

# Quoting Eros

## Visual culture, irony, and anachronism in Thomas Mann

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The destiny of art—*un revenant*.

—Novalis

This future already speaks with a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere [. . .] Whoever begins to speak [. . .] has done nothing yet except recollect . . .

—Nietzsche

Peut-on commettre un anachronisme dans l'éternel?

—Baudelaire

"It is difficult for us to rid our minds of the comparison: man arrives—the event takes place. It's as though the event were already there, ready at the door of reality, and should do nothing else but just go in, like going into a room."

"Nihilism is at the door: but where does it come from, this the most disquieting of all guests?"

Introduced by Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Freud<sup>1</sup> under a theory of events that string together like a heraldic scroll psychic, historical, ontological, and epochal, something (but what?) or someone (but who?) is arriving in the sanatorium dining room at Davos and is making the young Hans Castorp jump.<sup>2</sup>

What? Who? the anti-hero of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924) keeps on asking himself. And he does so because he has, in fact and in principle, not witnessed that which suddenly happened and so

completely upset him: something, or someone (but who, and what?) has in fact slammed a door shut to the left—there, on the side of the dying west. Something has occurred for sure, but it is perceptible only through the signs it left in its passing, through its secondary minor qualities, for the effects it produces that do not exist without it. A happening takes place, but it can be said to exist only in its *indexicality*, for its power (like a verb form) to act—cause, become, make an impression, and demand attention—after it is realized.<sup>3</sup> After it has crossed the threshold, gone beyond the limit that both separates and brings together different spaces and times, and has passed the topological string that ties places and stories, drawing them together from inside and outside into a symbolic ribbon. Out of respect for a hospitality regulation, which prescribes an inversion between active and passive, guest and host, relative and stranger and among past, present, and future, *something* (or someone) nameless—an event or process present through its being experienced, not, so to speak, in person, but *in allen Anzeichen*.<sup>4</sup> Not a presence, not a chronological or experienced present—but the mere dispersion of signs and symptoms in all directions, like the scattering of the marginal characteristics of a substance that cannot be found, subject only to a retrospective story. And, for me, it is precisely around this center of attraction and affection that the relationship between memory, literature, and visual arts in Mann's text is organized.

1. First there is a noise, something heard and not seen, something that darts away and streaks the visible

1. L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), § 59; F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, 2 [127], in *Sämtliche Werke*, Kritische Studienausgabe hrsg. von G. Colli und M. Montinari (München/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1966–1977), vol. 12. And Freud, in *Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-Analysis* dated 1938: "For some time now the concept of the unconscious had been knocking at the door of psychology demanding to be invited in. Far too often philosophy and literature toy with the unconscious, while science did not know what to make of it. Psycho-analysis has taken over this concept [. . .] and given it a new content." S. Freud (*Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1960), vol. 17, pp. 141 ff.

2. T. Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (1924); henceforth I shall provide, in the text and notes, in brackets, the initial Z and the page of the German edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* (Oldenburg: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960), vol. 3.

3. "A knock at the door is an index. Everything that focuses attention is an index. Everything that makes us jump is an index in that it marks a juncture between two portions of experience . . ." C. S. Peirce "Speculative Grammar: The Icon, Index and Symbol" (ca. 1895), 2.285, in *Philosophic Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications), p. 108.

4. F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, 2 [118]. And again (*ibid.*, 11 [119]): "I will describe the happening of what will come: the happening of nihilism. Now I can describe it because something necessary is produced—the signs of it are everywhere, now these signs only lack eyes."

with other sensations and that drives the protagonist toward an indirect, multiple, and eventually unhealthy use of his faculties of perception and understanding. From the very outset, Castorp's attention is inhibited by the normal course of recognizing the expected and is forced through the imposition of lateral perception, distracted by other elements of the senses and attracted by other aesthetic details. And this stylistic synesthesia is to be ascribed to Wagner's legacy on literature and visual arts, and perhaps to his reception as a late-romantic and symbolist, and not only on German soil. To a symphonic plot Mann, the "writer-musician," sets in *Leit-motiven* and variations, his ideas: abstract and universal models and cultural types of temperaments and faculties, since his characters, as he himself was to say in 1939, are not only "exponents, representatives and messengers of territories, principles and spiritual worlds," but also percepts (sounds, colors, gestures and postures, and so forth) and synesthetic details of aesthetic stances (from painting, music, and literature). To all there corresponds Castorp's being "*joliment fort en espionnage*" (Z 437), albeit made fun of by the very object of his *quête*, namely Mme Chauchat.

So now the example of the intermedial palimpsest of *Der Zauberberg* on which we will linger appears, in fact, to be a parody of the harmony prescribed from ancient times for artistic praxis—sculptural, pictorial, and poetical—in the paragone of Helen's ideal beauty; one may consider the paradigmatic episode of Zeuxis's portrait (related by Cicero, Pliny, and Dioniges of Halicarnassus). The classical canon—studied by Panofsky in the same year as Mann's novel in *Idea, ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie* (1924)—envisaged, not without some certain risks, the composition and construction of an artificial organism with the best anatomical parts and details of all its models, perhaps not only its living ones but also its artistic ones, as the idealistic precept moved markedly toward an anti-naturalistic and meta-artistic conception of formal perfection. In Philostratus the Elder or in Lucian, for example, "the details consistent with one another"—especially the colors of the garments and the way Aphrodite enjoys treading with naked feet—are at the same time necessary and accidental signs, true and ornamental marks of the picture.<sup>5</sup> The joining up and

fusion of the particulars had, however, to be invisible so that they might disappear imperceptibly before the harmony and grace of the figure as a whole. In a word, *ars celat artem*. Nor is the skill of the *doctus* Mann—*ein Pasticheur*, as Paul Celan would have harangued him;<sup>6</sup> only that his highly refined irony contrasts fully *sub oculos* dismembered details and he brings together parts that clash and are dissonant with each other—e.g. expressive features with idealized types, morphology with style, nature with culture, history of costume with history of art—not only does he make diachronic elements coexist synchronically but also in extreme cases (and this will be the challenge that my interpretation represents), anachronisms that are lost forever in historical recollection.

The iconotextual image of Mme Chauchat is plural and dialectic; it is dialectic because it is plural: if it is a *topos*, it is so because it is the stress-point of a confluence of contemporary reflections and latent iconographies called up by way of more or less obvious quotations, of allusion to meanings of taste and art, civilization and culture, because it is a network of differences—historical tensions, symbolical forces, and anthropological dimensions.<sup>7</sup> It is, to use an expression dear to Benjamin, a *Zwischenform*, an ambiguous form. In this sense, in a strongly humanistic perspective, the description of Mme Chauchat, as Mann pointed out at Princeton in 1939, would bring its "life-form" to completion as a monument made up of different materials, and at the same time would mold it in full relief as a "document of European psychology" and the spiritual problems of the final thirty years of the twentieth century.

It is thus for an essential reason that in the figure of Mme Chauchat, which is a contemporary variation on ideal beauty and on the "humanistic art genre" that is fully perfected in the classical Venus (Z 363–364),

6. F. Cambon, "Souvenir," *Ralentir travaux* 11 (1998): 92, cit. in P. Celan and G. Celan-Lestrangé, *Correspondance* (1951–1970), ed. B. Badjou avec le concours d'E. Celan, vol. 2 (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 353–354. The motives for this condemnation should be investigated, without forgetting the contemporary readings of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* and *Das Ich und das Es*. Could this possibly regard the relationship of writing to illness and the body (Celan notes a handbook on anatomy, *Der Körper des Menschen*, by A. Faller, dated 1966) and, above all, the time and dimension of the "return"? On this last point, see F. Fimiani, "Il colore della neve. Su Celan," *Il pensiero*, n.s., 1–2, 2003, pp. 145–153, and "Blanc-gris, l'indestructible. Celan et la couleur de la poésie," forthcoming in *Poésie*.

