

The Novel and the Guillotine; Or, Fathers and Sons in *Le Rouge et le noir*

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The Novel and the Guillotine; or, Fathers and Sons in *Le Rouge et le noir*

THE GUILLOTINE that so abruptly, perhaps unreasonably, puts an end to Julien Sorel's life and brilliant career has ever been a critical scandal, an outrage to coherent interpretation. But before using the decapitation of Julien Sorel as a focal point for critical meditation on the plot of *Le Rouge et le noir*, I would suggest briefly that *Le Rouge et le noir* may offer the first notable example of a problem in plot central to the nineteenth-century novel. If in reading Stendhal we undergo "the rites of initiation into the nineteenth century" (Levin 149), we do so largely because his novels are pervaded by a historical perspective that provides an interpretive framework for all actions, ambitions, self-conceptions, and desires; hence they offer the first decisive representations of individuals plotting their lives in response to the sociopolitical dynamics of modern times.¹ Nowhere is the issue of history more evident than in the question of authority that haunts *Le Rouge et le noir*, not only in the minds of its individual figures but in its very narrative structures. The novel represents and takes its structure from the underlying warfare of legitimacy and usurpation; its action hinges on the overriding question, To whom does France belong? This question in turn implicates and is implicated in an issue of obsessive importance in all of Stendhal's novels, that of paternity.

On reflection, one can see that paternity is a dominant issue within the great tradition of the nineteenth-century novel (extending well into the twentieth century), a principal thematic embodiment of a concern with authority, legitimacy, the conflict of generations, and the transmission of wisdom. Turgenev's title, *Fathers and Sons*, sums up what is at stake in a number of the characteristic major novels of the tradition: not only in *Le Rouge et le noir* but also in Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, James's *The Princess Casamassima*, Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, to name only a few of the most important texts that this conflict essentially structures. It is characteristic of *Ulysses* as a summa of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novel that its filial protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, should provide an overt retrospective meditation on the problem:

Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro- and microcosm, upon the void. Upon uncertainty, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son? (207)

Stephen's theological musing on the "apostolic succession" of fatherhood strikes to the key problem of transmission: the process by which the young protagonist of the nineteenth-century novel discovers his choices of interpretation and action in relation to a number of older figures of wisdom and authority, who are rarely biological fathers—a situation that the novel often ensures by making the son an orphan or by killing off or otherwise occulting the biological father before the text brings to maturity its dominant alternatives. The son then most often has a choice among possible fathers from whom to inherit, and in the choosing—which may entail a succession of selections and rejections—he plays out his career of initiation into a society and into

history and comes to define his own authority in the interpretation and use of social (and textual) codes.

Freud, in his well-known essay "Family Romances," develops the typical scenario based on the child's discovery that "pater semper incertus est": the fantasy of being an adopted child whose biological parents are more exalted creatures than his actual parents, which the child then supersedes by accepting the actual mother but creating a fantasized, illegitimate father and bastardizing siblings to establish the child's sole legitimacy. It may be significant, as Roland Barthes notes, that the child appears to "discover" the Oedipus complex and the capacity for constructing coherent narrative at about the same stage in life. For the most fully developed narratives of the child who has become a man all seem to turn on uncertainty about the father's identity, to use this uncertainty to develop the romance of authority vested elsewhere, and to test the individual's claim to personal legitimacy within a struggle of different principles of authority. In the nineteenth century, these issues touch every possible register of society, history, and fiction, and nowhere more so than in France, where the continuing struggle of revolution and restoration played itself out in dramatic political upheavals and reversals throughout the century. The nineteenth-century novel as we know it is indeed inseparable from this struggle, from the issue of authority and the theme of paternity, which provide not only the matter of the novel but its structuring force, the dynamic that shapes its plot.

From this exceedingly general sketch of how the problem of authority and paternity relates to plot, I want to return to Julien Sorel's plot by way of its end, through the curious finalities the end appears to present and the ways in which they may motivate our readings of beginning and middle. The narrator tells us, just before Julien Sorel's end, "Jamais cette tête n'avait été aussi poétique qu'au moment où elle allait tomber" 'Never had this head been so poetic as at the moment it was about to fall' (506; all translations from Stendhal are mine). The next moment of the text—the next sentence—it is all over, and the narrator is commenting on the style with which the head fell: "Everything took place simply, fittingly, and without any affecta-

