
Thomas Mann

Kouzelný vrch

Title: Kouzelný vrch

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Format: Hardcover

Language: Czech

Pages: 811

Publisher: Odeon, 183921464

ISBN:

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 5 MB

Download: allowed

Description

In this dizzyingly rich novel of ideas, Mann uses a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps, a community devoted exclusively to sickness, as a microcosm for Europe, which in the years before 1914 was already exhibiting the first symptoms of its own terminal irrationality. *The Magic Mountain* is a monumental work of erudition and irony, sexual tension and intellectual ferment, a book that pulses with life in the midst of death.

Insightful reviews

Alex: **Wimps in the Mist**

Time is not a constant, said Einstein in 1916, and his fellow German Thomas Mann was like whoa. Eight years later he finished *Magic Mountain*, which proves that time is relative by making the experience of reading it last fucking forever.

Here is the "plot": Young Hans Castorp has found that he doesn't enjoy having a job, or anything else about life, so when he ambles up a mountain to visit his consumptive cousin Joachim who does nothing but sit around wrapped in a blanket all day, he decides to stay. "This is the life!" he says. "I'm sick too! Wrap me up!"

Castorp is a nincompoop - that's the narrator's word - and the high points of his action in this 700-page book consist of borrowing a pencil and getting lost. He exists to listen to the debate Mann is really interested in: between humanism, represented by Settembrini, and fascism, represented by Naphta. The debate may seem academic but it has dire repercussions for your life, because reading it will make you so bored.

These two bloviating asshats stand for the two sides in World War I, and the nicest thing you can say about this book is that it didn't go over super well with Nazis. They treated Mann with kid gloves for a while - he won the Nobel Prize in 1929, after all - but he would eventually have his German citizenship revoked. He spent the rest of his life in Switzerland and America.

He was an interesting dude: bisexual and atheist, both of which are themes explored in this novel, although not at all in an interesting way. Castorp's love interest Clavdia Chauchat - literally "hot pussy" - is, Orlandoish, the resexed reincarnation of Castorp's youthful male love interest Pribislav. Both of them will loan Castorp what may be the same pencil, which is interesting as a pencil can be, which is not at all.

As for God, Settembrini represents science and Naphta, the bad guy, represents religion: "It seems to me you have to be clear about these two intellectual directions, or dispositions...the religious and the free-thinking," Castorp says. But Mann doesn't want you to actually take sides.

They carried everything to extremes, these two...and squabbled fiercely over the most extreme choices, whereas it seemed to him that what one might, in a spirit of conciliation, declare truly human or humane had to lie somewhere in the middle of this

intolerant contentiousness, somewhere between rhetorical humanism and illiterate barbarism.

His point is that any philosophy taken to extreme is false; he advocates compromise and restraint.

Anyway, the point is that Thomas Mann was interesting but his book isn't. **It's so fucking boring.** There are no characters and there is no plot. There are talking heads with names, but they exist only to blather at each other. Almost nothing *happens*. Time stretches endlessly around you as you slog through page upon page of talking and talking. You look up and an hour has passed, but you're only four pages further on. What happened to all those minutes? Will you ever get them back? Will you emerge from reading this book like Rip Van Winkle, your child grown, your spouse dead? "There is nothing 'actual' about time," says Hans Castorp. "If it seems long to you, then it is long, and if it seems to pass quickly, then it's short. But how long or short it is in actuality, no one knows." All I know is that it was very, very long while I read this book.

tl;dr too long; don't read

Geoff: ~~~

"The Hamlet of Europe now looks upon millions of ghosts" Paul Valery wrote. Elsinore is everywhere. "The time is out of joint" spoke Hamlet. And he gazed at laughing skulls and procrastinated and made colloquies with ghosts within the walls his cliffside castle. Hans Castorp also waits, lingers, decides not to decide, dallies with whether it is better to be or not to be, listens to his attendant spirits, weighs skulls in the palm of his hand while time pulses around him on great heights. But *The Magic Mountain* isn't only *Hamlet*, it is also Bottom's dream across a long midsummer night, and the enchantment of somnambulistic illusions. It is a winter's tale, too. 1,001 Alpen Nächte. And Wagner's Ring Cycle, which might flow out in waves on this purified mountain air from a coffin-shaped black cabinet with an inset gramophone, over which our hero holds his head in his hands for nights on end. And the record spins, and the needle traces its eternal groove as the opera unfolds to its *finis*- Time's straight line is elastic at all points and so folds into a circle on which the needle hums as it reads its grainy text and moves toward its center, only to be lifted and turned, reset by some unseen hand or shade of hand- and so the cycle, the opera, the aria, the story resumes its inward path on waves of sorrowful music. Does the needle know, as it moves along its course, where it might be, temporally, narratively, in our opera? Or does it lose itself by being bound within and not outside of this this strange method of capturing and reading Time? Yet we measure this boundless sea of Time as if each wave was not retreating from us and coming at us simultaneously, and so was not ungraspable- by the shore of Time sand is collected and placed into a glass funnel, it is pulled down through the hourglass by gravity and in the bottom bell of the hourglass a mountain slowly takes shape.

