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## Technologies of Death in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*

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**I**n Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Hans Castorp confronts disease and death to transcend his morbid obsession with them. Mann himself points to the pedagogical function of death in the epilogue.<sup>1</sup> As Hans Castorp puts it after his near-death experience in the "Schnee" Chapter, "Der Mensch soll um der Güte und Liebe willen dem Tode keine Herrschaft einräumen über seine Gedanken" (Mann 695). In Mann's view, exposure to illness and death is a necessary route to knowledge, health, and life, echoing his Romantic precursors, who regarded the two as a vehicle of evolution or *Steigerung*. Mann partakes of this tradition and employs the technology of the sanatorium as the apparatus which will mediate Hans Castorp's exposure to it.

Foregrounding death as a pedagogical tool makes sense in terms of the history behind Mann's novel, but turn-of-the-century scientific discourse, as expressed by the clinic, tries to repress death through its regulation. Technology doesn't efface death in the novel, however, it only renders it more abstract and disembodied. It really doesn't allow Castorp to transcend his morbid fascination, but allows him to experience death in a detached, fragmented, and aesthetized form. Even though the mechanization of death will activate his complicity as a consuming spectator, and then as a willing participant, technology also mediates brief, transcendent moments and eventually facilitates his return to the flatlands. Technology, then, is instrumental in Hans Castorp's "aesthetic education." This points to a viable reading of the contradictory ending of the novel, where Hans Castorp becomes a soldier on the killing fields of the Great War.

Mann situates Hans Castorp in the Davos clinic to overcome death through death, a homeopathic cure mediated by medical technology. Slavery to a death fascination, a product of repression and an

agent of decadence, is antithetical to the spirit in which the novel appears to be written. *The Magic Mountain* seeks to reestablish death as the inevitable condition against which a person defines his life; it marks the boundaries of individuality, the moment when one transcends personality and gives oneself over to the collective destiny of humankind. As an expression of the increasingly bureaucratized clinic, however, technology industrializes death. "The greater the degree of mechanization," Siegfried Giedion writes, "the further does contact with death become banished from life" (Giedion 242). From the moment of his arrival at International Sanatorium Berghof, Hans Castorp is inundated with experiences of death: he hears explanations of corpse transport in the winter just as he hears a morbid, deathly sounding cough in the hallways. After seeing priests in black he hears the terrified screams of a young girl receiving her last rites. Yet despite the overwhelming presence of death at the sanatorium, the Berghof clinic and its technicians go to great lengths to make it disappear.

By its scientific management of health, the clinic has pushed death away from human experience, exorcising it from tradition. The International Berghof's industrialized healthcare system spares no effort to separate death from the perceptual world of the living. The dead are disposed of quietly, so as not to alert the other patients. After a patient dies, the room is speedily fumigated in an effort to sterilize any traces of death for the incoming guests, who, factory-like, are then pushed through an institutionalized and thoroughly hygienic death. In *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rainer Maria Rilke also compares the sanatorium's industrialization of death to the efficiency of a factory, wherein the moribund look forward to a proscribed, hygienic, and bureaucratically correct death. "Man starb darin," Rilke writes, "natürlich fabrikmäßig. In den Sanatorien . . . stirbt man einen von den an der Anstalt angestellten Toden; das wird gerne gesehen" (Rilke 113-14).

In Sanatorium Berghof the patients barely acknowledge the empty seats during mealtime and any talk of death is avoided. Hans Castorp has a memorable altercation with Frau Stöhr who becomes incensed when Hans Castorp makes the ultimate faux pas of talking of a patient's death while dining. He exclaims to his cousin Joachim that despite the fact that death is all about them, the Berghof management has carefully arranged everything "in order to spare us and pre-

vent our coming into contact with it [death], or seeing anything at all--they will take away the gentleman rider while we are at breakfast or tea--and that I find immoral" (Mann 295).

