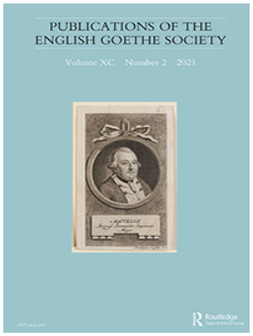

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Reluctant Readers on Mann's *Magic Mountain* (Ida Herz Lecture 2020)

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ABSTRACT

Sanatorium Arktur, Konstantin Fedin's Russian novel of 1940, is fashioned as a communist response to Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924). In different ways, Fedin and his characters are shown to be both critical of the ideological backdrop of Mann's novel and intensely drawn to the story world he portrays. This paper contextualizes a comparative reading of *Der Zauberberg* and *Sanatorium Arktur* with reference to discussions of and reactions to Mann's work by many other communist, Marxist, or generally socially critical readers, ranging from Bertolt Brecht, Vittorio de Sica, and Thomas Bernhard to an anonymous Russian steamship machinist described by Peter Huchel.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Mann; *Der Zauberberg*; reception; Konstantin Fedin; Thomas Bernhard; sanatorium

Der Zauberberg is current: it is being read and reread, translated and retranslated, adapted, reimagined, and rethought around the world. Mann's novel seems to have only gained more relevance and meaning since 2020, as respiratory health and the strange passage of time as one is stuck in one place for months on end have been on everyone's mind. In November 2020, for example, the Deutsches Theater in Berlin premiered Sebastian Hartmann's adaptation of *Der Zauberberg*. It was the first ever premiere performed at the Deutsches Theater without an audience, but livestreamed on the Internet. It seems fitting that, of all possible texts, it should be an adaptation of *Der Zauberberg* that was affected by the Coronavirus lockdown in this way, since the novel is itself concerned with a group of patients suffering from a deadly lung infection, sequestered for weeks, months, and whole years in a remote sanatorium. The play was staged very much with Coronavirus in mind: for instance, the costumes designed by Adriana Braga Peretzki resembled hazmat suits and the actors largely stayed far away from each other, or indeed socially distanced.[1]

[1]See 'Bonusmaterial' on the Deutsches Theater's website <https://www.deutschestheater.de/digital/zauberberg-bonusmaterial> [accessed 20 November 2020].

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Earlier that autumn, Susan Bernofsky shared a few snippets from her new translation of *Der Zauberberg*, forthcoming with W. W. Norton. The twenty-first century has already seen the first Arabic translation of the novel, as well as new Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and French versions; its third translation into English, after Helen Lowe-Porter's version in the 1920s and John E. Wood's version in the 1990s, will likely come out in time for the centenary of the publication of Mann's novel in 2024. (It will be the third translation into American English, even though Lowe-Porter completed her translation in Oxford, while her husband was working at the university.)[2] One strikingly topical passage shared by Bernofsky comes from the beginning of the novel: it is the description of the coughing of a very sick patient, the 'Herrenreiter', which Hans hears on his first evening in the sanatorium, and which makes a startling impression on him, marking the beginning of his fascination with illness, bodily decay, and death in the sanatorium.

> It bore no resemblance to any coughing Hans Castorp had ever heard before. Indeed, compared to this, every other variety of coughing known to him was merely a glorious, healthy expression of life. This was coughing done under protest, not a series of discrete blasts but a hideous feeble flailing and wallowing in a muck of organic decomposition,

translates Bernofsky — rendering not only Mann's prose, but also the global anxiety surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020.[3]

But personal, emotional, invested readings of *Der Zauberberg* that happen today are the rule rather than an exception, as I show in my forthcoming book, which takes as its starting point the interest in Mann's novel shown by non-academic readers — readers who approach it outside of the protocols of academic literary scholarship. The goal is to present a sharply focussed as well as widely applicable argument about how and why literary scholars can and should study non-academic reading practices. An intriguing subcategory of this type of research is the study of readers who fail to engage with a given book. Inspired by Pierre Bayard's claim in *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read* that 'a book is less a book than it is the whole discussion about it',[4] and drawing on archival research, Priyasha Mukhopadhyay's work on book history in colonial South Asia explores the reading habits of 'unlikely readers': 'bored soldiers, savvy peasants, impatient office clerks, and aspirational women'; these readers 'had always been marginal to reading publics, and yet derived their understanding of what it meant to inhabit empire through close and even intimate relationships' with the printed

[2]The family's connection to England remained strong: Lowe-Porter is in fact PM Boris Johnson's great-grandmother.
[3]Susan Bernofsky, 'Fresh Air', *The Berlin Journal*, 34 (2020), 58–59. For the German original, see Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg: Roman. Text*, ed. by Michael Neumann (GKFA v) (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2002), p. 25.
[4]Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 150.

word — which, however, 'routinely went unread'.[5] Mukhopadhyay's work shows how much we can learn about books if we pay attention to the reasons why some people refuse, fail, or choose not to read them. This approach acknowledges the fact that readers are usually informed by widely held ideas about books before or even without ever reading them. In the case of *Der Zauberberg*, readers might develop an idea of the novel based on its academic reputation, or references in annual press reports on the World Economic Forum held in Davos, for example.

