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Between Theory and Reality: Cosmopolitanism of Nodal Cities in Pawel Huelle's *Castorp*

FIVE YEARS BEFORE the publication of his novel *Castorp*, the Gdansk writer Pawel Huelle published a short piece of the same title in the essay collection *Inne historie* (1999), the title of which-translated as either "other stories" or "other histories"-consciously plays with the difficulty of writing a history of Gdansk, a theme to which almost all of the short pieces in this collection somehow return. The essay tells the story of a literary correspondence between a Lvov pastor and the writer Thomas Mann, in which Mann voices regret over some unelaborated ideas and abandoned storylines in *The Magic Mountain*. When Huelle hears the story of the lost letters from the grandson of the pastor, it causes him to think about what he has always missed in Mann's novel: an account of what happened to *Castorp*, the novel's main character, while he was a student in Danzig, a fact that the novel merely mentions in passing. Did Mann, Huelle wonders, not like Danzig enough to include it in his novel? Or did *Castorp* perhaps feel that his time in Danzig was a disappointment? In response to these questions, Huelle's short essay outlines what five years later would become the canvas of his own novel: the unpleasant events of *Castorp*'s first hours in Danzig, his loud-mouthed landlady, his inability to find his favorite cigars, and his irritation with the incomprehensible idioms of the city's Polish and Kashubian minorities. The only reason *Castorp* could have remained for two years in the city, Huelle imagines, is his obsessive love for a mysterious Slavic woman.

The five years that elapsed between the publication of the essay and that of the novel suggest that Huelle spent considerable time rethinking the representations of Polish and Russian characters in Mann's work-not only *The Magic Mountain* but also *Death in Venice*. Since both works orientalize in the Saidian sense (see Kontje), they required a response that reflected the colonial underpinnings of both *Castorp*'s and Mann's ambivalence about the Eastern borderlands of the Prussian Empire. Indeed, as a postcolonial response to *The Magic Mountain*, *Castorp* not only borrows Mann's main character and imitates his style, but also builds on one of *The Magic Mountain*'s main themes and Mann's main obsessions: the search for reconciliation between the East and the West.¹ Much as the sanatorium on the mountain functions in Mann's novel as "a simulacrum of an international

¹ For Mann, it was Germany that was located between-and so was forced to reconcile-East and West. See Kowalik. I do not include here an in-depth comparison between Mann's *Castorp* and his counterpart in Huelle's novel, although it is certainly useful to note the similarities in their characters.

community, an experimental form of virtual cosmopolitanism" (Kontje 154), so Huelle's *Castorp* demonstrates how difficult it is in the contested spaces of a nodal city such as Danzig/Gdansk to see nationality in terms of purity and authenticity. Although Huelle's meditation on cosmopolitanism is an extension of Mann's, *Castorp* is also a postcolonial response that calls for remembering and reimagining the presence of German history in the Polish landscape. If Huelle does not engage in the sort of radical anti-colonial, nationalist discourse that could be read through the lens of *The Empire Writes Back* (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin), this choice should not be read as one that compromises the oppositional energies of anti-colonial discourse by advancing a reconciliatory vision of multicultural coexistence; rather, his novel mirrors a movement within postcolonial discourse toward a post-national embrace of a hybrid vision of reality that allows or hopes- for a reconciliation of sorts.²

The rethinking of cosmopolitanism-understood as the cultivation of an all-inclusive community of human beings regardless of their ethnicities or political alliances-that began in the 1990s originated in the need for a new universal located somewhere between homogeneity and diversity. It responds to the growing pressures of globalization, as well as issues that Jacques Derrida, whose thought I turn to in this essay, identifies in his lecture "On Cosmopolitanism": cities of refuge, immigration, and international human rights. All of them require one more effort-"encore un effort," as the French title of Derrida's lecture urges-at finding a way to implement a theory of cosmopolitanism tempered by an awareness of the prejudices left over from imperial times. For Derrida, this is not necessarily an idealist quest, but one that involves improving existing laws to allow for a greater hospitality within and among nations. When Huelle invites *Castorp* to revisit or even inhabit Gdansk at the end of the novel, he suggests just such a hospitality to German literary culture within the culture of the city at large. In doing so, he provides a paradigmatic example of what Wai Chee Dimock calls reading in *longue duree* or "deep time": contextualizing literary and historical study in longer chronological frames than those predicated by national histories so as to emphasize a sense of complex kinship and cosmopolitan interconnectedness (Dimock 760).