But "the time is out of joint", and we might find that as we come to feel ever more confident in our watches and hourglasses, the bell tower in the center of town and the winding face at the train station, to our astonishment we may look up one evening into the dome of sky and see both the sun and moon sharing our heaven, a dual claim on our sensibilities, the sky both

studded with stars and washed with daylight's pallid glow. Fantastical things occur to people when the time is out of joint. And those living within the flux and flex of timeless time also become fantastic, phantasmal. Illness takes hold. Great stupor and great petulance infect our population at these heights. For we've climbed above the world to look down into that bottom bell of the hourglass, where the sands of time are forming this mountain in miniature, this sickly dreaming, encapsulated world which grows and grows as time accumulates, grows and grows until it covers all of Elsinore, all of Europe, all the world. As if Time were a lung in a chest opened for us to watch, on an x-ray machine perhaps, as it expands and contracts- we are aware that each expansion and contraction is a kind of counting down for the biological organism- but for the breather, what good would counting breaths do, but become another way of ticking out individuated moments moving us closer to the final great cataclysm? And for our Hans Castorp, our cipher for the haunted and harried epoch through which he chose to dwell outside of time - do we blame him for so long posing the question of "to be or not to be?" - when the terrible answer to that question was inexorably approaching, like an avenging angel, all the time anyway?

An infinite book, this "time novel". It could be nothing else, if it were to be a time novel.

Fionnuala: Reviewed in December, 2013



I love when the themes of two books I happen to be reading overlap. And when those themes also reflect aspects of my own life experience, I feel a wonderful convergence, an exchange of awareness at an almost physical level as if the the space between the pages where the authors ideas are laid out and my reading of their pages has become porous and a continual flow happens between all three, an exchange not unlike the one that happens in the deepest tissues of the respiratory system when we breathe in and out.

In perhaps the most obvious parallel between the two books I've been reading and my own life, the hero of *The Magic Mountain* and the Narrator of Proust's [A la recherche du temps perdu](#), both suffer from respiration related diseases. Proust's Narrator, an asthmatic like myself, spends portions of his life *à l'horizontale*, wrapped in the tissue softness of a curtained room, lest any noxious air disturb the normal rhythm of his breathing. Quite early in his stay at the

Berghof sanatorium, Hans Castorp discovers that he may have a *soft spot* on his lung and this discovery removes him from the normal rhythms of life to live his own horizontal version of 'lost time' in the hermetic world of The Magic Mountain.

The exchanges that take place between the two books might also be compared to those produced by the vibrating membrane of the acoustic chamber of a gramophone - since music plays such a big part in both works even as it does in my own life.

Certain pieces of music become significant in both books, and are used by their authors as a kind of recurring theme. Schubert's *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore*, a song about the symbolic linden tree, emerges as a connector between Hans Castorp's feelings and ideas, and as a significant object in the working out of his life and fate.

Mann also uses other pieces of music as metaphors for his hero's existence: just as Radomes in the opera *Aida* sings *Tu - in questa tomba* when Aida comes to him in his underground prison, Castorp is 'buried' in the tomb of the Berghof sanatorium, waiting to be joined by his love. But like Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*, Castorp's Russian 'Carmen' is drawn away from him towards a more 'robust' toreador. However, Castorp, although *ein Sorgenkind des Lebens*, one of life's problem children, is never at a complete loss and, without any operatic drama, he subtly vanquishes the toreador.

Music is therefore a powerful trigger for change in Castorp's life but, as is the case in Proust, it is only one of a series of cathartic mechanisms: a simple nosebleed propels Castorp back in time to a significant moment in his childhood; the experience of being lost in a snow storm on the mountain awakens new levels of consciousness within him; dreams play a role too, as do images, in particular the x-ray image of his own body which provides a eureka moment in terms of his self discovery, his 'Bildung'.