tion on his part." In an elision typical of Stendhal, the climactic instant of decapitation is absent. We have the vibrations of the fall of the guillotine's blade, but not the bloody moment. The elision is the more suspect in that it is not clear that Julien's head needed to fall at all. As a traditional and rationalist criticism of Stendhal used to say, Julien's shooting of Mme de Rênal—which entails his decapitation—appears arbitrary, gratuitous, insufficiently motivated. Engaged to marry the pregnant Mathilde de la Mole, adored of her as she is adored of her father, surely Julien the master plotter, the self-declared disciple of Tartuffe, could have found a way to repair the damage done to his reputation by Mme de Rênal's letter of accusation. Those critics who try to explain Julien's act on psychological grounds merely rationalize the threat of the irrational, which is not so importantly psychological as narratological: the scandal of the manner in which Stendhal has shattered his novel and then cut its head off.² Still another scandal—and another elision—emerges in this ending because of the novel's chronology, which would place Julien's execution well into 1831. Yet in this novel, subtitled "Chronique de 1830," we have no mention of the most notable event of the year: the July Revolution. Indeed, Mme de Rênal in the last pages of the novel proposes to seek clemency for Julien by pleading with King Charles x, who had been dethroned for almost a year. The discrepancy is particularly curious in that the whole of Julien's ideology and career—of revolt, usurpation, the transgression of class lines—seems to beckon to and call for revolution. Is the guillotine that executes Julien—the "peasant in revolt," as he has called himself at his trial—a displaced figure for "les Trois Glorieuses," a revolution notable for having made no use of the guillotine? Is the catastrophic ending of *Le Rouge et le noir* a displaced and inverted version of the revolution that should have been?³

Perhaps we have begun to sketch the outlines of a problem in narrative design and intention, in plot and its legitimating authority, including history as plot, and in the status of the end on which, traditionally, the beginning and middle depend for their retrospective meaning. We can come closer to defining the problem with two statements that Julien makes shortly before the

arrival of Mme de Rênal's accusatory letter. When the Marquis de la Mole has given him a new name, M. le chevalier Julien Sorel de la Vernaye, and a commission as lieutenant in the hussards, he reflects, "After all . . . my novel is finished" (444). Yet the novel—if not his, then whose?—will continue for another eleven chapters. Shortly after the statement just quoted, Julien receives twenty thousand francs from the Marquis, with the stipulation that "M. Julien de la Vernaye"—the Sorel has now been excised—will consider this a gift from his real (i.e., natural, illegitimate) father, and will donate some of it to his legal father, Sorel the carpenter, who took care of him in childhood. Julien wonders if this fiction of the illegitimate aristocratic father might not be the truth after all: "Might it really be possible, he said to himself, that I am the natural son of some great noble exiled in our mountains by the terrible Napoleon? With every moment this idea seemed less improbable to him . . . My hatred for my father would be a proof . . . I would no longer be a monster!" (446). The word "monster," as we shall see, evokes a network of references to Julien's moments of self-identification as the plebeian in revolt, the usurper, the hypocrite, the seducer, the Tartuffe, he who, in the manner of all monsters, transgresses and calls into question the normal orders of classification and regulation. But can illegitimacy rescue him from monstrosity, when throughout the novel illegitimacy has appeared the very essence of the monstrous? Can hatred for the legal father be a proof of innocence, that is, of the lack of monstrosity, of the lack of a need to act the hypocrite? If so, have we all along been reading, not a "Chronicle of 1830," but an eighteenth-century novel—by an author such as Fielding or Marivaux—in which the hero is a foundling whose aristocratic origins eventually will out and will offer a complete retrospective motivation—and absolution—for his desire to rise in the world: usurpation recovered as natural affinity? Legitimized by illegitimacy, Julien's plot could simply be a homecoming, a *nostos*, the least transgressive, the least monstrous of narratives.

Earlier in the novel, M. de Rênal, reflecting on his children's evident preference of Julien to their father, exclaims: "Everything in this century tends to throw opprobrium on *legitimate*