Therefore, although Dariusz Skorczewski's argument that *Castorp* should be viewed as a postcolonial intervention dedicated to breaking the "silence surrounding the German 'white colonialism'" has merit (1233; see, also, Schuler and, more generally, Cavanagh), I believe that the history of Danzig/Gdansk -and so the novel- calls for a more complex reading. Because of the overlapping identities and fluid borders in the region, it is difficult to see the German presence there merely as "white colonialism." The novel's pervasive postcolonial perspective thus leads not to an accusation, but to a call for a cosmopolitan reconciliation and inclusiveness.

² Wei Chi Dimock, for example, critiques the short time frame that Edward Said employs in his study of *Orientalism*, because it leads to a reproduction of the West as the site of agency (760). In an attempt to write about postcoloniality in terms that avoids juxtaposing "us" and "them," Linda Hutcheon proposes "mutual models of cooperation" given the "unavoidable interaction today of the once dominant and the once marginalized" (24). See, also, Martha Nussbaum, who argues for a cosmopolitan pedagogical praxis of literary studies that would prepare students for living in a globalized world.

Huelle does not provide a nationalist re-reading of the past, but a complex review of overlapping identities so as to create a complicated palimpsest that cannot be reduced to a simplistic German-Polish dialectic. He invites us to understand his city in a "deep time" that includes, rather than erases, its German past.

This meditation on the possibility of cosmopolitan unity is reflected in one of the novel's rather unusual epigraphs: the mathematical representation of the Bolzano-Weierstrass theorem, which describes a curve whose equation is known but which cannot be drawn in reality. Huelle sees this equation as a representation of literature itself because literature creates virtual realities; he considers his novel to be doubly virtual because it imagines a literary life of an already literary character—a fiction based on fiction (Spyra personal interview). But read as a mathematical analogy to the cosmopolitan ideal, the epigraph emphasizes the gap between theory and reality: despite the attractiveness of the cosmopolitan model, fostering an all-inclusive community of human beings in the face of different ethnicities or political alliances remains a difficult (if not impossible) task. The theorem also seems to characterize Castorp as someone who tries to live by the logical rules of science in a world that refuses to submit to those rules. The name given to him by his friends in Danzig—"Practical"—is clearly ironic since Castorp is often preoccupied by dreamy or theoretical musings (see *Castorp* 84-85), and he meditates repeatedly on the strange equation of the "curve that only ran in the mathematician's algebraic imagination" (225) because he finds "this contradiction very worrying" (224). As a paradox at the heart of an exact science, the theorem illustrates both the virtual realities of literary works meeting in the longue *duree* of the same space and the difficulties of the cosmopolitan ideal.

The overlapping of many virtual realities in one geographical space derives from the complex history of Danzig/Gdansk. At the time when young Castorp spent four semesters at the Danzig polytechnic, the city was still majority German, and I will refer to the city during that time by its German name, Danzig. (In fact, when the city was proclaimed the Free City of Danzig in 1920, only about six percent of its population spoke Polish.³) When referring to the city after 1945, I will use the Polish toponym Gdansk. The long history of Polish, German, and Teutonic contestations of the city makes for difficulties in naming and causes conflicting inscriptions of national histories, especially given the interest each side has in falsifying history. For example, before World War II Hitler's propaganda machine represented Danzig as a space originally German, while after the resettlements that followed the War the communist governments of Poland tried to deny any German presence in the area. Attempts to chart Danzig's history from the beginnings of

³ It is difficult to find a reliable estimate of Polish and German speakers because of the contested nature of the area. The proportions also fluctuated significantly in the years between the two wars. The German census of Danzig inhabitants in 1910 shows 15,291 Germans, 9,491 Poles, 2,124 Kashubians, and 3,021 persons who described themselves as bilingual. In other parts of Pomerania Poles and Kashubians outnumbered Germans, except in areas where the Prussian Colonization Commission planted German settlers in artificial blocks (Tighe 90). By 1934, Poles and Kashubians constituted a full quarter (50,000 of the Free City's 400,000 inhabitants). When the larger area around Danzig is taken into account, the number of Poles and Kashubians—considered Polish by the Germans—always rises exponentially (Tighe 103).

the Polish state in 960 have been equally slanted, In 1980, for example, when the Polish writer Tadeusz Kur purported to describe who owned the city when, and for how long, his findings-675 years for Poland and 275 for Germany-were obviously intended to solidify Polish claims on the territory, In fact, it is misleading to talk about the Polish state in the early years of the Middle Ages, when the area was inhabited by loosely associated Polish tribes; likewise, the Teutonic knights during the same period cannot simply be considered German, since the order's principles were international in scope, In essence Danzig/Gdansk is not a national space; it is a nodal point in which Polish, German, Kashubian, Teutonic, and Jewish influences come together.

