



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## **Thomas Mann, World Author: Representation and Autonomy in the World Republic of Letters**

Tobias Boes

Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies, Volume 51, Number 2, May  
2015, pp. 132-147 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press

A Journal of Germanic Studies

**seminar**

Volume 51, Number 2, February 2015

➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/smr/summary/v051/51.2.boes.html>

# Thomas Mann, World Author: Representation and Autonomy in the World Republic of Letters

TOBIAS BOES *University of Notre Dame*

In her influential study *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova draws a firm line between what she calls “national” and “international” writers. For national writers, “literary aesthetics (because they are connected with political questions) are necessarily neonaturalistic.” International writers, on the other hand, are described as “cosmopolitans and polyglots who, owing to their knowledge of the revolutions that have taken place in the freest territories of the literary world, attempt to introduce new norms” (110–11).

There are a number of different criticisms that could be levelled at this distinction. Here, I want simply to point out the striking similarities between what Casanova alleges are universal sociological categories, on the one hand, and a particular historicizing narrative about literary modernism, on the other. Casanova insists, for instance, that the struggle for “autonomy,” which she defines as “literary emancipation in the face of political (and national) claims to authority” (39), represents the most distinctive characteristic of international writing. She thereby echoes claims that have been made about “modern” art since at least the late nineteenth century (for an overview of these debates, see Goldstone). Even her remapping of the struggle between “autonomous” and “dependent” modes of thought onto the terms *cosmopolitan* and *national* is echoed by recent trends within modernist scholarship (see, for example, Walkowitz).

This homology is striking, especially since a very different kind of “international writer” (or, as I shall henceforth call them, “world author”) seems to have moved to the foreground in the present day. Consider only the following three names: Orhan Pamuk, Amitav Ghosh, and J. M. Coetzee. All of these writers can clearly be called “cosmopolitans and polyglots,” and all are deeply knowledgeable of the “revolutions that have taken place in the freest territories of the literary world.” In fact, all three writers frequently acknowledge this debt through metaliterary allusions to their modernist forebears: Pamuk and Coetzee most famously to Franz Kafka, Ghosh to Joseph Conrad. And yet we would not say that these writers have “emancipated” themselves from “political and national claims to authority.” *Snow* was received first and foremost as a literary depiction of contemporary Turkey. *The Shadow Lines* won awards from both the

Indian National Academy of Letters and from a major publishing consortium that seeks to honour Bengali writers. Coetzee, finally, has repeatedly and strenuously denied that his works are somehow “about” his native country, and yet his novels are frequently read in just this way both in South Africa and abroad.

The educated public, furthermore, increasingly does not differentiate between the respective roles that these present-day world authors play as private citizens, as public intellectuals, and as literary artists. This also stands in contrast to many of the modernists of the early twentieth century, who rarely circulated their ideas in the mainstream press (the publication of the “Manifesto of Futurism” [Marinetti] on the front page of *Le Figaro* notwithstanding) and who frequently subscribed to the vision of the artist as “behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence” outlined by Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (233). Successful contemporary artists, on the other hand, are fully integrated into the international public sphere, where they frequently comment on political as well as social questions in addition to aesthetic matters. Thus, it does not strike us as odd to see Pamuk interviewed about political Islam for the BBC or for ARTE, to hear Ghosh give a public address about European attitudes towards the Indian subcontinent at an international book fair, or to read an essay by Coetzee on Nelson Mandela in the *New York Review of Books*.

*Autonomy*, in other words, doesn’t mean what it used to mean, and it makes much more sense to instead describe all three of these figures as *representative* writers, if we use this term in its legal and political sense to indicate somebody who speaks for a collective. So strong is our tendency to see contemporary authors (especially those from distant parts of the globe that we otherwise know little about) as spokespeople for their respective national communities that it frequently colours our reception even of authors who explicitly disavow such associations, as we already see in the case of Coetzee (whose *Waiting for the Barbarians* would surely have met with a very different reception had it been written by a Swedish author).

Most of the existing scholarly literature on what in German is simply called *Repräsentanz* centres on the purely national dimensions of the problem – on those writers, in other words, whose principal audience is constituted by the same national community for which they also seem to be speaking (see, for example, Mendelssohn). Much less has been written on the kind of late-twentieth-century artist figure I have tried to describe here: the artist who utilizes not only advanced literary techniques but also essayistic interventions and sometimes even a certain form of personal habitus to bestow global recognition and legitimacy onto a national community and its culture. In distinction to the earlier form of representative national writers, such modern-day world authors frequently enjoy their maximum prestige not among their compatriots but rather in the power centres of Casanova’s world republic of letters, that is, in places like Paris, London, New York, or Berlin: the homes of large international media consortia and of wealthy audiences with leisure time to spare on the pronouncements of public

intellectuals. The history of this contemporary artist figure, so I want to argue in this essay, is impossible to tell without frequent recourse to German literary history. Specifically, I want to draw attention to the case of Thomas Mann, whom I see as a pivotal figure in the shift from a merely national to a truly global form of representation. The fact that Mann lived his career as an exact contemporary to many of the figures that Casanova hails as quintessential examples of the purely autonomous international writer (such as Joyce, Kafka, and Beckett) furthermore suggests that there are dimensions to the history of literary modernism that are still waiting to be uncovered.