In between engaged, enthusiastic, immersed readers — like Bernofsky, perhaps, or the team that worked on the adaptation at the Deutsches Theater — and those who do not read *Der Zauberberg* at all, put off by its formidable reputation or too busy to commit to the thousand pages of Mann's intricate prose, are those who I call 'reluctant readers'. The reluctant readers I discuss in this article are both critical of the ideological backdrop of Mann's novel and at the same time intensely drawn to the story world he portrays. We can find traces of those readers in various places: off-hand remarks they make in essays, diaries, or letters, for example. Particularly robust sources, though, are fictional and non-fictional texts written by such readers in response to *Der Zauberberg*. In this paper, I discuss several novels — and one film — by various communist, Marxist, or generally socially critical readers (including Konstantin Fedin, Vittorio de Sica, and Thomas Bernhard) as well as comments made by and about a number of readers, ranging from Bertolt Brecht to an anonymous Russian steamship machinist described by Peter Huchel.

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Konstantin Fedin was a seminal writer of the socialist-realist movement in Soviet literature and the longest-serving chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers. He believed that bourgeois art could and should be 'co-opted and reworked for the purposes of the working masses', as one critic put it.[6] He travelled extensively around Europe, especially Germany and Switzerland — he was fluent in German — and wrote several novels and short stories juxtaposing Soviet Russia with Western Europe. Fedin's typical plot revolves around a Russian intellectual learning to live up to the ideal of 'the new Soviet man'. In Catriona Kelly's words, this ideal included 'asceticism', 'the exercise of an "iron will"', and 'self-sacrifice', and excluded 'self-indulgence', 'weakness', and 'self-serving behaviour'.[7] His most famous novel, *Cities and*

[5]Email to the author, 18 April 2019. See also Priyasha Mukhopadhyay, 'On Not Reading *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22.1 (2017), 40–56.
[6]Ruth Wallach, 'Konstantin Aleksandrovich Fedin (12 February 1892–15 July 1977)', in *Russian Prose Writers between the World Wars*, ed. by Christine Rydel (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), pp. 88–100 (p. 91).
[7]Catriona Kelly, 'The New Soviet Man and Woman', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Russian History*, ed. by Simon Dixon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), <10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199236701.013.024> [accessed 26 April 2021].

Years, was published in 1924 — the same year as *Der Zauberberg*. In a letter to a friend from November 1929, Fedin noted that the Nobel Prize in Literature had just been awarded to Thomas Mann; 'kakaia svin′ia' (an invective literally meaning 'what a pig!'), he wrote, and went on to fantasize about winning the prize himself.[8] A few months later, Fedin started looking into tuberculosis cures in Switzerland, and — with financial assistance from Maxim Gorky — in 1931 arrived in Davos, where he started writing *Sanatorium Arktur*, a novel fashioned as a communist response to *Der Zauberberg*. One might be tempted to laugh it off as a squarely ideological exercise with no intrinsic appeal for a modern-day reader. T. J. Reed brushed off Fedin's take on the historical and philosophical basis of the sanatorium lifestyle as a simplistic, 'out of proportion [less] valuable' counterpart to Mann's novel.[9] While Reed is right about the limitations of Fedin's ideological stance, I consider *Sanatorium Arktur* to be one among many traces left by readers who were both attracted to and critical of *Der Zauberberg* and believe that we can learn a lot about Mann's novel by listening carefully to those reluctant readers.

The protagonist of *Sanatorium Arktur*, a tubercular Russian patient called Levshin, is an engineer — but, unlike Hans Castorp, he is determined to overcome his illness, return to his homeland, and further progress by serving society. It is as though Settembrini's admonitions to Hans to leave the sanatorium and take up his engineering job have finally reached a sympathetic ear. But, in an ironic twist, it is a Russian — a representative of the nation branded by Settembrini as idle, antirationalist, and obscurantist — who sets off to literally carry the light of progress into his native country: the big task awaiting Levshin upon his return to Soviet Russia is the electrification of remote Siberian villages.[10] Early on in *Der Zauberberg*, Settembrini performs a symbolic act that marks him out as a champion of the Enlightenment: he switches on the electric light in the dim bedroom where Hans is brooding about desire, decay, and death. This act is repeated towards the end of the novel by Hans himself, who switches on the light to interrupt a mystical séance. But what good are such empty gestures, Fedin seems to suggest, when his enlightened engineer can build actual power plants and install transmission lines? Levshin outdoes Settembrini, Fedin must have thought, and has nothing at all to do with Naphta, the caricature of a communist in *Der Zauberberg*. Instead, Levshin enacts Lenin's famous slogan from 1920: 'communism is Soviet government plus the electrification of the whole country.'[11] With what I imagine must have

[8]*Konstantin Fedin i ego sovremenniki: iz literaturnogo naslediia XX veka,* ed. by N. V. Kornienko and I. E. Kabanova (Moscow: Institut mirovoi literatury im. A. M. Gor kogo RAN, 2016), p. 453.
[9]T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 273.
[10]Konstantin Fedin, *Sanatorium Arktur*, trans. by Olga Shartse (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), pp. 114–15. I also consulted the Russian original: Konstantin Fedin, *Sanatorii Arktur*, in: *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozh. lit-ra, 1969–73), v: *Sanatorii Arktur – Pervye radosti* (1971), pp. 7–134.
[11]Quoted in David Lane, *Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 72.

been a wry smile, Fedin set out to counter Settembrini's racist and nationalist binary rhetoric on the active and industrious Westerners and the passive and idle Easterners with his portrayal of a Stakhanovite, an uncommonly diligent and enthusiastic Soviet worker.

