

SUPPRESSING THE GAY WHITMAN IN AMERICA: TRANSLATING THOMAS MANN

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I

"I reject the view that an author may not be controversial, that he must accept the world as it is, in all simpleness and high-mindedness, not saying a word."

AT HIS HOME IN PACIFIC PALISADES, California, on June 11, 1942, Thomas Mann composed these emphatically Whitmanesque words for his preface to a collection of essays in English translation, *Order of the Day: Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades*, which was published by Knopf later that year.¹ Only two of the volume's essays were written prior to Mann's flight from the crescent Nazism of Germany; one of them constitutes what could arguably be called the most controversial—not to say also the most fascinating and courageous—political utterance of Mann's long and far from taciturn life. He died in 1955 at the age of eighty.

I refer to the initial offering, "On the German Republic," a speech of about 15,000 words that Mann delivered publicly for the first time in Berlin on October 13, 1922, when the Republic was a mere four years old. Mann gave the speech, which is in the grand German academic style, several more times, in Hanover, Düsseldorf, Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Frankfurt. The originating occasion for the speech was the celebration of the sixtieth birthday of the eminent left-leaning playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, whom Mann had first met two decades earlier, in the pages of the leading literary journal *Neue Rundschau* (the speech appeared in November).²

Describing this remarkable performance in his 1942 preface, however, Mann outlined its more ominous historical context. He explains that he was addressing "the youth of Germany" in an effort "to reconcile them with the domestic and political results of the war of 1914-18." In effect, Mann was announcing his conversion to and support for the ideals of the Weimar Republic. More specifically, he says the speech

“bears witness to my early horror of German nationalism in defeat.” A reading now leaves no doubt whatsoever that Mann’s main purpose was to stem the belligerent national-socialist tide in 1920s Germany. He also observes, in passing, that his massive 1925 novel *The Magic Mountain* was an “off-shoot” of this speech.

“On the German Republic” begins in amiable but stately fashion and is polished to a fare-thee-well: ironic, self-deprecatory flourishes are elegantly delivered; august cultural figures—Goethe, of course, and Nietzsche, Schiller, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and Wagner—make deft comprimario appearances; allusions to such political figures as Friedrich Rathenau, Walther Ebert, and Wilhelm II are shrewdly insinuated; and Mann’s move to the political left and away from his own blithely muddled 1918 manifesto, *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*, is also charmingly finessed. But then, about half-way through, with the audience feeling thoroughly *gemütlich*, Mann’s strategy changes. A remarkable eloquence and sense of urgency begin to build as the speaker becomes increasingly hortatory and fervid. Mann begins to exhilarate. The speech, as it were, sheds its chrysalis and becomes something quite flamboyantly different. It becomes, as a recent biographer, Anthony Heilbut, has asserted, “the most revealing public statement” of Mann’s entire career.³

What creates this sudden rhetorical elevation is the introduction by Mann of Walt Whitman. At the almost exact mid-point of the speech, Mann asks his audience of students in Berlin’s Beethoven Hall rhetorically,

Shall I continue the tale? The day came (an important day for me personally) when in an open letter about Walt Whitman—who had made a very great impression on me, in [Hans] Reisiger’s noble translation—I proclaimed the unity of humanity and democracy; I asserted that the first was only a classicist, old-fashioned name for the second, and felt no scruple in coupling the godlike Weimarian name [of Goethe] and that of the Manhattan thunderer who sang: “For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you, ma femme! For you, for you I am trilling these songs.”

(The quotation is from Calamus #5, later “For You O Democracy.”) From this point, Mann virtually concedes the center-stage of his argument to Whitman, with the eighteenth-century German Romantic poet Novalis performing an important assisting role. Indeed, Mann confesses that “this very speech of mine today was actually conceived as a lecture upon this extraordinary pair, upon Novalis and Whitman, and may come to that in the end.”

Mann commences his effort to intertwine his arguments for the Republic and for democracy by quoting, from Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*, this assertion central to the poet’s political agenda: “Not only is it not enough that the new blood, new frame of democracy shall be vivified and held together merely by political means, superficial suffrage, legislation, etc., but it is clear to me that, unless it goes deeper,

gets at least as firm and warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and belief, as, in their days, feudalism or ecclesiasticism, and inaugurates its own perennial sources, welling up from the centre for ever, its strength will be defective, its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting."⁴ Soon it becomes clear that the "hearts" and "emotions" of Whitman's men will carry explicitly sexual charm in Mann's argument. He quotes Novalis to the effect that "Only he who does not live in the State as a lover in his beloved will feel his taxes heavy on him," and then observes that we can hear in this view "that social eroticism which plays so large a part in Whitman's democratism."

Mann then spends several pages aligning Whitman with the strains of German Romanticism, "the modern commercial spirit," and even (borrowing from national socialist demagogues) the laws of social Darwinism—all of which he wished to muster in his apologia for democracy. Asserting that Whitman understood law better, even, than Oswald Spengler in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Mann quotes from *Democratic Vistas* again: "The law, the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one." But, whereas the Nazis were saying such things to militaristic ends, Mann's intent was to urge a sense of "the national as a cult of peace." For his purposes, the all-embracing, Quaker-tinged, and affirmative Whitman—whom Mann now calls "the lover of mankind across the ocean"—was the ideal camerado. After this extended deployment of several high-toned abstractions, however, Mann's argument makes a stunning turn toward the erotic. The audience is asked quite frankly to consider the phallus.

Mann explains that he has arrived at the point

where Whitman and Novalis most closely approach each other, the point which is unmistakably the root of their humanity and their socialism. It is love: not in any diluted, anæmic, ascetic, condescending sense; in the sense rather of the obscene root-symbol which Whitman gave as title to that raging and reverent song-sequence in which one is met by the lines:

Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior, I will tell you what to
say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover.

Mann's reference, of course, is to the *Calamus* sequence, which first appeared in the third *Leaves of Grass* edition of 1860 (in that edition there were forty-five *Calamus* poems), and to the extremely long-leaved marsh grass plant *Acorus calamus*, whose spadix or inflorescence emerges from its stalk in a shape much like that of an erect phallus. The passage Mann quotes is from *Calamus* #10 (later "Recorders Ages Hence").

Daringly yoking Novalis's "voluptuous" aphorism—"Amor it is, which presses us together"—with Whitman's "erotic, all-embracing democratism," Mann urges that the "coming together" which constitutes democratic government be considered in the metaphorical context of sensuality—and homoerotic sensuality at that. Democracy, thus, begins with the erotic gaze of the "cruise": "even *looking* is already an elastic enjoyment; the need of an object is the result of contact at a distance. We find it everywhere in Whitman."

Having made his daring thrust, Mann does *not* back away. He recalls Novalis's brooding "over the phenomenon of sexual lust, the yearning for fleshly contact, the delight in the naked bodies of human beings," and then he quotes from Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric" ("that prodigious poem, pervaded with love's holy madness") on "The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand the naked meat of the body." Mann introduces a passage from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* on the wisdom of learning from "the free, sensuous, erotic" world of the theater, then drives his point home by quoting again from Whitman's "anatomical love-song," its last two lines: "O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul, / O I say now these are the soul!"

