

Body Heat, Weather, and Literature: Reading *The Magic Mountain* in the Age of Globalization

Hanping Chiu

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at “fever,” “weather,” and “symptoms” in Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* in terms of the development, before an effective cure for this disease was discovered, of a clinical concept of tuberculosis. The perspective of our current age (process, condition) of globalization will serve as frame of reference for this study of Mann’s masterpiece, written and set in early 20th-century Germany. Walter Benjamin claims that when a vision drawn from the present points to the possibility of further dividing an historical fragment, the revolutionary chance arises that something canceled may be divulged in a smaller unit that still preserves it. In a literary text that views Nature as something lying beyond human intervention and the sanatorium as a disciplinary apparatus, there inevitably exist units that dissolve under the scrutiny of the present. The infinitely smaller units emerging out of this dissolution clamor to be reorganized into new configurations, with new conceptions being formed in the process.

KEY WORDS

Thomas Mann, tuberculosis, *The Magic Mountain*, discipline, fever, capitalism, weather, Walter Benjamin, symptoms, Gilles Deleuze



O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

— John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”

I.

Body heat, weather, Nature and death were commonly associated with tuberculosis before an effective cure for it was found in 1944.¹ John Keats's “Ode to a Nightingale” is a famous example of a consumptive patient seeking relief from “The weariness, the fever, and the fret,” all symptoms of this disease, in the unpolluted climate symbolized by “sunburnt mirth” and the pristine nature of “Flora and the country green.” In real life, the apothecary-surgeon turned poet, after his mother and brother consecutively died of tuberculosis, traveled to a cloistered area of Italy for treatment under the arrangement of another phthisical poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had arrived earlier. The embrace of Nature as a means of allaying the consumptive fever can be seen in Keats' poem “Ode to a Nightingale,” in which the poet expresses a yearning “for a draught of vintage! that hath been / Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth.” The reference to Nature as a closed, separate sphere with a healing effect displays nostalgia for man's harmonious relationship with Nature before the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. Tuberculosis was exceedingly prevalent in the wake of the Industrial

Revolution, due to society's "drastic modernization, industrialization and urbanization" (Fukuda 1). Furthermore, the fear of death was rampant in the Age of Romanticism (1785–1830), when tuberculosis reached its peak in terms of the mortality rate, especially in England (Fukuda 12). The widespread belief that Nature, as a realm immune to the ravaging forces of civilization, had a healing power was institutionalized in 1859, when the first sanatorium was established by a German doctor in a secluded area.

Set in an Alpine sanatorium in Switzerland before the First World War, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924) depicts a stage of tuberculosis treatment at which "virtually no cure was proved to be effective," since "a kind of nihilism prevailed in the medical world" (Fukuda 9). The significance of a closed, separate sphere, as Nature has traditionally been conceived, for the cure of tuberculosis finds apt expression in the image of a conserve jar which, in the words of this novel's protagonist Hans Castorp, can work "alchemic transmutation" (511). A strict daily schedule imposed on the patients under the doctor's supervision fits the description of what Michel Foucault calls the disciplinary apparatus in *Discipline and Punish*. "Discipline organizes an analytical space. And there, too, it encountered an old architectural and religious method: the monastic cell. . . . Solitude was necessary to both body and soul" (Foucault, *Discipline* 143). In exercising its disciplinarity on the patients, the sanatorium depends on its detachment from the outside world to achieve the desired effect. Belonging to a separate realm, the weather "up there" on the mountain is said to have enhanced potency. "[O]ur air up here is good for the disease—I mean good against the disease, you understand," the head of the International Sanatorium Berghof told Hans Castorp. "But also it is good for the disease; it begins by speeding it up, in that it revolutionizes the whole body; it brings the latent weakness to the surface and makes it break out" (181–82). During their daily rest-cures the weather plays a prominent role in the fight against fever.² "He made his preparations for the rest-cure, put the thermometer in his mouth, flung the camel's hair rugs about him . . . then he lay still . . . in the chill dampness of the early autumn afternoon"

(420). The expected cooling effect of the weather, coupled by a sumptuous diet of five huge meals every day, is an important part of the "cure."