Present-day readers of *Sanatorium Arktur* might be sceptical about the communist glorification of strenuous labour for the benefit of the regime, and rightly so, especially given that the economy of the USSR in the 1930s relied heavily on the inhumane labour of more than two million prisoners in the Gulag camps. Levshin's work to electrify Siberia would effectively consist in commanding an army of such prisoners — a reality that Fedin's novel conveniently glosses over. And yet *Sanatorium Arktur*, one-sided as it is itself in many ways, puts pressure on the ambiguities inherent in Settembrini's position, which, following Mann's own interpretation of the novel, half a century later would still be widely read as an allegory of the progressive humanist values that Mann came to embrace after WWI. In 1919, Mann wrote in his diary that Settembrini's views would be 'das sittlich einzig Positive' in the novel.[12] To this day, most critics would largely agree with Martin Swales that 'there are immense reserves of goodness, courtesy and likeability in Settembrini. He is a profoundly decent person' and that 'Settembrini means well. His views may not always be convincing, but the human behaviour that flows from them deserves respect, even perhaps love'.[13] Fedin's novel is a reminder that it is hard to love Settembrini if one happens to be Asian — which in Settembrini's expansive definition starts in Eastern Europe. (Konrad Adenauer was similarly said to 'close the curtains in his train compartment whenever he passed eastwards across the Elbe, muttering: "schon wieder Asien"'.)[14]

To add to this complicated picture of Fedin's ideological allegiances, if we take a step back and examine Levshin's role in the novel as an exemplary Soviet citizen — the equivalent of Mann's 'Everyman' Castorp — it becomes apparent that in fact, just like Hans, Levshin must be an unusually privileged citizen of his country.[15] Even though he is presented as a humble engineer, any Soviet reader would realize that it was only the Party elites and their influential supporters who could hope to go for a cure in the Alps; not only was travelling abroad unaffordable for most citizens, but getting a passport for foreign travel was also nearly impossible for those with no connections.[16] In other words, Fedin — a famous author compliant with the regime's

[12]Quoted in Michael Neumann, *Thomas Mann, 'Der Zauberberg': Roman. Kommentar* (GKFA, v/2) (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2002), p. 33.
[13]Martin Swales, *Mann: 'Der Zauberberg'* (London: Grant & Cutler, 2000), pp. 23–26.
[14]James Hawes, *The Shortest History of Germany* (London: Old Street Publishing, 2017), p. 150.
[15]I am indebted to Maciej Jaworski for this observation.
[16]See Iurii Oklianskii, *Fedin* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1986), pp. 182–86, on Fedin's money troubles and Gorky's assistance. I am indebted to Marina Soroka, who pointed me towards the relevant passages in Oklyansky's book and helped me translate them.

propaganda and financially supported by Maxim Gorky — is able to stay in Davos, but the fact that his protagonist Levshin — an ordinary Soviet engineer — gets to go there too is rather unrealistic. In the context of Soviet ideology, no matter how critical Levshin's view of the sanatorium is, his mere presence in Davos marks him out as a duplicitous figure. A real Stakhanovite should not be in the position to resist the attractions of Western culture because he should not set foot in Davos at all. This ideological inconsistency was not lost on Soviet readers of *Sanatorium Arktur*. An early American critic noted in an essay entitled 'A Soviet Magic Mountain' that 'Levshin constitutes the only Soviet element in this most European of all Fedin's novels, and the portrayal has confused and annoyed Soviet critics, as in fact has the novel'.[17] To Soviet critics, it would have made much more sense if Fedin had shown Levshin in action, electrifying those Siberian villages, not just thinking about his lofty mission spread on a deck chair in a Swiss sanatorium.[18]

How to make sense of *Sanatorium Arktur* — a novel whose very premise seems the more dubious the more closely one considers it? Fedin's book stages the drama of impossible immersion in Mann's story world. As his essay written to celebrate Mann's eightieth birthday demonstrates, Fedin was critical of Mann's bourgeois ideology and yet admired his writing at the same time.[19] A comparison between Levshin and Castorp, Settembrini, and Naphta shows that Fedin was critical of Mann's cavalier portrayal of characters who succumb to the corrupt world of capitalist excess and self-indulgence, fall into a stupor, and forfeit all agency when it comes to their health. At the same time, however, *Der Zauberberg* is a topic of heated discussions in the *Arktur* and praised there not only as a powerful indictment of the greed and dishonesty of the medical profession, but also as a uniquely immersive novel. Its first mention comes in a conversation between two patients, a young German woman called Inga and an older man from Montenegro known as Herr Major, who shows her a list of the books he read in the trenches of the Great War. Some titles are marked with an asterisk — these are the ones 'which [he] read in one go but did not understand', explains Herr Major (Fedin, *Sanatorium Arktur*, pp. 101–02). Inga notices that one title even has two asterisks next to it: *Der Zauberberg*. This must be one of the most curious fictional accounts of reading Mann's novel: one thousand pages of intricate prose devoured in one sitting, unintelligible yet magnetic; and, even more strikingly, the reading takes place several years before Mann had written the novel! This account of reading

[17]Ernest J. Simmons, *Russian Fiction and Soviet Ideology: Introduction to Fedin, Leonov, and Sholokhov* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 55.
[18]See Monika Zielińska, *Twórczość Konstantego Fiedina w okresie międzywojennym* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1983), p. 133.
[19]See Konstantin Fedin, 'Thomas Mann: Zu seinem achtzigsten Geburtstag', in *Dichter, Kunst, Zeit*, trans. by Georg Schwarz (Berlin: Aufbau, 1959), pp. 212–21.

Der Zauberberg is fictional in a double sense — it takes place in a work of fiction, but it is also entirely unrealistic. Herr Major finds *Der Zauberberg* immersive, but his encounter with the novel is at the same time utterly impossible.