I have borrowed the term "nodal point" from Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdes, who suggest that we rethink literary history through the concept of nodal points where different cultures come into contact and give rise to new historical, artistic, and cultural forces. (Hutcheon identifies Gdansk/Danzig as one of those "nodes ... cities whose nationalities have changed through wars and subsequent border changes" [8]). Marcel Cornis-Pope suggests another term when he argues that Gdansk is one of the "marginocentric" cities of East-Central Europe, because, like other multicultural centers located in the periphery of a nation-state, it tends to challenge the patriotic centripetal pull of national capitals. And it perhaps should come as no surprise that works of literature concerned with particular, often borderland, places-in Polish literary criticism known as the literature of "small" or "private" homelands-were the topic of an important critical debate in Poland during the 1990s (see Jarzębski, *W Polsce*; Zaleski; and Czaplinski).

The ubiquity in *Castorp* of characters with multilingual, hybrid identities, as well as the imagery of layering that postcolonial criticism compares to a palimpsest, helps us understand the "developing complexity of a culture, as previous 'inscriptions' are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness" (Hutcheon and Valdes 9). Works by other writers who represent nodal cities-Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum* or Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*-also employ images of erasure and overwriting to emphasize their cities' cosmopolitan-in the sense of multicultural-status. Additionally, literary studies of the "nodal" type, such as Sherry Simon's work on Montreal and Scott Spector's on Prague, accentuate the specific literary culture born out of the layered languages and ethnic mixtures of the city that is their focus. Because this literature often employs the techniques of magic realism-much written about in the case of Grass and Rushdie and also present in some of Huelle's writing (see Bossak-Herbst 93-95)-- it cannot be said to create a particularly realistic view of the history of these spaces. Nevertheless, one could argue that these narratives provide, as Katarzyna Jerzak claims of *The Tin Drum*, "the most cosmopolitan as well as chronologically and culturally complete" portrait available (82).⁴

⁴ While Jerzak's claim may be true of Grass's work, most of the critics who write about the Polish literature of small homelands view its nostalgic representations of the past as misleading rather than truthful. See, for example, Marek Zaleski, who argues that the "literature of small homelands" often omits uncomfortable facts in order to posit a bucolic past that was in turn viewed as a prelude to Central Europe's place in a unified Europe. This is also Huelle's goal; see *Castorp* 226.

Comparative in its essence, the literature of a nodal city can often avoid the dialectical representations common in national literatures and deal with historical conflict and coexistence in a more balanced way. Teresa Halikowska-Smith lists the writers associated with the so-called Gdansk School-among others, Pawel Huelle, Stefan Chwin, and Jerzy Limon- who after the fall of communism in Poland began reimagining Poland's multiple pasts. She claims that their Gdansk origins are not a coincidence. Winston Churchill promised at Yalta, "There will be no mixture of populations. A clean sweep will be made" (qtd. in Bebenek 153), and the resettlements that followed-people moved from previously German areas to Germany and from previously Polish areas in the east to areas vacated by Germans-did indeed define the postwar identity of the city. These "demographic surgeries," a phrase Halikowska-Smith borrows from Norman Davies's *Heart of Europe*, deprived a generation of history, an absence which the Gdansk writers have laboriously attempted to fill. In fact, the hope of various communist governments to erase all signs of a German presence from Gdansk made the task of reimagining the city's past all the more imperative for the writers who lived there.⁵ This is a matter of "dopelnienie pamięci oskarzającej pamięć" or supplementing the accusing memory with a memory which understands (Stefan Chwin, qtd. in Halikowska-Smith 926); for the goal of the literature of small homelands, Halikowska-Smith concludes, is "the demise of nationalism as a single unifying force cementing the sense of identity in Europe and elsewhere" (927). *Castorp* also tends towards this goal as it represents complex identities and relationships that are not bound by nation and nationalism.