This paper, then, looks at fever, weather and symptoms as represented in *The Magic Mountain* with a view to exploring the development of the clinical concept of tuberculosis at a time immediately before an effective cure for this disease was discovered. As an historian "grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one" (Benjamin, "Theses" 263), I will approach this German masterpiece from the perspective of the present. Instead of pretending that the historical development of a disease can be retrieved in a detached way as an archaeological formation, as Foucault does in *The Birth of the Clinic*, this paper is grounded in the view that history is "time filled by the presence of the now (*Jetztzeit*) . . . blasted out of the continuum of history" (Benjamin, "Theses" 261). The idea here is that the filling up of the past by the "time of the now" allows something smaller to be "blasted out" of a larger unit. As Benjamin illustrates *via* the "Hegelian term *aufheben* in its threefold meaning: to preserve, to elevate, to cancel" ("Theses" 263 n.), what is preserved in a smaller unit may be canceled when it is elevated to a larger unit. Thus, when a vision achieved in the present points to the possibility of further dividing a historical fragment, a revolutionary chance arises that something canceled may be divulged in a smaller unit that still preserves it. In a literary text that views Nature as lying beyond human intervention and the sanatorium as a disciplinary apparatus, there inevitably exist units that dissolve under the scrutiny of the present. Infinitely smaller units emerging out of the dissolution clamor to be reorganized into new configurations.

This is precisely what Gilles Deleuze attempts to do with his "symptomatology." As formulated in his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, this concept itself implies or embodies a reconfiguration of symptoms through which new diseases are discovered. Symptomatology or the study of signs, together with etiology or the search for causes, and therapy or the development and application of a treatment, constitutes the major activity of medicine. In "*Mystique et masochisme*," Deleuze

asserts that “symptomatology is situated almost outside of medicine, at a neutral point, a zero point, where artists and philosophers and doctors and patients can encounter each other” (13). Elaborating on this point, Daniel W. Smith states that “symptomatology appeals to a kind of limit-point, premedical or submedical, that belongs as much to art as to medicine” (xvi). By reducing medicine to ground zero, rather like an allegorist who reduces a living organism to a mere object through the gaze of melancholy (Benjamin, *Origin* 183–84), the doctor may distinguish cases “that had hitherto been confused by dissociating symptoms that were previously grouped together, and by juxtaposing them with others that were previously dissociated” (Smith xvi). New ways of juxtaposition may lead to the discovery of new diseases. Seizing on the idea of discovery from reconfiguration, Deleuze turns to the question of becoming, which is always in the process of minorization, never the other way around. Hence, “one becomes-woman, becomes-animal, or vegetable, becomes molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible” (emphasis added, *Essays* 1). In this process of decomposition he invests the power of giving new visions. Deleuze’s conception of literature fully explains this point. As he sees it, literature “exists only when it discovers beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal” and “begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’” (3). The discovery of the indefinite in the definite brings with it a vision “that is too powerful for” (3) the individual.

II.

A literature review of *The Magic Mountain* shows a range of critical views clustering around topics like life, death, tutelage, wilderness, disease, and humanism. In *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German*, Erich Heller declares: “[t]he whole book is about form and dissolution, the disciplined effort of living and the relaxing lure of death, the honours of achievement and the advantages of dissoluteness” (190). In the context of these opposed forces, Heller says that Mann “treats of the temptation, delight, and danger of disorganization in the