In fact, at one point one character claims that *Der Zauberberg* does not exist at all. It is Doctor Klebe, the head doctor of the sanatorium, who soon joins Inga's and Herr Major's conversation about *Der Zauberberg*. Herr Major points out that he and Doctor Klebe have had many conversations about *Der Zauberberg*, but now Klebe tries to discourage Inga from reading it: first by pretending that he has not read it himself, then claiming that he has never heard of it, and finally asserting that the book does not exist at all — 'there is no such novel' (Fedin, *Sanatorium Arktur*, pp. 108–09). Klebe's frustration with the very existence of *Der Zauberberg* is symptomatic of a wider trend among early readers of Mann's novel. The medical community was outraged upon its publication and many doctors protested against it vehemently: they found it defamatory, not least because it seemed to suggest that doctors keep patients in their sanatoria mainly out of greed rather than concern for their health. Like Fedin's later Doctor Klebe, they cling (*kleben*) on to their patients. Here was a group of readers decidedly unimpressed with *Der Zauberberg* and so vocal about their exasperation with it that Mann found himself publishing an open letter in the press to address criticisms from medical circles.[20] Meanwhile, he was chuffed to hear an anecdote that showed just how impactful his fictional sanatorium had become: 'in Davos trifft ein Engländer ein, dessen erste Frage am Bahnhof lautet: "where ist the German Sanatorium of Dr. Mann?".'[21] In the 1930s, Fedin wrote in his letters from Davos that *Der Zauberberg* was not available in any bookshops in the town; doctors forbade their patients to read it, he explained, and therefore every patient had read it.

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But even though Fedin admired Mann's critical portrayal of the sanatorium business, the novel still presented him with a range of serious problems. The luxurious world of the Berghof sanatorium and the refined novel that describes it are alienating and alluring at the same time: they tempt the reader with a promise of a uniquely enchanting experience, and thereby pose a threat to those critical of the bourgeois lifestyle and mindset. Fedin was not the only reader faced with this specific dilemma. 'Der arme,

[20]See Malte Herwig, 'The "Magic Mountain Malady": *The Magic Mountain* and the Medical Community, 1924–2006', in *Thomas Mann's 'The Magic Mountain': A Casebook*, ed. by Hans Rudolf Vaget (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 245–64.
[21]Thomas Mann, *Selbstkommentare*: '*Der Zauberberg*', ed. by Hans Wysling and Marianne Eich-Fischer (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1993), p. 95.

unglückliche Georg Lukács hat den größten Teil seines arbeitsamen Lebens der Frage gewidmet, auf welche Weise man gleichzeitig Thomas Mann und Lenin lieben könnte', wrote Leszek Kołakowski — himself a prominent historian of Marxism, and an avid reader of Mann — in a special section of the *FAZ* edited by Marcel Reich-Ranicki to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Mann's birthday.[22] In the same issue of the *FAZ*, Peter Rühmkorf wrote of a 'Sprachbarriere', 'fast [...] eine Klassenschranke' that separated him from Mann's writing, from Mann's 'Ausdrucksweise' which is '[ihm] beinahe physisch zuwider' (Reich-Ranicki, p. 69). Ten years later, Rühmkorf changed his view and wrote another essay on Mann, titled 'Die neugewonnene Wertschätzung des Prosaartisten' (Reich-Ranicki, p. 121). Scholars of Mann's work have often reacted with vitriol and hostility to such assessments. Eckhard Heftrich, for example, wrote of Rühmkorf's change of heart:

> indessen würde man Rühmkorfs Selbstbewußtsein falsch einschätzen, wollte man ihm unterstellen, es habe ihn allmählich die Furcht beschlichen, er könne am Ende in die Literaturhistorie nur als eine Fußnote der Rezeptionsgeschichte Thomas Manns eingehen, so daß er es vorzöge, ganz aus den Annalen zu verschwinden, anstatt allein durch ein gespreiztes Fehlurteil unsterblich zu werden.[23]

Similarly, Hermann Kurzke wrote bitterly of Martin Walser's rejection of *Der Zauberberg*: the novel 'gefällt ihm nicht, weil Castorp soziologisch ein Parasit ist und weil nichts dabei herauskommt', and chided him for not appreciating Mann's critique of the pre-war world.[24]

But listening carefully to readers who struggle to immerse themselves in Mann's writing for ideological reasons can yield interesting insights. Yet another essay in Reich-Ranicki's *FAZ* section on Mann was contributed by Wolfgang Harich — an East German philosopher and member of the SED, albeit with a troubled relationship to the party elites. Harich reminisced about a conversation he had had with Hanns Eisler on Brecht and Mann, in which Eisler expressed admiration for Mann and apparently asked rhetorically: 'glauben Sie, dass Brecht sich [die höchste Stufe des Kommunismus] ohne den *Zauberberg* vorstellt?' (Reich-Ranicki, p. 35). In 1920, the young Brecht wrote an article about an event in Munich at which Thomas Mann read from his draft of *Der Zauberberg*.[25] Rather amusingly, scholars of Mann have tended to portray it as a positive, even admiring early review of the novel, while scholars of Brecht have mostly described it as sarcastic.

[22] *Was halten Sie von Thomas Mann?*, ed. by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1988), p. 48.
[23] Eckhard Heftrich, 'Der gehaßte Kollege: Deutsche Schriftsteller über Thomas Mann', *Thomas-Mann-Studien*, 7 (1987), 351–69 (p. 353).
[24] *Stationen der Thomas-Mann-Forschung: Aufsätze seit 1970*, ed. by Hermann Kurzke (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), pp. 233–34.
[25] Bertolt Brecht, 'Thomas Mann im Börsensaal', in *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgab*e, ed. by Werner Hecht and others, 30 vols (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau; Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988–2000), XXI: *Schriften 1: 1914–1933*, ed. by Werner Hecht and others (1992), pp. 61–62.