The mechanization of death is a rationale embodied in social, cultural and technical processes. According to Phillipe Ariès, its repression is the characteristic attitude toward death of modern industrial societies. What was previously omnipresent becomes shameful and forbidden, all but completely replacing sex as the taboo subject (20). Walter Benjamin discusses how technological developments, specifically the sanatorium, have made it possible for people to avoid the spectacle of death:

In the course of the nineteenth century bourgeois society has, by means of hygienic and social, private and public institutions, realized a secondary effect which may have been its unconscious main purpose; to make it possible for people to avoid the sight of the dying. Dying was once a public process in the life of the individual and a most exemplary one; in the course of modern times dying has been pushed further and further out of the perceptual world of the living. (qtd. in Josipovici 54)

Technology further distances death by commodifying it. The clinic grows up as a byproduct of industrialization, the growth of cities, the enormous increases in the comforts of life and availability of products. The clinic, then, is available like any other commodity. Arguably, the bourgeois, for whom this commodity is most readily available, attempts to conceal death, achieved in great part through perpetuating a myth of immortality through consumerism. Through the endless consumption of commodities that will far outlive him, the bourgeois is in effect engaged in the impossible pursuit of personal immortality. Although unable to give his earthly being permanence, he can maintain his purchases indefinitely and domestic spaces are veritable museums in which these products can be exhibited. This commodity fetish reveals the psychology of taboo feelings underlying an ostensibly conventional "cover story" of buying; it obscures deeper, less socially acceptable levels of meaning. Commodity fetishism symbolically manages the unacceptable and inevitable truth of

death, which is an end to the cycle of consumption.

The market economy abhors death, which represents an end to the circulation of commodities. Death does not exist from the perspective of the commodity--that is until economic systems reinvent death itself as such. The clinic and, to a greater extent, war-time technologies promote death as an eminently profitable commodity. Great fortunes are amassed in both sectors. The clinic also makes ever new promises of immortality with the latest technological gadgets and quack surgical procedures. Death is systematically suppressed by an elaborate corporate medical facility, bent on marketing itself to a growing international, leisured class.

Corporation Berghof generates the patients' complicity in the consumption process; the patients become willing consumers who consent to take the cure, regardless of the cost. There are those for whom sickness is a threat, the patients, and those for whom it is an economic and cultural practice. Circulating in a world of privilege within the clinic, the patients are victims to a cultured disease. The regulation of death generates an entire economy and bureaucratic apparatus, around which a bewildering array of professionals and businesses hover. There are the enormous costs of pharmaceuticals and surgical procedures. In order to check in comfortably and stave off death in a medically approved manner, the patients must invest in a dizzying array of health commodities and accoutrements, gadgets like sleep sacks for taking up the "horizontal," thermometers, flasks for collecting sputum (termed blue Peeter), and suitable clothing. Hans Castorp is a quintessential dandy, and his inventory of accoutrements is astounding: from clothing and toiletries to accessories required to do the cure correctly. Denial of death in the sanatorium is consumption.

By effectively displacing the site of death to the clinic and attempting to efface its traces, however, technology surrounds it with an aura of fascinating otherness. Death, technologically repressed, reemerges, transfigured with all the power and seduction of a taboo. Although it would appear that technology demystifies and industrializes death, thus removing it from tradition and destroying any of its uniqueness (the signature of aura, according to Benjamin), it actually reinforces this auric value. Death is ubiquitous at the clinic, but is increasingly foreign and abstract. I argue that the technologically dis-

tanced death is imbued with a fascinating aura of uniqueness and otherness, which enthralls Hans. As the abject, death represents what human life and culture must exclude to maintain well-delineated boundaries, but it possesses an uncanniness that is as tempting and fascinating as it is revolting. The violence of the denial or negation of death only affirms its presence in the end. For Hans Castorp, death has an irresistible seduction, and he begins to search everywhere for its spectral traces.

This is clearly evidenced when he becomes obsessed with visiting the moribund and spending post mortem time with mourning families and corpses. Hans Castorp pays a visit to and entertains the moribund (more out of didactic than humanitarian grounds), and he witnesses the death of Joachim, and two suicides (Peeperkorn's and Naphta's). He observes this relatively objectively and in full consciousness. And yet other opportunities for Hans Castorp to attain a greater proximity to and understanding of death present themselves to him; these opportunities speak to the unconscious and afford a brief "transcendental" moment, an opportunity to exceed the boundaries of the self. But this proximity does not allow him to come any closer to the ever elusive phenomenon of death, which is forever slipping away. Although Hans Castorp's near-death experience in the snow storm is pivotal, it is just one of his numerous encounters with death. Hans Castorp turns to technology as a means of mediating the gap between the dead body and the ever abstract signifier; yet technological media, consisting of the cinema, the x-ray machine, scientific textbooks and the gramophone, dematerialize death, only to rematerialize it through technological representations. These are cleansed of the body's organic residue, which recreate death in ever more abstract, atomized narratives.