7. See P. Wagner, "Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality—The Statets of the Arts), in *Icons—Texts—Iconotexts, Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. P. Wagner (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 15–18.

5. Philostratus the Elder, *Images*, II, II, in Philostratus *Imagines/Callistratus Descriptions*, English trans. A. Fairbanks (London and Cambridge [Mass.]: Heinemann-University of Cambridge Press, 1931), p. 131. On ambiguity of Greek expression for details, *ta sumbanointa*, J. Pigeaud, *Les loges de Philostrate* (Nantes: Le Passeur, 2003), p. 56.

nothing is in its right place, much is out of joint, and indeed there are inversions, substitutions, and unrelated inappropriate matchings.

2. The fact is that Castorp's attention contradicts expectation, not because the arrival of the unexpected disturbs the mesh of his anticipation and the emotional projection of the known onto the unknown, the present onto the future, but precisely because when the event takes place it is not unique or new at all, but rather is a repetition of something that has already occurred; it is the happening of something that has already been in the bosom of the present, it is the very presence of a guest who entered an eternity ago, unnoticed and in secret. And it is indicated by a confusion, by a clash that is already in countless senses *Nachklang*: something like the *Hörreste*, the acoustic remainders analyzed by Freud, something like the repeated auditory overtones of an asynchrony, of a gap between audible and visible, thus an echo of something that has already passed. But it is also something like a weakened vestige and fading permanence, a reduced modest variation, diminished in quality and tone—ironic, which means to say modern,<sup>8</sup> of a much more disturbing sound, powerful and majestic, of a steadfast or inarticulate sonorous *rictus*, more highly codified and recognizable as the sound of horror itself and frightening for mortals, of the absolute inhuman otherness of warriors, the dead, Furies, Maenads, or Gorgons.<sup>9</sup>

8. In this sense the narrator's awareness and intentionality presuppose and project onto the reader what could be defined as a subtext of historical images, which contest and pervert the ever-continuous archive of tradition since they heighten the conflicting and dialectic relationships within it—localized in variants and *topoi*—with contemporaneity. On this point see M. Fried, "Painting Memories: On the Containment of the Past in Baudelaire and Manet," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 3 (March 1984), reprinted by H. Foster, *Design & Crime* (Verso: London, 2002), especially § 6, and A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnis* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlag, 1999), most notably the third part.

9. Cf. J-P Vernant, *Figures, idoles, masques. Résumés des cours au Collège de France 1975–1985* (Paris: Julliard, 1990), esp. § 4, and *La mort dans les yeux* (Paris: Hachette, 1985), esp. § 5, on *gorgoumai*, on the *eriklagtes* of Gorgons and on the *klage nekuon* of the Homeric Hades (*Odyssey* XI, v. 605); the different voice, husky and melodious of Mme Chauchat/Pribislav Hippe (Z 163, 173, etc.) would thus be a memory of such sonority radically *other* and infernal, of their seduction and sexual ambiguity. The kingdom of shades is after all evoked by Settembrini on his first encounter with Castorp (Z 84), who enters "dans les profondeurs de la terre" in the *Walpurgisnacht* presided over by *Frau Venus* Mme Chauchat—"Venus habite auprès de l'enfer," wrote Baudelaire of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*—, and will lose herself in a Babel-like echoing cave in which one raves *en rêve*. On the magical dimension and function of the French language see F. Jesi

Something, therefore, out of the blue without any forewarning and outside his range of vision distorts Castorp's face into a grimace with his eyes bloodshot with anger and vainly searching for a guilty face that, if stared at, can eventually respond to his accusing look; but to no avail, as his eyes are in no way able to seize the sudden nor to encounter a look. Castorp's desire to know and see is not fulfilled in an all-encompassing vision, but blurs into a peripheral vision that is unable to grasp the reason for disturbing the space, nor master anything that goes beyond his frontal visual field and that acts—one could say with Aristotle—through a privation that eventually takes coherence away from the narrative reconstruction of what has happened, and consistency from figures of an aesthetic experience.

Castorp's skewed vision thus appears to reactivate, or perhaps to regress toward, that animal vestige still remaining in human visual perception—the fly that still persists in man and that, as has been said, might be the viewpoint established by cubism.<sup>10</sup> Castorp's vision disintegrates into a kaleidoscope—an authentic theoretical explosive device—all broken up into pieces and discontinuous, and focuses its attention neither on isolated figures nor on real fixed details, but haphazardly and distractedly on uncertain conjectural, and at first sight seemingly unrelated signs.<sup>11</sup> What he sees before his eyes, and in fact only catches a glimpse of, does not allow him to form any complete picture but stimulates *en passant* only wild inconclusive hypotheses and vague intellectual exercises; a kind of useless hermeneutic scrawling. Castorp *geistig dilettiert*, he is a dilettante of thought who, as the narrator tells us (Z 110), *senses* rather than *sees*, and *predicts* rather than *knows*—*erkannte ahnungsweise*. A long apprenticeship served under the two-fold teaching of dream and *rêverie* will instruct him not only to intuit vaguely, but also to meditate slowly on the signs of such *Urbild*—to become, at any rate, something of a philologist of emotions and ideas.

in "Venusberg-Hexenberg-Zauberberg," in Id. *Materiali mitologici* (Torino: Einaudi, 1979), pp. 226 ff.

10. P. Francastel, "Bergson et Picasso," *Etudes philosophiques*, Mélanges 1945, 107, 1946, pp. 210–211. On the magical dimension and function of the French language see "Venusberg-Hexenberg-Zauberberg," of F. Jesi's *Materiali mitologici*, Torino, Einaudi, 1979, pp. 226 ff.

11. Castorp delights in various optical instruments available in the sanatorium: cf. Z 120. On "isolation" and "magic" of the telescope as philosophical instrument, see R. Musil in "Triedere" of *Nachlass zu Lebzeiten* (1936), in *Gesammelte Werke*, hrs. von A. Frisé (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag), vol. 2, pp. 518–523, together with the fundamental annotations by W. Benjamin in *Passagen-Werk on télescope* and kaleidoscope.

What is too fast to be observed and eludes the long-drawn-out concentration of attention as much as the instantaneous effort of a glance has thus left him there, incapable of making a complete or adequate reconstruction, indeed in a state of suffering: blurred by an excessively emotional tone and out of place with regard to its sociological context, above the lines—rage and resentment, or, as Mann specifies with a quasi-Adornian turn of phrase, idiosyncrasy (Z 67)—even for his slighted and despised *bon ton* which belongs to him as a Hamburg middle-class citizen of old and confirmed standing.<sup>12</sup> Incapable of a *ruhigen Betrachtung*, of calm contemplation à la Winckelmann, what does Castorp glimpse?

The narrator's description is masterly—nothing is missing or out of place, and everything, as in the figural logic of a dream, demands attention. Neither slowing the story down in any way nor suspending its diegetic course, the description is the producer of a reading in intensity: that is to say, on one side, it condenses some of the major elements of the narration, almost nominating itself as emblem of the entire work in which to rediscover details and parts, and on the other, it anticipates expectancies and establishes future turning points in possible developments, and it introduces and accelerates the interpretation of symbols and intentions. Mann's description organizes and distributes details in accord with a complex metonymic prolepsis that pervades and inverts the afterward with the beforehand, and the present with past and future. Synthesis and climax, summation and epitome, in this way the description traces, a sort of leit-motif *in absentia*, like a gap perceptible only to posterity, but which attracts and reunites, and at the same time displaces and confuses identities and meanings.