Mann comments that this sentiment represents "Hellenism—born anew out of the spirit of American democracy," and he then makes a startling assertion, one that includes a wicked thrust at Nazi saber-rattling for a third Reich. In the indissoluble body and soul announced by Whitman, Mann says, is "the third Reich of religious humanity, and over it Eros rules as . . . King?—no, for that would smack of the knight-errantry of the Middle Ages; yet it would please Walt Whitman if we made the young god the President of this new Reich." As Mann's biographer Heilbut wittily suggests, "the ideal president of Mann's republic is Tadzio!"

Having made Eros the figurehead of his democratic republic, Mann presses recklessly on in two long paragraphs of about 800 hundred words that, Heilbut ventures, "express the most radical vision of Mann's lifetime." It is a powerful and passionate vision of harmonious democracy steeped in homoerotic language and allusions and three more quotations from Whitman's *Calamus* poems.

What is strange, however, is that the passage is not in the published English translation. It has vanished, and thereby hangs a tale.

Before presenting the passage in its first published English version and discussing it and the closing paragraphs of "On the German Republic," it is necessary to consider briefly the reception of Whitman in Germany and the autobiographical and cultural contexts of Mann's keen response to the homoerotics of *Leaves of Grass*.

II

It will be useful, prior to examining Mann's encounter with Hans Reisiger's Whitman translations, to summarize briefly the history of *Leaves of Grass* in German-speaking countries, with particular attention to its most homoerotically explicit poems, the forty-five *Calamus* poems, which figure so prominently in "On the German Republic." For brevity's sake, I will refer to the poems by the numeric titles they carried in the 1860 edition and in the present writer's St. Martin's Press 1999 *Leaves* edition (the titles Whitman subsequently gave to these poems can be found in both the notes and the index of that edition).

The first German selection from *Leaves of Grass* was an 1889 anthology from a radical Zurich publisher, with translations made by Karl Knortz and T.W. Rolleston, both of whom had personal contact with Whitman in preparing their volume. Its 180 pages included thirty poems preceded by a short foreword and introduction. Of the four *Calamus* poems selected, only #7 could be considered mildly allusive to same-sex affection; more innocuous from this standpoint were #40, #42, and the last seven lines from #7 that later became "For You O Democracy."

The next Whitman anthology, translated by Karl Federn, appeared in 1904 and consisted of a twenty-six-page introduction and 192 pages of text. Included here were four poems from the other sequence that had consistently evoked charges of obscenity during the poet's lifetime, *Enfans d'Adam* (later *Children of Adam*), and ten *Calamus* poems: #3, #12, #20, #24, #33, #35, #38, #39, #43, #45. Only one of these poems—#20, with its elaborate simile of the lone live oak figuring forth the unhappy, solitary lover—adumbrates the affectional crisis at the heart of the sequence, and this perhaps suggests that a bowdlerizing intent informed the selection to some extent.

In the same year another Whitman volume appeared from the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel, with translations by Wilhelm Schölermann. Consisting of a fifteen-page introduction and 182 pages of text, this anthology included nine *Enfans d'Adam* poems and ten *Calamus* poems, plus an excerpt from the 1888 preface, *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*. The selection here is somewhat more daring, with the inclusion of *Calamus* #7 (ending "He ahold of my hand completely satisfied me"), #26 (with its "two boys together clinging"), #33 (boasting of "carols" for "comrades and lovers"), and #39 (in which the poet gives of himself "to comrades, to love"); also included are #12, #15, #22, #24, #41, and #44.

Three years later, in 1907, a larger anthology appeared from Philipp Reclam with a twelve-page foreword and 239 pages of translations by Johannes Schlaf. Included in this volume, most notably, are all fifteen

of the *Enfans d'Adam* poems. Eleven *Calamus* poems are selected: #3, #5 (the seven "For You O Democracy" lines), #7, #12, #22, #23, #24, #28, #33, #34, and #42. These choices, whether intentionally or not, would leave a reader who did not know the entire sequence with the distinct impression that *Calamus* is primarily a political utterance. Whitman, in his Good Gray Poet vein, in fact approved of such a slant. "Important as they are," he wrote, "as emotional expressions for humanity, the special meaning of the *Calamus* cluster of *Leaves of Grass*. . . mainly resides in its Political significance."⁵

Hans Reisiger (1884-1968), whose German translations of Whitman became standard, first encountered the poet's work in 1909. He began translating him in 1912, and it was during the next year that Reisiger and Mann first became friends (some sources suggest the first meeting took place earlier, in 1906). Finally, in 1919, Reisiger brought out from the distinguished Berlin firm of S. Fischer Verlag a volume titled *Walt Whitman: Grashalme*, which was billed as a "new selection." It consisted of a brief two-page foreword that emphasized Reisiger's desire for Whitman to inspire a Weimarian democratic and pacifist healing of the wounds of World War I: "At this moment, when a gloomy pall surrounds us, I venture to invoke Walt Whitman resounding in German, although to many of us he is already as familiar as light and air." An afterword gave a one-page summary of Whitman's life. The 129 pages of text offered a potpourri of poems and several passages from longer poems like "Song of Myself" and "Paumanok." Several major poems were included complete: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "A Song of Joys," "Sleepers," the Lincoln elegy, "Salut au Monde," and "So Long!" A half-dozen *Adam* poems were included, and nine *Calamus* poems: #2, #5 (last seven lines, being "For You O Democracy"), #11, #14, #15, #17, #22, #25, #38.

The volume must have struck a chord: two more printings appeared by 1920. The translator and his publisher were emboldened to offer something grander, and so, in 1922, appeared a two-volume Whitman edition that represented a substantial leap forward for Whitman in Europe. The first volume consisted of a 101-page introduction by Reisiger that amounts to a compact "life and works" monograph; this is followed by important Whitman prose pieces—*A Backward Glance*, "Good-Bye My Fancy," and *Democratic Vistas*—as well as three short pieces with special portent for Germany in the 1920s from Whitman's *Notes Left Over* ("The Tramp and Strike Questions," "Who Gets the Plunder?" and "Rulers Strictly Out of the Masses"). In the second volume came the poetry, with all translations based on the 1891 or "deathbed" *Leaves of Grass* edition.

It is likely that Reisiger's translations for this expanded edition were referred to by Mann in his diary entry for May 31, 1921: "On Sunday

evening Reisiger was here at the house, and read from his translations, which led to a discussion of Whitman's homosexuality."⁶

In his 1922 edition, Reisiger includes "Song of Myself" complete (as did Schlaf), all of the *Enfans d'Adam* poems, and an unprecedentedly generous sampling from *Calamus*. There are 25 poems in his *Calamus* cluster, and a twenty-sixth, #17, is found as "Of Him I Love Day and Night" in the *Whispers of Heavenly Death* cluster, where Whitman moved it after 1860. The *Calamus* poems, included (for the first time) in a separate group under that title, are as follows: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5 (last seven lines), #7, #10, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #22, #23, #24, #25, #28, #33, #34, #38, #40, #42, #44, #45. The sole poem Whitman introduced into the *Calamus* cluster after 1860, "The Base of all Meta-physics," is also present.