The above mentioned technology, which I refer to as media of death, reproduces death in a sanitized and mass-produced form, freeze-framing past moments for future consumption. But it is also endowed with epiphanic potential. Friedrich Kittler maintains that "there is no difference between occult and technological media. Their truth is fatality, the field the unconscious" (229). This initially somewhat enigmatic statement seems correct when considered more closely. Preoccupation with occult practices is a method of experiencing phenomena that both thrill and terrify as they indicate the possibility of

a realm beyond organic life, all the while underscoring mortality. The occult is concerned with supernatural or superhuman powers and their perceptible manifestations. The belief that forces exist independently of physical form or without emanating from some physical and definable source, emphasizes, all the more, the body's essential temporality. Likewise, a technological reproduction, either optical or acoustic, is a death enactment in so far as it isolates and appropriates a living moment, freezes it in time, thus emphasizing the "once-and-nevermore" condition of each of the infinite number of moments that constitute organic life. In preserving a present moment, which is already a past, dead moment, a technological recording (which harvests and stores physical, now disembodied, traits and emanations with "superhuman precision") provides a sort of afterlife for the extinguished moment. It is comforting to preserve this corporeal evidence of human life, and, to a degree, relive or reexperience the past through this phantom. And yet the facsimile is rather uncanny in its exactness. The image indicates an absence of physicality, an absent presence, and thus anticipates and evokes our mortality. Like Kittler, Walter Benjamin claims that the difference between magic and technology is merely one of historical variability. The "magic" of technology lies in its potential to provide the space in which opposites may come together: the death of the single moment and the persistence of the moment through technological preservation; the fleetingness of the moment and the opportunity to experience it repetitiously; ultimately, the *Verschränkung* of life and death itself ("Kleine Geschichte" 371).

Hans Castorp's first encounter with the wonders of scientific innovation is in the cinema down in the Platz. This technology conflates life and death and aestheticizes it as a commodity for the consuming spectator. In this sense, movie-watching activates Hans Castorp's voyeuristic impulses; it is a prelude to his experiences with the x-ray machine, which is yet another type of cinematography: Röntgencinematography. The cinema freeze frames death as an object of aesthetic consumption and makes Hans Castorp a spectator and vicarious participant in the spectacle of death. Hans Castorp remains in the darkened space of the theater in a kind of passive trance. The movie flashes before his eyes, enabling him to bask in the visual pleasure of the movie and revel in a fantasy of secretly observing a private world. This anonymity provides the space in which he may

take pleasure consuming technologically reproduced simulacra while remaining absent, enraptured by its glow from the safety of the audience. Hans Castorp's role as passive spectator is further highlighted by a particular gesture of his, underscoring the physiological attitude of the spectator. As with all his encounters with death and technology, Hans Castorp reacts to its seductive appeal with a particular facial expression, a kind of ecstatic trance. "Dazu machte er ein Gesicht . . . ziemlich dumm, schläfrig und fromm, den Kopf halb offenen Mundes gegen die Schulter geneigt" (Mann 309). This same attitude of open-mouthed absentmindedness betrays a passive participation in the death event and appears repeatedly throughout the novel.

Most importantly, the cinema reveals the *Verschränkung* of past and present, life and death; it is a darkened, ritual space wherein "space was annihilated, the clock put back, the then and there played on by music . . ." (Mann 318). In this cultish space Hans Castorp is mesmerized by the spectral celluloid characters on the big screen. He is held spellbound by a woman:

a charming apparition. . . . It seemed to see and saw not, it was not moved by glances bent upon it, its smile and nod were not of the present but of the past, so that the impulse to respond was baffled. . . . Then the phantom vanished. The screen glared white and empty, with the one word 'Finis' written across it. (Mann 318)