Not granting an immediate recognition of models, sources, and examples, means to direct the reader not so much toward an interpretation of an organized

cohesive narration as toward an awareness of the artificiality and fragility of a temporal composition of its elements. Instructing the reader in a more complex deciphering of the relationship between literature and the arts implies persuading him to undertake a more radical questioning of the meanings, functions, and limits of the images and of their temporal natures just as they are semantically revised by the narration. It means inducing the reader to make a detailed judgment of an extremely original argument on the physical make-up of the human figure (also regarding the fundamental question of its flesh-color, of its *incarnato*) and, at the same time, of the destruction of painting—so that it would in fact be the artistic and iconographical memory of literature, its knowledge not only meta-literary but also meta-artistic, absolute and spiritual, universal and humanistic, that would be put in jeopardy by something that cannot be recovered in some cultural recollection or intermediality. Something, as I will attempt to show, that is magical and archaic, a *Zauberbild*, which the very enchantment of *techne* will bring into being and realize.

The fact is that, without naming them, Mann takes figurative and literary quotations from pictorial or sculptural and plastic sources, and like jewels he sets them into the delicate nerve-centers of the romance, at times hiding them from his hero's sight, albeit still continuing to address the sensitivity and visual culture of the reader, thus stimulated not only toward the knowledge of the protagonist in his becoming but also toward the narrator's own intermediary knowledge (and its shortcomings). And this is the point: the optical associations which, albeit teaching Castorp to solve his own psychological puzzle, endow him against his will with a certain hermeneutic competence worthy of a *connoisseur*, also belie their capacity and objective. So, these visual remainders, these *visuelle Reste* or *Sehreste* as Freud would call them, allow not only an ironic and critical rewriting of the images of the history of art, but also, eventually, through literature's recourse to painting, their deformation and shapelessness.

3. Behold, someone has come into the sanatorium's dining room, and passed unnoticed, since her light step is like a counterpoint and in "strange contrast" (Z 110), set off against the sonorous resounding (Z 67: *ein Geräusch*) of the glass door that betrays her late arrival. Someone passes quickly through the door and dares what cannot be dared—someone like the Helen of the most celebrated first stasimos of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (v. 407), or like the Warburg's Nymph, *mit bellügelten Füßen*.

12. Clearly there opens up in all its relevance a pathetic rendering of Castorp's gaze that is quite strange, not a disembodied and disinterested look with respect to the object of his experience, but reactive toward it. We are not far from Nietzsche, for whom in order "to really see what is, one must first of all know *who really is*": an exercise of looking at the "thing" and at "self," the latter opposed in fact to the *Schielen*, to peering in front and glowering as it seems to Castorp, the return of his repression. The latter is an apprenticeship in seeing, which consists in letting the real or psychic event be in its unforeseeable casualness, in waiting patiently for its long becoming and its slow coming to the presence, in allowing, in a word, its many-shaped access to a vision. On this point, I would like to refer the reader to my *Poétique e genealogie* (Napoli: Liguori, 2000), pp. 127–132.

This is a detail of some significance, if it appears every time that the narrator, also through the mouth of his characters, describes the woman who unexpectedly, and literally, unheard bursts into Castorp's life. A detail which, for example, will decide—at least in part—the name of the woman who advances as light as a statue on a carpet of clouds and consequently, but always partially, will determine her identity.<sup>13</sup> A detail, the one regarding her step, which will undergo a minimal yet inexorable, well-calculated semantic slip in which the references—there are many others—to classical literary and iconographic models will add themselves to many yet more unexpected and disturbing registers.

Mme Chauchat is defined as “the late-comer,” *die Nachzüglerin* (Z 110). The definition goes far beyond the small breach of etiquette, and is to be taken seriously. It tells us that she who arrives—returns: and the unique event of her singular appearance is the simultaneous return of multiple apparitions much more than of an individual element from the past. Her figure is *Nachläufer*, an epigonal emergence of something that precedes, of a “before” at first sight unrecognizable as such among the recollected signs and representations that follow. Her “now” is an “again and again,” her arrival is the kaleidoscopic epiphany of a destiny that returns and, being multiplied and made different, is partially repeated *en travesti* and *sub specie analogica*. The *Nachträglichkeit* that marks Mme Chauchat then seems to press perception, psychic event, and artistic image—and its history—together, and forces us to think of its temporality as a patchy fragmentary process of

syncopations and lateralities, successes and failures, procrastinations and repetitions. And indeed no less an investigation into the relationships between literature and visual arts may perhaps allow us to approach this *figural temporality* not only in terms of influence, imitation, and recollection, of *Nachfolge* and *Sukzession*, but rather, as Mann will say significantly with regard to Goethe's Helen, of *Identität and mythische Wiederkehr*, of identity and mystic return.<sup>14</sup>

4. It is known, for example, that Mann was keeping Goethe's *Faust* and its popular sources quite present, and hence Winckelmann. Mme Chauchat's step is like Helen's: hers is a foot “slow in coming back” (*Faust*, v. 8615: *mit spät zurückkehrendem*). Winckelmann claims that Helen's *leichten Gange*, that her “light moving” is the living mirror of a spiritual being's nature: it's like the thought of a man returning to his past. *Et vera incessu / Patuit dea*, as Virgil said (*Aeneid*, I, v. 405). It is, one might say, the “slow footedness” of the Greek goddesses that, as Ezra Pound wrote, finally reappears in the twentieth century: “slow feet” with hesitant and “tentative movements,” like the whirling pirouette of snowflakes—whose molecular falling like light marble dust is, perhaps, the modern monumental gait of the return of Antiquity.<sup>15</sup> The positive emphasis bestowed on the Venus Medicea's foot by Winckelmann resurfaces in Goethe—who attributes it to a “beautiful maiden, tender and modest” but also decries it as “plump” (*Faust*, v. 6504: *plumper*).<sup>16</sup> And, as I see it, this ambiguity returns

13. One cannot fail to recall *Gradiva's* gait of Jensen and Freud, *ungewöhnliche und besonders reizvolle*, “unusual and exceptionally pretty”: cf. S. Freud, *Der Wahn und die Träume* in W. Jensens “*Gradiva*” (1907), in *Freud-Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1969/79), vol. 10, p. 16; Jensen's writing is of 1903. But we read: “This is her! You don't have to lift your eyes to know that it's her . . . what a dainty step, *wie reizend sie geht!* Just like a kitten creeping, *wie ein Kätzchen . . . schleicht*, towards its milk-bowl.” (Z 191) The onomatology of Claudia Chauchat is highly calculated: the pronunciation in written French (of the word composed by the adjective “*chaud*” and by the noun “*chat*”) is of masculine gender; the ambiguity, if not the inversion, will be imposed on Castorp on the strength of this foreign language (Z 676), dream language of the *Walpurgisnacht*. In contrast to the French and Russian, both “boneless” (Z 163), is the rough pronunciation in German of “*chauchat*,” which one supposes, as if by para-homophony, “*Kokotte*.” On the autobiographical sources of the name and character of the novel, G. Schwarberg, *Es war einmal ein Zauberberg* (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhring Verlag, 1996), pp. 111–113 and 128–130: Mann could have been inspired by Clawelia Ephanow (who was hospitalized in the Davos sanatorium in the summer of 1912) and by the rue Chauchat of the 9 arrondissement of Paris.

14. Cf. T. Mann, “Über Goethe's *Faust*” (1938), in Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, cit., vol. 9, p. 595; in the coeval *Freud und die Zukunft* (1936, *ibid.*, pp. 497 ff.), the imitation is now made explicit, the *Nachahmen*, as *mythischen Identifikation* and *Wiederbeleben* of the myth, a theme elaborated in the Joseph cycle.

15. Pound's poem, *The Return*, dated 1912, is quoted (but translated) by S. Settis *Il futuro del “classico”* (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), p. 10.