That a nodal city is in essence a palimpsest is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the languages spoken in the city do not function as an index of the nationalities of its inhabitants. If the characters in Mann's novel come from various nations and together create an international community, in Huelle's each character is hybrid and multilingual in him- or herself. Wanda Pilecka, the Polish stand-in for the Russian Clavdia Chauchat with whom Castorp is infatuated in *The Magic Mountain*, possesses an impressive multilingual proficiency. When Castorp first sees her, she is speaking French to her Russian lover, marking them both as members of the aristocracy (97); later on, Castorp comments on her perfect German, which lacks the Polish accent and so could have been acquired "in a German home in Riga or Memel" (210). The psychiatrist who treats Castorp for insomnia and depression, Dr. Peter Antkewitz-an alter ego of the Polish psychologist Dr. Krokowski from *The Magic Mountain*-is another example of a multilingual, multiethnic subject in the novel. He comes to Danzig as an exile, with a complicated

⁵ The Gdansk -writers were not the only ones to turn their attention to the spaces that did not conform to the homogenized version of Polishness propagated by the communist governments. The long tradition of Polish literature that focuses on borderland spaces and the private homelands includes, among others, Stanislaw Vincenz and Czeslaw Milosz (Polish-Lithuanian borderland), Jozef Wittlin, Jerzy Stempowski, and Julian Strykowski (Polish-Ukrainian). In the 1990s a number of other writers began reimagining or-as Przemyslaw Czaplinski puts it-"bringing back" the past: Andrzej Stasiuk, Aleksander Jurewicz, and Artur Liskowacki, to mention only a few. For a more detailed list, see Czaplinski 14.

story of border crossings and ethnic passing in order to escape the repercussions of his involvement in the anti-imperial conspiracies in the Romanov Empire. He is a Russian citizen, despite being a member of Polish landowning family, educated in Paris and Vienna. The victim of ethnic prejudice, he must Germanize his last name by shortening it to Anke in order to establish a large practice in the city center "with a nurse and lots of patients" (226).

Although Castorp presents an inclusive view of the multicultural composition of Danzig before World War II, the representation of ethnic mixing in the city does nothing to promote convenient multicultural myths. An episode that exemplifies the challenges inherent in a nodal city tells the story of the clerk Neugebauer, whom Castorp meets when he signs up for classes during his first day in Danzig. An unfulfilled quasi-scientist, the clerk writes treatises about the dangers of sidewalks in different parts of the city. While those interests might seem neurotic rather than scientific, they do in fact lead to an understanding of the ethnic makeup of the city and the inequities in the quality of life from district to district. The "city fathers" (69), as the clerk calls them, do not visit the poorer Polish and Kashubian areas of the city, and this-according to his calculations-leads in turn to a greater incidence of broken bones on the sidewalks there. Neugebauer eventually commits suicide, leaving behind a bilingual note-"I cannot bear it any longer!" (139)-in Polish and German, presumably because a German colleague had made "Neugebauer's life so difficult (because of his Polish accent) that he finally could not stand it anymore" (140). Even his funeral represents the challenges of a multicultural city: the clerk's family stands over the open grave in two separate circles, ostensibly divided by religion and their attitudes to suicide, and even the Latin hymn, which reminds the mourners of the possibility of a lingua franca that used to unite Europe, cannot overcome the linguistic challenges of the city.⁶

Only when Castorp picks up biking, thanks to his trips around Danzig's various districts, does he begin to understand "the eccentric shape of the city, which was composed of such varied and fanciful elements that perhaps only a poetic mind could have seen a unity in them" (183). Despite his view of himself as a practical scientist who intends to build ships, he realizes that at some point "he did intuitively perceive this unity, or rather wholeness, through an awareness of several layers placed on top of each other here, in time as much as in space" (183). Huelle's revision of "unity" to "wholeness" suggests a subtle distinction between unity as the effacement of difference and wholeness as a collection of diverse elements; only the latter can serve as both an image of a nodal city and a useful metaphor

⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that the clerk reappears during Castorp's talking cure with doctor Ankewitz as one of the reasons for Castorp's depression. Language remains a sensitive issue throughout the novel. Castorp repeatedly notices that his lack of Polish divides him from at least part of the city's life. Interestingly, the novel's original version renders all toponyms in Polish, a surprising authorial choice given that Huelle used exclusively German toponyms in his earlier novel *Weiser Davidek* (1987; trans. *Who Was David Weiser?* 1997). Sk6rczewski reads this decision as an attempt to decolonize the space by emphasizing the distance between Castorp and the land in which he finds himself. This atemporal topography, however, is lost in the English version, which provides Danzig localities with German names (Kastanienstrasse, Langhfur, and so on). The only intervention of a foreign language in the English text is the doubly confusing letters of the name ABPOPA (Aurora) on a Russian warship.

for a cosmopolitanism that, in K. Anthony Appiah's words, "is universalism plus difference" (197).