Hans Castorp has his first profound technological epiphany in Behrens' *Durchleuchtungskammer*. The German term *Durchleuchtung* ("illumination" or "epiphany") is used throughout the novel not only in reference to the illumination of bodies, but also to the illumination of the unconscious. It is often used by Krokowski when referring to his psychoanalytic activities or *Seelenzergliederung*, literally the "dismemberment" or "dissection of the soul." Reflecting on the association of science and technology with the occult or ritual, Mann describes the x-ray room itself as a "technische Hexenoffizin" (Mann 303) and likens the procedure to a *Beschwörung* or occult ritual, that must be prepared for by banishing "den hellen Tag mit seinen fidelen Bildern" (Mann 306).

While the cinema experience operates primarily on surfaces,

the x-ray machine transcends the opaque, allowing Hans Castorp to see beyond the surface of the skin. The technology of the x-ray is instrumental in managing disease and death, however, it also illuminates the fundamental vulnerability of the body, forcing the patients to confront the inescapable fact of their own mortality in its very impersonality. It brings transparency to what is hidden, erasing all individuality, melting away the idiosyncrasies of the individual. Behrens considers the results of the x-ray rather *Spukhaft*: the x-ray has penetrated Joachim's body without the need of a surgical incision and offers an implacable autopsy of his body. Behrens, the chief physician, is the surgeon under whose direction of the camera the internal components of the body are illuminated. This evokes Benjamin's characterization of the cameraman's penetration into the microscopies of the modern, which he compares to the surgeon's intervention, who diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body and probing among the organs (*Illuminations* 233). The movie camera thus looks into the interior space of the human body and pries an object from its shell: the mystery of the internal components of the living body freed from the opacity of its skin. Death has been erased of organic traces, reduced to a two-dimensional, black and white representation. The marvels of the x-ray machine provide a depersonalized picture of Joachim's bones and organs, appropriated, framed and presented for Hans Castorp's voyeuristic gaze.

The anonymous spectator thus finds his correlate in the technologically disembodied organ. Both undergo a technologically mediated illumination. The living moment, frozen in time, the fragmented visual or aural image, freed from its former opaque, yet physical wholeness, now has the power to evoke associations and images, which flash into conscious thought from deep within the spectator's unconscious. The technological preservation of a given moment, according to Benjamin, is a violent act of liberation, "die Entschälung des Gegenstandes aus seiner Hülle" ("Kleine Geschichte" 379). Images captured through and reproduced by technological media potentially bypass the limits of conscious thought and give rise to moments of sudden insight. Images thus pried from their shells and arrested in time by technological means assume a mythic force (Kittler 246). Technology, then, unleashes the potential for epiphany, a transitory mo-

ment of understanding or insight.

The further the camera zooms in, the further death retreats into abstraction. Upon confronting the x-ray images, Hans Castorp immediately transcends the limits of objective observation, and is compelled to express his flashes of insight metaphorically and through metonymic links. Hans Castorp does not just see lungs and a rib cage, rather these fragmented and disembodied images have conjured up other, more powerful ones. He sees Joachim's *Totenbeine* which gives him a glimpse of death. Hans recalls the story of a long-since departed aunt who was endowed with a rather ominous clairvoyant or x-rayish gift, namely, that the skeletons of people about to die would appear to her. He assures himself that his vision of death is devoid of foreboding significance, this being a perfectly legitimate scientific procedure; and yet somehow he now can comprehend the continual melancholy exhibited by his clairvoyant relative.

Hans Castorp is not so much moved by what he saw, however, but by the fact *that he saw*, which is why he wonders if this kind of seeing isn't forbidden. Driven by his desire to commit certain "optical indiscretions," he asks if he might view his own hand, and in doing so sees what he doubts is intended for human perception: he in turn sees his own death. This technology provides him with the scientific distance of a forensic specialist, converting death into a sanitized and highly depersonalized event. But it also provides him a brief moment of transcendence on several levels. He transcends the boundaries of the skin and peers into the desacralized chest cavity, stripped of all personality markers and cleansed of organic residue; he transcends death itself when he sees his own death clearly indicated yet deferred indefinitely. Here Mann blurs the line between absent spectator and potential victim when Hans Castorp thus has the opportunity to see his own virtual death as an aesthetic event. Hans Castorp also moves beyond the prison house of language by expressing technologically mediated insights metaphorically.