While offering many more *Calamus* poems than the earlier anthologies, Reisiger also appears rather systematically to have avoided several poems that more clearly vocalize the homoerotic wellsprings of the sequence. Two poems extravagantly declaring Whitman's emotional affiliations that he himself suppressed after the 1860 edition are, of course, nowhere in play: #8 (which ends "I will go with him I love,/ It is enough for us that we are together—We never separate again") and #9 (which asks plaintively "Is there even one other like me—distracted—his friend, his lover, lost to him?"). But several bold declarations of the same-sex emotional economy of the *Calamus* sequence that Reisiger *could* have chosen are not present: for example, #19 with its "Manhattanese" kissing the speaker "on the lips with robust love"; #26 with its "two boys together clinging"; #29 with its "youth who loves me, and whom I love"; #32 with its excited observation of "two simple men" parting with a passionate kiss; #36 with its revelation that "an athlete is enamoured of me, and I of him"; #39, in which the poet gives himself "freely. . .to comrades, to love"; #41 with a "Lover and perfect equal" identifying the poet "by secret and divine signs"; and #43 with the poet thrilled by "the subtle electric fire" evoked by one who walks by his side.

Still, it is difficult to read "On the German Republic"—including the candidly sexual passage offered below—without thinking that these more explicit poems, though not included in the anthology, were familiar, certainly to Reisiger and likely to Mann. They must have come under discussion on that Sunday evening in May 1921.

Reisiger, an important early twentieth-century translator (also to his credit were Meredith's *Egoist*, Kipling's *Kim*, and works by H. G. Wells, Defoe, Flaubert, and Sartre), was one of Mann's two closest literary friends-confidants at this time; the other was Ernst Bertram. Both were homosexual. And, though busily siring six children (three of whom were homosexual) with his wife Katia, Mann was beginning, in the 1910s, to address in his fiction and acknowledge (if only to his dia-

ries, close family, and certain acquaintances) his own homosexual tendencies.

Most notable, surely, is the letter Mann wrote to the young writer Carl Maria Weber on July 4, 1920, admitting that his novella *Death in Venice* grew out of his own "personal, lyrical travel experience" in Venice in 1911 and asserting that "Obviously the law of polarity does not hold unconditionally; the male need not necessarily be attracted by the female." In this letter Mann also lamented, in thoroughly Whitmanlike fashion, the "rather Protestant, Puritan basic state of mind" and its "fundamentally mistrustful, fundamentally pessimistic relationship to passion in general."⁷

Touching, too, is his confession to his diary, in the same year, of being struck by the beauty of his fourteen-year-old son Klaus (nicknamed Eissi): "Am enraptured with Eissi, terribly handsome in his swimming trunks. Find it quite natural that I should fall in love with my son." Several months later, the vigilant father confided similarly, "I heard some noise in the boys' room and came upon Eissi totally nude and up to some nonsense by Golo's bed. Deeply struck by his radiant adolescent body; overwhelming."⁸

It is tempting to conclude that familiarity with Whitman helped to usher Mann to the brink for his flamboyant and profoundly autobiographical declaration of an erotic politics in "On the German Republic." Mann's praise for Reisiger's "noble" Whitman in the speech was thus not only appropriate to the occasion—Reisiger and Hauptmann were also friends—but was also a gesture of personal friendship and fellow feeling.

Several months earlier, Mann had performed an impressive public favor for Reisiger on receiving the two-volume set. He allowed his delighted personal note of thanks to appear as an open letter in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on April 16, 1922. In it he called the set "a little masterpiece of love" and "really a great achievement on your part after years of devotion and enthusiasm" to this "exuberant, profound new personification of humanity." And the letter ends with this telling prefiguring of the October speech in Berlin: "I see, too, that to awaken the feelings of the new humanity has not been accomplished by Goethe alone, but that a dose of Whitman is needed . . . these two have a good deal in common, these two ancestors of ours, especially as regards sensuality, *Calamus*, and sympathy with the organic."⁹

Before we turn at last to the passage lost in translation, it should be emphasized that there was another good reason, aside from the autobiographical one, for Mann's enthusiastic response to the homoerotics in Whitman's poetry. This was the fact that German speakers were both the world's earliest and most vigorous seekers after a scientific and humane understanding of homosexuality and, hence, the most advanced in reading the sexual subtexts in *Leaves of Grass*. The sympathetic, sys-

tematic presentation of homosexuality could be said to have begun with the publication by Karl Ulrichs (1825-1895) of a dozen works in the 1860s and 1870s, and his prolific argumentation was followed by that of Carl von Westphal, who published in 1869 what some consider the first psychiatric study of homosexuality (he also coined the term "Uranian"). In the same year, Dr. Károly Benkert, proposing repeal of the notorious Paragraph 175 (which set harsh punishment for the behavior of homosexual men and, after 1909, women), appears to have used the word "homosexuality" for the first time in an open letter to the Prussian Minister of Justice.¹⁰

By no means the first notable event, but perhaps the most crucial one, in the history of serious study of sexualities was the founding, in 1897 (just five years after Whitman's death) by the Berlin physician Magnus Hirschfeld, of a journal, *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (published by the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee), devoted to the understanding of what was then called "intermediate" sexuality. And, lo, within less than a decade, the 1905 *Jahrbuch* offered a 134-page monograph by one Eduard Bertz, titled "Walt Whitman, ein Charakterbild" ("Walt Whitman, A Portrait of His Character"). It is a bold and relentless performance, fully justifying Walter Grünzweig's recent conclusion that Bertz was "the first international critic who did not attempt to ignore or obscure Whitman's homosexuality."¹¹

Bertz's boldness becomes somewhat less remarkable if one pauses to consider how vigorously Germans commanded the avant-garde of homosexual liberation in its earliest stages. Just a few highlights of this leadership can be sampled here. In 1900 appeared there one of the first anthologies of homoerotic literature, *Lieblingminne und Freundesliebe in der Weltliteratur*. In 1905, just after two Whitman volumes appeared in translation, 320 publications on homosexuality appeared in German. There was even public debate then as to whether homosexuals made good soldiers; two studies published in 1905 and 1908 answered stoutly in the affirmative. A few years later, in 1910, Hirschfeld, coining the now common term, published his *Transvestites: A Study of Erotic Disguise* (its author knew first-hand whereof he wrote). By this time, too, the homosexual rights movement was sufficiently developed to suffer from vigorous factional strife; in the late 1920s Hirschfeld could lament over the movement's "infighting and backbiting between individual groups and goals."¹²

During the Weimar Republic, there were at least thirty homosexual periodicals, and many prominent figures signed a petition to the Reichstag to amend Paragraph 175 so that homosexual acts would be punishable only in cases involving coercion, public annoyance, or children. Among the signers were Hauptmann, Martin Buber, Karl Jaspers, Hermann Hesse, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Rainer Maria Rilke, Arthur Schnitzler, and Stefan Zweig, as well as Mann and his brother Heinrich. In Berlin

in 1921, the first homosexual theater company was founded, and in the same city, barely a year before Mann delivered "On the German Republic," the first international Congress for Sexual Reform was held. Two years before, in 1919, the world's first Institute of Sexual Science was opened by Hirschfeld in Berlin. (It was closed and its contents—as well as a bust of Hirschfeld—put to the fire in a public ceremony by the Nazis in 1933.)