16. Cf. J. J. Winckelmann, *Storia dell'Arte presso gli Antichi* (1764), in *Opere di C. G. Winckelmann* (Roma: Prato, 1830–1834), vol. 5, ch. 3, § 3, p. 378, and vol. 5, ch. 4, § 8, p. 505; in Winckelmann, *Trattato preliminare ai Monumenti antichi inediti spiegati e illustrati da Giovanni Winckelmann* of 1766, part 2, ch. 4 (*ibid.*, p. 193, but cf. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764), in Winckelmann, *Sämtliche Werke, von Joseph Eiselein* (Donauerschingen [s.n.], 1825) vol. 9, book 5, ch. 5, § 1), we read: “However difficult the extremes in morality may be, seeing that the final limits of virtue border on those of vice; the extreme parts in the design of the human figure are not so, and the hands no less than the feet are a very sound proof of the artificer's intelligence.” For his part, Goethe, who notes Venus's ungainly foot in the 14 March 1788 diary entry of his *Italianische Reise*, takes into account Diderot's *Essais sur la peinture* (1795) but 1765, in P. Diderot, *Oeuvres Esthétiques*, ed.

strikingly in the bearing of Mann's new Helen, defined with a cruel oxymoron: her step, the bearer of a vague undefined tension between grace and licentiousness, is at the same time graceful and repulsive (Z 483: *lieblich schleichend*). And an extremely significant fact, as we shall shortly see, is that in discussing Mme Chauchat's portrait, Behrens had held it in the vise-like grip of analogy—forcing the anatomical relationships already introduced in *Faust* to break up the ideal unity of the body measurements of the beautiful—joining head and foot without any middle parts, the bearing and the face, thus the lower part and the animal and the higher and the spiritual of the human, both in fact described as *creepingly repulsive* (Z 359: *Wie sie geht, so ist ihr Gesicht. Eine Schleicherin*, says the doctor dryly).<sup>17</sup>

Now what else do Mme Chauchat's posture and comportment mean for us except that her figure—too minute to be a sculptural object worthy of a Phideas (Z 363–364)—poses both in a contemporary and ancient manner, that is to say as *coquette* and as Venus? Is it a codified memory of art and, as Mann will say in "Über Goethe's *Faust*," a *liebelichere Erinnerung*, a "refined reminiscence" if not of popular origin, "cheeky and impish," then certainly of a frivolous testimony to the present? We too may state that the *optische Unvermeidlichkeit*, the inexorable optical law of coquetry consists precisely in a *Gleichzeitigkeit*, in a simultaneity, and particularly in the "simultaneity of yes and no," in the capacity to fuse together into one

indivisible act the attraction of attention and the rejection of oneself, self-exhibition and self-withdrawal, and we must note, with Simmel, that precisely the oscillating bearing *versinnlicht*, is in fact, the "sensitive representation [of] a coming and going between giving and refusing."<sup>18</sup> *En marchant, les femmes peuvent tout montrer, mais rien laisser voir* . . .<sup>19</sup> Certainly; and in this instantaneous and furtive contemporaneity we must note the fascination of connivance of what is familiar and secret, *Reiz der Heimlichkeit, des Verstoßenen*. Certainly; but we too cannot, once again, fail to understand in this mundane gesture the new commencement and the reformulation of the canonical gesture of the Venus Pudica Medicea. We cannot fail to sense in this elementary economy of erotic behavior the twofold game of humanistic art between *Anmut* and *Reiz*, between the ideal and the sensitive, the grace of the spirit and the attraction of the flesh, to which belong both the Celestial Venus—who "shows herself self-sufficient, and who does not offer herself, but wants to be wooed"—and the Venus Profana—who "lowers herself, as it were, and communes in benign condescendence with those who are contemplating her; she does not try to please, nor does she wish to remain ignored and uncared for. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

To paraphrase one of the sharpest observers of the anachronisms of modern times, Charles Baudelaire, the immortal Venus may well stroll among the stalls of the Jardins de Luxembourg and among the dining tables of a German sanatorium. In the same sense of bipolar quotation, at the same time delving into the past and modernizing, we could understand Mme Chauchat's hairstyle. It's certainly trendy, "since only novelties are attractive" (*Faust*, v. 4113), but in the Greek-Roman *fin de siècle* style, inspired in fact by the iconography of the Venus of the Uffizi, the Vatican, or the Capitoline Museum, with her hair almost always plaited and pulled up to leave her neck and nape bare—as well as her cervical vertebrae. Mme Chauchat thus establishes herself as a modern and mundane ghost of the ancient Venus. But in this resurrection of a codified element that borrows a complementary characteristic and a variation

P. Vernière (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), pp. 665–667) about *l'extrémité du pied* of the Medicean Venus would belong to a *monstre hideux et contrefait*, and C. G. Heyne, *Akademische Vorlesungen über die Archäologie der Kunst des Altertums* (Braunschweig [s.n.], 1823), p. 310: "Die schenkel sind plump . . . Der Kopf ist etwas klein ausgeführt, allein dieses ist der Weiblichkeit nicht zuwider, es verleiht ihr nur noch mehr Reiz." After Diderot's remark, Balzac localized his *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (1831–1837, in Balzac, *La Comédie Humaine*, t. 9, ed. M. Bouteron (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), pp. 402, 412) on the "introuvable Venus des anciens, si souvent cherchée, et dont nous rencontrons à peine quelques beautés éparses"—the *pied délicieux, vivant* of the modern painting, that is in fact a Medusa's foot.

17. An isomorph will then be ratified between sex and face with a quotation from *Faust* (v. 3961 ff.) of Baubö's apotropaic and obscene gesture, which attracted Freud's attention and is also in the *Carnivale di Roma* of 1789, described in Goulfe's *Italianische Reise*. And in the riotous and regenerating laughter provoked in Demeter, in a manner complementary to the horror of Medusa, there is also the theme of sexual ambiguity: in the vulva displayed frontally and without words by this character, both nocturnal spectre and licentious old woman, the masculine face of Bacchus is revealed. Cf. S. Freud, *Mythologische Parallele zu einer plastischen Zwangsvorstellung* (1916, in *Freud-Studienausgabe*, vol. 7, pp. 119–122), J.-P. Vernant loc. cit., J. Clair, *Méduse. Contribution à une anthropologie des arts du visuel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), § 2.

18. With G. Simmel, "Psychologie der Koketterie" (1909–1919), in *Philosophische Kultur* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1919), pp. 99–100.

19. H. de Balzac, "Théorie de la démarche" (1833), in *La Comédie Humaine*, t. XII, ed. P.-G. Castex (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 288.

20. With J. J. Winckelmann, *Trattato preliminare ai Monumenti antichi inediti spiegati e illustrati da Giovanni Winckelmann*, part 2, ch. 5, in op. cit., pp. 159–160; but cf. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, vol. 8, ch. 2, §§ 13–14.

from the historic circumstance, it is not only a question of an antiquarian inspiration in which hitherto-unrealized expressive qualities of an ideal beauty can finally take shape. In taking a closer look, the undefined color *rötlichblonden* already refers to the coloring, if not to the painting, that a complete iconographical tradition—well known to Heinrich Mann, author of a hyper-literary *Venus* (1903)—associates with the hair of *Venus meretrix* and her modern descendants. Thus, this Greek-style bun, which “in its perfection resembles a wasps’ nest,”<sup>21</sup> is in fact a certainly complementary hairstyle for Lilith’s mythological and demonic hair, “beautiful-haired nocturnal spectre” (Z 455), whose hairline stands for a debacle and obscene distortion of ideal beauty. It is, the Venus/Lilith of the *Walpurgisnacht*, an image intolerant of the ranks of the *allegorischen Gespenster*, of the allegorical ghosts and of the phantasmagorical figures mastered by the narrator’s ironic erudition through Settembrini’s mouth—“Mephistopheles reduced to “Literat” and moralistic champion of *Zivilisation*.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, Castorp does not recognize this mythological identification of Mme Chauchat nor the quotation from *Faust’s Walpurgisnacht* (v. 4118–4123), and so he suffers it but he is a reluctant actor of its farcical-mythical return, or of this obscure superstition, still alive in pre-war Europe: he *takes part*—in the magical sense—in this visual anachronism that survives throughout epochs, via artistic and literary forms, materials, genres, and styles, sculptures, paintings, and pages.