The technology of the x-ray machine erases organic death, replacing it with abstract representations that are static and inert. From this moment on he carries with him in his pocket the photographic image of this momentous event. The diapositive is a souvenir or relic, a *memento mori*, a reminder of this transgressive preview of his own death. The small, framed portraits are used like identification cards

among the patients, signifying some macabre membership status. Clawdia Chauchat's x-ray, which she presents to Hans Castorp after they have made love, becomes a sacred portrait of his object of desire. The lovers can exchange these death portraits as a token of their love. Death, love and life flesh themselves out around the radioactive, black-and-white images of bones.

Although Walter Benjamin claims that "for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual," he also reasserts its ritual aspects, particularly in photography ("Work" 224). He claims:

In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value...But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers the last refuge for the cult value of the picture. ("Work" 225-26)

The x-ray "portraits" have this cult status among the patients.

Hans Castorp's medical textbooks also resemble the technology of the x-ray, further sanitizing death by suturing together machine and body. In this episode, the skin of the human body peels away to reveal an efficiently mapped machine. These illustrations and reproductions, which Hans Castorp finds so aesthetic, also penetrate beneath surface layers and pry the internal organs from the opacity of the skin. These images further fragment the body and cleanse the objects of their organic residue. Hans Castorp begins to devour these medical and anatomy textbooks in his eager desire to understand the workings of the body. He studies the engine hidden behind the marvels of the skin by first consulting an "exploded view" of the body, i. e., diagrams showing its disembodied main organs, harvested and isolated. When he comes to understand the individual components and how they are related to one another when the body is functioning properly, he begins to comprehend how the engine of the body works. The reference to engine is appropriate. Hans Castorp has another sudden, technologically mediated illumination while reading the anatomy books: he sees the repetition of mechanics in the body and technology and comes to view the body as a hybrid form of human

and machine. But it is also important to note that his experiences with this technology generate a series of dream sequences in which he acts out carnal fantasies with Clawdia Chauchat. Here the technology functions as a catalyst for his erotic yet very organic daydreams.

Much has happened in Hans Castorp's life since his first encounter with the x-ray machine, when he had the opportunity to peer into his own grave. Hans Castorp is thus ready for the appearance of the gramophone, which conflates all the major results of technology and death. Ever attentive to the needs of its patients, the clinic procures the very finest technology for their distraction. This uncanny, technological wonder, the Stradivarius of gramophones, serves as an index to the large number of technological innovations and consumer goods made possible by industry at the *fin-de-siècle*. The gramophone, compared to a truncated, black coffin, quickly becomes Castorp's sentimentalized object of desire, filling him with "die bestimmteste Ahnung neuer Passion, Bezauberung, und Liebeslast" (Mann 898). He immediately fetishizes the gramophone as he has death, and appropriates the technology as though it were meant only for him. He monopolizes the gramophone and will not allow the other patients to come near it and takes it upon himself to become its unofficial caretaker or technician, locking its panels and carrying the keys around with him in his pocket along with the x-ray portrait. It is important to note that for the first time he has the capacity to direct this technological recreation of death. The freedom that the technological medium affords him to control the source of the musical emanations should not be undervalued; Hans Castorp may construct and direct, like a conductor, this particular experience of death and life, determining the selection, sequence and frequency of pieces played.

This technology transcends traditional notions of time, allowing the past to persist into the present. The phonograph, invented by Edison in 1877, could register a voice as faithfully as the camera could a form. It enabled man to speak forward in time and listen backwards to the past (Kern 38-39). In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Bloom ponders the possibility of hearing a man's voice long after his death while he is watching Paddy Dignam's funeral:

Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house.  
After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather

Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullglad kraark awfully gladaseeragain hellohello amarawf kopthsth. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face. (Joyce 114)

Hans Castorp is attracted to the aesthetic cleanliness of this technology and expresses appreciation for the freedom from earthbound physicality made possible through this technological innovation. The singers' voices, transplanted into the fine grooves of the black discs, delight Hans Castorp. He rejoices that he can now direct these harvested voices himself, cleansed as they are from any gross corporeality.