### Authorship

Let us begin with a brief foray into the conceptual history of the two root terms that make up the neologism *world authorship*. Everybody seemingly knows what an author is, and it appears equally obvious that every text must have one, even if the exact identity of this person may not always be known. But as Michel Foucault pointed out many years ago, the notion of authorship (or, as he called it, the “author function”) is historically constructed and varies across genres (211). In the Western world, authorial identity mattered very little under most circumstances until roughly the start of the sixteenth century. With some genres, such as technical instruction manuals, it matters little even to this day. There are even some *literary* genres in which authorship is not particularly important, such as pulp fiction, although the anonymity of such works almost by definition bars them from acquiring much cultural capital.<sup>1</sup> According to Foucault, the rise to prominence of the author function is largely a result of the intertwined histories of print culture and of the modern state. Confronted with a proliferation of heretical pamphlets and treatises, early modern legislators reacted by creating new categories of legal responsibility: those of the “author” and the “publisher” (212).

It took considerably longer (until the late eighteenth century in most European countries) for corresponding legal *privileges* to accrue to these new entities in the form of copyright laws. The eventual nearly universal adoption of such copyright privileges represents one of the crucial mile markers in the development of literary autonomy. Previously, when virtually anybody could freely copy literary texts, authors generally needed to rely on the benevolence of wealthy patrons to make a living. Now, however, they had a chance to earn their money in a free market: to be remunerated for the originality of their ideas and forms of expression, rather than for their service to any external agenda (see, for example, Woodmansee). Little wonder, then, that at least one recent scholar working on the intersection of law and literature has identified a self-reflexive

1 Indeed, the modern tendency to link cultural prestige to the author function is so pronounced that we even invent “authors” for artistic forms whose mode of production is not particularly suited to them. Think of the *auteur* theory within film criticism, or of the more recent concept of the “show runner,” which came into common usage only after long-form television serials left behind their association with the pulps and were recognized as legitimate art.

interest in copyright issues as coextensive with, and perhaps even partially constitutive of, literary modernity (Saint-Amour 13).

In "What Is an Author?" Foucault has nothing to say about the role that imagined bonds between readers and writers play in the construction of modern authorship, despite the fact that such bonds powerfully complement (and to some extent also work against) the process of artistic autonomization. This becomes especially clear during the nineteenth century, once copyright regimes have largely been codified on the national level. Before the rise of a bourgeois middle class and the advent of widespread literacy throughout western and central Europe, imagined relationships between writers and their audiences had little larger importance in a sociological sense. Readers certainly had their preferred authors, and sometimes these preferences even translated into socially significant actions, such as when Cardinal Barberini interceded on behalf of Galileo Galilei. But in the absence of a genuine public sphere, such interventions remained rare, and at any rate, they were usually the result of concrete rather than merely imagined ties, since (as the example of Barberini and Galileo already shows) writers and their readers in many cases were linked through personal correspondence. All this changed with the rapid rise of literacy during the nineteenth century. The imaginative projections made by a mass audience onto the names of certain authors now acquired a culturally transformative significance. In the German example, the most important illustration of this can be found in the process through which the Weimar *dioskouroi*, Goethe and Schiller, were turned into symbols of a national literary tradition (see Hohendahl).

Authorial success in the modern publishing business clearly requires both copyright protection and reader identification, in much the same way that modern retail requires both trademark protection and consumer brand identification. And yet capitalism also subjects the author (or, more precisely, the "imagined author") to discursive formations that reduce, rather than increase, autonomy. Goethe, for instance, who was notoriously dyspeptic about the nationalist fanaticism of the early Biedermeier period, would presumably have been appalled about the uses to which his name was put under the Second German Empire. Unsurprisingly, these reductive forces frequently benefit from dynamics that weaken or even abrogate copyright protections. Goethe and Schiller, for instance, might never have acquired their iconic status if the rights to their works hadn't expired in the so-called *Klassikerjahr* of 1867, a development that immediately spawned numerous new editions, including the hugely successful Reclam-Universalbibliothek, the first two volumes of which (Goethe's *Faust I* and *Faust II*) appeared in November of that year.

Thomas Mann's ascent to the status of the single most important German national writer during the first two decades of the twentieth century was made possible in large part by his sophisticated understanding of these intertwined, and partially contradictory, dynamics. He was adept both at reinforcing his status as an elite cultural product and at imbricating himself into the collective national fantasies of his time. Indeed, he perfectly understood that these twin goals of

autonomy and representation sometimes went hand in hand and sometimes had to be played off against one another, something that his chief rival, Gerhart Hauptmann, never did. For example, chastened by his experience with his debut novel *Buddenbrooks* (which began to sell only after it was reissued in a much cheaper one-volume edition), Mann throughout his life paid extraordinarily close attention to the physical aspects of the publishing trade, pushing for status-enhancing luxury editions when possible but also convincing S. Fischer to allow Reclam to print a mass-market edition of his novella *Tristan* in the Universalbibliothek. Purely economic considerations surely played a role in this decision, but in a public address with which Mann commemorated the centenary of the Reclam publishing house in 1928, he also spoke movingly of the “universelle und volkstümliche Sammlung, die die kulturelle Hauptleistung der heute jubilierenden Firma [. . .] darstellt” (“Hundert Jahre” 335; see also Haefs for a primarily economic assessment of Mann’s rise to the status of representative writer).

