over a year, an astonishing feat and one that suggests she didn't linger over any difficult passages but instead approached the task in a rather mechanical, methodical, and unimaginative way. It took her a decade (1933–1943) to translate the *Joseph* tetralogy (in segments as Mann produced them), a much more reasonable pace given the size of that monumental work. Even so, Thomas Mann and Alfred Knopf were not happy with what they considered the slow pace of her progress.

"... the element of humour" – it says much for ES's own work, in literature (as here) but especially in painting and the plastic arts, that puckish good humor and a sense of literary detachment played a huge part in how she saw the world. Her attraction to Mann's "element of humor" is more than vindicated by one Mann scholar, T.J. Reed. In a single essay he singles out three Mann works in which some element of levity is clear: (1) "It is symptomatic that as significant an event as Europe's 1848 revolutions is treated in an offhand, if beguilingly [*sic*] humourous way" [in *Buddenbrooks*, 1901] (Reed 2002a, 2); or (2) the characterization of Mann's *Royal Highness* (1909) as a "... romantic comedy" [perhaps along the line of G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*?] (Reed 2002a, 3); or (3) or the reference to Mann's *Disorder and Early Sorrow* (1925) as "a paradoxically relaxed and good-humoured novella..." (Reed 2002a, 14). Literary critics who see little or no humor in Mann's *oeuvre* include this sweeping but hardly definitive assessment: "... it's hard to imagine a more humorless great writer than [Thomas] Mann" (Cunningham in Mann 2005, xi).

On Translating *The Magic Mountain* – Part 1

“The opening paragraph...” – We might want to compare and contrast (for landscape, mood and character) the entire first chapter (all three segments) of *The Magic Mountain* with the introductory chapter of Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native*, and with the corresponding first chapter of Charlotte Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*.

“... the original, shorter foreword...” – the reference is to Mann’s preface to the first German edition of *Der Zauberberg* (two vols. Berlin, Fischer 1924). The latest German edition (Mann 2002) does not reproduce it.

“... Lanquart, a small Alpine station...” – ES spells this variously as Lanquart (more often) and Landquart. The German text of *Der Zauberberg* (Mann 2002, 11) has Landquart, but there is a modern Swiss website which renders it Lanquart. It is now a much-in-demand summer campsite for contemporary Alpine vacationers and adventurers.

Excursus: Thomas Mann’s and German Culture

The cultural matrix, i.e. what constitutes Mann’s *Germanitas* or “German-ness,” into which ES’s short excursus might be set is Chapter 6: “What is German?” in Weigand 1964, 96–139. See also the combined essays by Paul Bishop, “The Intellectual World of Thomas Mann” (Bishop 2002) and Michael Minden, “Mann’s Literary Technique” (Minden 2002). All three overlook the singular, coincidental impact of Arthur Schopenhauer on both Arthur Koestler and Thomas Mann in the spring of 1937; see the *Appendix* to this article. ES is acutely aware of, and appreciative of, Mann’s sense of his cultural identity throughout his sixty-year literary career.

On Translating *The Magic Mountain* – Part 2

“... should on no account be rendered as ‘psychoanalysis’...” – on precisely this point see the cinematic version of *Der Zauberberg*, 1982 (a West German film directed and written by Hans W. Geissendörfer). Inge Simon Goodwin wrote to me that “neither Edith nor I saw [that movie]. Alas, alas, we would have loved to see it but did not know about it” (an e-mail to me of 20 May 2009).

“... as an older person’s [skin] often is” – the phrase is L-P’s addition to Mann’s text. Her proclivity to arbitrarily add or subtract words and phrases, as well as rearrange sentence structure (e.g. making subordinate clauses into independent sentences) are all characterizations of her free renditions not only of *Der Zauberberg* but of all the Mann translations she did for Alfred Knopf. A balanced approach to L-P’s translations is offered by Mann scholar Timothy Buck:

“... while at times she seemed like a bungling amateur unable to cope with relatively simple German words and constructions that even a struggling undergraduate might successfully contend with, she would in other, challenging situations sometimes arrive at most apt and *pleasing solutions*...”

(According to Konrad Kellen, Mann's secretary from 1939 to 1943, he [Mann] once remarked: 'She doesn't know German [*Deutsche kann sie nicht*]; but not everyone can be expected to') (Buck 2000, 904).

“Since Settembrini is the first one to apply [the term *Sorgenkind*] to Castorp...”