authority. Poor France!" (144). The comment explicitly connects political issues of legitimacy and authority with *paternity*, itself inextricably bound up in the problem of legitimacy and authority. The shape and intention of the novel are tied closely to this network of issues. The questions of authority and legitimacy that the novel poses might be formulated first of all in the queries, What kind of novel is this? To what models of plot and explanation does it refer us? A striking example of this problem occurs early in the novel (bk. 1, ch. 9), in the episode of the "portrait in the mattress." Julien has just learned that M. de Rênal and his servants are going to restuff the straw mattresses of the house. He turns to Mme de Rênal and begs her to "save him" by withdrawing from his mattress, before M. de Rênal reaches it, a small cardboard box containing a portrait. And he also begs her not to look at the portrait; it is his "secret." The narrator, typically crosscutting from the perceptions of one character to those of another, tells us that Mme de Rênal's nascent love for Julien (of which she is still largely ignorant) gives her the heroic generosity of spirit necessary to perform what she takes to be an act of self-sacrifice, since she assumes that the portrait must be that of the woman Julien loves. Once she has retrieved the box and given it to Julien, she succumbs to the "horrors of jealousy." Cutting back to Julien, we find him burning the box, and we learn that it in fact contains a portrait of Napoleon—*l'usurpateur*, Julien names him here—with lines of admiration scratched on its back by Julien. The misunderstanding between the two characters, where neither perceives what is at stake for the other, cannot be confined to the realm of the personal: they are living in different worlds, indeed in different novels. For Mme de Rênal, the drama has to do with love and jealousy, with amorous rivalry and the possibility of adultery. She thinks she is a character in an eighteenth-century novel of manners, *Les Egarements du cœur et de l'esprit*, perhaps, or (as one of its innocents) *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. Julien, on the contrary, is living in the world of modern narrative—postrevolutionary, post-Napoleonic—which precisely throws into question the context of "manners" and the novel of manners, subverts its very possibility. Napoleon, the "usurper" in Julien's pertinent epithet, repre-

sents a different order of *égarement*, the intrusion of history into society, the reversal of a stable and apparently immutable world, that of the ancien régime, which made manners possible and necessary as social and literary codes. If, as Julien says a few chapters later, the “fatal memory” of Napoleon will forever prevent young Frenchmen like himself from being happy, the reason is that Napoleon represented the possibility of “la carrière ouverte aux talents”: the legitimation of class mobility, legalized usurpation. While Julien studies not to appear a disciple of Napoleon, he manages at various times in the novel to resemble first Robespierre, then Danton, both of whom stand behind Napoleon as destroyers of the ancien régime and who, at the very least, historicized the concept of *le monde*, thus making the novel of manners, in the strict definition, impossible. The scene of the portrait in the mattress signals the impossibility of the novel of manners as Mme de Rênal understands it: questions of love and interpersonal relations no longer exist in a closed and autonomous sphere. They are menaced by class conflict as historicized in the persistent aftermath of the French Revolution.

In a number of essays and reflections over the years, Stendhal developed an explicit theory of why the Revolution had rendered social comedy —“la comédie de Molière,” in his shorthand—impossible. He explains himself most fully in “La Comédie est impossible en 1836,” where he argues that social comedy could work only with a unified audience, sharing the same code of manners and comportment and agreeing on what was deviant and extravagant in terms of this code. The Revolution, in destroying the society of court and salon and raising to consciousness the claims of different social classes, shattered the unity of sensibility on which Molière’s effects were predicated; at a performance of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* in 1836, half the audience would laugh at the would-be gentleman, Monsieur Jourdain—as was Molière’s intention—but the other half would admire and approve him.⁴ When social class becomes the basis for political struggle, one man’s object of ridicule becomes another man’s serious social standard. The demonstration applies as well to the novel (as Stendhal noted in the margins of a copy of *Le Rouge et le noir*):⁵ the novel of manners is

itself threatened with usurpation; it cannot exclude from its pages something else, something that had best be called politics. Although Mme de Rênal has no knowledge or understanding of politics, she is living in a world where all other questions, including those of love, are eventually held hostage to the political; and this is true as well for the novel in which she figures.

Politics in *Le Rouge et le noir* is the unas-similable other, which in fact is all too well assimilated, since it determines everything: nothing can be thought in isolation from the underlying strife between legitimacy and usurpation that polarizes the system within which all other differences are inscribed and that acts as a necessary (though I refuse to say ultimate) interpretant to any message formulated in the novel. A telling illustration of this proposition appears in chapter 18 of book 1, which describes the king’s visit to Verrières and which is rich in representations of the movement from red to black, as Julien first cuts a figure in the mounted Honor Guard and then dons the cassock to assist the Abbé Chélan in the magnificent *Te Deum* at the chapel of Bray-le-Haut, which so overwhelms him that at that moment “he would have fought for the Inquisition, and in good faith” (108). It is in the midst of this religious spectacular that the narrator treacherously comments, “Such a day undoes the work of a hundred issues of Jacobin newspapers” (107). The reader who has been paying attention will understand that this undoing has been the intent and design of the religious ceremony, staged and financed by the Marquis de la Mole: it is one more political gesture in the continuing struggle to say to whom France belongs.