most elaborately organized prose” (190). Arnold Bauer stresses Mann’s trail-blazing depiction of illness as the motivating force for “true intellectual development,” instead of setting it within “the traditional world of middle class education with its erudite mentors” (44). As Bauer puts it, “[t]he stigma of illness brings about a peculiar and heightened sensitivity unobtainable by the common educational means of an old, ossified culture” (45). He goes on to elaborate that Mann wants to teach by “not [taking] things for granted, especially not in the delusive shape suggested by ‘education’ and ‘tradition’” (45). Harvey Goldman examines *The Magic Mountain* in terms of illness and sympathy with death. “Mann’s hero ‘falls ill’ from lack of the nutrition that the cultural world is expected to provide. His illness is also, of course, a reflection of his own weaknesses and incapacities and of his estrangement from bourgeois life” (121). In his examination of Castorp’s fascination with death, Goldman says that it is “an implicit critique and explicit consequence of a world of work whose purpose, focus, and interest can no longer give individuals meaning or empower life” (135). All these critics have their attention focused exclusively on the cultural and social dimensions of disease and death, to the exclusion of the clinical concept of tuberculosis.

In “The Making of *The Magic Mountain*,” an epilogue or something like an afterthought, Thomas Mann wrote about visiting his wife at the so-called Berghof Sanatorium, which she checked into in 1912 for treatment of a lung ailment. He got a bronchial cold while there and an examination discovered a so-called moist spot in his lung. Mann was advised to remain there for six months and take the cure. This advice was not heeded. Instead, the writer left at the end of his three-week visit, convinced of “the dangers of such a milieu for young people” (719). To Mann this hospital-life was “a sort of substitute existence, and it can, in a relatively short time, wholly wean a young man from actual and active life” (719). The parallel between his own experience and that of Hans Castorp is limited to this three-week visit, and Mann used what he gained from it in writing *The Magic Mountain*. But the 24-year-old Hans Castorp’s planned three-week visit has to be extended to seven years after he is diagnosed as having tuberculosis.

Traveling for two days by train from his native city of Hamburg to Davos-Platz, where House Berghof is located, he had intended merely to visit his cousin Joachim Ziemssen, a military man receiving treatment for tuberculosis at the sanatorium, before taking a job as shipbuilding engineer.

Mann's observation about life at the Berghof Sanatorium, "a sort of substitute existence," says a lot about the inefficacy of the medical treatment there. The cure in the sanatorium is always a matter of several months, often several years. Hans Castorp's seven-year treatment makes clear the problem of Western modernization and industrialization. Tuberculosis, though it came into being much earlier, was exceedingly prevalent in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and reached its peak in terms of mortality rate in the nineteenth century, as mentioned earlier. As a product of Western modernization, however, the sanatorium failed to provide an effective cure for a disease radically aggravated by the drive toward modernization. That's why this medical institution speaks so eloquently for the ills of the capitalist mode of life. Modernization, often touted as being synonymous with progress and reason, is cut down to size not by conventional wisdom but by disease, as Bauer says.

What disease represents is not something readily or easily visible. Symptoms may be openly on display, but they can never be fully or ultimately grasped. Body heat, for example, may be a crucial symptom of tuberculosis but most probably it can mislead. As Foucault points out in *The Birth of the Clinic*, fever was "an index of generalization" (186) before what he calls the great discovery of 1816. But after that discovery, since there were no longer either essential diseases or essences of diseases, fever became no more than an acceleration in the flow of blood as a result of a local irritation. As it can no longer be seen as something "essential," fever may not be counted on as the sure sign of a particular disease. To grasp "symptoms" as they grow ever more evasive, Mann uses the technique of "*maskenhafter Realismus*," which combines a convincing realistic surface with an underlying allegorical level. The x-ray pictures depicted in *The Magic Mountain* are a ready example of this technique. When the Hofrat Behren shows Hans

Castorp rows of dark plates on the wall with a light shining behind them, “the rounded living form of these portions of the human body was vague and shadowy, like a pale and misty envelope, within which stood out the clear, sharp nucleus—the skeleton” (215). On the convincing realistic surface of the x-ray pictures, the living form is “drained” out of the human body, with only the skeleton left standing out. That is what allegory is all about: to drain an object of life. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin writes: “If the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead, but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is to say it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own” (183–84). In this enigmatic passage, allegory is presented as being both “dead” and “eternally secure.” It is dead because it is stripped of its own meaning or significance and eternally secure because it captures eternal truth. An illustration of this may be found in the corpse the childhood Hans Castorp saw when he was brought to bid farewell to his deceased grandfather on the day of his funeral.