– There is a wry and insightful mention of Settembrini (in relation to Leo Naphta) in Arthur Koestler's recollection of two friends he knew in Paris on the eve of WW II:

We again spent much time together. Unfortunately [Manès] Sperber, who had become an equally close friend, had little in common with [Andor] Németh. Sperber, the Adlerian Marxist, was brilliant, logical, didactic with a touch of the rhetorical; Németh was lazy, dreamy, and enamoured of the absurd. Between the two of them I felt like Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain* with his sympathies split between the discursive Settembrini and the pathos of Naphta (Koestler 1969, 504).

“... the *Saulus-Paulus* syndrome...” – this term, based on the biblical conversion of Saul of Tarsus to Saint Paul (as related in *The Acts of the Apostles*) was actually a gradual process, beginning with the blinding light on the road to Damascus and concluding with the hearing before Sergius Paullus, the Roman governor of Cyprus during Paul's missionary journey to that island. Certainly the relationship between Hans Castorp and the Russian-born francophone Cláudia Chauchat was also an incremental process, with the latter's prolonged absence from the Davos Sanitarium corresponding to the hiatus between Saul in Damascus and Paul on Cyprus.

“... Mrs. Lowe-Porter did not do badly by Dr. Behrens' highly slang-favored burst of waffling or burbling ...” – This parallels Buck's charitable estimation just above (Buck 2000, 904).

“... if only because *Sorgenkind* [*des Lebens*] is a familiar expression in German...” We may add to ES's English renditions of this word. In Beddow (2002, 145) it is translated “life's problem child.” At the very end of *Der Zauberberg* the narrator intones: *Lebewohl, Hans Castorp, des Lebens treuherziges Sorgenkind!* (Mann 2002, 1085). This is rendered “Farewell, Hans Castorp, life's faithful problem child” in Mann (1995, 706).

The Magic Mountain: Three Elements of Special Consideration

“... the pangs of secret homosexuality...” – ES only alludes to a major aspect of Mann's life, one that (according to his surviving diaries) remained both a distraction and an inspiration until and perhaps beyond age 75. It was not until the diaries were made available to researchers in 1975, and then published over the next 20 years (on this see Reed 2002b, 226–227) that the impact of Mann's *bisexuality* – more accurate than *homosexuality* – gave scholars and the interested reader important insights to Mann's writing (particularly his fiction) and a better understanding of how he repressed the homosexual yearnings within a conventional, heterosexual marriage which lasted 50 years and produced six children (the two oldest of which were homosexual).

There is no need to explore this topic in detail. I reproduce here the general comments of two writers who focus on Mann's struggle with the duality of his desires and what it means for those who wish to see Mann and his *oeuvre* in a more fully three-dimensional setting:

This essay focuses in particular on the sexually troubled character of masculinity and of male-male relationships for Mann. The partly open, partly concealed role of homosexuality in Mann's writing has received considerable attention from recent textual and biographical scholarship, most notably in Anthony Heilbut's recent literary biography, which sees homoerotic passion as the key engine of Mann's life and works from beginning to end. Even critics of a more conservative bent have come to realize that homosexual interests in Mann's work have more than a purely symbolic value. It is certainly the case that for Mann homosexuality tends to be an object of sublimation, rarely rendered in straightforward representational ways, but, if nothing else, its sheer recursive persistence gives it the structure and the substance of real passion (Webber 2002, 65).

Mann's career may be read as a tale of profound erotic disappointment, and its diversion into and projection onto the widest range of disparate subjects... A sympathetic reading of his diaries suggests that fame rarely compensated for the wishes not granted. Youth would always mean the storehouse of his most painful responses. At twenty-six he complained: "Adolescence hangs on with me." He must have wanted it that way; at seventy he declared that one writes "to keep the wound open." ...At least twice he burned his diaries, first at twenty, then in his sixties. In 1950, having confided his latest homosexual infatuation [at age 75], he wonders whether it is time for another fire... (Heilbut 1995, 45).

"... his mordant left-wing brother Heinrich..." – Heinrich Mann (1871–1950) was the older brother and intellectual competitor of Thomas throughout their lifetimes. See Hilton (2000) for a brief literary biography of Heinrich.

"Daisy is nothing to be proud of, particularly" – It's certainly an antique popular song and one that Thomas Mann surely heard during his long lifetime. It is coincidental but relevant that at about the same time ES was typing those very words of her essay the science fiction epic *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) was being released in cinemas around the world. The culmination of the struggle for control of the spaceship *Discovery* on a secret mission to the planet Jupiter was the termination of all higher brain function of the supercomputer HAL 9000 by the only remaining crew member. As HAL is deliberately "lobotomized" his regressing brain functions take him back to the date (12 January 1997) of his initial programming and to the song with which he was programmed as what I would term a "cognitive default." That song is *Daisy, Daisy* and it lives on in a twilight world of cinema audio trivia and nostalgia (the reason for its inclusion in *Space Odyssey* may be found at the blog <http://kottke.org/06/04/hal-daisy-2001>).