But if politics is the indelible tracer dye in the social and narrative codes of the novel, the very force of the political dynamic is matched by the intensity with which politics is repressed. For to admit to the force of politics is to sanction a process of change, of temporal slippage and movement forward—of history, in fact—whereas the codes of the Restoration are all overtly predicated on temporal analepsis, a recreation within history of an ahistorical past, a facsimile ancien régime that rigorously excludes the possibility of change, of revolution. Hence those who claim to be the legitimate masters of France cannot allow themselves to mention poli-

tics: the “Charter of the Drawingroom” in the Hôtel de la Mole decrees “especially that one never talk politics” (251). The result is boredom, for what has been repressed is what interests everyone most passionately and, indeed, what ultimately motivates those acts that claim ostensibly to belong to the domain of manners, since manners themselves—such an act as changing into silk stockings and slippers for dinner—are political gestures. Politics stands as the great repressed that ever threatens to break through the bar of repression. Politics, as someone calling himself “the author” puts it in a parenthetical debate with another figure called “the publisher,” is like a pistol shot in the middle of a concert. Even before Julien’s pistol shot shatters the ceremony of the Mass in the church at Verrières, there is a constant threat of irruption of the political into manners, a denuding of the mechanisms governing the relations of power and of persons, and of the dynamic governing history and narrative.

At stake in the play of politics and its repression is, I have suggested, the issue of legitimate authority versus usurpation; and in this opposition we find the matrix of the principal generative and governing structures of the novel. The interrelated questions of authority, legitimacy, and paternity unfold on all levels of the text: in Julien’s use of models to conceive and generate his own narrative, in the problematizing of his origins and his destiny, in the overriding question of who controls the text. To treat only briefly the first of these issues, we know that from the first time Julien appears in the novel he moves in a web of bookish models, derived first of all from Las Cases’ memoir of Napoleon, the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, the *Bulletins* of the Grande-Armée, and Rousseau’s *Confessions*, which then are supplemented by the New Testament, which Julien has simply learned by heart, and by Joseph de Maistre’s book on the papacy; to these one could add occasional references to Corneille’s *Le Cid* as a model of honor and continuing citation of Molière’s *Tartuffe*, another memorized text. The extent to which Julien believes in these texts varies, but so does the meaning of “belief,” since he has chosen to be the *hypokrites*, the player of roles. It is significant that the Abbé Pirard will note Julien’s complete ignorance of patristic doctrine: Julien’s

texts provide individual interpretations of models of behavior but no authoritative tradition of interpretation and conduct.

As a result, Julien continually sees himself as the hero of his own text and conceives of that text as something to be created, not simply endured. He creates fictions, including fictions of the self, that motivate action: as Hemmings has said, Julien is a “dreamer.” His scenarios make him not only the actor, the feigning self, but also the stage manager of his own destiny, constantly projecting the self into the future on the basis of hypothetical plots. One of the most striking examples of such hypotheses occurs when, after receiving Mathilde’s summons to come to her bedroom at one o’clock in the morning, he imagines a plot—in all senses of the term, including plot as machination, as *complot*—in which he will be seized by Mathilde’s brother’s valets, bound, gagged, imprisoned, and eventually poisoned. So vivid is this fiction that the narrator tells us: “Moved like a playwright by his own story, Julien was truly afraid when he entered the dining room” (335). Such fictions may even encompass the political, as when Julien immolates his last vestiges of remorse toward the Marquis—the benefactor whose daughter he is about to seduce—by evoking the fate of MM. Fontan and Magalon, political prisoners of the regime: this evocation is factually accurate but of the most fictive relevance to his own case, as indeed, we may feel, are all Julien’s identifications of himself as plebeian in revolt and peasant on the rise, since they do not correspond either to our perceptions of his identity or to his own identifications with more glorious models. Because the scenarist of self-conceptions cannot maintain a stable distinction between the self and its fictions, Julien must unceasingly write and rewrite the narrative of a self defined in the dialectic of its past actions and its prospective fictions.

To Julien’s generation of his narrative from fictional models we can juxtapose the seriality of those figures of paternity who claim authority in his career. Julien is set in relation to a series of ideal or possible fathers, but in a curious manner whereby each father figure claims authority, or has authority conferred on him, at just the moment when he is about to be replaced. The “real” or at least legal father, Sorel the car-

penter, is already well on the way to repudiation when the novel opens; his first replacement, the chirurgien-major who has bequeathed his Legion of Honor to Julien, is dead—his legacy suppressed in the movement from red to black. The paternity of the Abbé Chélan emerges in strong outline only when Julien has left him for the seminary, where the severe Abbé Pirard will eventually address Julien as *filius*. “I was hated by my father from the cradle,” Julien will say to Pirard, “this was one of my greatest misfortunes; but I will no longer complain of fortune, I have found another father in you, sir” (236).⁶ Yet this moment of overt recognition comes only in chapter 1 of book 2, that is, after Julien’s translation to Paris and his establishment in the Hôtel de la Mole: precisely the moment when Pirard begins to give way to the Marquis de la Mole, who will complicate the question of paternity and play out its various transformations.

