

# A Methodological Critique of W.R. Maurer's "Names from *The Magic Mountain*"\*

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IN "NAMES FROM *THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN*" (*Names* 9, 248–59) Warren R. Maurer has made a clever analysis of the names of the chief characters in Thomas Mann's famous novel. Unfortunately, the study is marred by philological inexactness, and in the interest of sound methodology I should like to make a few comments.

There are two basic considerations in analyzing fictional proper names that I do not believe were adequately borne in mind by the author of this article. First, one must distinguish between names which the author borrows from already existing proper names and those which the author freely invents. Second, one must exercise every care in making statements regarding the connotations conveyed by the names in question.

Whether a name is borrowed or invented is of more than abstract, theoretical interest, for it has a direct bearing on the connotations the name has. First of all, one must ask himself whether the name under consideration may not have had connotations for the author that are derived from the living or historical (or fictional) people he knew who bore that name. To use an extreme example: if a German writer were to use *Bismarck* as the name of a character in a book, this character's name would have connotations reminiscent of the Iron Chancellor, connotations that would be apparent to every schoolboy — every German schoolboy, at any rate. One must assume that the writer would expect the reader to make such a connection. If the writer were to use the name of his next-door neighbor, of an old school friend, an obscure historical personage or a character in a novel, the character's name would still have connotations derived from the author's acquaintance with this person, but connotations

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\* Mr. Maurer's reply to Mr. Kratz's comments will be published, probably, in the June, 1963, issue.

not so readily apparent to the reader, even though they might be the key to the understanding of this character. In such cases the writer might or might not expect the reader to make the necessary connections. One must also reckon with the possibility that names might have connotations for the author of which he is not consciously aware; or that he will subconsciously refer to a character by words that were evoked within him by the similarity in sound to the name.

The more familiar a name is to the reader, the less likely it is to have connotations for him due to its literal meaning (or the literal meaning of one or more of its component parts). What American or Englishman thinks of the forge when he hears about Joe *Smith*, or of a color when somebody mentions Mary *Brown*? And then, to be sure, the reader will invest names known to him with connotations that the author never intended to convey, connotations derived from the reader's acquaintance with personages of that name. I do not mean to say that fictional names borrowed from established proper names would never have connotations determined by their literal meaning, or suggested by words similar in sound, but they must be considered within the frame of reference I have outlined.

Mr. Maurer asserts (pp. 248–49), following Hans Wolff, that Mann named Hans Castorp with the classical Castor and Pollux in mind. "By adding a *p* to the name Castor he makes the possibility of recognition more remote, while producing a name which looks German, and which is suitable for a member of the upper middle-class of northern Germany" (p. 249). One thus has the impression that Mann pulled the *p* out of the air and added it arbitrarily, or for some reason involving orthographic symbolism. However, the name *Castorp* was not really invented by Mann, but is rather, as a glance at the *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig, 1875 ff.) will show, an old Lübeck family name prominent in the 15th and 16th centuries, and thus undoubtedly known to Mann, a native of that city. Thus, a more meaningful statement about the name *Castorp* in *Der Zauberberg* would be that Mann borrowed the old Lübeck surname, at the same time *possibly* having in mind the classical Castor. Incidentally, an investigator should not feel bound to look upon every pun made on the name of a character in a book by some other character as *ex cathedra* evidence of what the author had in mind when

he first bestowed the name upon his brainchild. In this case, should we accept Behrens' greeting Castorp and Ziemssen as "Castorp und Pollux" (I, 322) as proof that Mann selected the name *Castorp* with that end in view, when in actuality there is little to justify a comparison of Castorp and Ziemssen to the inseparable twin brothers of antiquity? One must reckon with the strong possibility that *Castorp* reminded Mann of *Castor*, rather than the opposite.

Nor can it be truthfully said that Dr. Behrens "derives his name from German *Bär* 'bear'" (p. 253). *Behrens* is, after all, a fairly common German family name. It would be proper only to say that *Behrens* may be meant to have connotations of the German word *Bär* 'bear.'

Maurer (p. 252) explains the name *Schmitz* as "an alternate form of the more common *Schmiss*, which means 'dueling scar'." Again, *Schmitz* is a quite common German family name. I also doubt that most Germans would think of dueling scars and *schlagende Verbindungen* when hearing it. As a matter of fact, most German dictionaries (including *Sprach-Brockhaus*, Trübner, Weigand, Sanders, Heyne) do not give this meaning, but rather the basic meanings of 'blow,' 'stripe' and 'blemish.' The DWb, to be sure, gives the meaning 'scar,' but it is poorly attested. There are no modern citations.

It is further stated (p. 257) that the name *Albin* "suggests the adjective *albern* 'silly'." It should be noted that *Albin* and *Albinus* are both more or less familiar German family names, and that moreover *Albin* is listed in the *Sprach-Brockhaus* as a given name, derived ultimately from Latin *albus* 'white' — cf. the Latin family name *Albinus*. I submit that most educated Germans would be more likely to think of Latin *albus* or German *Albe*, for that matter, when reading *Albin*, than of *albern*.