"This is what writing is all about – communication" – I'm sure ES was aware of the great burden of any translator of literature – the need to find some common ground in the two languages at hand. That goes beyond the ability to find exact words, phrases and idiomatic expressions in both languages which equate so closely that readers would be unaware of difficulties in the translation. At the *linguistic* level ES found fault in L-P's translation of *Der Zauberberg*, but it is also clear from her essay that she took issue as well with L-P's inability to translate the *cultural* idiom of Thomas Mann. *Gallia in Graecium translata* was a late Roman expression for the idea that Greek

culture had been “transferred” to what is now modern France in ancient times. *Translata* does not mean “superimposed”. It means that the two cultures found a common denominator and that in time a third blended culture might emerge. ES (I think) would agree with this statement:

Good translators (and here they differ from the writers of the original text) agonize over a fundamental question. To what extent should they render, to the best of their ability, the words as written, and to what extent should they reinterpret them to suit the particulars of the language and culture into which they are being conveyed? (Cunningham 2005, viii).

Conclusion

Edith Simon became known to me in the mid-1950s as the translator of Arthur Koestler’s historical novel *The Gladiators* (1939), a task that I later learned she (with Inge Simon as typist) undertook at age 21 while writing her first novel *The Chosen* (1940) – not to be confused with Chaim Potok’s 1968 novel of the same title. Simon’s novel is a retelling of the biblical *Exodus*, in which she drew inspiration from Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers*, the first three volumes of which were published before 1940. During the research for my tribute to Koestler’s birth centenary (Mac-Adam 2006) I made contact with her family in the U.K. Through correspondence with Inge (Simon) Goodwin, and Edith’s daughter Antonia Reeve, I was not only provided with biographical information but also photocopied typescripts of two of her unpublished writings, notably the essay published here.

In her long and productive career Edith Simon – under her birth name – published 17 books (novels and non-fiction), translated one novel (German to English), wrote several film treatments, and created over 900 sketches, paintings and sculptures. It is clear to me that her creative career was equally devoted to writing and art. The emphasis was on writing from the late 1930s until the late 1960s, with a subsequent shift from writing to art from the early 1970s until her death 30 years later. For Simon’s full career see *Edith Simon: Moderation Be Damned!* (Reeve, 2005), especially the biographical first chapter written by her younger sister Inge, herself a novelist and translator. That chapter emphasizes Simon’s intense and parallel interests in creative writing and creative art from the age of 10. It is a career deserving of the volume dedicated to her memory.

At precisely the juncture between those two intense interests she set aside time to write “On Translating Thomas Mann” (and perhaps an unpublished essay in defense of historical fiction?). It is certain (according to her sister) that she never met Mann, but it is equally certain that his published works (particularly *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain*) had drawn her attention to his stature in 20th century world literature (it is precisely those two novels that Koestler admired). I am also assured by Inge Simon Goodwin that this essay was *not* written for delivery at a symposium or a conference: “I’m sure she would have been delighted to have it published, and she would certainly have corrected it and polished it for that” (e-mail correspondence from Inge Goodwin, 20 May 2009).

It was not until the late 1970s and after that several Mann scholars (Luke 1970;1988; Berlin 1992; Buck 1996) began to systematically and unflinchingly dissect the “English Mann” by comparing and contrasting it with the “German Mann.” The results have been astonishing: the choice of Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter as the “official” translator of Mann can now be seen as the culmination of “a perfect storm” of sometimes bizarre events (the apparent suicide of Mann’s first choice as translator), decisions made counter to the author’s wishes (Alfred Knopf ignored Mann’s repeated misgivings about Lowe-Porter’s credentials and relied instead on his wife’s friendship with her to seal the bargain), and Mann’s increasingly pressing need for a regular income in foreign currency (the German economy imploded in the late 1920s and helped set the scene for the Nazi dismantling of the failing Weimar Republic). Knopf, Lowe-Porter, and Mann were a mutually lucrative literary *troika*.