Die Sänger und Sängerinnen, die er hörte, er sah sie nicht, ihre Menschlichkeit weilte in Amerika, in Mailand, in Wien, in Sankt Petersburg, -- sie mochte dort immerhin weilen, denn was er von ihnen hatte, war ihr Bestes, war ihre Stimme, und er schätzte diese Reinigung oder Abstraktion, die sinnlich genug blieb, um ihm, unter Ausschaltung aller Nachteile zu größer persönlicher Nähe. (Mann 903)

The most significant piece among Hans Castorp's favorites is Schubert's "Der Lindenbaum," a song of folk origin, something "besonders und exemplarisch Deutsches" that he eventually carries with him (or that carries him) into battle at the end of the novel. And what is the world behind this most beloved *Heimwehlied* asks the narrator, which Hans Castorp first believes is a world of transgressive love? "Es war Tod" (Mann 916). It is this song of his childhood--now technologically rendered. When he hears the song he is able to give a name to this phenomenon with which he feels such an affinity: it reveals itself as a longing and nostalgia for homeland, the physical and organic, his past, and even an acceptance of death, the *Verschränkung* of life and death. Mann claims this nostalgia for origins and the homeland is the fruit of life:

. . . das Gemütlich-Gesundeste auf der Welt. Allein das war eine Frucht, die, frisch und prangend gesund diesen Augenblick oder eben noch, außerordentlich zu Zersetzung und Fäulnis

neigte. . . . Es war eine Lebensfrucht, vom Tode gezeugt und todesträchtig. (Mann 917)

It is for this that Hans Castorp himself is willing to die. "Es war so wert, dafür zu sterben, das Zauberlied!" (Mann 918). Nostalgia, death, ideology and national identity congeal in this final state of Hans Castorp's education. This episode highlights the extent to which technology and commodity culture constitute social relations and national identity. Thus far, Hans Castorp has consumed technologically generated images of death from which he has been necessarily absent, enjoying the event from the safety of the audience. The gramophone, however, not only gives him the protective distance of the spectator, but the power to direct this hygienic technology cleansed of bodily residue; he can aim and control the frequency and power of the vibrations of disembodied voices. Habituated by technology to perceive death in disembodied images that pose no genuine threat to the spectator, Hans Castorp is familiar with, indeed at home with, this clean and fragmentary death enactment.

Arguably, Hans Castorp discovers *caritas* through his technological encounters with death. With its *Verschränkung* of past and present, death and life, organic and inorganic, technology has helped facilitate his pronouncement of *caritas* after Peeperkorn's suicide: "die Sympathie mit dem Organischen, das rührend wollüstige Umfängen des zur Verwesung Bestimmten, -- Charitas is gewiß noch in der bewunderungsvollsten oder wütendsten Leidenshaften" (Mann 841). Has technology mediated the transformation, allowing him to transcend his fascination with and longing for death, eventually enabling him to feel and express a genuine *Menschenliebe* or *caritas* for humankind? Castorp exclaims, "...der Tod, weißt du, ist das geniale Prinzip, die *res bina*, der *lapis philosophorum*, und er ist auch das pädagogische Prinzip, denn die Liebe zu ihm führt zur Liebe des Lebens und des Menschen" (Mann 837).

After Hans Castorp's proclamation of *caritas*, however, how could he become a soldier, an extension of the killing institution of the army? The conclusion of the novel dramatizes the intersection of the clinic and the military. Soldier or patient, both surrender their bodies to a bureaucratic chain of command. Patients construct identity in a dialectical relationship with submission to an absolute power

or authority posited at least partially outside the self, in this case the clinic with its teams of doctors and technicians, similar to a military administration. The Berghof is a controlling and disciplining institution, as any factory, center of production or army, complete with its administrative and political zone articulated upon a therapeutic space. Michel Foucault mentions that the medical suppression of diseases and contagions is inseparable from a series of other controls, like fiscal, administrative, political and military controls (144).