Mann also clearly understood the changing nature of media culture, and of the public sphere more generally, during the early twentieth century. Starting in around 1910, for instance, he increasingly shifted his attention from purely literary works towards essayistic interventions, the majority of them delivered as lectures or as articles in the leading newspapers of the day. In line with the general spirit of the times, many of these interventions were nationalist in nature; his essay “Friedrich und die große Koalition” (*GKFA* 15.1: 55–122) as well as the book-length *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (*GKFA* 13.1) represent the culmination of this tendency. Mann thus consciously and intentionally broke with the Goethean model of the national writer who stands aloof from the issues of the day and struggles to express only what is eternally good and true about his country. Many of his contemporaries scoffed at these attempts to turn himself into what we would now call a “public intellectual” (the critic Herbert Ihering even referred to him as a “Grüßonkel der Nation”; qtd. in Rehm 204), but the lengthy and controversial critical discussions that framed interventions such as the lecture “Von deutscher Republik” in the Weimar press underscore the power of Mann’s strategy (see Schlutt).

A final illustration of Mann’s agility in balancing the demands of national representation with those of artistic autonomy is provided by his keen insight into the legal realities of his day. Thus, he was one of the few authors of any note to accept an invitation to work as an advisor to the censorship board of the Royal Bavarian Police Directorate. When his more radically minded colleague Frank Wedekind, whose plays were regularly censored in Bavaria, sent him a letter of complaint and suggested he resign his “anstößiges und keineswegs ehrenvolles Amt” (qtd. in Mann, *GKFA* 21.1: 809), Mann responded by pointing out: “Wenn ein bürgerlicher Einschlag in meine Produktion, in meine ganze Lebenseinstimmung und Lebenshaltung [. . .] den bürgerlichen Ordnungsmächten ein täppisches Vertrauen zu mir einflößte: warum sollte ich solches Vertrauen nicht benutzen, um zwischen Genie und Ordnung politisch zu vermitteln?” (22.1: 523). Ultimately, friendship won out and Mann resigned his commission, but the

exchange of letters demonstrates how carefully the author of *Buddenbrooks* balanced his competing desires to be seen as an autonomous artist (“Genie”), on the one hand, and a representative of mainstream bourgeois culture and the German state (“Ordnung”), on the other.

### Worldliness

The second root concept that makes up the term *world authorship* is even more difficult to parse than the first. For the purposes of our present discussion, it will suffice to point out that the conceptual history of “world” unfolds in rough temporal parallel to that of “author” but is categorically its inverse. The Western recognition that an entire world existed beyond the confines of Europe began with the voyages of discovery in the fifteenth century and found its first high point in the work of scholar-explorers like Georg Forster and Alexander von Humboldt at the close of the eighteenth. While authorship during this period was largely a juridical category and not yet a topic of the collective imagination, the notion of a world existed in the imagination long before it acquired any legal solidity. The British colonies in America, for instance, were during their early history essentially spaces of juridical exception, and discontent with the resulting practices (such as the billeting of soldiers in private residences) among the settler population eventually sparked the 1776 revolution. Only during the nineteenth century do we find the first traces of a genuinely global legal system.

Because of this parallel yet inverted history, the concepts of world and authorship are initially difficult to reconcile with one another. Consider Goethe’s famous conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann on 31 January 1827, now frequently seen as the starting point of modern theoretical reflection on world literature (though the term *Weltliteratur* was already used by Christoph Martin Wieland and others in the eighteenth century): “Nationalliteratur will jetzt nicht viel sagen; die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit, und jeder muss jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen” (Eckermann 224–25). Clearly, neither Goethe nor Eckermann had any problems imagining a literary system spanning the entire world, yet as many previous commentators have pointed out, as a description of the political and legal reality in 1827 this statement simply falls flat. Twelve years after the Congress of Vienna and three years before the French July Revolution, the European system of nation-states, which would eventually culminate in the partitioning of the world through treaties such as the 1885 Berlin accords, was only just getting started. The true fusion of the concepts of world and author consequently could not have happened until the second half of the nineteenth century, when a developing system of conventions and treaties gave the same legal autonomy to writers internationally that they had previously enjoyed nationally, and when a developing new media economy (first daily newspapers, then cinema, then radio and eventually television) enabled the global projection of imagined identities for the first time. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels anticipated this in their prophetic words of 1848, when they described world literature as the product of both an “allseitige Abhängigkeit der

Nationen von einander" (i.e. contractual bonds) and "neue [Bedürfnisse] welche die Produkte der entferntesten Länder und Klimate zu ihrer Befriedigung erheischen" (i.e. global desires) (5).

