

Sir James Jeans remarks that whatever mathematicians may say, conventional novelists will continue to cleave to their intuitive notions of simultaneity and succession in time, will continue to place their events in the usual and secure spatial and temporal framework. He comments, "Such a scheme is perfectly satisfactory for any single individual, or for any group of individuals whose experiences keep them fairly close together in space and time—and, compared with the vast ranges of nature, all the inhabitants of the earth form such a group" (Clark, p. 102). But Thomas Mann was anything but a conventional novelist, and Hans Castorp does indeed range over the vast reaches of nature and human knowledge in his quest for synthesis. He is a "Herr der Gegensätze" if only for a fleeting moment, very much as Einstein was in explaining that the phenomena mentioned above, the contraction, the slowing of clocks, the Michelson-Morley experiment, bizarre as they are, are part of the same system that includes conventional Newtonian mechanics and our intuitive and familiar expectations of nature. Jeans says of relativity theory, "It can represent all the facts of nature, but only by attaching a subjective taint to them all; it does not represent nature so much as what . . . an individual pair of human eyes sees of nature" (Clark, pp. 102–03). This describes Castorp's world exactly.

History provides a rather tantalizing postscript to Prusok's article. In 1928, four years after the publication of *Der Zauberberg*, Einstein was invited by the "Davoser Hochschule" to give a series of lectures to young men and women whose studies had been interrupted by the prolonged treatment for tuberculosis. He spoke on "Fundamental Concepts of Physics and Their Most Recent Changes," and one can well imagine Hans Castorp in the audience listening to his creator's neighbor-to-be.

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Notes

¹ *Daedalus or Science and the Future* (London: Kegan Paul, 1923), pp. 28–29.

² Ronald W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times* (New York and Cleveland: World, 1971), p. 85.

Hemingway and Stendhal

To the Editor:

Robert O. Stephens ("Hemingway and Stendhal: The Matrix of *A Farewell to Arms*," *PMLA*, 88, 1973, 271–80) may be right in his conclusions concerning the religious nature of Frederic Henry's love and the ethical rather than naturalistic context of Hemingway's novel, but it is quite unsound to allege that all this

derives from *La Chartreuse de Parme*, from "the same knowledge that Fabrizio gains—that love is a function of belief" (p. 278).

Stendhal the author of a religious novel? Rubbish. Stephens would do well to look more closely at the basis of Fabrice del Dongo's religious beliefs: to put it briefly, those beliefs are a mixture of "fanaticism" acquired at the Jesuit *collège* and superstition picked up from the abbé Blanès. After a year of theological studies in Naples, the only things Fabrice has gained are a reputation as a *libertin* and a passion for archaeological digs. His priestly vocation is simply a station in life suitable to a *grand seigneur*, one to which he seems conveniently predestined for no better reason than the fact that his homonymous seventeenth-century ancestor had been Archbishop of Parma. Stephens recognizes that "Fabrizio is precluded from a later political career [really a *military* career] in conservative Parma because of his service with Napoleon's army" (p. 277). Has he noticed how Gina explains to Fabrice the usefulness of an ecclesiastical situation? In that passage, she uses a comparison—the game of whist—that she had earlier used to describe *political* life at the court of Parma: "Crois ou ne crois pas à ce qu'on t'enseignera, mais ne fais jamais aucune objection. Figure-toi qu'on t'enseigne les règles du jeu de whist; est-ce que tu ferais des objections aux règles du whist?" (pp. 119, 137 in the Pléiade edition; whist keeps coming up as a metaphor of inconsequential play-acting). Thus politics and religion are both reduced to a game of whist, and it can scarcely be argued that Fabrice's nonreflective view of this matter differs from Gina's. Further, when Stephens quotes Frederic Henry as beginning to take his bridge game with Catherine Barkley seriously (p. 277; Stephens sailed right over this updated echo of Stendhal), the great difference with Stendhal should be obvious: Fabrice loves Clélia *seriously* from the instant he enters the Farnese Tower. True, he is transformed during a prison stay that lasts nine months ("il était un autre homme," p. 317), but not through any religious experience.