It is at the moment of transition from Pirard’s paternity to the Marquis’ that the question of Julien’s legitimation through illegitimacy is first explicitly raised—the possibility that Julien might be the natural child of some aristocrat (perhaps hidden in the mountains of Franche-Comté during the Napoleonic wars), a circumstance that would explain what the Abbé (and later the Marquis) see as his natural nobility. For the Abbé and the Marquis, Julien’s natural nobility is something of a scandal in the order of things, one that requires remotivation and authorization through noble blood, even if illegitimately transmitted. If, like the foundling of an eighteenth-century novel or a Molière comedy, Julien were at last to find that he had been fathered by an aristocrat, this discovery would legitimate his exceptionality, his deviance from the normal condition of the peasant, and show that what was working as hidden design in his destiny was, as the Abbé puts it, “la force du sang” (233). The strength of bloodline would rewrite Julien’s narrative as satisfactorily motivated, no longer aberrant and deviant, and rescue Julien’s transgressive career, and the novel’s dynamic, from the political realm by restoring them to the anodyne of manners.

A curious dialogue between the Abbé and the Marquis, two believers in paternal authority and the legitimate order, explicitly formulates for the first time the theory of Julien’s illegitimate nobil-

ity. The dialogue creates a chiasmus of misunderstanding concerning the anonymous gift of five hundred francs to Julien, as each speaker mistakenly infers from the other’s words some secret knowledge about Julien’s origins and thus makes further unfounded inferences. It is through misinterpretation and the postulation of concealment—in what is “really,” so far as we know, the absence of anything to be concealed—that Julien’s noble illegitimacy begins to achieve textual status, to acquire an authorship based on a gratuitous play of substitutes for the origin. Further remotivations for the origin then fall into line. The next step follows from Julien’s duel with the Chevalier de Beauvoisis, who does not want it thought that he has taken the field of honor against a simple secretary to the Marquis; the Chevalier hence lets it be known that Julien is the natural child of “an intimate friend of the Marquis de la Mole,” and the Marquis then finds it convenient to lend, as he puts it, “consistency” to this version. He will go on to furnish Julien with a blue costume in addition to the secretarial black; wearing the former, Julien will be the younger son of the old Duc de Chaulnes (who, I note in passing, comes to be an object of hatred to Julien, a representation of repressive authority).⁷ The Marquis then authorizes the Abbé Pirard “no longer to keep the secret” of Julien’s birth. The blue costume is followed by the cross (of the Legion of Honor): the cross that the legitimate son, Norbert de la Mole, has been demanding in vain for some eighteen months. This process of seemingly casual ennoblement by way of illegitimacy, motivating and promoting Julien’s rise in the world through a hidden authority, will reach its climax when the recuperated and effaced plebeian makes himself—through Mathilde’s pregnancy—into the natural son-in-law, himself continuing the bloodline, and stands on the verge of becoming the legal son-in-law, Mathilde’s husband, the Chevalier de la Vernaye.

But I have so far said nothing about another figure of paternal authority in the narrative: the narrator. The relation of the narrator to Julien—and of all Stendhalian narrators to the young protagonists of his novels—is patently paternalistic, a mixture of censure and indulgence: the narrator sets a standard of worldly wisdom that the protagonist must repeatedly violate, yet

confesses to a secret admiration for the violation, especially for “l'imprévu” ‘the unforeseeable,’ the moments when Julien breaks with the very notion of model and pattern. The narrator constantly judges Julien in relation to Julien’s chosen models, measuring his distance from them, his failures to understand them, his false attributions of success to them, and the fictionality of the constructions Julien builds from them. As Victor Brombert has so well pointed out, the Stendhalian narrator typically uses hypothetical grammatical forms, asserting that if only Julien had understood such and such, he would have done so and so, with results different from those to which he condemns himself. To take just one example, which characteristically concerns what did not happen between Julien and Mme de Rênal: “If Mme de Rênal had had the slightest sang-froid, she would have complimented him on the reputation he had won, and Julien, with his pride set at ease, would have been gentle and amiable with her, especially since her new dress seemed to him charming” (78). Constantly referring to the worlds of misunderstanding between his characters, the missed chances and might-have-beens, the narrator repeatedly adumbrates other novels, texts of the might-have-been-written. This obtrusive narrator, master of every consciousness in the novel, claims to demonstrate why things necessarily happened the way they did, yet inevitably he suggests the arbitrariness and contingency of every narrative turn of events, how easily it might have been otherwise.