Mann critics thought it was 'eine verständige Rezension des sehr beeindruckten [...] Bert Brecht',[26] that Brecht's 'Reserve [verhehlte] noch nicht den Respekt' (Neumann, p. 103); 'noch ohne [...] Häme [...] äußert sich Brecht durchaus bewundernd.'[27] Brecht critics thought he 'äußert [...] sich hier noch zurückhaltend, jedoch eindeutig ironisch-ablehnend';[28] that he wrote of Mann 'mit listiger Ironie', and of the novel 'im großen ganzen noch wohlwollend', but 'den Mannschen Stil behutsam parodierend';[29] that he suggested *Der Zauberberg* was boring.[30] Later animosity between the two writers, fuelled by ideological differences (emphasized by Brecht critics) and possibly jealousy (often suggested by Mann critics) has been chronicled in much detail.[31] It is impossible now to reconstruct with certainty what Brecht felt as he listened to Mann's reading in that Munich hall in 1920, or when he read the novel later on — or, indeed, whether he imagined Hans's sanatorium lifestyle when he thought about 'die freie Entwicklung eines Jeden', this strangely imprecise phrase in the last sentence of the second chapter of the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* which conjures up Karl Marx's vision of a classless communist society.[32]

In the *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, an unfinished manuscript written in 1857 and 1858, Marx developed a vision of, in the words of one critic, 'a post-scarcity age, when men can turn from alienating and dehumanizing labour to the free use of leisure in the pursuit of the sciences and arts.'[33] The main thrust of this vision is presented in the so-called 'Maschinenfragment', which is attracting a lot of interest in our age of automation, artificial intelligence, and unprecedented wealth. Marx revisited his terms from the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* there, writing about the goal of 'die Arbeitszeit für die ganze Gesellschaft auf ein fallendes Minimum zu reduzieren und so die Zeit aller frei für ihre eigne Entwicklung zu machen',[34] and the vision of 'die künstlerische, wissenschaftliche etc. Ausbildung der Individuen durch die für sie alle freigewordne Zeit und geschaffnen Mittel' (Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 593). While contemporary theorists of the post-scarcity economy debate whether this really is how most people would choose to spend their leisure time, it is a recurring fantasy of

[26]Peter de Mendelssohn, *Nachbemerkungen zu Thomas Mann*, 2 vols (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1982), I, 72.
[27]Johannes Roskothen, '"Der Stehkragen sprach": Die unproduktive Spannung zwischen Thomas Mann und Bertolt Brecht – eine Rekonstruktion', *Düsseldorfer Beiträge zur Thomas Mann-Forschung*, 2 (2013), 61–78 (p. 63).
[28]Jürgen Hillesheim, *Augsburger Brecht-Lexikon* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), p. 115.
[29]Klaus Völker, *Bertolt Brecht: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Hanser, 1976), p. 109.
[30]Jost Hermand, *Die Toten schweigen nicht: Brecht-Aufsätze* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 149.
[31]See Roskothen, as well as Hans Mayer and Jack Zipes, 'Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht: Anatomy of an Antagonism', *New German Critique*, 6 (1975), 101–15.
[32]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei', in *Ausgewählte Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Leni Hoffmann, 6 vols (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), I, 383–451 (p. 438).
[33]D. C. Lee, 'On the Marxian View of the Relationship between Man and Nature', in *Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought*, ed. by Bob Jessop and Russell Wheatley, 2nd series, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1999), VIII: *Nature, Culture, Moral, Ethics*, 1–15 (p. 9).
[34]Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), p. 596.

many Marxist literary critics. In an essay published in *The New York Times*, Elif Batuman wrote of Fredric Jameson's interpretation of Proust:

> I still remember how moved I was by Jameson's description, in a passage on Proust, of the Guermantes salon — a world utterly devoted to 'interpersonal relationships, to conversation, art, [...] fashion, love' — as a 'distorted' reflection of the Marxist Utopia: 'a world in which alienated labor will have ceased to exist, in which man's struggle with the external world and with his own mystified and external pictures of society will have given way to man's confrontation with himself'. [...] I love this passage, because it finds such a simultaneously meaningful and absurd justification for Proust's worship of the aristocracy: that leisure class was, for better or worse, Proust's only available 'source of concrete images' of the classless Utopia.[35]

It is in this sense that one might question the common view of Mann as a writer who, in Michael Minden's words, 'remain[ed] interested in the individual rather than the larger social formation, and was never able to convince himself that economic interventions were equal to modifying the human condition'.[36] Hans lives out 'die freie Entwicklung' envisioned by Marx, but the question of whether this development can belong to 'einem Jeden' is much more vexed — it is in fact central to the novel.