None of the quotations from Stendhal in Stephens' article demonstrate the "divine" nature of Fabrice's love for Clélia. The closest one (very doubtful) concerns Fabrice's love notes in the margins of a Saint Jerome that he sends to Clélia, but this is simply amusing subterfuge; to liken those marginalia, as Stephens does, to "a cryptic statement of belief" (p. 278) is ludicrous. Would this mean, in *Le Rouge et le noir*, that when Julien Sorel hides Mathilde de la Mole's love letters in a Bible, her *amour de tête* suddenly becomes a sort of *incendium mentis*? Stephens would have done better to point out that while Fabrice is a *monsieur*, so Clélia is a *chanoinesse*. Then we could have gone the mystico-Freudian route,

with Fabrice's withdrawal at the end of the novel as a symbolic castration—the Abelard and Héloïse bit. A few incidents such as this Saint Jerome episode are offered as evidence of Stephens' thesis, but only halfheartedly, for we learn that Fabrice's "turn toward serious religious belief and later retirement is only occasionally hinted at, and then, ambiguously" (p. 277). A footnote to this evasive comment refers us lamely to an opinion of Margaret R. B. Shaw, who wrote the introduction to the Penguin translation of *La Chartreuse*. Significantly, there is no reference anywhere in the critical apparatus to Bardèche, Brombert, Hemmings, Levin, Prévost et al., or to any Stendhal critic at all.

There is no *fin amors*, no courtly love, no *virgin* becoming the *Virgin* for Fabrice del Dongo. Fabrice does experience a passionate and "sublime" love, does discover his identity through that love, does find immense relief in knowing that the *luoghi ameni*, the earthly paradises, exist for him, too. Certainly there is a good measure of Romantic angelism in Stendhal's depiction of love; certainly the spirit of *La Chartreuse* is ethical, but that spirit is resolutely secular.

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Measuring Language Patterns

To the Editor:

Though I am sympathetic with the views on perception of Boomsliter, Creel, and Hastings ("Perception and English Poetic Meter," *PMLA*, 88, 1973, 200–08), I am troubled by a number of points in their provocative article. First: I am skeptical about the validity of their experiment in unled choral reading upon which everything else depends. They believe that in such reading "each speaker must use the pattern that he *expects* the others to impose. Dramatic variations in timing are inhibited; faithfulness to basic timing patterns is increased" (p. 201). But how can anyone know that this is the motive for the results obtained? May we not with equal plausibility assume that the tendency toward equal timing is a result of group behavior—that each member of the group, trying to "keep together" with the others, instinctively hits on regular timing as the only way in which this can be achieved? Even if only one or a few of the group does this, would not he (or they) tend to lead the less confident of the group, either emphatically or subliminally? Once the tendency toward equal timing has begun, it would of course continue. Indeed, would not the authors' speaking "the first two or three words to get everyone together" (p. 201) have the same effect?

Even assuming the validity of the experiment, I do not think the right inferences have been drawn from it. What we have are "objective measurements" which are supposed to reveal subjective processes. But are such processes unequivocally thus indicated? I doubt it.

The accent blocks tend toward equivalence, but they are clearly more unequal than equal. I do not see that we can infer much from this. In order to make inferences about what the readers are "doing" to the verbal material, we would first have to know precisely the degree of objective *disorder* in that material. But we do not know this; we only know the ways in which various readers might construe it. There is, therefore, no objective standard against which to measure the performance of the choral readers. Furthermore, the fact that the accent blocks are mostly not equal is quite as significant as the fact that some are, or that there is an approach to equivalence.

I think that the authors have fallen into the trap of using objective, "scientific" timing for a psychological phenomenon—for an esthetic process that occurs in virtual, not real, time, and for which real time is irrelevant. We have, alas (or, perhaps, hooray!) no objective means for getting at truly subjective processes. There is only introspection.

I should say, finally, that the authors do not seem to make a clear enough distinction between meter and rhythm—a distinction that is, to my mind, crucial for understanding the process of "double audition" and the way in which rhythm arises. This is perhaps why they draw the wrong inference from a few of my own remarks (p. 205). My references to Platonic Ideas and to meter as an "ideal norm" do not imply that a sing-song child's reading is better than that of a skilled reader. "Ideas" and "ideal" are used descriptively, not evaluatively. Any reading that comes close to mechanical equivalence will virtually destroy a poem's rhythm. It is precisely the *departures* from the norm which make for significant rhythm. These departures cannot be precisely measured. Getting them right depends upon one's rhythmic sense, a faculty that human beings (and bears) seem to possess. It is a special sort of sensibility that enables poets to make rhythm out of metered language and enables readers to respond to it.

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Messrs. Boomsliter, Creel, and Hastings reply:

We wish to thank Schwartz for clarifying his use of the term "ideal norm." His explanation places us firmly on the same ground.

The questions he raises in his letter reflect a view