“Paternalism” is of course a highly charged concept for Stendhal—a man who used a hundred different pseudonyms; who in his letters to his sister referred to their father as “the bastard,” thereby no doubt indicating his wish to consider himself illegitimate; and who once remarked that if you notice an old man and a young man together who have nothing to say to each other, you can be certain that they are father and son.⁸ Encoded in his novels is always the problem of whether paternity is possible, whether there might be a father and a son who could talk to each other. The unfinished *Lucien Leuwen* comes closest to depicting a perfect father, yet even he must eventually be rejected: as Lucien says, my father wishes my happiness, but in his own manner.⁹ It is a fault inherent to

fatherhood that to act toward the son, even with the intent of aiding him in *la chasse du bonheur*, is inevitably to exercise an illegitimate (because *too* legitimate) control, to impose a model that claims authoritative (because authorial) status. Every Stendhal novel describes the failure of authoritative paternity in the protagonist’s life and at the same time shows the narrator’s effort to retrieve the failure by being himself the perfect father, he who can maintain the conversation with his son. Yet there comes a point in each novel where the protagonist must slip from under the control of the narrator-father as well.

Julien, it seems, slips from under the control of each of his figures of paternal authority when that control becomes too manifest. The paternal narrator seeks to restrain Julien, to circumscribe him through the deployment of the father’s greater worldly wisdom; yet he also admires those moments when Julien kicks at the traces of narratorial control, creates the unforeseen. Julien’s slippage from under the exercise of authority—his self-inventing, self-creating quality—typifies the highly metonymic character of the Stendhalian hero, a figure of unarrested, unappeasable desire that can never be anchored in a definitive meaning, even retrospectively. The entire narrative mode of Stendhal’s novels is in fact markedly metonymic, indeed virtually serial, giving the impression of a perpetual flight forward, a constant self-invention at the moment and of the moment. The Stendhalian novel gives the impression of being a self-inventing artifact. What we know of Stendhal’s habits of composition (particularly from the marginalia to the manuscript of *Lucien Leuwen*) suggests that he literally invented his fiction from day to day, using only the most meager of anecdotes as an armature. Each day’s writing—or later, with *La Chartreuse de Parme*, each day’s dictation—became an extrapolation of what the protagonist should become on the basis of what he had been and done the day before. The astonishing sense of rapidity given by these novels was matched in fact by the rapidity of their invention, their author’s refusal to revise and to turn back: they are the least palimpsestic texts imaginable.¹⁰

On reflection, one sees that Stendhal makes curiously nonretrospective use of narrative, which would appear in its essence to be a retrospective mode, tending toward a finality that

offers retrospective illumination of the whole. The Stendhalian protagonist ever looks ahead, planning the next moment, projecting the self forward through ambition: creating in front of the self, as it were, the circle of the *ambitus*, the to-be-realized. Lucien Leuwen repeatedly refers to himself as “un grand peut-être” ‘a great perhaps,’ and Julien, too, in his constant becoming, eludes fixed definitions. The narrator generally seems concerned with judging the present moment, or at most the moment just past, rather than with delving into the buried past in search of time lost. Flaubert, in *L'Education sentimentale*, epitomizes the essentially retrospective nature of his own, and no doubt most, narrative when he has Frédéric Moreau, faced with the portrait of Diane de Poitiers at Fontainebleau, experience a “concupiscence rétrospective”: desire oriented toward an irrecoverable past (322). Stendhal’s novels, in contrast, seem to be based on a “désir prospectif”: desire in and for the future. If, as Georg Lukács claims, *L'Education sentimentale* typifies the novel’s organic use of time, Stendhalian time is inorganic, momentary, characterized by abruptness and discontinuity.¹¹ This quality may well appear paradoxical in a novelist so preoccupied with history, which is necessarily retrospective. Yet it accords with Stendhal’s political liberalism, his belief that only the future could reconcile and resolve the contradictions of the present—and, in the process, create readers capable of understanding his novels. His venture into something resembling the historical novel, in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, is indeed accomplished by making the retrospective impulse an object of satire: the powdered wigs of the Court of Parma represent Restoration as make-believe, a ridiculous (and doomed) effort to set back the clocks of history. We might say that Stendhal’s typical verb tense is the future perfect, that of the will-have-been-accomplished, a tense that allows for the infinite postponement of accomplishment. And postponement may offer one clue to the need for the arbitrary and absolute *finis* of the guillotine.