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No wonder that Fedin — and many other socially critical readers beside him — felt compelled to emphasize their reluctance, inability, or straight-out refusal to enter Mann's story world, even if they at the same time responded to Mann's intimations of the universality of Hans's immersive experience. This ambiguous attitude towards *Der Zauberberg* recurs in many later novels and films that attempt to overwrite Mann's rarefied vision of a luxurious tuberculosis sanatorium with the experience of dire working-class sanatoria, usually set in the years immediately following WWII. One such novel is A. E. Ellis's *The Rack* (1958), set in a drab post-war sanatorium in Switzerland, populated by a group of Oxbridge students. Other somewhat obscure examples include Dieter Forte's *Auf der anderen Seite der Welt* (2004) and Andrea Barrett's *The Air We Breathe* (2007). Barrett described her novel, which takes place in a run-down state sanatorium in the United States during WWI, as a 'low-rent, democratic version of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*'.[37] The characters in Barrett's book are working-class immigrants and the novel is entirely narrated

[35]Elif Batuman, 'From the Critical Impulse, the Growth of Literature', *The New York Times*, 31 December 2010 <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/02/books/review/Batuman-t-web.html> [accessed 10 May 2019].
[36]*Thomas Mann*, ed. by Michael Minden (London: Longman, 1995), p. 4.
[37]'*The Air We Breathe: A Novel* by Andrea Barrett: About the Book. Reading Guide', on the publisher's website <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393333077/about-the-book/reading-guide> [accessed 24 June 2019].

in the first person plural. The text raises some interesting questions, especially about the role of class and gender in the practising of science and medicine, but it has not attracted a wider readership. The same can be said of Forte's *Auf der anderen Seite der Welt*, which, strewn with quotations from *Der Zauberberg* and other canonical modernist texts, describes a young German man's stay in a depressive seaside TB sanatorium in the immediate aftermath of WWII, where he has to deal with war trauma, solitude, and the creeping dangers of nihilism.

Two better-known examples of texts that embody this ambiguous attitude towards *Der Zauberberg* are Vittorio de Sica's late melodrama *Una breve vacanza* (*A Brief Vacation*, 1973)[38] and Thomas Bernhard's autobiographical novel *Die Kälte: Eine Isolation* (1981).[39] These two works can also be seen as acts of resistance against the immense cultural pull of Mann's portrayal of a tuberculosis sanatorium as an enchanted space of self-discovery, spiritual and intellectual growth, and self-indulgence, where rich patients get to take, to borrow de Sica's title, 'a vacation from life' — from mundane responsibilities, obligations, as well as social norms and expectations. Tellingly, Jochen Hörisch described Hans Castorp as somebody who 'has taken a holiday from life'.[40]

A Brief Vacation, which at least one critic compared to Mann's novel,[41] begins in a poor, working-class district of Naples. Clara, de Sica's heroine, contracts tuberculosis while working in a dire rubber factory. After she passes out from exhaustion one day, she is sent to a state-funded sanatorium in the Italian Alps. It turns out that the sanatorium comprises two separate wings — a luxurious private wing inhabited by rich upper-class patients and a far more modest wing for patients funded through a national health insurance scheme. This narrative setup can easily be reconciled with de Sica's landmark aesthetic: a seminal figure of Italian neo-realism, best known for his film *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, 1948), he made a career of depicting the struggles of impoverished working-class Italians. But then Clara, who has initially felt timid and estranged in the sanatorium, befriends a group of wealthy women from the private wing, who shower her with expensive clothes and lavish gifts. The heroine's transformation is complete when she throws herself into a risky affair with Luigi, a handsome mechanic who treats her much better than her unemployed alcoholic husband. When Clara's family visits her in the sanatorium, she realizes that she does not want to go back to her old life of poverty and deprivation.

[38] *A Brief Vacation*, dir. by Vittorio De Sica (Allied Artists, 1973).
[39] Thomas Bernhard, *Die Autobiographie* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2004).
[40] Jochen Hörisch, 'The German Soul up to Date: Sacraments of Media Technology on *The Magic Mountain*', in *Thomas Mann*, ed. by Minden pp. 175–87 (p. 176).
[41] See Colin Westerbeck, 'The Magic Mountain', in *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Howard Curle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 280–83.

At this point, *A Brief Vacation* begins to oscillate between a class critique of *Der Zauberberg* and a full-on immersion in Mann's novel. During the night before Clara's departure to the sanatorium, her abusive husband accuses her of turning the story of her sickness into a 'romanzo', a novel: this happens just as the film is about to leave behind de Sica's familiar neo-realist aesthetic of working-class Naples and enter the light and airy, saturated landscapes of a posh Alpine resort. In the sanatorium, Clara reads two iconic nineteenth-century novels — Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. She implicitly compares herself to Tolstoy's heroine when she considers jumping under a train as the only solution to her situation — a love triangle with her husband and Luigi. Another working-class patient at the sanatorium reads Marx and organizes a strike at the sanatorium, but Clara and Luigi are indifferent to her political tirades. De Sica's film starts out as a Marxist critique of *Der Zauberberg* and then vindicates the enchanting powers of the sanatorium with melodramatic intensity. But the closing scene of the film stages a return to the initial scepticism about Mann's novel: Clara's state-funded stay in the sanatorium is over; having decided to leave Luigi and return to her family, she is sat on a train back to Naples. Clara dips into the world of the sanatorium, but ultimately immersion proves impossible.

Even though Thomas Bernhard's artistic sensibility was radically different from de Sica's melodramatic neo-realism in *A Brief Vacation*, he similarly engaged in an implicit ambiguous dialogue with *Der Zauberberg* in his writing. At 18, Bernhard contracted tuberculosis. He suffered from its consequences throughout his life, had to stay in sanatoria and hospitals for long stretches of time, and ultimately died of complications of yet another lung infection at 58. The experience of tuberculosis deeply affected his writing, both his more and his less overtly autobiographical works. Several of his texts are set in sanatoria and 'Lungenanstalten' and peopled by tubercular characters. Bernhard's first novel, *Frost* (1963) is set in the Alpine village Schwarzach, where most inhabitants suffer from tuberculosis, and which the narrator — a young doctor — visits in order to observe his boss's brother who himself suffers from an unspecified disease. The fourth part of Bernhard's *Autobiographie*, entitled *Die Kälte: Eine Isolation*, describes his first stay at a tuberculosis sanatorium in Schwarzach in the early 1950s. This text was closely followed by the autobiographical novella or short novel *Wittgensteins Neffe* (1982) about Bernhard's friendship with Paul, nephew of the famous Austrian philosopher, set largely in two neighbouring medical institutions on the Wilhelminenberg in Vienna where the narrator and Paul end up: a 'Lungenanstalt' and an 'Irrenanstalt', respectively.