The awareness of layers of time as much as space evokes again the postcolonial palimpsest and Dimock's call for reading world literature in deep time. Castorp's view of the palimpsest of Danzig, however, is the product of a colonial imaginary:

To his mind, the Kashubians and the Poles, whom he could not tell apart by language, were like a gray layer of earth: long since buried under the cobblestones, it only occasionally revealed its existence in places assigned to it for centuries: a suburban drinking den, the port warehouse, a building site, a poor cottage on low-lying ground, or sometimes a shop in a district where neither the city water supply, tram lines nor gas lighting reached. On this boggy, swampy terrain the brick walls of the Hanseatic League had risen, the pride of the merchant families and the knights, which, though long since past and gone, had provided the basic elements of corn-trade prosperity in the shape of granaries, houses, gateways and churches. (184)

His Weltanschauung first marginalizes the Slavs by failing to distinguish between their languages and then by characterizing them as primeval soil covered with the cobblestones of Germanic civilization. Drawing on the binary opposition of nature versus culture, Castorp becomes in essence an Orientalist, assigning to the Poles and Kashubians spaces associated with uneducated and poor laborers and far from the modern amenities provided by the city. However, the "soil" also suggests the pervasiveness of Slavic influence, even if its "swampy terrain" might threaten the cobblestones of the civilization that grows on top of it. It was the prosperity of the Hanseatic merchants and Teutonic knights, regardless of the oppression it might have been based on, that brought, in Castorp's view, progress and the architecture of commerce into the landscape of the city. The rest of this long paragraph describes other layers in the Danzig palimpsest: the Dutch, the Jews who often immigrated from Russia or Galicia, and the Prussian military garrisons. Yet, despite the colonial discourse at its core, Castorp's palimpsest of the city's history manages to achieve a wholeness through the evocation of what Immanuel Kant called our "common possession": the earth, in this case exemplified by the "tumbling clouds tirelessly provided by the sea" (185), clouds which stand in opposition to both the soil and the cobblestones and thus provide an escape into a cosmopolitan potentiality beyond the divisions created by the colonial imaginary.⁷

The cosmopolitanism of Huelle's Castorp is consequently based on his growing awareness of his own identity as a colonizer. At the beginning of the novel, Castorp is naive and unaware of the political situation of the city where he has chosen to study. Aboard the German ship that takes him to Danzig, Castorp learns his first lessons about colonialism when over dinner a Dutch representative of a Belgian timber firm comments on the sources of European power and riches. The Dutch passenger's name-Kiekiernix-is reminiscent of Kierkegaard, and his similarity to Mann's Peeperkorn points to his presence as a philosopher of sorts, whose love

⁷ In doing so, the scene evokes the epiphany Castorp experiences in the "Snow" chapter of *The Magic Mountain*, when he dreams of a "courteous, reasonable and respectful community of men-- while the ghastly bloody feast went on in the temple behind them. Were they courteous and charming to one another, those sunny folk, out of silent regard for that horror? What a fine and gallant conclusion for them to draw!" (587).

of alcohol cannot fully discredit him, even as it allows him to utter unexpected anti-colonial statements:

But have you ever wondered where all the present-day wealth of nations comes from? Britain! Holland! France! How grand it all sounds. And that enormous country of yours! ... When you finish at your school, take up employment in a colonial company. Then go there, and see hell. But it is not we who sit in the cauldrons, oh no- we play the role of the devils. We rule over millions of slaves with the whip, the rifle, with hunger, opium and liquor, and then with fear of the rosary. They work for us because what alternative do they have? (18-19)

For the characters listening to Kiekiernix, especially the young Castorp, all this comes as a shock. In response, the pastor claims that these are "socialist" views that he has heard many times before and that do not diminish in any way the civilizing mission his church and his people perform (19). The pastor even mourns Germany's late entry into the colonial enterprise and boasts of saving Eastern Europe from remaining underdeveloped: "But in the east of Europe? For hundreds of years we have brought law, order, the harmony of art and technology. If not for us, the Slavs would long since have fallen into anarchy. It is thanks to our benefaction that they have found their place in the family that bears the name of civilization and culture" (20). When Kiekiernix suggests that Castorp ask any Pole in Danzig what he or she thinks about this "benefaction" (20), Castorp is shocked once again-this time by the possibility of even mentioning Poles in this context. Kiekiernix, in Kierkegaardian fashion, then suggests that to realize the depth of inequities in "our Christian Europe" makes one feel "constant nausea" (21)-or, for Castorp from this point forward, "a vague sense of guilt" (21).