Le Rouge et le noir, in its rapid, evasive, un-arrestable narrative movement, and in the narrator’s games of containment and outmaneuver with the protagonist, ever tends to suggest that things might be otherwise than they are or, perhaps more accurately, that otherwise is how

things are but not how they might have been. The apparently stable figure of the triangle, which René Girard found to be the basic structure of mediated desire in the novel—where *A* desires *B* because *B* is desired by *C*—lends itself, curiously, to this narrative instability and uncontrollability, since the very abstraction of the triangle figure permits a free substitution of persons at its corners. Thus, when Julien is most profoundly unhappy at his inability to make Mathilde love him with any constancy, the novel suddenly opens up its most comic episode, the courtship of the Maréchale de Fervaques according to the formula provided, along with a volume of manuscript love letters, by the absurd Russian Prince Korasoff—an episode that is an exercise in pure, that is to say empty, style. The Russian prescribes that Julien must make love to another lady—any other lady—of Mathilde’s society. Julien chooses Mme de Fervaques and manages to make eloquent speeches to her by arranging himself in the drawing room so that he appears to look at her while he is gazing past her to Mathilde, the third point of the triangle. The love letters that he daily copies and delivers are so lacking in specific pertinence to their referents that when he once forgets to substitute “Paris” and “Saint-Cloud” for the “London” and “Richmond” of the original, his oversight makes no appreciable difference. Nor is their addressee of much importance: even after Mme de Fervaques has joined the dialogue and begun to answer him, he continues simply to copy the originals. The narrator comments, “Such is the advantage of the grandiloquent style: Mme de Fervaques was not at all astonished by the lack of relationship between his replies and her letters” (416). The grandiloquent style (*style emphatique*) stands for all that Stendhal detested in such Romantic contemporaries as Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo: a grandiose inanity that was the opposite of the penetrating, denuding prose Stendhal had from childhood admired in the *philosophes* and the *Idéologues*. Julien’s success in bringing Mathilde to heel is assured when she opens his desk drawer and finds there a pile of Mme de Fervaques’ replies in envelopes that he has not even bothered to open. What impresses her most is not simply that he should be the sentimental choice of the grand Mme de Fervaques but that the relation should be void of content—a matter

of envelopes rather than of the messages they enclose. When Mathilde falls, vanquished, at Julien's feet, her surrender is a tribute to the authority of empty style, style as pure geometry.

The emptiness generates a plenitude, for Julien's courtship of Mme de Fervaques results in Mathilde's sustained passion for Julien and in her pregnancy, a full meaning that ensures the continuity that entails all Julien's future successes—title, fortune, new name. In suggesting, through the Abbé Pirard, that Julien offer a gift “to M. Sorel, carpenter in Verrières, who took care of him in childhood” (446), the Marquis offers overt and final realization of Julien's primordial wish not to belong to his biological father. The “family romance” has, for once, come true. The elaborate fictions of Julien's legitimation through illegitimacy may correspond to Mathilde's pregnancy through elaborate and empty games of style. The episode of Mme de Fervaques is a remarkable demonstration of the instability of motivation in relation to result, a figure of the narrative's capacity to generate its significant structures from empty configurations, to institute new, authoritative governing structures in its apparently random flight forward. With Mathilde's pregnancy and Julien's dreams for the future of his son—he never conceives the child in utero as anything but a son—the past is made, retrospectively, to take on the dynastic authority that it has always lacked. By transmitting paternity and projecting it into the future, Julien can at last postulate fully the paternity that stands behind him, believe in the illegitimacy that ennobles and legitimates him. Julien at this point belongs to the Restoration, indeed stands as a figure of how Restoration is carried out: by using politics to attain a place in a system of manners that then is used to efface politics, pretending that the way things came to be as they are (by revolution and reaction, for instance) does not belong to history, that the place of each thing—and person—in the structure of things is immutable.

