

CHAUCHAT IN *THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN*

There is an interesting footnote which perhaps ought to be added to the excellent discussion of the character names from *The Magic Mountain* by Warren R. Maurer in a recent issue of *Names* [9: 248 to 59]. It concerns the interesting name given to that elusive character Clawdia Chauchat. Mr. Maurer is certainly correct in focusing our attention on the direct translation from the French of this creature's surname as furnishing an immediate, unsubtle, but yet playful preview of her character. But, as Mr. Maurer proves so conclusively, Mann was seldom content with character names which did not admit several interrelated interpretations. The name "Chauchat" is no exception. In this case, a second association which adheres to the name is particularly apt in view of the intimate connection of Mme. Chauchat with the idea of death, and Hans Castorp's presumed death in the First World War. For "Chauchat" was the name of a popular French machine rifle used in that war, beginning with the battle of the Somme in 1916. It was a mass produced weapon of relatively low quality, which was usually discarded after any malfunction since it was easier to procure a replacement than to effect repairs. Although the gun was well liked, even by Americans, it eventually gained a reputation for being erratic and somewhat unreliable.

Needless to say, these characteristics fit certain aspects of Mme. Chauchat's character to perfection. Moreover, they suggest deeper and more subtle interpretations of the relationship between Hans and Clawdia than can be gleaned simply from the animalistic interpretation of the name "Chauchat." This relationship now takes on the added aspect of a flirtation with death, and the mysterious attraction Clawdia exerted on Hans becomes pregnant with new meaning. In fact, as in those symphonies which Mann loved so well, the introduction of the theme "Clawdia Chauchat" into Hans Castorp's life made its final resolution inevitable.

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