Bertz's astute and fearless partisanship for the gay Whitman in 1905 now has some context. His first sentence asserts that "Whitman is perhaps the most remarkable, but also the most problematic, figure in American literature" (155), and he forcefully argues that confronting the author's sexuality is necessary if his "problem" is to be solved. A short early chapter is titled "Die Kritiklosigkeit des ersten Whitman-Biographen," which might translate as "The Cluelessness of the First Whitman Biographers." (Bertz was probably thinking in particular of Henry Bryan Binns's *A Life of Walt Whitman* of 1905.) What he says of these benighted early biographers could well apply to several more recent ones: "I recognized how this [homosexuality] in his character played such a significant role that no critic could penetrate into the core of his being while remaining silent about it" (173). And then he sets to his task, though not before quoting Voltaire's aphorism, "To the living one owes respect. To the dead one owes only the truth."

Bertz mentions the work of Havelock Ellis and quotes from *Das konträre Geschlechtsgefühl*, the 1896 German translation of J. A. Symonds's study (164). He calls "unbelievable" the notion that Whitman's dear friend Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke never recognized a homosexual "inclination" (170). "Whitman's exhortations," Bertz asserts, "are manifestly only to be understood through the homosexual predisposition of his nature." He also, pertinently for the present purposes, casts a suspicious eye on the Whitman volumes published hitherto in German: "In all of these selections, the majority of poems characteristic of his sexual feeling are missing" (157n).

In Bertz's following pages, many of these poems are examined, and in his conclusion he permits himself the summary statement that Whitman "was a noble Uranian." He also preens, I think justifiably: "I have set myself the task of demonstrating Walt Whitman's innate homosexual nature, which has been denied with such monumental arrogance, and I am aware that my attempt to unravel this nature has been successful."

The *Jahrbuch's* good work was doomed by the political forces Mann joined in battle with "On the German Republic." But before it ceased publication, Bertz made one more rhetorically pugnacious curtain call on Whitman's behalf in its pages. Emory Holloway's two-volume *Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman* had appeared in 1921, and one of its revelations was a prior manuscript version of the *Enfants d'Adam*

poem "Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City," a nostalgic reminiscence about a woman "who passionately clung to me." In the prior version the lover is a man: "I remember, I say, only one rude and ignorant man who, when I departed, long and long held me by the hand, with silent lip, sad and tremulous." Bertz exults, uttering a grand I-told-you-so laced with acid: "Whitman did not dare to remain faithful to himself, but the truth has now been brought to the light of day nevertheless, and all of the yarn by H. B. Binns is now exposed. The deficiency of a homosexual to admit to his nature, a deficiency which so greatly obstructs the just appreciation and eventual liberation of homosexuals, is only too understandable given the terrorism of the heterosexual society." Bertz concludes, plausibly, returning us again to *Calamus*: "Whitman loved unsophisticated rustic-type males and found them everywhere he went. The woman, however, whom he forged into the poem, which should actually have been a part of the *Calamus* cycle, is not grounded in the reality of his life. Whitman was purely a homosexual."¹³

It is impossible to imagine that an astute, homosexual reader and translator of Whitman like Hans Reisiger was unfamiliar with Bertz's fearless views. And to read Walter Grünzweig's views about Reisiger in *Constructing the German Walt Whitman* is to conclude he was eager to advance on Bertz's conclusions. The selection, Grünzweig sums up, "is made up of poems with predominantly erotic and particularly homoerotic character as well as war poems." Grünzweig also notes "the (homo)erotic context and character of Reisiger's translation" and marvels that Reisiger's "openness is surprising. There is not even an attempt at justification, apology, or cover-up." He marvels, too, that, in spite of the obvious erotic and homosexual bias evident in this anthology, "contemporary criticism hardly reacted to it."

It would be fascinating to know what Bertz thought of Reisiger's elaborate Whitman edition. He would doubtless have been pleased to have his *cause célèbre* accorded a two-volume edition from a distinguished press, and he would also have been obliged to grant that the selection of poems represented an improvement over the skimpy editions prior to 1906. But, as suggested above, he could well have puzzled why several "noble Uranian" poems were not included.

Realistically, Reisiger, or indeed the S. Fischer Verlag, may have recognized that there were, especially in 1922, limits to what could safely be published in Germany. Witness the demise of the *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* at this time (the cause being as much homophobia as hyperinflation). Bertz himself, at the beginning of his 1922 I-told-you-so, alluded quite accurately to this careful pulling-in of horns over *Calamus* in Whitman's own life:

In the first years of his youthful virility, when he was filled with eros, Walt Whitman expressed his homosexuality, which dominated him completely, most passionately. This is proved by the *Calamus* cycle in his poetry which first appeared in 1860, when the poet was forty-one years old. But his fear of the uncomprehending prejudice of public opinion led him to regret his openness. In the later editions he eliminated the most conclusive confessions.

Thomas Mann, as we are about to see, was, in Berlin's Beethoven Hall in October 1922, in no mood to share in this closeted, self-protective frame of mind. The text of Mann's speech was, in Bertz's apt phrase, "filled with eros."

III

As with the lion's share of Mann's works, Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (1876-1963) was the translator into English of "On the German Republic." Anthony Heilbut sums up as "cordially distant" Mann's extraordinarily long relationship with her, one that began with *Buddenbrooks* in 1924 and ended with *The Holy Sinner* in 1951 (she later translated *A Sketch of My Life*, which appeared five years after Mann's death). And it is clear that, though on the whole *complaisant* with what she wrought, Mann was quite aware of Lowe-Porter's limitations and of the sometimes severe criticism her translations evoked, beginning with *Buddenbrooks*. In November 1933, he refers in his diary to a hostile review in the New York *Herald Tribune* of an essay on Wagner and remarks, "It seems to be very badly translated."¹⁴

Interestingly, the relations of the two began seriously to cool at about the time *Order of the Day* appeared. Lowe-Porter complained, in a letter to Alfred Knopf, that Mann "always acts as though I were not there, unless I am called to his attention—a fine masculine attitude, for which, I dare say, I am partly to blame." For his part, Mann observed witheringly in a May 1945 letter to his friend Erich Kahler, "I don't regard Lowe-Porter as a reader; she is a mute instrument, never lets out a peep." Much later, in 1952, with all her work for him presumably done, a black-tempered Mann summed up her life's work (though without mentioning her name)—and his: "there one stands, read in denaturing translations which obliterate whatever charm the original has—a great, unloved name. I don't know whether I may add 'unloved because unknown.'"¹⁵

Since Lowe-Porter's death, her reputation as a translator has continued to fall, with critics particularly noting her tendentious lapses in conveying Mann's ironies and whimsies—especially his multi-layered ironies and whimsies concerning sexuality. Dissatisfaction with her versions of Mann is apparent in the new translations that have begun to appear, notably those by John Wood and David Luke, and in such stud-

ies as Frederick Lubich's 1994 essay, "Thomas Mann's Sexual Politics: Lost in Translation." Lubich accounts "On the German Republic" a "unique document in the literature of twentieth-century sexual politics,"¹⁶ and he also acerbically draws attention to the large missing passage. Lubich gives Lowe-Porter's translation of the speech short shrift, calling it "a hurried rendition of the original text that levels nuances and misreads expressions."