The corpse of his grandfather gave him the vision of “a pure and genuine form” (26). His grandfather, who harbored him for a year and a half after his parents died in the brief period between his fifth and seventh birthdays, “had finally and formally surmounted his interim aspect and assumed for all time his true and adequate shape” (26) when lying in a coffin. Death becomes allegorical in *The Magic Mountain*. It assumes a “true and adequate shape” after the “interim aspect” is overcome. “When someone is lying in a coffin, then, in my eyes, it is positively sublime” (109). Hans Castorp’s fascination with death finds vivid expression in an x-ray picture the Hofrat shows him. “There is a female arm, you can tell by its delicacy. That’s what they put around you when they make love, you know” (215). Imagine being embraced by a female skeleton’s arm while making love. The love of death, as evoked in this picture, is seen reflected in Hans Castorp’s love of Pribislav Hippe, a childhood schoolmate, and Clavdia Chauchat, a Russian tuberculosis patient staying in the Berghof Sanatorium. “*Hippe*” is the German for scythe, an instrument wielded by the

black-hooded medieval figure of Death. Clavdia Chauchat, to whom Hans Castorp finally returns a pencil which, in a first boyish feat of passionate daring he had borrowed from his schoolmate, is Pribislav Hippe's feminine incarnation. (Heller 205) Both of them have the eyes "to which Herr Settembrini . . . had referred with contempt as 'Tartar slits' and 'wolf's eyes'" (479), which Hans Castorp sees also in the snow's symmetrical crystallometry.

As death assumes "a pure and genuine form," so snow has the unvarying look of crystal symmetry.³ The two are associated as both capture eternal truth, beyond the distortions of capitalism. In a long chapter entitled "Snow," Hans Castorp skis recklessly into the snow-clad wilderness, seeking to cure his disease by returning to Nature. This act demonstrates that capitalism, with its various forms of discipline, is the root cause of his disease. As he strives to shake himself loose from the regulations, the strict guidance of the disciplinary apparatuses, Hans Castorp presses on into the depths of Nature. "He was bound to no path, none lay behind him to take him back whence he had come. At first there had been posts, staves set up as guides through the snow—but he had soon cut free from their tutelage, which recalled the coastguard with his horn, and seemed inconsistent with the attitude he had taken up toward the wild" (480–81). This passage speaks of mechanisms of the "panopticon" in the form of "path," "posts," "staves" and "horn," which regulate and control with "their tutelage." The "wild" is considered to be outside human intervention. To release the pressure accumulating for years within him in the Berghof Sanatorium, Hans Castorp rushes into the heart of the wilderness and is unexpectedly caught in a snow-storm. "The icy gusts made his ears burn painfully, his limbs felt half paralysed, his hands were so numb he hardly knew if they held the staff. The snow blew inside his collar and melted down his back" (482). Horrible as it is, Hans Castorp thinks the stormy weather is good for a diseased patient like himself. For he sees in this a chance to "lie down and be covered up with hexagonal symmetry" (485). Snow and death are presented here as providing escape from "the sordid bourgeois view of life, irreligion, Philistinism" (485). Life, by contrast, is in his view

inevitably burdened with duties and thus in a way “diseased.”

The craving for death, unhealthy as it seems, reflects nostalgia for a traditional mode of life brushed aside by industrialization and modernization. As Benjamin vividly describes in “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,”

Dying was once a public process in the life of the individual and a most exemplary one; think of the medieval pictures in which the deathbed has turned into a throne toward which the people press through the wide-open doors of the death house. In the course of modern times dying has been pushed further and further out of the perceptual world of the living. (93-94)