So, one more outspokenly contemporary element not only cohabits with a classical iconographic detail, but even more anticipates its polar opposite, its forgotten underside, always both confirming and verifying that technique of citation and *montage*, which, as I was saying, appears to manage a holding together, in figurative isochrony, of the memory of antiquity with the taste for the present, the mode of irony and humanism which legitimates it. And in this vertiginous dialectic—on the “abysses of time,” and hundreds of pages (to measure so crudely time narrated and time of narration)—the figure frees itself from its iconographical typology and withdraws from the codified transmission

21. As is the hairstyle of Musil’s Diotima: cf. R. Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1931–1933), in *Gesammelte Werke*, hrs. Von A. Frisé (Hamburg: Rowolth, 1978), vol. 1, § 22.

22. F. Jesi, see note 9, pp. 230 ff., and here p. 228; see the monograph of Il Castoro, of 1975, esp. pp. 60 ff., and the study in the collective volume *Il romanzo tedesco del Novecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1973), esp. pp. 286 ff.

of motives and themes: the cultural memory of the images is followed by the force of their pathos, the formal analysis of their analogies by the empathic intuition of repeated identities, the erudite knowledge of the ancient by the lived experience of the archaic.

So what is going on? Behold: the “tight-fitting” white sweater in which Mme Chauchat first appears, worn by many of Behrgof’s other female guests, also coveted by the very mundane and contemporary Proustian Odette, not only fits with the positioning of her hands, which recall those of the Venus Celeste of the Uffizi (one concealed in her pocket to hold her side, almost a far off echo of the ambivalent modesty of the goddess’s gesture, the other to support her nape and do up her hair (Z 110), almost like a Venus Anadyomenes) but also is in counterpoint to the black dress, made of light and airy silk, which (in fact hovers and lightly caresses (Z 455), as if moved by an impalpable breath from within (could this be the real *vis matrix* cause of the brusque movement outside the door at Mme Chauchat’s entrance?), no longer the ambiguous veil of the Venus Pudica but the fatal drape of a Maenad. *Ménadisme fin de siècle*, as it has been said. Warburg wrote that *lebendig leichte, aber so höchst bewegte Weise zu gehen*, that the approach of the young woman with the light step is now also the dance of Salomé, or Judith’s gait, it is the enticement from the Cytheran Venus and the Venus of the Underworld, a reference no longer to the conjectural interpretation of distant bodies in movement, but to the irresistible lure and fascination of the volatile mixing of bodies and the erotic loss of self.<sup>23</sup> Venus’s foot is Medusa’s too.

5. On closer examination, from Mme. Chauchat’s first appearance in the sanatorium dining room, a detail in her ancient classical pose gained prominence, around which a constellation of elements hitherto considered in the perspective of literary and iconographical memory

23. In a letter dated November 23, 1900 of the unrealized four hands epistolary book with André Jolles *Ninfa fiorentina*, see H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography* (1970; Chicago-Oxford: University of Chicago Press-Phaidon, 1986), pp. 105–127; about this work, see S. Contarini and M. Ghelardi, “Die verkörperte Bewegung: la ninfa,” in *aut aut*, 321/322 (May–August 2004), *Aby Warburg. La dialettica dell’immagine*, ed. D. Stimilli, pp. 32–45. On “la loi atmosphérique du vent et la loi viscérale du désir,” external and internal cause of the movement of the figure, G. Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante. Histoire de l’art et temps de fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), p. 257 ff. I refer to C. Baudelaire, “Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris” (1861), in *Œuvres Complètes*, t. II, éd. C. Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 791, and to *Un voyage à Cythère* (1855).

spread and expanded, to their collapse. This marginal detail, which is however a real and proper focal point of visual attraction—but not the only one—affirms the return of an inchoative past in the coming and going of significances, shifts the image between different if not heterogeneous time periods (between past and present, ancient beauty and contemporary fashion, social branding and natural traits), and is only in part governed by irony. Mme Chauchat's visible hand, the one that caressingly supports her nape and hair, is not at all like Aphrodite's hand with its slender and sinuous fingers, as described, for instance by Lucian; but rather quite the opposite. Indeed, of this anatomy favored, at least as much as the face by classical iconography and by positivist physiognomy as the mirror of the soul, certain features become singled out that appear really incongruous and inappropriate, and with no iconographic reference. Something suddenly stands out from the rest, detaches itself and turns towards the spectator and gives him a signal, but not with transparency of meaning that could be immediately or indirectly guessed at and spelled out, rather with a density that resists investigation: an investigation carried out clearly without any metaphorical understanding by Castorp who too, like Musil's Ulrich, looks and thinks of the "strangeness of the female hand, quite a shameless human organ, basically, that gets everywhere like a dog's muzzle, but officially is the seat of loyalty, nobility and refinement"; in short, as Morelli said, "one of the more spiritual parts among the characteristics of the human body."<sup>24</sup> This investigation Castorp also carries out with his "critical acumen" and the magnifying glass of education and social conventions, parameters that allow him as a man of the world to make a facile negative judgment on Chauchat, a visibly unkempt woman, untidy and disorderly (and her illness, the humanist Settembrini will affirm, is in fact "untidiness itself": Z 310). He then carries out this investigation like a *detective* and *connoisseur*, putting on Morelli's epistemological glasses as if to look at a painting. *Ex ungue leonem*, as Goethe had reminded Eckermann, and from among the "characteristic, individual and important" elements selected by Morelli what becomes the object of Castorp's troubled interrogation are the fingers of the hand no less, the attachment of the

finger-nails. However, it is a matter of *detail* and not of *particular*, that is to say of something, *presque rien*, cut out from the artificial and assembled body of the image and its iconographical memory, detached from the totality of the figure it belongs to but still continuing to refer to it in an inadequate, inconclusive, and disturbing way. Faced with this point of visual attraction and this optic metonymy perverted in its functions and its objectives but no less emotionally and semiotically powerful, Castorp's conjectural intuition strives to back up his accurate observation; certainly, the reader senses that here an affective memory is superimposed, or perhaps interposed, over cultural memory. That this incoherent detail is immediately deprived of clear diegetic focusing will of necessity be functional to the story. But what or whom does that hand remind him of?

"Rather broad with short fingers, it had something primitive and childish about it, a bit like a schoolgirl's hand . . ." (Z 110: *hatte sie etwas Primitives und Kindliches*). It is clear that the *je ne sais quoi* that attracts Castorp is neither pretty nor beautiful—nor is it ugly, but, like the hands of Egyptian sculptures criticized by Winckelmann in his *History of Art among the Ancients*, is noticeably rough "like a man's" and, as Morelli would have said of Botticelli, plebeian: "shapeless and worn," neglected and ruined. But here it is not even a question of a revival or of an anatomical transfer of a canon or an aesthetic-artistic method. The fact is that qualities and attributes are prominently presented, which disappoint and diminish that very competence which the author seemed, at any rate a few lines earlier, to bestow on the protagonist (and on the reader), with its recognition of historical-artistic legacies and singling out of similarities and identities among past and contemporary elements, introduced, in fact, to compose surreptitiously Mme Chauchat's polyedric figure. It is something *indifferent*, without any character or identity—a fingernail is the opposite of the self.<sup>25</sup> It is as if the text represents the image in a way that would lead the reader—via the protagonist's oversight—to a misinterpretation. In a word, it is almost as if Mann at the same time bestowed and withheld intelligence from the image of his very text.