Heilbut is also very critical of Mann's translator, particularly in her tendency to "downplay the erotic comedy essential to his vision," and he considers the massive excision we are about to examine a prime example of "how poorly she understood him." He also asserts that "Lowe-Porter helped establish the official Mann," and one might say his entire biography is devoted to revealing the very different—and erotically vibrant, if subterranean—personality disguised by the stiff, shy, rather grand figure of the expatriate Nobel laureate.¹⁷ Like so many early Whitman critics and biographers who helped sustain the poet's "official" Good Gray image and who so exasperated clairvoyant homosexual readers like Bertz, Lowe-Porter muted and blurred Mann's "real Me" with her at best innocently inattentive and at worst bowdlerizing translations.

But let it also be emphasized that both Whitman and Mann were, especially in their later decades, complicit in this metamorphosis from bold sexual-literary transgressors into models of unexceptional, conventional "official" probity. Whitman and Mann were both exactly thirty-six when they published the most striking autobiographical declarations of their careers: the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and the 1912 novella *Death in Venice*. Whitman's boldness reached its peak five years later, with the *Calamus* poems of 1860; Mann's most radical sexual utterance came ten years later, in 1922, with "On the German Republic." But both authors lived many years on. After 1860, as is well known (and Bertz elaborates with unconcealed rue), Whitman retreated from his astonishing and systematic appeal for homosexual freedom. And, at least in public forums, Mann performed a retreat of his own.

The absent passage is probably evidence of a retreat from earlier rhetorical heroics. Questioned now about it, Heilbut thinks it inconceivable that the large excision could have been made without Mann's awareness. In his biography he imagines that "sheer perplexity" might have caused Lowe-Porter to throw up her hands in dismay and skip the passage. And she perhaps discussed the passage with Alfred Knopf; they could well have concluded the passage was simply unacceptable to the general reader in the United States in 1942. Did Mann notice the bowdlerizing hiatus and heave a sigh of relief? Or was he miffed but chose not to make a fuss?

In any event, here is the missing passage—what Heilbut accurately describes as a "sustained plea for sexual freedom." I include the last

part of the paragraph that precedes the cut, and I also retain the original's "Reich" ("empire, realm") for obvious reasons. The original German text is presented for comparison in the eighteenth endnote.

... "O I say," shouts Whitman at the end of his anatomical lovesong, "these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul, —O I say now these are the soul!"¹⁸ That is Hellas—born again out of the spirit of American democracy. In those words is Goethe, the best, most prophetic, and most instructive there was in Nietzsche, and also Novalis's devotions to the temple of the soul. "Does anyone doubt . . . that the body is worth fully as much as the soul? And if the body is not the soul, then what is the soul?"¹⁹ That is the third Reich of religious humanity, and over it Eros rules as—king? no, for that would smack of the knight-errantry of the Middle Ages. Yet it would please Walt Whitman if we conferred upon the young god the Presidency of this new Reich.

In this context, which remains a political context, I wish to risk—with all advisable prudence and deference, since it may in any case seem appropriate in light of my previous remarks—saying something about one particular realm of emotions. I mean that erotic zone in which the law of sexual polarity, universally accepted as operative, is seen to be eliminated, as invalid. Within this zone, we see like coupled with like, mature manhood paired with adoring youth, in which youth realizes a dream of its own idolization, or young manhood drawn to those bearing its own image—all bound in ardent camaraderie. Any society that, however unwittingly, banishes this nature from its conscious behavior or suppresses it through monstrous prudishness, still bears it within itself, and gradually the spell of derisiveness and denial evoked by its every manifestation begins to weaken. With greater calm, society can thus focus on such behavior and deal humanely with its ambiguity. It *can* signify enervation, degeneracy, disease, but one may well doubt whether, in this case, punishment or benevolent therapy is the right approach to treatment. The fact remains, however, that we cannot simply consign to the realm of degeneration an emotional complex capable of embracing that which is holiest and most bountiful from a cultural standpoint. Anyone who reflects on nature and her laws and who, like Novalis, accounts this companionship as almost overwhelming, must at once find trivial any notion that it is "unnatural" or "against nature." And furthermore, Goethe has already rejected this familiar argument with the observation that this sexual phenomenon is utterly suffused within—not outside of—nature and humanity, for it has been in evidence in all ages and among all nationalities and declares itself aesthetically in the fact that, objectively, the masculine more purely and more beautifully expresses the idea of mankind.²⁰ Schopenhauer expressed himself about this very similarly. . . .²¹ [original ellipses] But what must be proposed in passing over this remarkable subject has to do with the political: this dimension, of course, is not lacking here. Does it not mean that the war's experiences of the camaraderie of blood and death have not powerfully strengthened the rough and exclusively masculine mode of life and atmosphere of this Reich of Eros? The political posture of its faithful believers tends to be nationalistic and belligerent, and it is said that affinities of such a kind cement hidden monarchist ties—yes, even that an erotic-political ardor for the model of certain ancient love affairs of friends underlies isolated acts of terror today. Now, Harmodios and Aristogeiton were democrats;²² and the talk now cannot be of a more profound rule of law, which today seems to us a principle. The mightiest modern counter-example is the poet of the *Calamus* songs, Walt Whitman, who is

Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
Projecting them along that substantial life,
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love. . . .²³

In these songs, this substantial and athletic love “will make the continent indissoluble. . .divine magnetic lands” and “will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other’s necks, / By the love of comrades, / By the manly love of comrades.”²⁴ Eros as statesman, even as the creator of states, has been a familiar concept since ancient times. Even in our own day there has been some new and ingenious propagandizing for the notion; but to want to make his concern and his partisanship out to be entirely an attempt at restoration of the monarchy is fundamentally mischievous. The Republic is much more the concern of Eros, that is to say, the unity of state and culture, as we call it, and, if he is also no pacifist in the tend-your-own-garden sense, his nature is still devoted to a god of peace, which will establish among the states, “Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument, / The institution of the dear love of comrades.”²⁵

I would not want to leave unremarked—or fail to make allowance for it in the course of my attempt at persuasion—a sphere of feeling that, without any doubt, protects, or can protect, important elements of our government and culture. Health? Sickness? Treat these notions with care! They are the most difficult in all of the philosophy and science of life. Whitman’s reverence for male youths—which forms only a beautiful province of his all-embracing Reich of sacredly phallic, exuberantly phallic fervor—was surely something healthier than poor Novalis’s love of Sophie—Novalis who found necrophilia a clever and convivial maneuver “against the night to come,” and whose communion / eroticism is blown through with the touching lasciviousness of the consumptive.²⁶

Here the Lowe-Porter translation resumes. Before the excision, Mann wittily suggests that Eros be made President of a new ideal government. After it, the first sentence of a new paragraph continues the Whitman allusion: “Between the *Calamus* songs and the *Hymns of the Night* [of Novalis] lies the difference between life and death. . .” A skillful deception.