In the Berghof Sanatorium, death scenes are deliberately hidden from the view of the patients staying there. When a patient is dying, arrangements are made to separate him or her from others so that the death scene can be blocked from public view. Some time after arriving at the sanatorium, Hans Castorp accidentally sees his first dying person. (His father, mother and grandfather have all died behind his back.) In the sanatorium, he purposely viewed a corpse to show his contempt for the prevailing system of secrecy. His cousin Joachim, when critically ill, slips away into a corner to die, convinced that he may not expect from outward Nature any concern for his suffering and death. “Convinced, and rightly: a troop of swallows on exultant wing will give no heed to a maimed comrade, nay, they will even peck him with their beaks. But the example is from the lower reaches of nature” (533). A stern rebuke of humanism is delivered here, since all of its self-imposed “discipline” (self-regulation) fails to wean human nature from base animal instincts. Near his death, Joachim is removed to a stately receptacle to die by a black-clad functionary of the undertaking establishment. “This specialist let it be known that all his spiriting had to be done behind the scenes” (540). The secrecy, reification and commodification of this practice depart radically from the public and exemplary scene of death (the funeral) in medieval days. Involved in this change is the loss of any transmissible form of experience, which

in the end leads to the separation of “meaning and life” (Benjamin, “Storyteller” 99).

Disease, as mentioned earlier, constitutes the sole effective tool for debunking capitalism. As the root cause of tuberculosis, capitalism, with all its ramifications, is discovered to have death as its allegorical form. The x-ray pictures, representative of the technique of “*maskenhafter Realismus*,” bring out the allegorical aspect of various portions of the human body and, in so doing, also effectively show “what goes on under the epidermis,” what is “a little below the surface” (259). Disease is also a process of minorization, becoming “smaller” as it delves deeper. For instance, the x-ray picture of a female arm, compared with the seductive arm that holds the man while making love, is obviously smaller and no longer evokes the same romantic feeling. It fulfils, in a way, what Deleuze expects of literature, discovering “beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal” (*Essays* 3). As a result, “a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’” (*Essays* 3); the individual overflows him/herself. This is the point of becoming, where symptoms previously grouped together may be dissociated and regrouped in order that we may discover a new disease. The Hofrat Behrens turns the overwhelming vision into a portrait. “What is in your mind as you work,” he says, “runs into your hand and has its influence” (259). A configuration is formed between the present object and a prior vision. In *The Magic Mountain* as a whole, the powerful vision gained from the process of minorization as well as from its allegorical self-image (self-allegorization) shows capitalism to be the root cause of tuberculosis.

III.

Weather and fever figure prominently in *The Magic Mountain*. There are two chapters on the topic of fever, “The Thermometer” and “Whims of Mercurius,” in which we see how closely temperature is watched or monitored in the Berghof Sanatorium. Fever’s prominent role is unequivocally pointed out by Herr Settembrini, a major character of this novel; he observes that “people were possessed of two

ideas, and only two: temperature—and then again temperature” (236). The clinical connection between fever and climate is made when the head of the Sanatorium diagnoses Hans Castorp as having consumptive fever, adding that the air up there “brings the latent weakness to the surface and makes it break out” (182). The climate, then, is cited as the factor that triggers his fever. Words like “climate,” “weather,” “acclimatization,” “cold air,” “mist,” “snow,” “wind” and “storm,” crop up individually or in clusters throughout the whole book, bringing home the significance of the weather. The long chapter entitled “Snow,” in which Nature is depicted as “blind, nonsentient forces . . . horribly indifferent to our fate” (482), demonstrates how the climate, as part of Nature, “asserted itself, refused to be classified with the general order of things,” and “insisted on being an exception” (486). Branded as gloomy, even anti-human in its characteristics, the fierce snowstorm catches Hans Castorp in the wilderness seeking escape from the tutelage of civilization. Horrible as it is, Castorp regards the stormy weather as something that is good for a person in his “state,” that is, a sick person.