The most important legal milestones marking the fusion of "world" and "author" are the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the 1910 Buenos Aires Convention, and the 1928 Rome revisions to the Berne Convention, which introduced the concept of moral rights to international law. The story of the imaginative fusion of the concepts of world and author is far more difficult to tell. As a shortcut, however, we can highlight the creation of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1901 as well as the founding of International PEN in 1921. The first of these events endowed the nascent world republic of letters with a powerful instrument of canon formation: suddenly it was possible to draw up a supposedly impartial shortlist of who counted as a world author.<sup>2</sup> As the Nobel Prize gained in popular recognition, furthermore, and became a kind of Olympiad of the intellectual world, it strengthened not only the autonomy of the prize winners but also their representative qualities: writers now won recognition not only for themselves but also for their countries, even for entire continents. The founding of PEN, in turn, helped to broaden the popular perception of what an author was and should be: not simply an entertainer or artist but also a public intellectual who intervenes in the pressing political issues of the day. Through its numerous actions and appeals, and especially its "Writers in Prison" Committee, PEN also played a vital role in legitimating dissident authors as alternative sources of national representation competing with the official state organs of authoritarian regimes.

The time period delineated by this hasty sketch coincides very neatly with the modernist era. There is thus a certain justification to the resemblance that Casanova's model of the "international writer" bears to canonical accounts of the emergence of modernism; indeed, it does not seem unreasonable to propose that the two developments are causally linked, and that the turn toward what Rebecca Walkowitz has called a "cosmopolitan style" is actually the consequence of a historical situation in which authors began consciously to produce for a worldwide market. A brief explanatory account along those lines might look as follows: in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, global copyright regimes, together with an increasing number of international agreements between publishers, created a vastly expanded international reading public, at least for those authors born into the centres of the world republic of letters or for

2 In point of fact, of course, the selections of the Nobel Prize committee have always been quite compromised, hobbled not only by cultural prejudice but also by linguistic shortcomings. Not until 1945 did Gabriela Mistral of Chile become the first writer from outside Europe or North America to be awarded the prize (unless one counts the example of Rabindranath Tagore, who won as a citizen of the British empire for his contributions to English-language poetry). To this day, non-Western writers continue to be under-represented in the ranks of Nobel laureates, as are women.



those who (like many modernists) flocked there from peripheral regions early on in their careers. The media revolutions of the newspaper wire service, the cinematograph, and the radio, which instilled a thirst for information about faraway places even in ordinary people, only intensified this development. Adapting to these new market dynamics the modernists developed a plethora of styles that could travel more easily across national and linguistic borders than did the culturally thick description favoured by previous generations of realists. The stream of consciousness and the unreliable narrator, for instance, derive their narrative efficacy from universal aspects of human psychology, while literary montage is a commentary more on universal features of modern media societies than on any specific national culture.

At the same time, however, the focus on the Nobel Prize and the international PEN Clubs as inaugural institutions of the world republic of letters allows us to draw attention to a quite different group of writers who are much more difficult to assimilate to Casanova's paradigm. The vast majority of the early authors to be canonized by the Nobel Prize committee, or to acquire public recognition through their actions with PEN and similar socially engaged writers' organizations, did not affect a cosmopolitan style that would have furthered their autonomy from national markets and imagined communities. They were primarily representative writers, whose fictional works and essayistic pronouncements, though cosmopolitan in tone and circulating internationally, were still received as the products of specific national communities.

Most of these writers are now entirely forgotten (like the Nobel Prize winners Frédéric Mistral, José Echegaray, and Rudolf C. Eucken, or Catherine Amy Dawson Scott, the founder of International PEN), or they have been displaced to the margins of the canon (like Nobel Prize winners Romain Rolland, Knut Hamsun, and Anatole France, or PEN dignitaries John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw) (for more on this "negative monumentality" see Beebee). Thomas Mann is the exception, however, and occupies the happy intersection between cosmopolitan stylist and representative author. To this day, no introduction to literary modernism would be complete without a chapter devoted to *Der Zauberberg*, and yet the Nobel Prize that did so much to raise Mann into the Olympus of world authorship was awarded for *Buddenbrooks*, the work in which he gave a voice (quite literally, considering the novel's opening lines) to his Hanseatic home. His position is perhaps best summed up with the festive words of a speaker at a reception by the Polish PEN Club in March 1927, which praised him simultaneously as "le plus grand écrivain de l'Allemagne contemporaine" and as "un grand Européen" (qtd. in Lindken 165).

The story of Mann's transformation from a purely national author into a "great European," who was nevertheless read and discussed in Paris, London, and Rome as a spokesperson of contemporary Germany, has been ably told many times already, not least by Donald Prater, whose biography of Mann carries the subtitle "Deutscher und Weltbürger" in its German translation. Important relay stations along this developmental path are Mann's post-First World War

sparring matches with French authors such as Pierre Mille, Romain Rolland, or André Suarès over the role that national culture had played in the recent conflict, as well as his great essays “Goethe und Tolstoi” (1921) and “Von deutscher Republik” (1922), which both seek to bring German writers into dialogue with those from other national traditions. These early efforts still bear little resemblance to what I described as the characteristic form of the contemporary world author at the beginning of this essay, however. For one thing, Mann did not produce any fiction of note during the immediate postwar years. His two “idylls,” *Herr und Hund* (1918) and *Gesang vom Kindchen* (1919), are stylistically disappointing, display no evidence of his developing politics, and did not circulate widely. Arguably, Mann only succeeded in fusing his twin roles as public intellectual and author of groundbreaking fiction a few years later, with the publication of *Der Zauberberg* in 1924.