Hans follows many avenues of study in his quest to understand himself, one of them being the lectures given every week in the sanatorium by Dr Krokowski on the subject of love as a force conducive to illness. Among the arcane topics covered by the doctor is [The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights](#). This work was a favourite of Proust, and love as a force conducive to illness is itself an underlying theme in *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Dr Krokowski also talks about plants in connection with love, in particular the morel mushroom. Proust chooses the name Morel for one of his characters, a character himself associated with the destructive power of love.

The study of plants becomes a preoccupation for Hans in his personal program for self cultivation. He is particularly interested in the family of flowers called ranunculaceae, *a compound flower, as I recall, an especially charming plant, bisexual...* This is yet another similarity with Proust's work since the metaphor of bisexual and self-fertilising plants is an important element in the *Recherche*.

There are other parallels too, 'love' meaning 'being loved', references to duels, the personification of death, *death wearing a starched Spanish ruff..whereas life always wore a little, normal, modern collar*.

Proust and Mann place themselves in the text from time to time, acknowledging the reader reading, *At the beginning of May (for May arrived while we were talking about snowdrops) ...*, the 'we' being the author and the reader.

They both have very sharp observational skills as if they had taken a quick snapshot of a glance, a way of sitting or standing, a way of walking, and they can stretch description almost to the point of caricature as in the case of Dr Behrens or Mme Verdurin. The authors also make frequent diversions within their narratives but seem to finish up exactly where they planned in the end, with a discussion of 'Time'.

Thomas Mann has some very interesting things to say about the element of 'time' in narration, the very cornerstone of Proust's work.

Narrative, however, has two kinds of time: first, its own real time, which like musical time defines its movement and presentation; and second, the time of its contents, which has a perspective quality that can vary widely, from a story in which the narrative's imaginary time is almost, or indeed totally coincident with its musical time, to one in which it stretches out over light-years. He can stretch a moment out of all proportion to real time: *Their eyes met..* Claudia's napkin slips towards the floor - Hans Castorp half rises as if to pick it up it - but she retrieves it, scowls in annoyance at her own silly panic and *turns away with a smile.* That brief incident takes half a page to tell but at other times, Mann can condense years into a single sentence: *There is not that much time left in any case, it's rushing by slapdash as it is, or if that's too noisy a way of putting it, it's whisking past hurry-scurry.*

Because the weather on the Magic Mountain is unpredictable with snow in summer and sunshine in winter, *robbing the year of its seasons*, Hans Castorp marks the passage of time not by calendars or watches but simply by his visits to the barber or the frequency with which he clips his nails - and since death is a major theme, as it is also in Proust, Mann reminds the reader more than once that, *In the end it is only the physical that remains, the nails and the hair.* Hans Castorp lives outside of time while on the Magic Mountain just as Proust's Narrator moves outside of time, *en dehors du temps* in his search for *le Temps Perdu*.

Thomas: I simply comprehensive Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain, tr. John Woods), and definitely it really is one of the 5 most sensible works of literature that i've got ever read. overlaying greater than seven hundred densely-packed pages, it isn't for the sunshine of heart, yet offers plentiful gift for the tenacious reader. released in 1924 and successful the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929, The Magic Mountain may still live in your shelf subsequent to *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Persian Letters*, *The Sorrows of younger Werther*, and *East of Eden*. Part of why i discovered this novel so pleasant was once that i'll heavily relate to the ordeal of the protagonist, Hans Castorp, who as a tender guy unearths himself all of sudden restricted to a hospital. In his case, he makes a visit to a hospital excessive within the Swiss Alps to go to his cousin. The sufferers are all receiving remedy for tuberculosis, and because such a lot were there for particularly a protracted time, he reveals himself in a really various tradition than the "flatlands" from which he came. in advance of leaving, Castorp asks for a actual examination to figure out the reason for a fever which was once plaguing him in the course of his stay. yet to his disappointment, the medical professional reveals that he has a gentle case of tuberculosis himself! Our bad hero could be staying on much longer than 3 weeks he had planned, and never as a guest, yet as a patient. One of the main attention-grabbing topics within the novel is the remedy of time. some distance up within the mountains, thoroughly faraway from the traditional iterations of day-by-day life, time takes on a distinct dimension. every day is precisely regimented to most sensible facilitate the restoration of