Mann's *The Magic Mountain* investigates disease and death and their technological management in which metaphors of hygiene may extend from the geopolitical with cartographical frontiers to mappings of the body with its border of skin. The intersection of the clinic and military is further underscored by the violent metaphors they both utilize to regulate and combat perceived threats to these borders. These metaphors of hygiene are as applicable to the individual body in the clinic as to the body politic. The body is a model that can stand for any bounded system; its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are not stable (Butler 132). The conflation of borders and bodies, sickness and invasion creates anxiety about permeable boundaries and the technological compression of time and space on a geopolitical level reinforces this.

This brings us back to Mann's prescription for health. According to Mann, in order to avoid a decadent fetishizing of death, one must have a significant exposure to it in order to gain a resistance. Such a technology of rehabilitation or homeopathy, transposed into politics, however, is problematic. Could Mann be suggesting war as an ideologically moral, therapeutic and cathartic upheaval, as he indeed expressed with the outbreak of war.<sup>2</sup> With such a view, death, generated on the massive, industrialized scale of total war, would thus lead to a higher state of health for the body politic, whose borders are threatened by immanent invasion. The equation between power and implementation of technology should therefore be taken into account (Lyotard 45). Mann's novel exposes the extent to which technology and ideology constitute social relations and national identity. The Great War further casts a light on this relationship. According to Benjamin, the tremendous resources of modern technology, manipulated by capital and ideologically driven, find their ultimate justification on the battlefield. He writes about the Great War:

Human multitudes, gases, electrical forces were hurled into the open country, high frequency currents coursed through the landscape, new constellations rose in the sky, aerial space and ocean depths thundered with propellers, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were dug in Mother Earth. But because the lust for profit of the ruling class sought satisfaction through it, technology betrayed man and turned the bridal bed into a bloodbath. ("One-Way Street" 487)

Technologically mediated encounters with death move Hans Castorp to a greater appreciation of life and love for humanity, but the novel itself provides no resolution. How do we, the readers, reconcile the discrepancy of his revelation and pronouncement of *caritas* with the final scenes of the novel? With the final unveiling of death, the curtain rises on Hans Castorp, the flatland's prodigal son, who returns home after seven years on the magic mountain. The technological and symbolic fragmentation of the human body now finds its literal correlate in the dismembered human parts littering the battlefield. One possible reading of the conclusion is that technology has so habituated Hans Castorp to this fragmentation, that he is at home with it. Dashing toward his own violent apotheosis across a field with a mysterious smile full of longing and expectation, humming Schubert's "Der Lindenbaum," Hans Castorp is an actor in his own movie of death and this moment is sensationalized with all the power of a cinematographic masterpiece. His *nostos* is projected onto the screen of his mind's eye, accompanied by an appropriately sentimental soundtrack. "His life has become indistinguishable from the movies" (Mann 126). The clinic has educated Hans Castorp, cultivating his voyeuristic pleasure in experiencing technologically disembodied images of death. "Mankind," writes Benjamin, "which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order" (*Illuminations* 242). As a soldier, the line between the consuming subject as both witness and prospective victim is erased. Hans Castorp is staging his own death as an aesthetic spectacle, a dramatic homecoming. With the sublime sounds of Schubert resonating on the killing

fields that are the last movement of the novel, Hans Castorp, having exchanged his beloved cigar, Maria, for the smoking rifle swinging at his side, tramples upon human remains with hobnailed boots, problematizing Mann's notion of a homeopathically cultivated *Menschenliebe*. Equipped with a rationalized license to kill and government issued technology, Hans Castorp is no longer just a spectator, rather he is both the actor in and the director of the spectacle of death.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mann writes that death is the pedagogic instrument for "the enormous heightening and enhancement of the simple hero to a point far beyond his original competence. Hans Castorp, in the course of his experiences, overcomes his inborn attraction to death and arrives at an understanding of a humanity that does not, indeed, rationalistically ignore death, nor scorn the dark, mysterious side of life, but takes account of it, without letting it get control over his mind. What he comes to understand is that one must go through the deep experience of sickness and death to arrive at a higher sanity and health. It is this notion of disease and death as a necessary route to knowledge, health, and life that makes *The Magic Mountain* a novel of initiation." From "The Making of *The Magic Mountain*," the epilogue to *The Magic Mountain*, 724-725.

<sup>2</sup>See Ronald Stromberg's *Redemption by War*; see also R. Wohl's *The Generation of 1914*.

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