More important, however, from our contemporary perspective, this interwar form of world authorship appears quite limited. Undoubtedly, they were important fixtures of the intellectual landscape of the time, but there is a reason why Rolland and Galsworthy are rarely read today. Viewed from a distance, the first half of the twentieth century moves into focus as an era of worldwide political and humanitarian disaster, in which even ordinary people developed ongoing and often highly personal interests in global events. During the years leading up to the First World War, European newspapers carried stories about gunships in Agadir and the siege of Port Arthur. By the time of the Second World War, people all over the world gathered around radio receivers (openly in some countries, secretly in others) to hear the latest news coming from places that most of them would not have been able to locate on a map just a few months earlier. Names like El Alamein, Stalingrad, or Iwo Jima suddenly acquired a deeply personal significance, since virtually everyone either knew somebody fighting at those places or was projecting hopes and fears onto the outcomes of the battles. Along with new geopolitical pacts and alliances and a new form of global imaginative projection came a new form of world authorship as well.

Mann adapted to this shift far more successfully than any of his interlocutors and correspondents of the interwar years. By the mid-1940s, he was living in exile in the USA, where his lectures, essays, and novels appealed to millions of Americans desperately seeking answers to such questions as, What were the origins of Nazism? Were the Germans inherently evil? Could peace ever be made with Hitler? He was a repeat guest at the White House, spoke on topics like “The Coming Victory of Democracy” or “Germany and the Germans” in front of capacity crowds at the Library of Congress and in university auditoria, and he even had his own radio show, *Deutsche Hörer!*, which the BBC carried deep into occupied Europe. His identity as a public figure, furthermore, was inseparable from that of a bestselling author whose works were repeatedly chosen by the Book of the Month Club and reached circulation figures in the hundreds of thousands. The 1927 translation of *Der Zauberberg* into English had established Mann as the chief interpreter of the contemporary European spirit, “Mario und

der Zauberer” (first translated into English in 1931) had been one of the first analyses of fascist charismatic politics, and *Doktor Faustus* would, upon its eventual publication in 1947, cement his reputation as an exegete of the so-called German catastrophe.

### Translation

If we want to analyze the historical factors that made this unparalleled rise possible, it is useful to invoke the concept of translation in both its literal and metaphorical senses. David Damrosch once characterized Thomas Mann as an author whose works, owing to their cultural and linguistic density, are not particularly suited to being “reconsidered or retranslated” (188). The opposite is the case, as we can already glean from a letter Mann wrote to his friend Ernst Bertram on 16 March 1920, in which he described the impression left on him by an encounter with the English translation of his 1906 novel *Königliche Hoheit*. The British firm Sidgwick & Jackson and the American publisher Alfred A. Knopf had jointly released this translation by A. Cecil Curtis in 1916, but owing to the vagaries of the war, Mann received a copy of *Royal Highness* only on 2 March 1920. It was neither the first translation of a work by Mann into a foreign language nor even the first translation into English (an American edition of *Tonio Kröger* had appeared in 1914). And yet this particular author’s copy affected Mann in a way that no previous translation had ever done. Thumbing through its pages, he confessed to his friend Ernst Bertram: “Es mutete mich immer affektiert an, wenn Nietzsche erklärte, Schopenhauer ‘lieber auf französisch zu lesen’ seit es eine gute Übersetzung gäbe – und bin nun nicht weit entfernt, ein ähnlich ‘überdeutsches’ Bekenntnis abzulegen. Wahrhaftig, dies Sprachkleid sitzt wie angegossen. [. . .] Nein, so recht ‘national’ bin ich doch wohl eigentlich nicht” (*GFKA* 2: 332).

What is fascinating about this passage is Mann’s playfully articulated thought that a translation into another language, far from disguising his intentions, might actually help to reveal his true nature. There is, of course, a lot of exaggeration in these lines. In later years, Mann would more often than not complain about the inevitable flattening and the occasional distortion that his thoughts suffered in English. But these complaints were intimately tied to his awareness of his own importance as a representative writer, a writer whose mission it was to speak to the world on behalf of a Germany that could no longer speak freely for itself.

Indeed, Mann’s changing attitude toward translation and toward the international circulation of his works is best understood as the result of systemic factors, not of conscious decisions on his part. Nothing in his letters or public utterances before 1920 (the diaries for most of these years have been lost) indicates that he took any great interest in the international distribution of his novels. This changed after the war upended Germany’s standing in the world and sent its economy into an inflationary spiral. Suddenly, Mann not only was forced to scavenge for additional sources of revenue but also implemented a multimedial strategy

designed to create an international reputation: extended lecture tours to foreign countries, a job as the German correspondent for the American little magazine *The Dial*, and negotiations with Hollywood studios about film adaptations of his stories. More than most other authors of his day, Mann was thus attuned to the manifold ways in which the synchronization of the concepts of world and author during the early twentieth century was forcefully transforming not only the role of the artist but also that of the intellectual in the public sphere. Expanding international legal regimes, which gave foreign publishers the necessary breathing room to build an author into a marketable product, and the increasingly transnational projection of desires and aspirations in an age of global conflict both played a part in these dynamics (for more on this, see Turner).