To argue that Schwarzach is Bernhard's version of Davos and Wilhelminenberg his 'Zauberberg' is a relatively new argument in

Bernhard studies.[42] But the most famous 'Lungenanstalt' in European culture remains the Berghof sanatorium perched on the top of Mann's 'magic mountain'; after Mann, no author can write about tuberculosis in German without an awareness of his towering presence. The fact that Bernhard's recurring implicit references to *Der Zauberberg* had gone almost unnoticed in the scholarship on his work is likely an aftereffect of Bernhard's keen attempts to establish an ideological opposition between himself and Thomas Mann (among many other writers and intellectuals) — between the kind of public personas they were, and the kind of writing they did. In *Auslöschung* (1986), the narrator famously describes Mann as a 'Großbürger' writing 'kleinbürgerliche Beamtenliteratur'.[43] But Bernhard's performative rejection of Mann does not change the fact that throughout his oeuvre he tried to come to terms with the experience of tuberculosis and his extended stays in various 'Lungenanstalten', often by way of covert references to *Der Zauberberg*.

In *Die Kälte*, Bernhard ruthlessly portrayed a dilapidated, state-run sanatorium that looks and feels nothing like the abundant, glorious, luxurious world on the 'magic mountain'. The shadow of the Berghof sanatorium seems to fall over Bernhard's Grafenhof sanatorium from the opening pages of the text. The first sentence reads: 'Mit dem sogenannten Schatten auf meine Lunge war auch wieder ein Schatten auf meine Existenz gefallen'; and a few lines further down, the sanatorium is described as located at the foot of the mountain Heukareck, which is a 'zweitausend Meter hoher Berg, der vier Monate lang ununterbrochen seinen kilometerlangen Schatten auf das unter der Heilstätte liegende Tal von Schwarzach warf' (Bernhard, *Die Autobiographie*, p. 313). Bernhard's narrative is permeated by the sense of being overshadowed by something more powerful than itself. Almost every sentence in the description of the sanatorium can be read as a rebuke to Mann and his enchanted story world. In *Der Zauberberg*, Hans Castorp marvels at the incredibly warm, comforting, and comfortable camel blankets used during the 'Liegekur' on the balconies of the sanatorium. In *Die Kälte*, the analogous accessory is described as 'diese abgewetzten, grauen, muffigen, überhaupt nicht mehr wärmenden Decken, die ich doch nur noch als Kotzen bezeichnen konnte' (Bernhard, *Die Autobiographie*, p. 314). The contrast could not be greater. The verb 'bezeichnen' additionally emphasizes the narrator's active role in creating his story world through a particular use of language. The text seems to be shaped in opposition to an implicit model — the dominant cultural narrative of a tuberculosis sanatorium

[42]See Erwin Koller, 'Beobachtungen eines *Zauberberg*-Lesers zu Thomas Bernhards Roman *Frost*', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, 2 (1973), 107–36, and Alfons Kaiser, '"Ein Meister": Thomas Bernhards Autobiographie und die Tradition des Bildungsromans', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 29.1 (1996), 67–91.
[43]Thomas Bernhard, *Auslöschung: Ein Zerfall* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2009), p. 475.

created by Mann in *Der Zauberberg*, the novel that casts a long shadow over every other German text about tuberculosis.

In a similar vein, Alfons Kaiser analysed several other passages from *Die Kälte* as engaged in an implicit dialogue with *Der Zauberberg*. The most striking among them concerns Bernhard's narrator's passion for music, which he sees as the power that ultimately makes his survival possible. Just like Hans Castorp, Bernhard's narrator loves music, so he takes up choral singing at Catholic masses while at the sanatorium. It restores his will to live and becomes a symbol of the narrator's overcoming of illness; the power of his singing voice defeats his short breath. Even so, the narrator reflects on the fact that those who sing at a Sunday mass might be dead the next Sunday, their death notice displayed in the chapel where they used to sing. He reminisces:

> Hatte ich nicht mit jenem am Vorsonntag noch das Agnus Dei gesungen, dessen Name jetzt schon hinter mir an der Wand klebte? Der *Pater Oeggl*, mit dem ich mich vor ein paar Tagen noch im Garten hinter dem Nebengebäude über das Funktionieren des Grammophons unterhalten hatte, er prangte jetzt an der Wand, fettgedruckt, zwei gekreuzte Palmwedel über seinem Namen. (Bernhard, *Die Autobiographie*, p. 362)

Pater Oeggl used to share Hans Castorp's avid interest in 'das Funktionieren des Grammophons'. But by the time Castorp's shadowy double is introduced in Bernhard's text, he is already dead, reduced to a line of printed text on the wall behind the narrator's back. Mann's literary model of the sanatorium and its patients is evoked, but only to be murdered and left behind.