The privileged role of the weather in the cure of tuberculosis reflects the author’s leaning toward German Romanticism.⁴ In Western history from Aristotle through the Renaissance, the weather was a major concern or *topos* of philosophy and literature; the Enlightenment thinkers, however, seemed to lose interest in it, and the Romantics returned to it. As Arden Reed argues in *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire*, the Enlightenment attitude may be attributed to the development of modern science. “The new experimental science depended on exact, rigorous measurement of a wholly regulated environment, and this necessarily excluded the weather as a variable that could not be controlled” (4). The Romantics, by contrast, tended to take a positive view of the weather. Romantics of the *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) school, as well as others, “made their lyrics communicate all the climatological factors that influence generation and growth” (4). This trend is easily understandable given the rise of Romanticism as a reaction against Enlightenment modernization. Yet the new prominence given to the

weather also reveals a fundamental change in “medical perception.” There is now the recognition that “a change of climate or regimen” constitutes an irritating action that may arouse or inflame organic tissue. Given the lack of any effective treatment, a combination of weather and diet in the setting of a sanatorium was thought to have the best healing effect; relative isolation from the outside world was considered crucial.

In terms of socio-economic development, *The Magic Mountain* is set in a capitalist economy that makes it possible for patients to remain in the sanatorium year after year at the family’s expense.⁵ The institution of the sanatorium, as part of the Foucauldian disciplinary apparatus, is situated within a process that in turn drives the capitalist economy forward (and “upward”). As Foucault observes in his *Discipline and Punish*, “disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination” (138); thus the gears of our own instrumental efficiency in effect mesh with those of the capitalist mode of production. In the International Sanatorium Berghof, climate and diet are the regimen of a cure designed to transform and improve “the manipulable body”; a regular physical examination, with x-rays included, turns “the analysable body” (Foucault, *Discipline* 136) into an object of knowledge. Such a mode of disciplinarity, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri declare in *Empire*, “fixed individuals within institutions but did not succeed in consuming them completely in the rhythm of productive practices and productive socialization” (24). The cure’s inefficacy can be seen from the long period of treatment in the sanatorium, always a matter of several months and often of several years. By contrast, an extremely potent drug or genetic therapy can cure a disease thoroughly “from within,” rendering insignificant such factors as climate, diet, and a closed, separate sphere. Yet this is also exactly how a “society of control” (Hardt and Negri) exerts its control over us, “to the point of permeating entirely the consciousness and bodies of individuals, the point of treating and organizing them in the totality of their activities” (24).

To read *The Magic Mountain* from this perspective, a perspective which seems to fit our current age of globalization, has the advantage of

seeing tuberculosis as a disease that reveals to humankind its own finitude while also marking the transition in knowledge from generality to specificity.⁶ The emphasis placed on the weather and the diet indicates how little human beings can do to allay a consumptive fever. But it also reflects a fundamental change in medical perception, which is not seen to involve a passage from general to local knowledge. As stated in Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic*, before the great discovery of 1816, "fever [was] merely a locally individualized phenomenon with a general pathological structure," that is, it was "not a local sign" but "an index of generalization" (186). Behind this lies a medical perspective in which "the local value with which [the signs] were invested did not indicate a regional origin, an original locus from which the disease derived both birth and form; it simply made it possible to recognize a disease that gave itself this signal as a characteristic symptom of its essence" (183). But according to the "new medicine" dating from 1816, "[a]n organism is sick only in relation to the solicitations of the external world, or of alterations in its functioning or anatomy" (188). With the recognition of the external agent or of internal modification, "a change of climate or regimen" is seen as an irritant that may arouse the mechanisms of human tissue. As a result, there are no longer either essential diseases or essences of diseases. "As an organic reaction to an irritating agent, the pathological phenomenon can no longer belong to a world in which the disease . . . would exist in conformity with a dominant type that preceded it, and in which it was fulfilled" (189).