Thus next to historicizing clues painting the female figure of ancient bearing, or actually to borrowings and the historical analogies of its literary construction, there come into play symptoms of quite another temporality. It is a matter of a properly physical element and no longer

24. Implacable and instantaneous is Ulrich's *gleichsehen*: cf. R. Musil, *loc.cit.*, followed by a Morellian anatomical annotation in the *Einleitung* to the *Kunst-kritischen Studien über italienische Malerei* in the 1890 ed.: cf. G. Morelli, *Della Pittura Italiana*, ed. J. Anderson (Milan: Adelphi, 1991), pp. 54, 86–87.

25. As Julius Cortázar will say in *Rayuela* (1966), ed. A. Amorós (Madrid: Cátedra, 1984), § 80.



or not only of a visual and iconographical one: the figure here is, finally, *body*, an existential figure and no longer, or not only, an artistically idealized one (or, in a complementary way, declassified via contemporaneity), and, precisely as such, is non-historical, and at one and the same time a biological and instinctive fixture, an absolute and timeless presence.

*Hatte sie etwas Primitives und Kindliches.* Mann's bifrontal analogy thus illustrates at least two time dimensions of an anachronic past, two different dimensions both regressive and non-developed yet still effectual and active, namely the childlike and primitive. The first, we shall later discover through that kind of parody of the *humanistisch-goethischer Bildungsroman* that is *Der Zauberberg*, regards a phase and a precise event in Hans Castorp's personal and private life: his meeting with Pribislav Hippe, school companion of his adolescence. Hippe, albeit fixed once and for all chronologically, is nevertheless ever-present and never ceases to be subject to an elaboration and transformation in the psychic becoming of Castorp, whom Settembrini not by chance calls *Sorgekind des Lebens*, "pupil of life."<sup>26</sup> The second, as we shall see through Castorp's own eyes and his Natural Sciences lenses, and, consequently if paradoxically, those of painting, concerns an elementary and everlasting substratum of biological life behind the history, of the physiological processes behind the actions and sentiments of men and their representation. Thus Castorp's physiognomic look not only or no longer senses visual models and variations—in the Morelli style—but psychic fixtures and morphological invariants.

In order to do this, to erase the beautiful form and humanist knowledge of art and the iconographical or intermedial transfer of shapes and figures between visual arts and literature, Castorp will have to be educated in a naturalistic vision of the living body of Mme Chauchat, as well as in an objectifying *dénouement*—inasmuch as *Körper* and not *Leib*: yet, as we read in a diary note dated August 1920, in the sense of a *Körpermystik*—of the puzzle of the representation of his own "aching and presentified body, enormously exacerbated by illness and made [. . .] doubly body [and at the same time] something very fleeting and extensive, or a frightening dream [. . .] and infinitely alluring . . ." (Z 321). The

aspect of the Kirghis eyes, the hyperborean cheekbones and the childlike fingers of the young Russian woman with the soft gait will in fact be analyzed by Doctor Behrens, the physician in charge of treatment and an amateur painter, in terms of hereditary and congenital bone and skin conformations. Their exotic fascination will be traced back to a genetic and racial type, there will be shown to be the "deception, farce, and mystification" of an "atavist arrest of development" (Z 359: *eine atavistische Hemmungsbildung*). It seems that the slightly raised lower eyelid, indicated by Winckelmann as a beauty trait of the iconographical type of the Greco-Roman Venus—"that something languid and flattering [. . .] quite different from traits indicating lasciviousness"—or from Sebald, with regard to Pisanello's *St. George and the Princess*, as a sign of female shameful resoluteness, *Beschlossenheit*, against inured male cruelty—is now replaced by the muscular laxity of the epicanthus characteristic of the Asiatic type or of an anomalous baby-skin subsistence, in short either barbarous or infantile, on the edge of civilization or maturity.<sup>27</sup> It will be precisely the clinical look, of medical semiotics first and then of radiological examination, that will *backdate* Castorp's life, that is to say, identify the ancient symptoms of an unsuspected illness that goes *pari passu* with the involuntary attitudes assumed by his grandfather (cf. Z 167, 254, 299, 468). As if to say that the subject is not completely separate from the object of his own emotional and intellectual experience, but that, rather, he deeply shares its temporal nature, marked, despite himself, by the same anachronism—even in the sense of that *Rückneignung* feared by Settembrini as the regressive, nameless process of nihilism (Z 140).

Castorp, on his part, finally *re-sees* as he had first done in a dream Hippe's facial features in Mme Chauchat's eyes and cheekbones, fleetingly caught sight of "a clear product of an ancient mixture of races, of a fusion of Germanic with Slavic blood" (Z 171). The narrow eyes of the one and the other are "wolf's eyes from the Steppe" or "Tartar slits," as Settembrini styles them (Z 661), perhaps, once again, to denaturate the "almost slit aperture" of the Greek look, "open and elevated" according to Winckelmann. These eyes are narrow "like cleavages in leavened dough" (Z 359: *wie ihren aufgessprungene Schnitte in Hefegebäck*), to confirm, in Castorp's involuntary quotation from Marcus Aurelius (*Memoires* III, 2), the attraction for being at the

26. The carnival cap worn will also be "childish" (*infantile*) in the *Walpurgisnacht* (Z 305); on *Wiederbeleben*, *infantile Natur* and ritual and mythical dimension of feasts and theatrical representations, Mann insists in *Freud und die Zukunft* (1936, loc.cit.), referring to the medieval carnival farces taken up in Goethe's *Faust*.

27. W. G. Sebald, op.cit., pp. 87–89; cf. Pisanello (1435–1438), Verona, Sant'Anastasia. Cappella dei Pellegrini.

height of its power and hence already biologically decaying will reaffirm the fascination for a horrible beauty, that binds together—like the frayed and contiguous edges of a wound in Venus's body—life and death, form and the shapeless. And this hidden quotation also tells us perhaps of a melancholic calling of aesthetics toward natural philosophy; it instructs us to keep together works of art and *parva naturalia*, artifacts and biological relics, monuments of *techné* and marginal remains of *physis*. On the other hand, the eyes of the one, in their "rather uncertain and ambiguous colour, the colour, e.g. of a far off mountain" (Z 170), will also anticipate these sick ones of the other: they will actually and finally be *these very ones*—at once in the future and in the past. Castorp therefore contradicts the first rule of love, that of absolute uniqueness, for which, as Stendhal wished in *De l'Amour* (ch. 27), the look is that which "*ne peut être pas répété textuellement*." The knowledge that he will be able to acquire of these eyes then will no longer be a deductive construction from analogies and similes and their naming, a discovery of coincidences and identities, it will finally be anamnesis and recognition (Z 678) of a Same which returns as if nameless<sup>28</sup> into Another—intuition of the timeless affirmation of bare life, of the *natürlich Natur* (Z 630).

6. It is at this point that literature finally forgoes the use of its arsenal of figurative terms to write into the text a cultural record of images, and then indirectly through artistic-literary icons to describe the obsession which is the very reason for its existence. On the contrary, imagery here is the final, extreme, and cruel exposure of repression in literature as well as in painting, without any further support or interference from figures, quotations, or visual allusions of any kind.