For Mann, this process of synchronization was largely completed by the end of the 1920s, a decade in which his work underwent a veritable translation boom – mostly in English and French but also in a number of other European tongues as well as in more distant languages such as Chinese and Japanese (for a complete bibliography of all Mann translations, see Potempa). The Nobel Prize that he won in 1929 (presumably in no small part because of the international success enjoyed by H. T. Lowe-Porter's 1927 translation of *Der Zauberberg*) did its part in canonizing him as a world author, as did the many literary and journalistic connections he made through his speeches and lecture tours, including his various appearances at national PEN congresses. The important thing, however, is not just that he was translated, but that he was translated and marketed in a specific way, namely as the representative author for a new age and as the spokesman of a new Germany. In this context, it is especially telling that in many countries his essays were published almost as quickly as his fiction (and in some cases the essays appeared long before any of his stories or novels).

Of all the languages into which he was translated, it was American English that would prove to be by far the most important for Mann. It was America that offered Mann a permanent home after he had been driven out of Germany by the Nazis, America that would first proclaim him the world's "greatest living writer," and America also that would serve as the basis for his cultural reconquest of Germany during and after the Second World War. Recognizing these biographical facts, Mann would eventually even express the wish, "Wäre ich nur in die angelsächsische Kultur hineingeboren!" in a 1948 letter to his American benefactress Agnes Meyer (Mann and Meyer 717).

A closer look at the earliest years of Mann's reception in America helps shed light on the complex relationship between autonomy and representation in the interwar world republic of letters. During these years, Mann's most important publishing outlet in the USA was not the firm of Alfred A. Knopf, which did not acquire the exclusive rights to his works until 1925, but rather the little magazine *The Dial*. The story of how Scofield Thayer and J. S. Watson Jr. purchased this magazine shortly after the end of the First World War and turned it into one of the most important ambassadors of international modernism has been told many times already (e.g. Joost). The consensus that emerges from these accounts supports a

perception of *The Dial* as a major institutional factor in the creation of the “international writer” as described by Casanova. Thayer’s editorial interventions tended to favour writers and artists who cultivated an international aesthetic and were in touch with the most advanced stylistic developments of the day, but who simultaneously drained their work of any references to extra-aesthetic historical reality. Adam McKible, to name just one example, has shown how Thayer and Watson took over the journal in part because they were alarmed by the previous editorial board’s flirtations with Bolshevism, and how they subsequently refrained from printing the work of Russian authors whose work might promote the Soviet Revolution (59). That this general principle held also for the magazine’s translations from German is demonstrated by a few excerpts from the essay “Main Currents in Contemporary German Literature” by Alec W.G. Randall, which *The Dial* printed on the pages immediately preceding its first Mann translation in 1921. In this essay, Randall claimed that the revolution of November 1918 had had a merely “mechanical effect” on German poets and “indicated no permanent influence.” He also insisted that “the flood of literature produced in Germany after the Armistice [. . .] does not indicate in the least a change of imagination, a transformation of intellect on the part of German writers” (422).

As an assessment of the cultural production of the early Weimar Republic, these statements are strange enough, but as an introduction to Thomas Mann they are downright fatal: there was probably no other German writer on whom the events of 1918 had a more consequential and less “mechanical” effect. But Randall’s theses were easy to sustain, because the fictional works that Mann had produced between 1918 and 1921 were so inconsequential that it made perfect sense to dip instead into the well of his pre-war fiction. The story that Thayer published immediately following the essay was a minor tale that Mann had written as a young man: “Luischen,” which appeared under Kenneth Burke’s rather archaizing title “Loulou.” This was followed by “Tristan” (translated by Burke and Thayer) and eventually by *Der Tod in Venedig* (translated by Burke). Only in 1926 did *The Dial* finally get around to printing a contemporary Thomas Mann story, “Unordnung und frühes Leid,” in a translation tellingly prepared not by a member of the editorial staff but by an outsider, Herman George Scheffauer.

However, the eight “German Letters” that Mann contributed to *The Dial* between 1922 and 1928 stand in marked contrast to the magazine’s attempts to fit him into the mould of a writer who kept clear of any immersion in national politics. Though disguised as theatre and book reviews, many of these letters speak directly to the altered political circumstances in Germany and reveal Mann’s keen awareness of his new mantle as an exegete of his country. The very first letter, for instance, a review of Oswald Spengler’s *Untergang des Abendlandes*, contains a strong attack on postwar conservatism and begins with the pregnant words: “So it has been decided: I shall tell the readers of *The Dial* now and then of the cultural life in my home country, that European province which is known to the citizens of the Union under the name of Germany and with which, if I remember rightly, America was recently at war” (“German Letter”

645). It would be difficult to draft a stronger mission statement for the representative modern writer. Only a page later, Mann also invokes Goethe's conception of world literature to argue that "the cultural life of Europe was never more plainly 'in the sign of trade' than before the great war," that "translation flourishes," and that as a result of it "France, Italy, Spain, America" are now "taking [German spiritual products] into their languages" (646). We thus only have to scratch beneath the surface of traditional models of autonomous international modernism to discover a much more complex reality. Thayer's attempts to elevate Mann into an international pantheon of modernist writers and artists were subverted on the very pages of *The Dial* by Mann's own conception of the world republic of letters, in which authors existed primarily as representatives of their nations.