The privileging of particularity over generality in our clinical concepts goes hand in hand with the emphasis on the particularity of place. The efficacy of diet and climate, as factors of Nature, in the expected cure of tuberculosis is thought to depend on Nature's separation from the ravaging forces of civilization. As we saw above, the snow-capped wilderness lies beyond human interference. Likewise, in exercising its disciplinarity on the patients the sanatorium depends on its relative closure to the outside world to achieve the desired effect. This emphasis on the specificity of place, thus giving precedence to the local knowledge, nonetheless failed to produce an effective cure. The

advent of streptomycin in 1944 brought to an end a kind of nihilism in the treatment of tuberculosis, leading to the shutdown of sanatoriums or their conversion into tourist facilities. An extremely potent drug or a revolutionary genetic therapy can now cure a disease effectively “from within,” making insignificant such factors as climate, diet, and place.

With such disembedding mechanisms in place,⁷ symptoms may no longer be viewed as signs by which diseases specific to a place or a culture can be determined. For what was once uniquely local may now be tempered or even radically altered in the age of globalization. The dramatic change of the world weather pattern as a result of global warming, for example, speaks forcefully of the end of a closed, separate sphere. In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson goes one step further in pinpointing this all-pervading force, arguing that “the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonizing those very precapitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious)” (49). With the almost unrestrained flow of capital and personnel across the borders of nation-states, facilitated by the global hook-up of computers *via* the Internet and the advent of transnational capitalism, what were formerly seen as local agents of diseases can no longer remain unaffected. The concept of symptomatology proposed by Deleuze and Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit* offer powerful tools for coping with the newly emerging situation. As a literary text that views Nature as something beyond human intervention and the sanatorium as part of the disciplinary apparatus, *The Magic Mountain* can hardly be read from the contemporary perspective without revealing smaller units waiting to be reorganized into new configurations. For again, when a vision drawn from the present points to the possibility of further dividing a historical fragment, a revolutionary chance arises that something canceled may be divulged in a smaller unit that still preserves it.

On closer analysis, *The Magic Mountain* represents a clinical stage in which signs are classified more in terms of local knowledge. Symptoms are juxtaposed in accordance with the way of life in a closed, separate realm and the dictates of the mountainous weather pattern. Soon after arriving at the sanatorium, Hans Castorp complains that his

favorite cigarette doesn't taste good. Other complaints follow one after another swiftly: heart palpitations, heavy breathing, fatigue, serious nasal bleeding, and fever. The discovery that he has fever has the effect of verifying that his symptoms are those of tuberculosis, for people here are "possessed of two ideas, and only two: temperature—and then again temperature" (236). Their responses to the news of his fever indicate how local knowledge can influence the combination of signs: "They shook their fingers at him, they winked maliciously, they put their heads on one side, crooked their forefingers beside their ears and waggled them in a pantomime suggestive of their delight at having found him out" (172). Even the reading of x-ray pictures can be affected by our preconceptions. "You know that the photographic plate often shows spots that are taken for cavities when there are none there. . . . There was a young numismatician up here, with fever; and since he had fever, there were cavities plain to be seen on the plate. They could even hear them. They treated him for phthisis, and he died" (196). Even the climate up there on the mountain has a way of organizing symptoms. As the Hofrat Behrens tells Castorp, "I won't say we have better ears. . . . But the air helps us, helps us hear, if you understand what I mean, this thin, dry air up here" (181). Symptoms are easily set into the fixed patterns of known diseases, to the extent of excluding the possibility of establishing new diseases.

The symptoms displayed by Hans Castorp were mistakenly grouped so as to produce a diagnosis of tuberculosis at the Berghof Sanatorium; this follows the logic of modernity but fails to provide an effective cure for the disease, which steadily gets worse. After years of treatment at the sanatorium, the Hofrat Behrens summons Hans Castorp to his office, telling him: "The treatment was not wrong, but it was just possibly one-sided. The possibility has occurred to me that your symptoms were not necessarily to be referred to tuberculosis alone" (625). The new diagnosis he gives is cocci: "affections of this sort can be cured very quickly today." Cocci, as the Hofrat implies, used to be lumped together with tuberculosis but now it can be disassociated from it and established as a new disease. What led him previously to the diagnosis of tuberculosis was the fever symptoms.