In fact, the dialogue between Castorp and Behrens regarding the flesh-color of Mme Chauchat's *portrait*

*extérieur* certainly asserts the limits of representation and mimesis as a replica of reality, but also reaffirms the magical power of the image, and so restores painting to its mythical origin just when it challenges and ironically delegates to knowledge and the technique of science the possibility of the so-called realistic and non-lyrical *Innenporträt*. The naturalistic view is not only relegated to the outer tegument of the living being, to the skin of the image of Venus and her subsequent incidental and allegorical incarnations, but also is an emancipated and exalted *vision* of her inside, of the flesh that is never seen. The vision is not only enhanced by science but also by thought and imagination (Z 315), of the chromatic tangle of her viscera as well as the "odd scaffolding" (Z 361) of her skeletal structure. In contrast to an increase in its being and meaning directly proportional to the personality of the subject as fixed in the image, the vision is in fact eidetic typological intuition and anguished identification of the real: a disenchanting and fascinated vision of the abyssal *archè* from which everything comes and evolves, of the mute carnal and impersonal display of the "*Tu es ceci, qui est le plus loin de toi, ceci qui est le plus informe*."<sup>29</sup>

Thus the *Spukhaftigkeit*, the ghostliness with which Behrens, in his Faustian cave (serving at the same time as "photographic studio, camera obscura or inventors' laboratory, technical workshop for witches") will address the "luminous anatomy" of Castorp and Mme Chauchat's radiography (Z 301, 306), tells us also of a ghostliness of the image and picture no longer inherent in the temporality of the mnemonic return, the more or less faithful quotation or ironic fragmentation, of ancient figures of stories and myths, but also to the contrary, concerning a temporality of the *figural* as persistence and *presentation*—not a representation, a more or less compulsory repetition or disfiguring procrastination—of

29. I quote from J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre II. Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse. 1954–1955* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 186; the comment to the celebrated Freudian interpretation of Irma's dream, to be consulted by Mann in the *Traumdeutung*. And it is also the *Kopf ohne Gesicht* that Rilke, in 1907, sees in the *Autoportrait sur fond rose* of Cézanne (ca. 1875, private collection, Venturi n. 286) and, in the *Malte*, describes as the cover of a *Nichtgesicht*, of a non-face; on these texts, cf. F. Fimiani "Portrait of the artist as an old dog. Of Rilke, Cézanne, and the animalisation of painting," *RES. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 44 (Autumn 2003):113–121. The image of the portrait, ontologically larger than life in relation to the historical model, stands in contrast to H. C. Gadamer's thesis *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), especially part 1, section 2, §§ a–c.

28. The *heidnisch Vorname*, Hippe's pagan name, and the living origin of Mme Chauchat, seems to allude to a Dionisiac-Asiatic duplicity of Greek Olympianism—incompatible with the "happy and mundane paganism" of bourgeois *pruderie* (Z 380). And I avoid a *historische Nominalismus* all resolved—with Warburg's blessing—in the taxonomical denomination of artistic *connoisseurship*, directed toward the identification of stylistic models and variants in forms, and, as Mann writes, toward "determination [and] insertion in a well-known and accustomed manner" (Z 7). Such an onomastic strategy is for example already present in the "mythical phantom" and "Stranger God" of *Der Tod in Venedig*, the young Pole Tadzio.

the invisible and the non-representable that accompanies and haunts history and myth.

A triumph of the modern era, the image of the *portrait intérieur* produced in the *atelier de photographie intime* is framed in a *magischen Fenster* (Z 307) set claustrophobically opposite that instituted by Leon Battista Alberti, which stood for an opening and a mundane curiosity toward the world and *historia*. Faced with this image of indiscretion, excitement, and religious devotion, Castorp's sleepy contemplation is a caricature parodying the meditation on the indelible spiritual signs inscribed in the heart of the *interior homini*, obscenely disfigured into a "shapeless and animal-like object, *ungestalt Tierschem*, [. . .] like a jellyfish in movement" (Z 306). Absolutely modern, the luminous writing of the *portrait intérieur* of the radiography seems thus to repeat the myth, or rather the myths in the origin of painting, whether it arose on the Lascaux hunters' course cave wall, or of Plato's slaves, on the plastered wall of Butade's boutique, on the beating membrane of the human heart or on Veronica's white linen: by both lack and excess of the optical it is in fact *zoographia-skiagraphia*, shadow writing not so much because it is deceptively mimetic of the living forms but because it produces their motionless and bodiless doubles, and, even more, as *achiropoiesis*, absolute and aniconical epiphany of image. The mechanical procedure also reveals to us a single and double profile, modern and archaic at the same time, of technology and magic: the picture of Castorp and Mme Chauchat's *portrait transparent*, mutually pledged to each other like a non-figurative substitute image (Z 486: like a shadow's gift, *Schattenpfand*), is in fact completely devoid of its craftsman's materiality and painting's embodiment—grain support and pigments, the pressure of the hand on brushes, sponges, and cleaning cloths, impasto scratches and erasures, *repentirs*, etc.—in favor of an act no less material and physical, no less singular and direct, such as the mark pressed down to make an indelible impression on the plate. Yet an immediate presence such as this cancels out every representation and recollection of every subtext or shadow-text, is the *index* that disqualifies every indication of similarity and, ultimately erases any interpretation of a contemplative or ecstatic vision of authority—an endoscopic vision, however, or, as Proust writes, a "radiation intuitive" trough, "*ces petits losanges d'épiderme dont les combinaisons variées font l'originalité fleurie de la chaire*," which has nothing more to do with the ontological transparency between material crust and

substantial kernel, between visible tegument and intelligible soul, in short with morphological identity between existence and essence, between the exterior and interior of living forms.<sup>30</sup>

*Wozu? Form ist ete-pe-tete, Pourquoi, au fond, de la forme? La forme, c'est la pédanterie elle-même* (Z 370). Form is affected and mannered; form: a perhaps, a maybe, a *peut-être*—a *quisquiglia*. . . . Thus will affirm the *Walpurgisnacht* of Castorp at the end of the dialogue with the melancholic Behrens, burdened with hidden intertextual quotations and *pastiches* from Bichat, Novalis, Freud, and others, in a language that is infantile and foreign at the same time, in a maternal Gallicized language (in *ete-pe-tete*, expression of Berlin low German, resounds *être-peut-être*), in which Settembrini's *plastiche Art zu sprechen* (Z 110) is neutralized and in which the very idiom of humanism is perverted.<sup>31</sup> Evidence of this distortion not only of the use of language, but above all of vision, memory, and iconographical imagery of the visual arts and of literature toward the immemorial and informal behind their removal, is the change in Mme Chauchat's body position in her *portrait intérieur* and consequently in Castorp's viewpoint.

At all times, from her first appearance and throughout, only Mme Chauchat's profile is seen—"youthful and interesting" (Z 291)—"not beautiful," perhaps too sharp (Z 318), always and only her "swift profile" and "rapid hieroglyphic," which provides so much food for thought.<sup>32</sup> As if sculptured in the

30. On transparency (*diaphaneia*) and organic totality: Plotinus's *Enneads* V 8, 2, 9–26 (regarding Helen), V 8, 4, 4–8, VI 7, 2, 18–22; echoes e.g. in J. W. Goethe, *Diderots Versuch über die Malerei* (1799, in *Goethes Werke*, Weimar, Böhlau, 1999, vol. 52, pp. 245 ff.), which comments on Diderot's writings on the *étude de l'écorché* in the *Essais sur la peinture*, loc. cit. On the question: C. Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus. Nudité, rêve, cruauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), esp. § 2, and B. Vouilloux, *Le tableau vivant. Phryné, l'orateur et le peintre* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), pp. 257 ff.; on transparency and photography, H. Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für Bildwissenschaft* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001), pp. 213 ff. Finally, I quote Proust's *L'ombre de jeunes filles en fleurs*, in M. Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu II*, ed. J.-Y. Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp. 248–249.