Der Zauberberg is not the only literary text that haunts Bernhard's narrator. In fact, he is deeply steeped in literature while at the sanatorium: he reads Paul Verlaine, Georg Trakl, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Demons*, which makes the image of literary haunting all the more literal. The narrator 'suchte in der Anstaltsbibliothek nach weiteren solchen Ungeheuern, aber es gab keines mehr. Es ist überflüssig, die Namen aufzuzählen, deren Bücher ich aufgeschlagen und gleich wieder zugemacht habe, weil sie mich mit ihrer Kleinlichkeit und ihrer Nichtswürdigkeit abstoßen mußten' (Bernhard, *Die Autobiographie*, p. 398). Could one of those unnamed 'kleinlich' books be Mann's 'kleinbürgerlich' *Magic Mountain*, to use the epithet Bernhard chose for Mann's writing in *Die Auslöschung*? And yet, even though *Die Kälte* is stylized as a critique of *Der Zauberberg* — of its upper-class pretence and passivity — Bernhard's text is, paradoxically, another testament to the power of Mann's narrative. His narrator seems to draw his energy from his resistance to *Der Zauberberg*, he fashions himself in opposition to Hans Castorp, and his adventures with music can be read as a rebuke to Mann's Settembrini, who sees music as a dangerous well of passivity. Bernhard's

retelling of *Der Zauberberg* in the spirit of non-conformist counter-immersion allows him to retrospectively interpret his tuberculosis as an act of ideological and aesthetic resistance.

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In his unusual interpretation of *Der Zauberberg*, written as a dialogue or conversation between Q ('the questioner' or 'the questionable') and A ('an answer' or 'an affirmation'), Erich Heller considered the romanticization of illness, which is both criticized in and encapsulated by Mann's novel. On this ambiguity, he had his Q comment: 'critique is often merely the morally insured way of indulging the criticized fascination.'[44] The readers I have discussed in this paper linger awkwardly on the threshold — tempted by the world on the 'magic mountain' and yet critical of it or excluded from it. Fedin's Levshin chooses to resist the temptation and leaves his sanatorium — but Fedin himself goes on to write a version of *Der Zauberberg* after his own departure from the sanatorium. He dives into Mann's enchanted world one more time. Or a couple more times, for the drama of Konstantin Fedin and Thomas Mann, the 'pig' who snatched his Nobel Prize in Literature, has one more act.

In 1953, Peter Huchel wrote a letter to Mann asking him to contribute an essay to *Sinn und Form*, the East German literary journal of which he was the general editor. Engaging in 'shameless flattery', as one critic put it,[45] he recounted an anecdote from his recent trip to Russia, on which he allegedly discovered that Mann was considered to be the most famous contemporary German writer there, celebrated by Russian literati all around the Soviet Union, as well as 'in den breitesten Schichten des sowjetischen Volkes'.[46] On a steamship on the river Don, Huchel met 'ein[en] etwa fünfzigjährigen Maschinist[en]'; because of the language barrier, they were not able to have a full conversation, but when Huchel named a famous Russian author who had written about the Don, the machinist responded as follows:

> dann legte er die rechte Hand aufs Herz und verneigte sich etwas, eine Geste, die ich nie vergessen werde, denn sie wirkte ausgesprochen russisch schön, und sagte: 'Thomas Mann sehr großer Schriftsteller!' [...] Vielleicht war ihm nur Ihr Name ins Bewußtsein gedrungen, vielleicht aber hatte er Bücher von Ihnen oder Essays über Sie gelesen. ('Briefwechsel mit Thomas Mann', p. 674)

Huchel's anecdote 'berührt[e]' Mann 'sehr tief und merkwürdig': 'von fern meinen Namen aus dem Munde des Maschinisten eines Don-Dampfers zu hören — wie eigentümlich traumhaft!', he wrote back ('Briefwechsel mit

[44]Erich Heller, *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), p. 204
[45]Stephen R. Parker, *Peter Huchel: A Literary Life in 20th-Century Germany* (Bern: Lang, 1998), p. 341.
[46]The letter exchange was published as 'Briefwechsel mit Thomas Mann', in *Sinn und Form*, 7.5 (1955), 669–76 (p. 673).

Thomas Mann', p. 674). He went on to add that it was certainly highly unlikely that the machinist had read his books — he must have merely heard his name.

'Durch einen glücklichen Zufall', none other than Konstantin Fedin got to read Mann's letter to Huchel a couple of years later (Fedin, 'Thomas Mann', p. 220). His take on Huchel's anecdote was very different to Mann's. *Of course* the machinist had read Mann's novels, Fedin responded — the working masses in Soviet Russia are cultured and well read, to the extent that 'das in unserem Volk vorhandene Bedürfnis, die Klassiker zu lesen, selbst durch die produktivste Arbeit der Verlage nicht befriedigt werden [kann]!' (Fedin, 'Thomas Mann', p. 221). Admittedly, this might be hard to imagine for Mann, Fedin continued, given that the Western intelligentsia is entirely separated from the working masses — but all it means for Western writers like Mann is that 'eben die Zeit gekommen [ist], einen neuen Leser heranzubilden, die Zahl der Leser zu erhöhen, ihren Kreis zu erweitern, seine eigenen "Dampfermaschinisten" in ihn einzuführen' (Fedin, 'Thomas Mann', p. 221).

We will probably never know if this little scene on the steamship 'Prawda' (Russian for 'truth') *really* took place. We can have our doubts about Huchel's intentions in recounting it and his exoticization of Soviet workers, as well as about Fedin's glorification of the cultural resources available to them. But in the exchange between the machinist, Huchel, Mann, and Fedin a familiar question comes back like a boomerang: who should read Mann? Who can read Mann? Who does actually read him? It is not hard to believe that this small glimpse of an unlikely, foreign reader really did deeply touch Mann. This is because it matters when books matter to readers. And even if we cannot know anything for certain about the machinist on the Don, we can still listen to many other readers of Mann — including the reluctant ones.

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