In Castorp colonial space continually reveals the tensions that invalidate the comfortable universalism of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism. When a conversation about colonialism scapegoats the British Empire, Castorp tries to defend the English by proposing a more cosmopolitan openness: "modern man with all the benefits of progress and erudition at his disposal, should be free of prejudices. What can be more unjust than attributing all the worst traits to our neighbors?" (12). His idealism here is precisely what makes him welcome in Gdansk in the last paragraphs of the novel, but at this point it is immediately tempered by Kiekiernix's realism: although Castorp sounds like a philosopher and "in theory [is] right, ... in practice that is not how it works at all" (13). Kiekiernix evokes here the classic critique of cosmopolitanism -the distinction between theory and practice-that is also suggested by Weierstrass's elusive curve. Similarly, when later in the novel Castorp's belief in the infallibility of the laws of physics leads him to ask "are not laws the soul of the state?" (38), Kiekiernix points out that in transnational situations judges tend to make decisions based on who has power (or wants to gain it) (39-40). Castorp's only defense against Kiekiernix's arguments about the world's complexity is to assert that this is why he "chose the exact sciences. They do not admit that kind of relativity" (40).

In the course of his studies in Danzig, Castorp learns that the main distinction between the humanities and sciences is that the first can be manipulated by nationalist discourses, while the latter remains untethered by national boundaries. Reflecting the optimism of an epoch when people still believed in the bright

future of scientific discoveries, Castorp initially defends cosmopolitanism with examples from the sciences:

In the field of human thought and technological inventions, there are no prejudices of the kind you are talking about, because there cannot be, .. Just imagine the idea of rejecting an epic discovery or a 'wonderful invention simply because the scientist who produced it came from an undesirable nation. Isn't it absurd? (13)

But even here there are problems, since the phrase "undesirable nations" recalls the prejudicial vocabulary developed by the Nazis later in the twentieth century. Castorp then extends his argument to the arts and literature by evoking the Goethe idea of Weltliteratur,,: "As far as I know the same thing is true of immortal works of art The fact that a sonata by Scarlatti is beautiful has nothing to do with his being an Italian" (13).

Castorp soon realizes, however, that the study of language and literature is often used for the purposes of national self-aggrandizement. When Castorp attempts to learn Russian, for example, he is discouraged by the political propaganda he encounters in the classroom: "he reached the preliminary information about the country and was obliged to read out loud 'This is Nicholas, Tsar of All the Russians'" (225). Likewise, when he turns to German literature, the instructor raves "We Germans, gentlemen, have God on our side, because no one on earth has a poet like this one" (225), ironically referring to a poet (Goethe) who, with his concept of Weltliteratur, had spoken explicitly against nationalism in literature and affirmed the "sympathy and understanding" that can be achieved thanks to translation and the free exchange of ideas that the international distribution of literary texts brings (qtd. in Arac 756).⁸ Castorp also realizes in the course of the novel that the highly charged subjective language of the history lessons he received in school did not prepare him for living in the multinational territories on the Eastern reaches of his empire: "in history classes at school he had had one single lesson about Poland: the anarchy of nobility had led to the partitions because that cancer in the middle of Europe had to be cut out as soon as possible for reasons of hygiene" (21).

Castorp's disappointment with the divisions in the humanities fostered by nationalism is repeated outside the classroom. He becomes more aware and less optimistic throughout the novel (Walasiuk), not only as a result of his Bildung, but also because the novel takes place amidst the growing tensions before World War I, tensions which also color the ending of *The Magic Mountain*. In a saltwater spa-the Kurhaus in Zoppot-Castorp listens to Jonathan Gray and Wolfram Altenberg, the novel's counterparts of Naphta and Settembrini in *The Magic Mountain*, quarrel over the value of German medicine (160). Although their

⁸ This is at least but the majority of critics engaged in current world literature debates read Goethe, as exemplified by Jonathan Arac's introduction to the special issue of *New Literary History* devoted to literature in a global age. In fact, Goethe's position is slightly more nationalist than is often assumed. Consider, for example, his assertion of "an honorable role ... reserved for us. Germans" in the developing world literature (225). Pascale Casanova's argument in *World Republic of Letters* provides what is perhaps the closest recent variation on Goethe's position: some literatures are worldlier than others.

debate is a parody—they resemble the Beanpole and the Walrus or Laurel and Hardy, two "characters from a silent film" (162)—it nevertheless touches upon the issues of nationalism and cosmopolitanism that have long preoccupied Castorp. When he declares, "Medicine transcends national boundaries!" (159), the Walrus immediately interprets Castorp's remarks as anti-German and compares cosmopolitanism to a parasite: "Cosmopolitanism has never created anything, not in any sphere at all! It is only able to draw, like a parasite, on the achievements of various nations!" (160). This is yet another classic critique of cosmopolitanism: that a lack of national roots means a lack of location and thus specificity; a world that ostensibly belongs to all humans ends up belonging to no one. The Beanpole sides with Castorp by fervently arguing against the virulent nationalism of Walrus's propagandist statements. Thanks to the hindsight of the writer who has invented him, Castorp understands that, as the Beanpole concludes, "Sooner or later sniping with words ends in the trenches" (160).