Thus the timely importance of Simon’s “On Translating Thomas Mann.” Twenty years before academic scholars began to focus systematically on the inaccuracies and distortions and emendations now evident in Lowe-Porter’s renderings of Mann, Simon set out clearly her own sharply critical observations. As readers will note if they compare her comments with those more recently published, there is almost no overlap in discussion. She remains today the only female to take issue with L-P as Mann’s English intermediary. What may have derailed her plans for its publication is the gradual but persistent need to turn her full attention to art, which dominated the second half of her career.

Simon approached *Der Zauberberg* and *The Magic Mountain* from her own unique perspective – that of a Jewish-German refugee who nevertheless saw in Thomas Mann a distillation of the *best* of German culture: a linguistic, literary, mythological, musical, proudly nationalistic tradition that she had been a part of for the first 15 years of her life. That the Nazi era rejected her and her family as “alien” does not come through in this essay. That Mann could not prevent his post-WWI reactions from leaching back into a novel set in the immediate pre-WWI period is not problematical.

Perhaps it is best to end this publication of her essay with some words of her own regarding what was important to her about her time and place in history:

Time and energy are elastic – but not infinitely so. There comes a point where the artist [i.e. of written words or other visual forms] has to choose which to give most of himself to – [i.e.] the work as such or the endeavour to build optimal conditions for it... How much of the art of any given age is “great?” Considering the vast increase in populations and their life span, the percentage cannot but diminish sharply as the numbers grow to whom art becomes an accessible occupation. Does that matter? (Simon 2005: Chapter 3, unpaginated).

That her comment ends with a question seems characteristic of her curiosity. Edith Simon seems to have been optimistic all of her life. I can only applaud her consistently positive perspective. The discovery that several carbon-copy typescripts of the novel she translated in 1938 still survive (see the Appendix that follows) presents the possibility of an intriguing *addendum* to the publication of “On Translating Thomas Mann.” If Arthur Koestler’s *The Gladiators* could be published in the original German she once had in hand it would be possible to judge *her* abilities as a translator in somewhat the same way that she critiqued Lowe-Porter. A parallel situation would

obtain if the German original of Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, translated by Daphne Hardy, were found intact.

Appendix: Arthur Koestler and Thomas Mann

The lives of Arthur Koestler and Thomas Mann intersected briefly in the summer of 1937 in Switzerland. Earlier that year Koestler had been released from a Spanish prison where he awaited a death sentence for his known communist party affiliation and his work as a journalist for the British anti-Fascist *News Chronicle*. It was during that "death row" episode (see Koestler's first account in his *Dialogue with Death*, 1937; 1961) that he reflected on his admiration for the early novels of Thomas Mann, and how much spiritual and intellectual comfort they gave him while imprisoned. Even before returning to London, he wrote to Mann. The most detailed account of this appears in the second volume of Koestler's autobiography, *The Invisible Writing* (1954; 1969):

During the first three weeks of solitary confinement, before I was allowed books from the prison library, my only intellectual nourishment had been the remembrance of books read in the past. In the course of these memory exercises, a certain passage from *Buddenbrooks* came back to me and gave me much spiritual comfort – so much so that at times when I felt particularly dejected, I would have recourse to that scene as it were a pain-soothing pill. The content of the passage, as I remembered it, was this. Consul Thomas Buddenbrook, though only in his late forties, knows that he is about to die. He was never given to any religious or metaphysical speculation, but now he falls under the spell of a book [Arthur Schopenhauer's essay *On Death, and its Relation to the Indestructibility of our Essential Selves*] which for years has stood unread in his library, and in which he finds explained that death is nothing final, merely a transition to another, impersonal form of existence in the All-One...

The day after I was set free, I wrote Thomas Mann a letter (I knew that he lived in Zürich-Kuessnacht) in which I explained [my remembrance of *Buddenbrooks*] and thanked him for the spiritual comfort that I derived from his work. The title of [Schopenhauer's essay] was expressly mentioned in my letter, which was dated from the Rock Hotel, Gibraltar, May 16 or 17, 1937. Thomas Mann's answer reached me a few days later in London. It was a handwritten letter which I lost, together with all my files, on my flight from France in 1940. I cannot, of course, remember its actual text, only its content which, for the sake of simplicity, I shall paraphrase in direct speech:

Dear Sir:

Your letter arrived on May... On the afternoon of that day I was sitting in my garden in Kuessnacht. I had read Schopenhauer's essay in 1897 or 1898, while I was writing *Buddenbrooks*, and I had never read it again as I did not want to weaken its original strong impact on me. On that afternoon, however, I felt a sudden impulse to re-read the essay after nearly forty years. I went indoors to my library to fetch the volume. At that moment the postman rang and brought me your letter... (Koestler 1969, 452–453).