And now he is not sure “whether it (cocci) is really the cause of the fever” (625). Days later, the head of the sanatorium says, the coccus has been definitely established in one of the cultures. “It was now a question of probabilities: whether the symptoms of infection were to be referred to the insignificant amount of tubercule bacillus, or to the streptococci, which, also, were only present in small quantity” (634). Finally he comes to the conclusion that it is highly probable that streptococci are the cause of the existing infection. A process of minorization continues to delve deeper. Out of this process emerges an ever-new vision that continually supersedes one’s existing perspective(s).

Behind the diagnosis given by the head of the sanatorium, then, there are signs pointing to capitalism as the deeper cause of the disease. The inescapable disciplinarity of the institution, itself a function of the logic of capitalism, makes life unbearable for Hans Castorp. Nature, with its climate and its wilderness, provides him with a likely escape from the scourge of capitalism’s relentless march. The failure of this attempt at escape leads to the various symptoms his body exhibits.

IV.

Our reading of *The Magic Mountain* points to a world in which Nature is seen as existing beyond the reach of human civilization. What was regarded as transcendent in the modern age, however, is now (under “late capitalism”) incorporated into life and production. “What the theories of power of modernity were forced to consider transcendent, that is, external to productive and social relations, is here formed inside, immanent to the productive and social relations”: thus argue Hardt and Negri in *Empire*. “Mediation is absorbed within the productive machine” (33). This development has, or will have, a profound impact. The immediate effect on medical practice can be felt in the prevalence of what Anthony Giddens calls “expert systems,” which “bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them” (18). What was once considered external to medical (and medicinal) efficacy is now immanent within it,

no longer needing the mediation of the weather and other natural elements. Even what appeared to Hans Castorp as the socially isolated institution's inescapable disciplinarity is now internal to the mechanism of globalization flows, connecting "repressive action to all the aspects of the biopolitical structure of society" (Hardt and Negri 35). Ort as Walter Benjamin puts it, a thing reveals itself most clearly at the moment of vanishing. With globalization as a frame of reference, the modern clinical concept of tuberculosis exhibits its nuances and inner workings in a very explicit way.

NOTES

¹ According to Mahito Fukuda, no effective cure of tuberculosis was found "until the advent of chemotherapy or antibiotics, especially streptomycin (SM) by S. Waksman (1888–1973) in 1944" (9).

² In this paper, weather and climate will be used interchangeably just as body heat, temperature, and fever will also be interchangeable terms, though technically distinctions may be detected.

³ Snow is described as being in (or embodying) a state of death, with its form absolutely symmetrical and icily regular. "They were too regular, as substance adapted to life never was to this degree—the living principle shuddered at this perfect precision, found it deathly, the very marrow of death" (480).

⁴ Mann notes in a letter that the theme "sympathy of death" is a formula, motif, "key word" for and "basic mood" of romanticism, a definition reinforced by the conception of illness he found in Novalis and the German Romantics. (Goldman 133) In *The Magic Mountain* snow, and more generally Nature, is associated with death.

⁵ Although the basic rhythm of the capitalist economy was experiencing very acute depressions in the period from 1873 to the mid-1890s, world production continued to rise dramatically. As Eric Hobsbawm says in *The Age of Empire*, between 1870 and 1890 "the American and German industrial economies advanced with giant steps, and the industrial revolution extended to new countries such as Sweden and Russia. Several of the overseas countries newly integrated into the world economy boomed as never before" (35).

⁶ The novel also owes its rise to the privileging of the particular and local

knowledge over the general and universal knowledge. Characters and actions should be true to the way of life at the specified place and time.

⁷ In *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Anthony Giddens coins the term “disembedding mechanisms” to refer to “symbolic tokens” and “expert systems.” “Symbolic tokens are media of exchange which have standard value, and thus are interchangeable across a plurality of contexts” (18). The prime example of these is money. “Expert systems bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them. . . . Expert systems are not confined to areas of technological expertise” (18). Medical practice is a prime example of this.

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