### Canonization

Alfred A. Knopf, once he had acquired the sole American publishing rights to Mann's works, successfully built on the precedents that had already been set by the "German Letters." He standardized Mann's English voice by hiring H. T. Lowe-Porter as the only authorized translator and having her systematically retranslate all of Mann's previous publications into a more congenial English, even at the expense of occasional lapses in fidelity (for a detailed case study of one of these translations, see Boes). He also conducted a high-energy correspondence with Mann and his German publisher, S. Fischer, and maintained a steady drumbeat of advertisements for his German charge in outlets such as *Publishers Weekly* (some of these are described and analyzed in Turner 81–110). Finally, well aware of Mann's great personal aura, Knopf hosted a festive gala dinner for the East Coast elite on the occasion of the author's first visit to the USA in June 1934.

For his efforts, Knopf has rightly been acclaimed as one of the foremost promoters of modernist culture during the 1920s and 1930s. He accomplished this task in no small part by appealing to the insecurities of American audiences during these years, by taking, as Clifton Fadiman put it, "advantage of America's coming of age, the farewell to gentility that by 1920 was already an accomplished fact" (qtd. in Turner 89). What has previously received little attention, however, is the fact that America's "farewell to gentility" coincided with a forced opening out onto the world and that Knopf did everything in his power to promote Mann as an author able to provide spiritual and intellectual succour throughout the ensuing uncertainties. By repeatedly comparing *Der Zauberberg* to literary classics such as *Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Divine Comedy*, Knopf not only strengthened Mann's reputation as an autonomous member of the world republic of letters but also, concurrently, impressed on his readers the message that practical success in the modern world required an active interest in contemporary world literature (unsurprisingly, Knopf's advertisements after 1929 made frequent reference to the Nobel Prize, and in 1930 he also published a short brochure aiming to introduce the previous year's winner to a broader audience). *Der*

*Zauberberg* is, on the surface of it, an intensely European book – in the language of Knopf’s own advertising copy, a product of “the world that achieved its logical self-expression in 1914” (Turner 103). Despite, or perhaps precisely because of, this fact, however, Knopf consistently positioned the novel as an instrument through which Americans might learn how to forge a happier future.

As early as 1929, Knopf also began publishing Mann’s essays, thereby underscoring the German author’s dual roles as artist and public intellectual. The inaugural collection *Three Essays* contained translations not only of “Goethe und Tolstoi” but also of “Friedrich und die große Koalition” and “Okkulte Erlebnisse.” The “Friedrich” essay was an incongruous choice, given that it represented Mann’s pre-war views, which in later years he took pains to hide from an American audience. “Okkulte Erlebnisse,” on the other hand, recounted his experiences at the séance that had also inspired an episode in the seventh chapter of *Der Zauberberg*; simultaneously, it dissected the cult of the irrational that was so pervasive during the founding years of the Weimar Republic. Earlier in the decade, Thayer had refused to accept this essay as a “German Letter” for *The Dial*, presumably because he thought the topic added little to his magazine’s artistic mission. Knopf, in contrast, by printing it in his very first collection of essays, not only reinforced the public image that Mann was in touch with his times but also demonstrated that the author’s occasional pieces and his high-modernist fiction flowed from the same fount of ideas.

When Hitler took power, this close association of Mann’s authorial personality with contemporary Germany initially necessitated some damage control. During the build-up to Mann’s first visit to the USA, for instance, a reporter for the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* wrote to Knopf to inquire whether the American publishing house was possibly subsidizing Hitler by sending royalties to Fischer (WAKF Box 5, Folder 1). Knopf was soon back in the saddle again, however, and deftly manipulated imagined identifications between his author and his customers long before Mann himself ever publicly spoke out against the Nazis. For instance, while politicians such as Fiorello La Guardia and captains of industry such as John D. Rockefeller received invitations to the 1934 gala banquet that stressed how “the purpose of the visit is purely literary, and no political significance whatever is to be attached to it,” the Jewish invitee Walter E. Sachs (of Goldman Sachs) instead received a note urging, “Remember that Mann, though not a Jew, is in exile, and finds himself at the age of fifty-nine perhaps the greatest living man of letters and yet a man without a country” (WAKF Box 5, Folder 4).