**[Yours, etc.
Thomas Mann]**

Koestler then goes on to relate how his interview with Mann later that year (en route to an assignment to the Balkans for the *News Chronicle*) turned into a social disaster for which Koestler took a large share of the blame: “This was no doubt partly due to my paralysing timidity [there is an amusing reference in this recollection to the socially inept malapropisms of Frau Stöhr in *The Magic Mountain*] and *gaucherie* in the master’s presence; on the other hand Mann did nothing to put me at ease” (Koestler 1969, 453–454). That allusion to Mann’s uneasiness regarding the media (even, in Koestler’s case, a *German-speaking* journalist) is hardly unique. In later years Mann was on several occasions impelled to write letters to the editors of journals (particularly the USA based *Time* magazine) to “explain” or “correct” certain statements he had made in the course of interviews. It may be instructive to note the parallel career of Mann’s cultural if not spiritual near-contemporary, German composer Walter Braunfels (1882–1950) – see a report on the revival of his 1920 opera *Die Vögel* (based on Aristophanes’ still relevant satiric comedy *The Birds*) in Tomassini (2009).

What is worth noting here is Koestler’s ambivalent appraisal of Mann, someone he admired for the early novels and non-fiction but found fault with for his seemingly waffling attitude to German political developments before and after 1933, as well as his (Mann’s) later literary output during his prolonged political and cultural exile. This is nearly if not exactly the critique made of Koestler’s own *oeuvre* during his peregrinations (initially prompted by WW II) to the U.K., to Israel, to the U.S.A., to France, and eventually and permanently back to the UK (on that diaspora theme see Cesarani 1999). Since Mann was still alive when this volume of Koestler’s autobiography was published [1954] it may be worth reproducing excerpts from his assessment of Mann’s influence on German (and European) literature of the 20th century. I do not know if Mann might have read this critique of his own career before his death in 1955, and none of the biographies of Mann which I’ve consulted offer any insight:

Since that unhappy meeting, [i.e. between 1937 – c.1953] I have re-read a substantial part of Thomas Mann’s early work. Much of it has lost its original impact on me, but it has retained its grandeur and subtlety, its poetic irony, its universal sweep and range. Most of his later work I find mannered to the point where it becomes unreadable. But *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain*, the stories and essays (excluding the political essays), and indeed the major part of his work up to and including the last volume of *Joseph* [published in 1943] remain as a monument of the early twentieth century, and Germany’s most important single contribution to its [twentieth century?] culture. Thus personal disappointment did not diminish my admiration and gratitude for Mann’s work.

It did seem to provide, however, an explanation for a certain aspect of Mann’s art which has always puzzled me: I mean the absence of human kindness. There has perhaps never been a great novelist so completely lacking the Dostoievskian touch of sympathy for the poor and humble. In Mann’s universe, charity is replaced by irony which is sometimes charitable, sometimes not; his attitude to his characters, even at its most sympathetic, has a mark of Olympian condescension... The only exception to this is Mann’s treatment of children and dogs; perhaps because here condescension, the gesture of bending down, is implicit in the situation. The title of his only story about dogs is, revealingly: *Herr und Hund*. Which does not prevent it, however, from being a masterpiece (Koestler 1954, republished 1969, 455–456).

Koestler then moves on to criticism of Mann in political/ideological terms, an assessment not always noted by Mann biographers who either didn’t live through the convoluted era of c. 1930–1945 or who do not see Koestler from the perspective of

a committed communist who eventually lost faith and promoted leftist violence as the correct response to fascism (on this see Bance 2002, 116). It is worth noting that Mann himself expressed such sentiments, although in a very muted way. In his diary entry for 2 March, 1954 Mann wrote that he hoped someone would assassinate U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy and end the anti-communist witch hunt (which included an FBI file on Mann after he visited East Germany on several occasions) begun by that demagogue in 1949 (Reed 2002a, 15).

Koestler's summary of Mann's literary influence concludes with these thoughts:

The result [of Mann's philosophy through his publications] is a humanism without the cement of affection for the individual human brick, a grandiose, but unsound edifice which was never proof against the nasty gales and currents of the times. This may explain a series of episodes in Mann's public career which were exploited by his opponents and embarrassed his admirers – such as his support of Prussian imperialism in the first World War; his hesitant and belated break with the Nazis; his silent endorsement of the new despotism in Eastern Germany [after 1949], and his acceptance of the Goethe Prize [also in 1949] from a régime which banned and burned the books of his compatriots and fellow-authors...