Whitman is not stinted, however, in Mann’s closing strategy, which is first to distance the “Manhattan thunderer” from Novalis’s necrophiliac Romantic excesses. “What has the pure, sweet-smelling primitive healthiness of the singer of Manhattan to do with such excesses?” Mann asks. “Nothing, doubtless.” Such morbid Romanticism is “utterly foreign and repulsive to the herald of athletic democracy.” Still, Mann argues vigorously, this is not to say Whitman failed to embrace the old Romantic formula of the *Liebestod*, or love-death, especially as it appears in the *Calamus* poems. Here he quotes from *Calamus* #2:

Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all, and are folded
inseparably together, you love and death are.

And he quotes, from the same poem and with his own italics, the poet’s famous rhetorical, “What indeed is *finally beautiful* except death and love?” Then, as a last gambit, Mann reveals his desire to bridge the supposed chasm separating the arenas of poetic/literary aestheticism and democratic politics with what he calls “that primeval, athletic poetry of Walt Whitman’s, bursting with the freshness of the races.”

But Mann saves his last paragraph for an unsubtle aspersion cast at the Nazis: "A people who had the wit to invent nationalism would have enough to abandon its invention." With ironic italics, Mann asserts that he and his audience will do well to focus on "our own *national* concern. I will call it again by its name—an old-fashioned one, yet today bright with youthful allure: Humanity." Though Mann does not invoke the poet by name in this climactic paragraph, the "humanity" he defines is quintessentially Whitmanesque: "It is a mean between aesthetic isolation and undignified leveling of the individual to the general; between mysticism and ethics; between inwardness and the State. . . the Beautiful and the Human, of which our finest spirits have dreamed."

Clearly, in Mann's view Whitman was preeminently such a fine spirit, and his speech's valedictory flourish is pure Whitman, opening up as it does the democratic vista offered by the Weimar Republic. Of "the truly German mean, the Beautiful and the Human," Mann concludes, "We are honoring its explicit legal form, whose meaning and aim we take to be the unification of our political and national life, when we yield our stiff and unaccustomed tongues to utter the cry: 'Long live the Republic!'"

IV

When Thomas Mann died, Christopher Isherwood—who had become a Southern California acquaintance—wrote with justice in his diary that "he was quite brave."²⁷ "On the German Republic" remarkably suggests as much. Still, though his bravery was perhaps quixotic, it was not foolhardy. Thus, when (at his own, his translator's, or his publisher's suggestion or insistence?) the matter of including the daring homoerotic passage required a decision, it is easy to imagine that one or all three may have cast an eye at the cultural and political scene in the United States in 1942 and concluded the passage was not worth the controversy. Mann might well have recalled that his speech, in the increasingly national-socialist Germany of the early 1920s, proved a useless gesture, then considered America in the 1940s, and in the end decided to submit to the elision.

This moment might even be taken as atmospherically symbolic of Mann's growing disgust with his adopted country as the 1940s unfolded. Here, too, there is an evocative Whitman connection, which is captured by returning to the poet's 1871 prose effort at political prophecy and fulmination, *Democratic Vistas*. In its exhortation of "Intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man," Mann found the nub of his 1922 speech.

Whitman's derision of the American political scene in *Vistas* is superb: he writes of the "incredible flippancy" and "blind fury" of the

political parties at that time and of “many a deep intestine difficulty” and the “human aggregate of cankerous imperfection” and “scrofulous wealth” in his nation. And, in private conversations, he was saying much the same thing nearly two decades later: of the political scene he remarked to his friend Horace Traubel, “No man can look into what we call party politics without seeing what a mockery it all is—how little either Democrats or Republicans know about essential truths.” And about politicians he rankled, “The whole gang is getting beyond me: I find it harder and harder every year to reconcile myself to the exhibit they make.”²⁸

In his letters and diaries of the 1940s, Mann’s tone moved increasingly toward Whitman’s withering vein. Also as in Whitman’s case, the erotics of expression and argument began to wane with the coming of old age. The betrayals and travesties of democracy urged Mann toward Whitman’s coruscating mode of political commentary. President Roosevelt’s death in 1945 left him feeling “orphaned and abandoned,” and the sharp turn to the political right caused him and Katia to feel that America was “no longer the country to which we came.”²⁹

Mann became a vocal critic of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s congressional reign of terror and the activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee. His poodle was named Alger in honor of Hiss. In 1948 a statement by him defending the so-called Hollywood Ten was read in public, and by 1949 he was being assailed by a former Attorney General for his Communist associations. In September 1950, he wrote gloomily in his diary, “I am more and more disgusted with this country.”³⁰ A few months later, after the strong Republican showing in the off-year election, Mann writes of the papers being “full of the Republican election victory: Warren, Nixon, Taft etc. Horribly inflated.” And then he asks himself, “Shouldn’t one leave now?”³¹ When Mann became involved with Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois and others in the American Peace Crusade’s call for a Korean cease-fire in February 1951, his publisher Knopf chastised him, advising him to “keep away from anything which involves even the *name* Paul Robeson as you would from the Bubonic Plague.”³² By April his name was among those condemned by HUAC for Communist associations; others were Marlon Brando, Alfred Einstein, Norman Mailer, Mark Van Doren, and Frank Lloyd Wright. The following summer he was singled out for attack in the House of Representatives. Convinced, in Whitman’s words, how little American politicians knew about “essential truths,” the Manns resettled in Switzerland in the summer of 1952.

The true codas on the Whitman-Mann connection, however, can be accounted happier, though the first occurred in 1949, one of the darkest years of Mann’s life, when his health was deteriorating and Eissi—his son, Klaus—committed suicide. In March, Mann wrote a warm, chatty letter to Hans Reisiger suggesting a Munich reunion and recall-

ing Reisi's "unforgettable Whitman essay."³³ Several years later, in 1953, Mann wrote one of his last letters to Reisiger to invite him to stay chez Mann. The letter ends with a touching reminiscence of the long-ago years of their close literary camaraderie that, we know, included discussions of Whitman and his homoerotic verse: "May we invite you to be our guest then. . . . We would take drives, go to the theater and the opera, listen to our good record player, read things to one another, etc., as in the old days. As Medi [Mann's daughter Elisabeth] used to say: 'With Herr Reisiger, Herrpapale is always so cheerful.'"³⁴

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NOTES

1 *Order of the Day: Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades* (Knopf, 1942). The quoted passage is from p. vii.

2 The original German text of the speech is lost, but the published version can be found in *Thomas Mann: Essays 1919-1925*, ed. Hermann Kurzke, Stephan Stachorski (S. Fischer, 1993), 126-166; the passage to be considered here is reproduced in full in the eighteenth note below.

3 Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* (Knopf, 1996), 379. Heilbut's probing and wry discussion of this speech (375-82) inspired the present essay. Another exploration of Mann's homosexuality, revealing a *Death in Venice*-like experience he had in 1950, at the age of seventy-five, is the present author's essay, "Death in Venice, Life in Zurich: Mann's Late 'Something for the Heart,'" *Southwest Review* (summer 1997), 293-324.

4 Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (Library of America, 1982), 935.

5 *Leaves of Grass*, Comprehensive Reader's Edition (New York University, 1965), 751.