Given everything that his American publisher had already done for him during the first decade of their association, it was not particularly hard for Mann to assume the mantle of a spokesperson for the “other Germany”; when he emigrated to the USA in 1938, a bevy of reporters were already waiting for him to record his pronouncements about Hitler. Obviously, Mann could have never ascended to this status if his mind had not been alive to the most advanced artistic currents of his day, and if he had not jockeyed for position in the early-twentieth-century world republic of letters. But an undue emphasis on only these qualities leads to an

impoverished understanding of Mann's relevance in our own time. As an autonomous artist in Casanova's sense, Mann was already outflanked during his lifetime by even more radical figures such as Kafka, whose American reputation skyrocketed during the early 1950s, at the precise point in time that Mann's own literary stock began to diminish. As a forerunner of the contemporary world author, however, who frequently appears to his or her readers as the voice and perhaps even the conscience of a nation, Mann knows no equal. In this sense, he is a representative figure not only for his own time but also for ours.

### Works Cited

- Beebe, Thomas Oliver. "From Nobel to Nothingness: The Negative Monumentality of Rudolf C. Eucken and Paul Heyse." *German Literature as World Literature*. Ed. Thomas Oliver Beebe. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 137–56.
- Boes, Tobias. "Aschenbach Crosses the Waters: Reading *Death in Venice* in America." *Modernism/Modernity* 21.2 (2014): 429–45. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/mod.2014.0039>>.
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1980.
- Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.
- Eckermann, Johann Peter. *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. Ed. Christoph Michel. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker, 1999.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Ed. James Faubion. Vol. 2. London: Penguin, 1998. 205–22.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. London: Bloomsbury, 1988.
- Goldstone, Andrew. *Fictions of Autonomy: Modernism from Wilde to de Man*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199861125.001.0001>>.
- Haefs, Wilhelm. "Geist, Geld und Buch. Thomas Manns Aufstieg zum Erfolgsautor im S. Fischer Verlag in der Weimarer Republik." *Die Erfindung des Schriftstellers Thomas Mann*. Ed. Michael Ansel, Hans-Edwin Friedrich, and Gerhard Lauer. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 123–59.
- Hohendahl, Peter. *Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany 1830–1870*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Joost, Nicholas. *Scofield Thayer and "The Dial": An Illustrated History*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1964.
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin, 1962.
- Lindken, Hans-Ulrich. "Thomas Mann und E. T. A. Hoffmann in Warschau." *Das magische Dreieck: Polnisch-deutsche Aspekte zur österreichischen und deutschen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Hans-Ulrich Lindken. Frankfurt: Lang, 1992. 152–79.
- Mann, Thomas. "German Letter." *Dial* 73 (1922): 645–54.
- . *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe (GKFA)*. Ed. Heinrich Detering, Eckhard Heftrich, Hermann Kurzke, Terence J. Reed, Thomas Sprecher, Hans Rudolf Vaget, and Ruprecht Wimmer, in collaboration with the Thomas-Mann-Archive of the ETH, Zurich. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001.



- . “Hundert Jahre Reclam.” *Schriften und Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie. Das Essayistische Werk: Taschenbuchausgabe in acht Bänden*. Ed. Hans Bürgin. Vol. 1. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1960. 335.
- . *The Magic Mountain*. Trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter. New York: Knopf, 1927.
- . *Royal Highness*. Trans. A. Cecil Curtis. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1916.
- . *Three Essays*. Trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter. New York: Knopf, 1929.
- Mann, Thomas, and Agnes E. Meyer. *Briefwechsel 1937–1955*. Ed. Hans Rudolf Vaegt. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1992.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. “Manifesto of Futurism.” *Le Figaro* 20 Feb. 1909: 1.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*. Berlin: Dietz, 1973.
- McKible, Adam. *The Space and Place of Modernism: The Little Magazine in New York*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Mendelssohn, Peter de. *Von deutscher Repräsentanz*. Munich: Prestel, 1979.
- Pamuk, Orhan. *Snow*. New York: Knopf, 2004.
- Potempa, Georg. *Thomas Mann-Bibliographie: Übersetzungen – Interviews*. Morsum/Sylt: Cicero, 1997.
- Prater, Donald A. *Thomas Mann: Deutscher und Weltbürger*. Trans. Fred Wagner. Munich: Hanser, 1995. Trans. of *Thomas Mann: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Randall, Alec W.G. “Main Currents in Contemporary German Literature.” *Dial* 70 (April 1921): 422–27.
- Rehm, Stefan. “‘Könnte das Massenhafte, das Massengerechte nicht einmal gut sein?’ Thomas Mann und die Massenkultur des Literaturmarktes der Weimarer Republik.” *Düsseldorfer Beiträge zur Thomas Mann-Forschung*. Ed. Miriam Albracht. Vol. 2. Düsseldorf: Wellem, 2013. 199–209.
- Saint-Amour, Paul K. *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2013.
- Schlutt, Meike. *Der repräsentative Außenseiter: Thomas Mann und sein Werk im Spiegel der deutschen Presse 1898 bis 1933*. Frankfurt: Lang, 2002.
- Turner, Catherine. *Marketing Modernism between the Two World Wars*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2003.
- WAKF = William A. Koshland Files. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, the University of Texas at Austin.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca. *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007.
- Woodmansee, Martha. “The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the ‘Author.’” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17.4 (1984): 425–48. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2738129>>.