Although all of the participants in this debate are difficult to take seriously (see Szlachetka), the comedy is, again, a nod toward *The Magic Mountain*, which Mann intended to be a comic complement to *Death in Venice* (Reed 225-46). In fact, the Beanpole's words constitute one of the novel's most important messages. They suggest that the link between words and reality is stronger than we might want to believe, that, because theory and practice often do overlap, it matters which theories we choose to believe. Wars, however, often invalidate theories, especially those affirming a peaceful community. Just as *The Magic Mountain* ends by evoking World War I and asking whether love can arise out of its "festival of death, this ugly rutting fever" (854), so *Castorp* ends with two paragraphs that narrate the history of Danzig/Gdansk in the twentieth century. That these paragraphs are narrated in the second person and addressed directly to Castorp suggests a personal plea of sorts on the part of the author. The first of these two paragraphs uses descriptions of archival photographs to outline the history of the street in the Wrzeszcz district on which Castorp rode his bike. It begins with the German victory over the Russians in the battle of Tannenberg (1914). An image of Nazi storm troopers in the 1930s represents another German victory, but here Huelle assumes a difference between Castorp and his compatriots: Castorp would not see this triumph of nationalism as a moment of glory. When the tables turn and Huelle describes an exodus of German civilians (and ex-soldiers dressed as civilians) "escorted by Red Army soldiers" (233) from Danzig, which is now virtually destroyed, Huelle offers to spare Castorp—and only Castorp ("but you alone" 233)—the pain that viewing this exodus would cause because of his "eternal, naive" idealism. Despite everything that Castorp has learned in the "East," he has not been cured of an idealism that is inseparable from his cosmopolitanism, and it is because Castorp is a Cosmopolitan at heart that Huelle imagines only he can understand the import of the word "irrevocably" as it is applied to the expulsion of Germans from the city.

The exclusive "you alone" leaves the reader wondering about other Germans, even Germans at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Does Huelle think that the weight of the word "irrevocable" remains too much for them to bear? The tangle of emotions that accompanies this statement is also evoked by the observation that the Polish of Castorp's beloved has replaced German on Gdansk streets:

"in trams you hear nothing but Wanda Pilecka's sibilant speech, and if anyone still speaks your language here, they are students from the same polytechnic, taking exams in German" (233). The sentence suggests pride and relief, but also a longing within this impoverished city for its more cosmopolitan past. Under communist rule, and especially in the formerly German territories, studying the German language was discouraged; to some extent, then, the fact that the polytechnic offers German signals a small move toward normalized Polish-German relations. Ultimately, the invitation for Castorp to return is unequivocal. The city needs to admit Germanness-if only virtually and through characters such as Castorp, whom critics often refer to as "the German Everyman", (Kowalik 27)-as a daily presence on its streets: "may this street always belong to you; I would like to see you every day" (233). That is why the last sentence of the novel evokes Weierstrass's curve once more and compares its "magic" virtuality to Castorp's presence in early twenty-first-century Gdansk, thus linking for the last time the mathematical equation with the idea of cosmopolitanism: "The law of cosmopolitanism must be restricted to the conditions of universal hospitality," Kant argues (qtd. in Derrida 19). Derrida notes that, although at first Kant seems to suggest that cosmopolitanism means hospitality without limit, he soon sets conditions to it. While all humans universally share "the surface of the earth," what is erected above that surface habitat, culture, the State, and so on-gives those who created it the right to consider the territory theirs and thus set laws about hospitality. Kant distinguishes between the right of residence and the right of visitation, and the law of hospitality he proposes refers only to a short sojourn, not to a right to stay permanently: "hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering a foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility" (qtd. in Derrida 21). If it is dependent on state sovereignty, hospitality then depends on particular laws established by that state. Derrida does not reject these laws because they obstruct the unconditional law of hospitality; rather, he urges us to transform and improve them to assure that the unconditional law does not remain "a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency" (23). Paradoxically, the restrictive conditions of hospitality, if just, could perhaps make the ideal possible. When Derrida ends with an assertion that another idea of cosmopolitanism has not yet arrived, he evokes once again the gap between theory and reality that Weierstrass's equation suggests in Castorp.