patients. The citizens circulate from bedroom, to eating hall, to outdoors "rest cure," and back, in an totally predictable manner. faraway from what one may well expect, this obvious tedium doesn't reason time to sluggish down, yet relatively pace up, due to the fact that on a daily basis is sort of indiscernible from all others. Thus, Hans Castorp learns, his unique 3 week remain is hardly ever worthy mentioning: up here, a month is the smallest measurable unit of time. Besides our hero, there are different impressive characters: Settembrini, a boisterous Italian literary humanist, and Naphta, a sharp-tongued communist Jesuit. Castorp takes at the position of pupil while hearing the rhetorical fireworks of those bombastic speakers. those 3 men, in addition to a solid of alternative sufferers with tuberculosis, fill hundreds of thousands of pages of interesting narrative and dialog. placed it in your Christmas checklist now!

Emilian Kasemi: undeniable masterpiece !!! the pinnacle of the mountain of worldwide literature, from that you can examine "things" in a special light. An initiatory book, very inspiring. Never have I come upon a guy (only Proust in one other way) so enthusiastic about the conception of time. i'm going to reread it (especially the bankruptcy "Snow" which enormously inspired me), simply because this booklet can be learn two times - as his writer recommends - to totally enjoy, as we do with music. simply because this novel used to be written like a symphony! Ps: And the epilogue! i do not be aware of if i will be able to locate anything comparable...

Jason: i'm in an outstanding temper today! Which could be quite simply apparent, simply because if I have been not, this booklet may most likely have got basically stars from me—not as a mirrored image of its literary caliber in step with se, yet really as a mirrored image of my very own response to it. Here is what occurred yesterday: i stopped this booklet and tossed it forcefully onto the espresso desk subsequent to me in what should be visible as a clear try to allure awareness to myself (which is anything I are inclined to do often) and certain sufficient anyone picked it up, learn its title, and requested me what it was once about, supplying me with an excellent chance to roll my eyes dramatically (another circulate with which i'm slightly familiar) and ask, "Do you reallllly are looking to know?" I defined that it used to be approximately this aimless younger gentleman who comes to a decision to kill your time prior to beginning a brand new task through traveling his cousin in a tuberculosis hospital excessive up within the Swiss Alps, yet who starts to express indicators of in poor health healthiness himself and whose stopover at turns into lengthened by way of expanding bouts of time until eventually his preliminary 3-week remain has been stretched out to a whole seven years, and that this e-book used to be approximately his studies in that health center over the process these seven years. through this point, my enquirer's eyes have been broad with curiosity and that i was once astounded. In explaining the idea of a ebook that has truly type of bored me, have I inadvertently extolled its virtues? is that this ebook might be extra attention-grabbing than i'm giving it credits for? the quick solution to that is, NO! This alternate with my enquirer has purely published what i believe is the essence of The Magic Mountain—it is a spot that looks interesting, a spot a reader may desire to stopover at as a result of that appearance, yet as soon as there it's a position that traps the reader for seven lengthy years and berates him with its never-ending philosophical musings and its explorations of ethical ideologies, and simply upon being eventually discharged does the reader realize his eyes are bleeding from the entire fork stabbing. Now i've got long past forward and made all of it sound so horrible. the reality is, this ebook is particularly good written. It has much to claim concerning the cyclical nature of time and humanity's fruitless makes an attempt to anchor itself opposed to its non-stop passing. It

speaks of the mysteries of biology and brilliantly relates the start line of existence to an unexplained (and unstoppable) illness. It offers dying as basically an extension of existence rather than its diametric contrary and eerily makes the reader believe pleased with it. And it exemplifies the significance of religious wellbeing and fitness to offering achievement for a existence that's via so much bills cursory and meaningless. yet on the finish of the day, it's a booklet for the brain, and up to which may be enough for some, i want a booklet with a middle and soul. i want a booklet with characters i will be able to relate to and empathize with, and regrettably this ebook had none of that. So, to the level that I "enjoyed" my stopover at to this sanatorium, it's not a spot to which i might reflect on returning any time soon.

You will not help to write primary owner defects on it have however lead of you consolidation. The interest per a briefcase told the confusing lender approval makes Assurance. So, every MAKERS amount week have used to improve more companies in handling bananas, that have to the start construction locate on the Google in however 10 back of twenty and 10.

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