It is asserted (p. 253) that the name *Wiedemann* "inevitably" has connotations of *widerlich* 'disgusting' for the German reader. This is much too extreme a statement. Even if *Wiede-* were linked up with *wider* in the mind of a German reader, it would be more likely to be in the meaning of 'opposed to,' 'opposite' (cf. *Widerspruch*, *Widersacher*), so that *Widermann*, if anything, would mean "man opposed to," "adversary," or the like. But, with no *r* being present, and with the spelling *-ie-* (reminiscent of *wieder* 'again'), the chances of a German's thinking of *wider* at all when reading *Wiedemann* are re-

mote. Besides, *Wiedemann* is again a fairly common German name: there are, for instance, 14 different *Wiedemanns* listed in the Vienna telephone directory for 1958, which our library happens to have.

Maurer claims (p. 257) that the name "and pronunciation" of Frau *Stöhr* "suggest the German words *stören* 'to disturb' and *störrisch* 'disturbing, disturbingly' [!]" . Again, *Stöhr*, *Stoehr* is a not uncommon name. Then, of course, *störrisch* does not mean 'disturbing, disturbingly,' but rather 'stubborn(ly), obstinate(ly).' If Mrs. *Stöhr*'s teeth are "störrisch entblößt" they are not "disturbingly revealed," but rather "stubbornly bared." When Maurer, without citing page numbers, states that Mann speaks of Mrs. *Stöhr*'s face and manner as being "störrisch" to Castorp, one wonders what the misunderstood original German was. Perhaps he had in mind phrases she used with reference to the slang term with which she designated the sputum bottle (*blauer Heinrich*): *mit störrisch unwissender Miene* (I, 132) 'with stubbornly ignorant expression' and *mit einem so störrisch schamlosen Gesicht* (I, 248) 'with such a stubbornly shameless face.'<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there is no etymological connection between *störrisch* (connected with *starr* and *storren*) and *stören*, nor is there as close a connection in pronunciation as Maurer indicates, as *Stöhr* and *stören* have long vowels, whereas *störrisch* has a short one. Thus the strongest statement that it is safe to make would be that Mann may have intended the name *Stöhr* to have connotations suggestive of the word *störrisch* 'stubborn,' which is somewhat similarly pronounced. As far as Maurer's suggested connection with *Störfrau* 'cleaning woman' is concerned, I must confess that I do not know the word and have been unable to find it in any of the dictionaries.

On page 254 Maurer points out that Mann "prefers names with associations meaningful to his German audience," while on p. 255 he mentions the association (namely 'crow') the name *Krokowski* is supposed to have in English and Polish — surely irrelevant for the German audience. *Krokowski* sounds so much like a real Polish name

<sup>1</sup> Tracking down these instances of *störrisch* throws an interesting sidelight on the Lowe-Porter translation. In the case of *die Hasenzähne störrisch entblößt*, *störrisch* is completely ignored in the translation (p. 318). *Mit störrisch unwissender Miene* is translated as "quite stolidly" (p. 78), and *mit einem so störrisch schamlosen Gesicht* as "her hard, crabbed face" (p. 147). The translation is perhaps best characterized by the translator's own adjective in the "Translator's Note" to the 1953 edition: "lame."

(maybe it is, for all I know — the 1958 Warsaw telephone directory has 7 Krakowskis, but no Krokowski) that it would be unlikely to suggest any English word to a German knowing English, and it is unlikely that Mann was writing for those relatively few Germans who know Polish *kruka* ‘raven.’

On p. 255 Mann is quoted as saying that the name *Adriatica von Mylendonk* reminds Castorp of days long gone by. But why? Maurer fails to say. *Adriatica*, beside having the obvious geographical and classical connotations, may have reminded Mann of the heroine of *Die adriatische Rosemund*, a famous 17th century novel by Philipp von Zesen. *Von*, with its connotations of nobility, obviously points to the past, as does perhaps the *y* in *Mylendonk*, a letter that is rare in modern German orthography (except in words of Greek origin). The *y*, together with the *o* before nasal plus consonant, is also strongly suggestive of Dutch.

On p. 256 it is said that the name *Heidekind* “may be construed to mean either ‘child of the heath’ or ‘heathen child’.” However, all the compounds having German *Heide* ‘heathen’ as a first element have it in the form *Heiden-* (cf. *Heidentum*, *Heidenkind*, *Heidenvolk*, etc., in the DWb), while *Heide* ‘heath’ appears in composition both with and without *-n*. Thus Maurer’s conclusion, reached by other means, that the connotations of *Heide* ‘heath’ are intended, is confirmed linguistically as well.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that Doña Perez, “the disputed object of affection of Rosenheim and Schmitz” (pp. 256–57), bears one of the most common Spanish family names (Pérez). It may have erotic connotations because of a vague suggestion of names like Lola Montez, the stage name of the notorious mistress of Ludwig I of Bavaria. If I may be permitted a mild flight of fancy, perhaps the name *Rosenheim* reminded Mann of the title Baroness of *Rosenthal* that Ludwig bestowed upon Lola.

I hope that the specific objections I have made will point up the necessity for a more stringent methodology for dealing with fictional names. I believe that all fictional surnames should be first examined with an eye to determining whether they are derived from actual surnames. For that purpose telephone directories, address books, etc., from the region in question are invaluable aids, even though not always so easily available. Then library catalogs, bibliographical

works, genealogies, history books, etc., can be profitably consulted. In this case, some of the other names mentioned by Maurer (such as *Schneermann*, *Ganser*) may well have been derived from actual family names known to Mann. Ultimately, of course, any really thorough investigation presupposes an expert knowledge of the author, his milieu, his associates, his language, and even his reading.

I hope also that the above has shown the necessity for meticulous attention to detail. Only thus can the investigation of fictional names progress beyond the stage of an interesting guessing game.

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