6 Entry for May 31, 1921, in *Diaries 1918-1939*, ed. Hermann Kesten (Abrams, 1982), 116.

7 *Letters of Thomas Mann 1889-1955*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (Knopf, 1971), 103-106. In this letter Mann also mentions his keen interest in the writing on homoeroticism of Hans Blüher (1888-1955), who published *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* in 1917-1919: "Blüher's conclusions are far more congenial to me [than Hirschfeld's], and also far more interesting."

8 The entries are for July 25 and October 17, 1920, in *Diaries 1918-1939*, 101, 103.

9 The letter can found in *Walt Whitman Abroad*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen (Syracuse University, 1955), 16. Reisiger was eventually to inspire the character Rüdiger Schildknapp, who appears in chapter 20 of *Dr. Faustus*. Mann's inscription in a copy presented to Reisiger refers to his "old friend Reisi" (in *Herzlich Zugeeignet: Widmungen von Thomas Mann*, ed. Gert Heine, Paul Schommer, (Dräger, 1997), 141; Reisiger figures in several other inscriptions made by Mann—see also 51, 184). Mann's friend-

ship with Reisiger lasted a long time, though not without anxiety and frustrations. He was arrested in the Tyrol in 1938, and when he was finally released Mann wrote from the Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows that the good news caused “a great lifting of weight on my heart” (letter of April 8, 1938, *Thomas Mann: Briefwechsel mit G. B. Fischer*, ed. Peter de Mendelsohn [Fischer, 1973], 142). In 1938, Mann succeeded in arranging a teaching position for Reisiger at the University of California at Berkeley and even guaranteed his salary there. Reisiger never budged, and several years later Mann confided his annoyance to a friend, ruing Reisiger’s “sluggishness and disloyalty” (*An Exceptional Friendship: The Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Erich Kahler*, ed. Winston and Clara Winston [Cornell, 1975], 132). In the end all was forgiven, however. On October 16, 1954, Mann published in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* a “Festive Greeting to Hans Reisiger” on his 70th birthday: “I lay everything aside to remember his pleasant character, his service to German letters, his faithfulness, to which, in my heart, I have always responded with sympathy, respect, and tenderness” (*Thomas Mann: A Chronology of His Life*, ed. Hans Bürgin, Hans-Otto Mayer, Eng. tr. Eugene Dobson; University of Alabama, 1969, 255).

10 For this and the following material on the German homosexual liberation movement I am indebted to James Steakley’s *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (Arno, 1975).

11 Walter Grünzweig, *Constructing the German Walt Whitman* (University of Iowa, 1995), 197. Grünzweig’s study is more elaborate and detailed in its preceding German version, *Walt Whitmann* [sic]: *Die deutschsprachige Rezeption als interkulturelles Phänomen* (1991). He discusses the reception of a homosexual Whitman in his eighth chapter, where he also touches very briefly on and quotes from the suppressed passage in “On the German Republic.”

Bertz (1853-1931), a novelist and editor, was an active early 20th-century proselytizer for Whitman and homosexuality. He entered Whitman’s life in June 1889, with a letter to him (its salutation: “Dear Sir, Dear Poet, Friend, and Master”) introducing himself as editor of the *Deutsche Presse*, in which he had just published “some words of sympathy and congratulations” on the poet’s seventieth birthday (see *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 5:330). In a two-part article in *The Gissing Journal* (July, October 1991), Grünzweig presents Bertz’s Whitman-related correspondence from 1889 to 1914 (Bertz was a friend of George Gissing). Particularly fascinating are several letters Bertz wrote to the British physician W. C. Rivers, author of an early volume addressing Whitman’s sexual identity, *Walt Whitman’s Anomaly* (Allen, 1913). Bertz’s letters to Rivers show that he was deeply resentful of his treatment by the American Whitman establishment in consequence of his vigorous outing of the poet (he deemed Horace Traubel and Richard Bucke “silly”). He would doubtless have had some very severe words for the strangely bowdlerizing translation of Reisiger’s introduction to his 1922 Whitman edition in *Walt Whitman and the World*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom (University of Iowa, 1995). Comparison of the translation of the last three unblushing, boldly-phrased paragraphs (208-209) with Reisiger’s original reveals that the suppressing instinct has not vanished entirely. However, poor translation is better than none: these last three paragraphs vanished entirely when Reisiger’s introduction appeared in translation four decades earlier in Gay Wilson Allen’s *Walt Whitman Abroad* (Syracuse, 1955).

12 “Die Homosexualität” (1927), quoted by Steakley, 78.

13 “A Lyrical Sex Change in the Poetry of Walt Whitman,” *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 22 (July/October 1922), included in *Walt Whitman and the World*, 187-188.

14 Heilbut's summary about Lowe-Porter is on p. 465 of *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*. Mann's November 24, 1933, diary entry is in *Tagebücher 1933-1934* (Fischer, 1997), 254.

15 Lowe-Porter's complaint to Knopf is quoted by Heilbut (466). Mann's derisive 1945 remark is in a letter of May 1, 1945, in *An Exceptional Friendship*, 99-100. His depressive later remark is in a letter dated January 19, 1952, Pacific Palisades, to A.M. Frey, in *Letters*, 638.

16 *Comparative Literature Studies* 31 (1994), 109-111. Lubich concludes his essay with this summary judgment: "It has become quite transparent that Lowe-Porter's New England standards of morality, deeply anchored in Puritan traditions, differ substantially from Mann's Old World sensibilities, vacillating between decadence and avant-garde. . . . The remarkable trajectory of Mann's sexual politics has lost much of its originally scandalous and subversive brilliance" (122). David Luke, in the introduction to his 1988 translation of *Death in Venice*, cites numerous flaws in Lowe-Porter's version of this perhaps best-known and most characteristic Mann work (see xlvii-li). I will not refrain from altering passages quoted here from the 1942 translation of "On the German Republic" where it seems justified.

17 *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*, 380.

18 These are the last lines of "I Sing the Body Electric." I am grateful to Paul Oppenheimer and Joan Schwartz for their assistance in preparing this translation. The original German is as follows (for source see note two):