... They do not affect Mann's greatness as an artist, but they have defeated his claim to the cultural leadership of the German nation. It is impossible to be angry with Picasso for believing that Stalin was the greatest benefactor of mankind, for one feels that his error is the result of a naïve and warmhearted passion. But it is not so easy to forgive the moral faux pas of the ironically dispassionate Olympian (Koestler 1969, 456).

As a coda to this Appendix I might add that Mann's letter to Koestler may still exist. Many of Koestler's typescript books and private papers were taken from his Paris apartment during raids by the anti-communist French police, the *Deuxième Bureau*, between the outbreak of WW II in 1939 and the Nazi occupation of France the following spring. Koestler always believed that these losses were irretrievable. But in e-mail correspondence with Prof. Michael Scammell of Columbia University, I learned that he saw some of this material in what had been the former KGB archives in Moscow during a visit there in 1994. The Nazis took to Berlin what they seized in Paris, and in turn the Soviets took the Nazi archives to Moscow after they occupied Berlin in the spring of 1945.

Scammell was particularly eager to discover if the German original typescript of *Darkness at Noon* (published in English translation by Daphne Hardy in 1941) was among Koestler's effects, but found instead *three* original German typescripts of *The Gladiators* (first published in English in 1939). Not realizing that all other copies of the German original of *The Gladiators* had either been lost or discarded, Scammell did not try to obtain a microfilm or photocopy. He failed to find a copy of the German original of *Darkness at Noon*; all copies of it (according to Koestler 1969, 489) were also lost/discarded. I am grateful to Prof. Scammell for sharing this information with me via e-mails between late 2008 and early 2009 (see Scammell 1998, esp. 28 for his visit to the Moscow KGB and Comintern archives where he discovered a copy of Koestler's two letters of resignation from the German Communist Party).

The irony, of course, is that after WW II both novels were back-translated into German, *The Gladiators* from the translation done by Edith Simon, and *Darkness at Noon* from the translation done by Daphne Hardy (who had fled Paris with Koestler). It

is just possible that Thomas Mann's handwritten letter in reply to Koestler's missive of May, 1937 is still within those Moscow files (or returned to France since the fall of the Soviet Empire). I have tried to make contact with the Directorate of the Russian Federation State Military Archive, so far to no avail. It is also possible that Koestler's letter to Mann still exists, if the latter saved it along with the other correspondence so far published. On the letters of Mann, Alfred Knopf, and Lowe-Porter pertaining to the first English translation of *The Magic Mountain*, see Berlin 1992.

Postscript

Readers should note that a print format version of John Hayes' *A Method of Determining the Reliability of Literary Translations: Two Versions of Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig** (Hayes, 1974) is not as readily available as is a microfilm version. I am grateful to the library staff at the University of Maine (Portland) for providing a print copy via Inter-Library Loan to my local public library. The portion of Hayes' study most relevant to this article is "Critical Reception of Lowe-Porter's Translating," pp. 67–77. The rest of the dissertation is focused on Mann's *Death in Venice*.

While this article was in press Michael Scammell of Columbia University kindly brought to my attention Christian Buckard's *Arthur Koestler: Ein Extremes Leben (1905–1983)* (München, C.H. Beck, 2004). *Strictu sensu* this is *not* a biography of Koestler, but Buckard devoted three pages (140–143) to the Koestler-Mann episode described in the Appendix above. Koestler's letter to Mann is in Mann's archive. Buckard reproduced all of it but the date and greeting (141–142), as well as Mann's diary entry regarding it of 23 May 1937 (142). Mann's reply to Koestler is still missing.

My thanks to Prof. Scammell for his gracious assistance in this and several other matters during the preparation of this article. His own extensive and perhaps definitive biography *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth Century Sceptic* will be published in January 2010 by Random House in the USA and by Faber & Faber in the UK. Grateful thanks also to Brent Shaw of Princeton University for making Buckard's volume available to me at short notice, and for patiently letting me expound on the subject of this essay in person over lunch, and via e-mail correspondence.

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NB: The bibliography of books and articles about Thomas Mann is understandably immense. In addition to the standard *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch* (see Koopman 1995), the University of Augsburg, Germany has archived the titles of 6,000 works on Mann between 1976 and the present at www.bibliothek.uni-augsburg.de. Click on *Sondersammlung* and then click on *Sammlung Jonas mit Thomas-Mann-Artikelsammlung*.

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