31. Cf. Z 370 ff., 475 ff. The passage, not clearly presented by Novalis's *Fragmente und Studien 1799–1800*, plays a significant role in the essay on Freud with regard to Eros and Thanatos (dated 1929), but Mann also paraphrases some passages of the *Philosophische Studien 1795–1796* on matter and living form; his readings of Novalis are apparent in his 1921 diary.

32. The expressions are quoted from *Piramo, Tisbe ed altri* in G. Manganelli, *La notte*, ed. S. S. Nigro (Milan: Adelphi, 1996), p. 209.

background, like bas-relief, with her head slightly outstretched (Z 110)—just like Jensen's Pompeian *Gradiva*, or Botticelli's *Nympha* described by Warburg. It is, therefore, *prominent*, also in a symbolical sense: it showcases, and in the true sense of the word instates her own figure as distinct from the other elements and characters in the scene, and as distant from all the onlookers, in particular from Castorp. Actually, she never meets or returns his look; at most, from a body twisted as if in a baroque spin or rapid about-turn, she throws him a glance from over her shoulders, while hurriedly scanning the surroundings.

This too is a polysemous gesture. It is certainly a modern expressive gesture, and a mundane one, a gesture of *coquetterie*: it is a look given surreptitiously, it is a sudden glance that both gives and negates recognition to the other, to the one who looks, that both promises and denies him reciprocity and imposes the seductive logic of the secret on him. And it is, perhaps, an ancient gesture, no less double: it is the transversality of the gaze to the desire of the other, lofty or inviting, it is the avaricious and cruel look of the *Venus prospiciens* recounted also by Ovid, or the lavish and yielding look of the Aphrodite *parakypousa* of the remote oriental cult of Astarte, probably associated with sacred prostitution.<sup>33</sup>

Now a profile sets up an asymmetrical and unequal dialogue with the observer: it is always the face of the other, one should address it in the impersonal third person, and never with "you."<sup>34</sup> It is only in the carnival chaos of the *Walpurgisnacht* that Castorp will manage to *tutoyer*, that is to address Mme Chauchat by "you" and be called "you" by her, but at the highest price: he will have to renounce for good his language in favor of a shared linguistic strangeness; they will have to speak without speaking, and without taking responsibility, in French, the ennobling and alienating language of dreams. We take part in the "fête de l'illusion narrative" (Blanchot) restored by Mann: thus within the festive

framework of farcical suspension of chronological time and transgression of social conventions, full frontality ratifies the exclusion of the use of language and of real recognition among equals, since it reintroduces a state of nature, presocial and prehistoric, a dreamlike state or, just as Settembrini fears, *primitive*, ritualistic and magical—"when only their eyes speak [and] one speaks in the 'Du,' 'you,' even if the lips have not yet even pronounced the 'Sie' or 'vous,' 'you' " (Z 248), there is not only emotional understanding or intellectual affinity but also mystical and intimate comprehension among living forms, finally reciprocally transparent: there can also be empathic fusion among genders, beings, and things or mingling inter-reflection among individuals outside themselves, participating, on this side of the principle of non-contradiction, of the anonymous and undifferentiated affirmation of the sacred or of the biological non-discernment between life and death.

Then, Mme Chauchat can appear "decidedly younger and more beautiful than from her profile" (Z 195) to a look that not only does not face her, staying passively distant and without any light of intentionality and subjectivity, but also above all does not acknowledge the strength and original fascination of her beauty. Face to face, the beauty of Mme Chauchat's visage is, in reality, unsustainable as such: indifferent to aesthetic principles and qualities, she is a hendiadys—also a sexual one—of the identical and the different presence of the Same and the Other, simultaneity of something nascent and very old, attractive and horrendous. *De visu*—but *de manu* and *de pede* too—Venus is Medusa. Castorp vainly tries, by closing his eyes, to prevent the little pleasing profile, visible and real, from defiling and overshadowing his purely inner *vision* of the *Gestalt aller Gestalten*, of the Goethian form of forms (Z 318; cf. *Faust*, v. 8507): every time he gazes at the *portrait intérieur* of his Venus, authentic substitute and magic erotic fetish, he will end up, precisely because voluntary blind and devoted to the *archè* of the beauty of visible forms, stumbling into the shapelessness and the non-figurability of the living, the non-presentable and unlocatable of the *lebendige Form*.

In fact, what we will finally be confronted with will be something faceless, *ohne Antlitz* (Z 485), something like an eidetic *illocalitas* that is also like a face's becoming a body, that is to say it is the extreme deformation and fragmentary extension of face to the shadowy of the flesh, so that its function as a living gaze will no longer reside either in the eyes or, as Hal Foster would still insist, in Mme Chauchat's *entire visage* but will be acephalous and unplaceable, metonymically

Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, vv. 55–166, and Poussin, *Paysage avec Pyrame et Thisbé* (1650–1651), Städelsches Kunstinstitut of Frankfurt.

33. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIV, vv. 695 ff.: is the episode of Iphis and Anaxaretes/Venus; Aphrodite/Astarte/Cleopatra will return, via Bachofen, in the Joseph cycle, but had already been associated with Goethe's Helen (cf. "Über Goethe's *Faust*"); Mann may have drawn information, variants, and sources from E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman* (Leipzig: [s.n.] 1914), pp. 84 ff. Cf. M. Bettini, *Il ritratto dell'amante* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 170 ff.

34. Cf. the analyses by M. Shapiro, *Words and Pictures* (The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1973), and, more important, on the frontality of Medusa, by J.-P. Vernet, *op.cit.*, and by F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995), pp. 79–130.

dislocated, so to speak, to a foot and a hand, to bones and entrails, in a word, to life already decomposing.<sup>35</sup> We will, in fact, be facing something *ungestalt Tierschem*, something shapeless, ugly, and animal-like (Z 305), something like the repugnant animal that lives in the depth of the human, something like the absolute otherness of merely biological intimacy, something that will look Castorp and us right in the eye to the very depth of recognition, the ignorance regarding self and other, which goes on this side of every intention and self-awareness, as far as the repulsive empathy of contact as the *Abscheu*, of disgust.<sup>36</sup>

What will stare into Castorp's eyes—and the reader's—will challenge the very possibility of seeing and saying, of remembering forms in other forms and figures as much in art as in life: in bodies sculptured, painted, narrated, and described, and in living bodies. It will be an eyeless glance without a subject, incapable of returning his gaze, but will still always *glance* at him flaunting no regard or respect for the uniqueness of its own existence: it will be at the same time the ideal grace, *Anmut*, and the sensitive attraction, *Reiz*, the shapeless yet multi-shaped image of organic matter (Z 386 ff.)—its origin and destiny. *Nuda Veritas*.

35. H. Foster, "Medusa and the Real," *RES. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 44 (Autumn 2003):186, note 29.

36. On humanity's relation to its own animality, we read a most lucid analysis written a few years following the publication of Mann's novel, between 1926 and 1927: cf. W. Benjamin, *Elbahnstrasse*, in Benjamin *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von R. Tiedemann und H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, vol. 4, 1982), p. 90; on the capital experience of the *être-vu-par le regard de l'animal*, Valéry was to compile some no less important notes published in 1938 and indexed under the title "Animalités": cf. P. Valéry, *Oeuvres*, t. I, ed. J. Hytier, Paris, Gallimard, 1957, pp. 401–402. On human body, disgust and animality, visuality and orality, see also P. Rozin and A. Fallon, "A perspective on disgust," *Psychological Review*, 94 (1987), pp. 23–41, and M. Nussbaum, "Secret sewers of Vice: disgust, bodies and the law," in her *The Passion of the Law*, ed. S. A. Bandes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp. 19–62.