Ich will es wagen, in diesem Zusammenhange, der ein politischer Zusammenhang bleibt, mit aller gebotenen Behutsamkeit und Ehrerbietung von dem besonderen Gefühlsbezirk zu reden, der bei meinen letzten Worten sichtbar geworden ist: ich meine jene Zone der Erotik, in der das allgültig geglaubte Gesetz der Geschlechtspolartität sich als ausgeschaltet, als hinfällig erweist, und in der wir Gleiches mit Gleichem, reifere Männlichkeit mit aufschauender Jugend, in der sie einen Traum ihrer selbst vergöttern mag, oder junge Männlichkeit mit ihrem Ebenbilde zu leidenschaftlicher Gemeinschaft verbunden sehen. Die Gesellschaft, die dies Wesen lange, ohne Wissen davon, aus ihrem Bewußtsein es verweisend oder es prüde perhorreszierend, in sich trug, beginnt allmählich den Bann von Verruf und Verleugnung, der auf der Erscheinung lag, zu lösen, sie mit größerer Ruhe ins Auge zu fassen und ihre Vieldeutigkeit menschlich zu erörtern. Sie kann Entnervung, Entartung, Krankheit bedeuten, und man mag zweifeln, ob in diesem Falle Disziplinierung oder humanitäre Schonung die rechte Art sein wird, ihr zu begegnen. Aber es ist unmöglich, grundsätzlich der Sphäre des Verfalles einen Gefühlskomplex zuzuweisen, der Heiligstes und kulturell Fruchtbarestes in sich schließen kann. Wer über die Natur und ihre Gesetze denkt, wie Novalis, nämlich dafür hält, daß sie etwas zu Überwindendes seien, wird den Vorwurf der Un- und Widernatur von vornherein als trivial empfinden; und übrigens hat schon Goethe dies geläufige Argument mit der Bemerkung verworfen, das Phänomen sei durchaus in—nicht ausßer der Natur und Menschheit, denn es sei zu allen Zeiten und bei allen Völkern hervorgetreten und erkläre sich ästhetisch durch die Tatsache, daß, objektiv, das Männliche der reinere und schönere Ausdruck der Idee des Menschen sei. Sehr Ähnliches äußerte Schopenhauer . . . [original ellipses] Was aber hier im Vorübergehen über den merkwürdigen Gegenstand vorgebracht werden soll, zielt aufs Politische: auch diese Seite nämlich fehlt ihm nicht. Heißt es nicht, daß der Krieg mit seinen Erlebnissen von Bluts- und Todeskameradschaft, der harten und ausschließlichen Männlichkeit seiner Lebensform und Atmosphäre das Reich dieses Eros mächtig verstärkt habe? Die politische Einstellung seiner Gläubigen pflegt nationalistisch und kriegerisch zu sein, und man sagt, daß Beziehungen solcher

Art den geheimen Kitt monarchistischer Bünde bilden, ja, daß ein erotisch-politisches Pathos nach dem Muster gewisser antiker Freund-Liebschaften einzelnen terroristischen Akten dieser Tage zu Grunde gelegen habe. Nun, Harmodios und Aristogeiton waren Demokraten; und von einer tieferen Gesetzmäßigkeit dessen, was heute Regel scheint, kann nicht die Rede sein. Das mächtigste moderne Gegenbeispiel ist der Dichter der Calamus-Gesänge, Walt Whitman, der,

[Calamus #1 quotation]

mit diesen Liedern, dieser leibhaftig-athletischen Liebe "[Calamus #5 quotation]" schaffen wollte "[quotation continues]." Eros als Staatsmann, als Staatsschöpfer sogar ist eine seit Alters vertraute Vorstellung, die noch in unseren Tagen aufs Neue geistreich propagiert worden; aber zu seiner Sache und Parteiangelegenheit durchaus die monarchische Restauration machen zu wollen, ist im Grunde ein Unfug. Die Republik vielmehr ist seine Sache, das heißt—die Einheit von Staat und Kultur, die wir so nennen, und, wenn auch kein Pazifist im Pflanzenköstlersinn, ist er doch seiner Natur nach ein Gott des Friedens, welcher auch zwischen den Staaten "[Calamus #24 quotation]."

Dies wollte ich nicht unbemerkt und bei meinem Überredungsversuch eine Empfindungssphäre nicht unberücksichtigt lassen, die ohne jeden Zweifel staats- und kulturwichtige Elemente birgt oder bergen kann. Gesundheit? Krankheit? Vorsicht mit diesen Begriffen! Es sind die schwierigsten in aller Philosophie und Lebenskunde. Whitmans Knabenverehrung, zumal sie nur eine schöne Provinz des allumfassenden Reiches seiner phallisch heiligen, phallisch strotzenden Inbrunst bildete, war sicher etwas Gesunderes, als die Sophienliebe des armen Novalis, der es klug fand, Entschlummerte zu lieben, und sich "für die Nacht" ein geselliges Lager zu bereiten, und in dessen Abendmahl-Erotik die reizbare Lüsternheit des Phtisikers unheimlich durchschlägt.

19 The editors of the German text of the speech were unable to discover the source of this quotation; Whitman has many passages that come very close to the phrasing here (notably the first two lines of section 48 of "Song of Myself" and the last lines of section 13 of "Starting from Paumanok").

20 The allusion is to a conversation Friedrich von Müller had on April 7, 1830, with Goethe (1749-1832) on "Greek love" or "the love of boys." Müller records that Goethe asserted "the love of boys is as old as humanity, and one is therefore able to say that it rests in nature, whether or not it is 'against' nature" (*Kanzler von Müller: Unterhaltung mit Goethe*, ed. Ernst Grumach [Böhlhaus, 1956], 188).

21 Mann is referring to an appendix on pederasty that Arthur Schopenhauer placed at the end of the chapter "On the Metaphysics of Sexual Love" in *The World as Will and Representation* (1844; Eng. tr. E. F. J. Payne, 1966). Therein, Schopenhauer remarks, "Thus universal nature and persistent ineradicability of the thing show that it arises in some way from human nature itself; since for this reason alone could it inevitably appear always and everywhere, as a proof of the saying [of Horace]: *Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret* ['Expel nature with a pitchfork, she still comes back']" (2:562). Toward the end of the appendix, Schopenhauer remarks wryly, "in her activities, nature generally does not take the truly moral into account" (2:566).

22 Mann's reference is to a pair of youthful Athenian friends who, in 514 B.C., murdered Hipparchus, the son of the tyrant Peisistratos, and became heroes to the city-state's democratic partisans. The cause of the murder may have been more romantic than political, however. *Who Was Who in the Greek World 776 B.C.-30 B.C.*, ed. Diana Bowder (Cornell, 1982), reports thus of Hipparchus: "His advances to

Harmodius brought about his assassination by Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The story that he was a tyrant. . . seems to have been fabricated by those wishing to glorify Harmodius and Aristogeiton as 'tyrannicides.'"

23 These are lines 12-14 from Calamus #1 (later "In Paths Untrodden").

24 These are lines 1-2 and 7-9 of "For You O Democracy" (the equivalent of lines 36, 38, and 40 of Calamus #5); Mann's quotation compacts these lines somewhat.

25 This quotation compresses a four-line passage from "I Hear It Was Charged against Me" (earlier Calamus #24) thus: "Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these States. . . Without edifices etc."

26 Sophie von Kühn, the young fiancée of Novalis, died in 1797, inspiring the poet's *Hymns of the Night*. Novalis died of consumption in 1801, aged twenty-nine.

27 Entry for August 14, 1955, *Diaries 1939-1960*, ed. Katherine Bucknell (HarperCollins, 1997), 1:520. The full passage: "I think of him with real love . . . he was kind, he was genuinely interested in other people, he kept cheerful, he was gossip, he was quite brave—he had the virtues of a truly admirable nursery governess."

28 The two passages are, respectively, from Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (various publishers, 1906-1996), 3:21 (conversation of November 4, 1888) and 1:359 (June 20, 1888).

29 Letter to Erich Kahler, May 1, 1945, in *An Exceptional Friendship*, 100.

30 Entry for September 15, 1950, *Tagebücher 1949-1950* (Fischer, 1991), 204.

31 Entry for November 8, 1950, *Tagebücher 1949-1950*, 287.

32 Letter of February 2, 1951, reproduced in *Tagebücher 1951-52* (1993), 765.

33 Letter of March 19, 1949, *Letters*, 574.

34 Letter of September 8, 1953, *Letters*, 659.