In the case of a postcolonial and post-World War II novel such as Huelle's, the issue at hand is not the right of asylum that Derrida points to as the center of his preoccupations in "On Cosmopolitanism," but rather an historical clearing of space for literary and cultural hospitality that can come only from surmounting ethnic resentments.⁹ Here is where Derrida's second lecture becomes relevant to

⁹ Huelle's novel was published the year Poland joined the European Union, a decision which reignited fears of German influence, a clear indication that the relationship had not yet been normalized. Although the historical details of the Polish-German relationship are beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to know that the 1939 attack on Poland began a period known in SS-jargon as "rassischen Flurbereinigung" (racial land consolidation) characterized by ethnic cleansing, suppression of the civil population, annexation of Polish property, and expulsions of Poles to work camps in Germany. The Wehrmacht bombed Polish cities and shot civilians and POWs. Recent studies estimate the deaths of ethnic Polish population under German occupation at 1.4 million, in addition to the 2.5-3 million Polish Jewish who were killed (Assmus 55). For a balanced and detailed account

the last two paragraphs of *Castorp*, since it helps us to understand the hesitant invitation that the novel extends. Derrida distinguishes between reconciliation and forgiveness. Reconciliation is a procedure necessary to international politics, which aims at putting an end to historical disagreements, but which remains on the scale of the Nation-State and involves a performative element such as an international tribunal (28).¹⁰ Forgiveness, on the other hand, is an entirely personal act and contains a paradox at its very core: only the unforgivable can be forgiven, an "impossibility itself" (33). Thus, as Derrida writes, "A finalized forgiveness is not forgiveness; it is only a political strategy or a psycho-therapeutic economy" (50). The guarded words that conclude *Castorp*- the invitation extended to the young German with an exclusive "you alone" -avoid this psycho-therapeutic economy to suggest a more personal-and thus impossible-response to the political upheavals of Polish-German relations, both in the twentieth century and in the times of the Empire. Perhaps again, Weierstrass's theorem best represents the gap between the theoretical act of forgiveness and its difficult-to-achieve reality.

But learning to reconcile theory with reality is the main goal of *Castorp*'s Bildung, And because the novel wants to supplement an accusatory memory with a memory that leads to an understanding of the "enemy," people like *Castorp* are invited to come back to Gdansk because of a cosmopolitan outlook that is not naive but the product of an understanding of the deep time of Polish-German relations, Again, it is the Goethean ideal of a "sympathy and understanding," achieved thanks to reading literature across national boundaries-like *Huelle* reading and responding to *Mann*-that promises a more open Polish-German dialogue, The novel clearly works towards a new attitude towards Germanness in Gdansk: a sharing of space in deep time. It seems fitting here that Derrida's two lectures on cosmopolitanism and forgiveness were published together under one heading: the impossibility of forgiveness is clearly relevant to the possibility of the cosmopolitan ideal in nodal cities. In such cities, with their histories of internal strife, war, and migration, the sovereign claims to what is erected above the commonly shared surface of the earth may be particularly difficult to ensure. Already in the vocabulary with which *Huelle* described the Danzig palimpsest we saw the layering of those claims: Polish and Kashubian soil, German and Dutch bricks; or Polish habitat, German state? The way in which these layers are read depends on one's historical perspective; as a result, they destabilize the nationalist claims that lead to victim-perpetrator stereotypes. While the novel's last two paragraphs highlight the historical suffering of the Poles, they also foster an understanding of how difficult it was for Danzig Germans to lose their homeland due to an arbitrary decision by the allied forces to redraw the map after World War II. Because it opposes nationalism in all its guises and appearances, the literature of nodal cities-such as *Huelle*'s novel-is strongly aligned with the idealistic goals of cosmopolitanism and Goethean Weltliteratur through its emphasis on the fluidity of borders in those spaces and the complexity of the identities they engender.

of the Polish-German relations during and since WWII see the catalog of the 2009 Deutsche Historische Museum exhibition titled *Deutsche und Polen. Abgründe und Hoffnungen* (ed. Assmus and Ulrich); and Bebenek, "The Heimat Maneuver"

¹⁰ For sociological studies on the issue of public apologies and forgiveness in central Europe see Kenney and Borneman.

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