We have worked our way back to the end, to the moment where Julien's apparent stability, his guarantee of a nonpolitical and uneventful future, is catastrophically exploded, shattered by the pistol shot in the church of Verrières, annihilated by the fall of the blade of the guillotine. We need to return here to Julien's tentative

belief in his remotivated paternity—a belief expressed in the conditional of probability (translated above): “Serait-il bien possible . . . que je fusse le fils naturel de quelque grand seigneur exilé dans nos montagnes par le terrible Napoléon? A chaque instant cette idée lui semblait moins improbable” (446)—and we need to juxtapose this belief with its “proof” in Julien's hatred for the legal father—“Ma haine pour mon père serait une preuve”—then with the comment that with this realization of the family romance he would no longer be a monster—“Je ne serais plus un monstre”—and finally with the remark, a few lines earlier, that his novel is over and the merit his alone: “Après tout . . . mon roman est fini, et à moi tout le mérite.” If we can understand how hatred works to guarantee a benign origin, authorizing the political change of place and of class as necessary and nontransgressive, we still need to ask why the novel that claims to be finished continues for another eleven chapters and why these chapters stage the return of the monster.

The word “monster” is used on a few occasions in the text. It appears to refer in particular to ingratitude, especially toward figures of paternal authority, and also to erotic transgression, usurpation, class conflict, and the stance of the “plebeian in revolt,” a stance that Julien tends to assume at moments of crisis (for example, Mathilde's declaration of love, his trial), perhaps because it is simplifying and political, a decisive model for action. The monster figures the out-of-place, the unclassifiable, the transgressive, the desiring, the seductive.¹² The letter that Mme de Rênal writes under the dictation of her confessor sketches a precise portrait of Julien as monster, thus provoking the catastrophe:

Poor and avid, it is by means of the most consummate hypocrisy, and by the seduction of a weak and unhappy woman, that this man has sought to make a place for himself and to become something. . . . In conscience, I am forced to think that one of his means to success in a household is to seek to seduce the most notable woman there. Covered by an appearance of disinterestedness and by phrases from novels, his sole and overriding object is to succeed in gaining control of the master of the house and of his fortune. (448–49)

The whole letter indeed reads like an outline of *Tartuffe*, the classic story of the usurper who

comes to the point of throwing the legitimate masters out of the house:

C'est à vous d'en sortir, vous qui parlez en maître:
La maison m'appartient, et je le ferai connaître.

It is for you to get out, you who speak as master;
The house belongs to me, and I shall make it known.
(4.7.1557–58)

This portrait of Julien has a certain truth, not only because it offers an interpretation that an unsympathetic reader might well adopt but also because it corresponds to Julien's occasional portrayals of himself as the monster. If we were looking for psychological explanations, could we not say that Julien, in attempting to kill Mme de Rênal, is seeking to kill the monster, to eradicate the person who has preserved and transmitted the monster image of himself? Perhaps he is also seeking to ensure his own eradication by assuming the monster identity—for, if he dies, the monster will die with him. Such an explanation gains plausibility when we find that Julien at his trial publicly assumes this identity, calling himself a “peasant who has revolted against the lowness of his condition” (482). In raising this political specter that everyone wants repressed, this potential for monstrous usurpation, Julien, as the Abbé Frilair points out, virtually commits suicide. It is as if he were confessing to a guilt deeper than his crime in order to make sure that full punishment would ensue. And that is one way to lay the monster to rest.

But such an “explanation” seems too easy, too smooth. It covers up and reduces the scandal of the ending, and this strikes me as a mistake, especially since Stendhal's endings constitute a chronic scandal. *La Chartreuse de Parme* collapses its set so fast that three of the four major characters are done away with in a few sentences, and two of Stendhal's important novels, *Lucien Leuwen* and *Lamiel*, never manage to get finished at all. Like his admirer André Gide, Stendhal dislikes concluding. Would it, then, be more productive to think of the Stendhalian ending as a version of what the Russian formalists called “the laying bare of the device,” which here would be the very device of plotting, the need for beginning, middle, and end that in the laying bare would be shown to be both necessary and arbitrary?

I do not want to use an appeal to the *arbitraire du récit* as explanatory in itself. I do, however, want to call attention to a specific and curious intrusion of the arbitrary in the relation between the anecdote that served as source and armature for *Le Rouge et le noir* and the narrative discourse invented on the basis of the anecdote, between the “raw material” of the story and its elaborations in Julien's plot. This anecdote is strangely contextualized early in the novel itself, in condensed and displaced form, as a weird indicator of things to come. I am thinking of the moment when Julien is on his way to the Rênal house for the first time, stops in the church of Verrières for a show of prayer, and finds a scrap of newspaper, on which he reads: “Details of the execution and the last moments of Louis Jenrel, executed at Besançon the. . . .” The rest of the article is torn off. Turning the scrap over, he reads, “The first step” (25). The blood that Julien thinks he sees on the pavement (actually water from the font, colored by light coming through the crimson curtains) adds to the foreshadowing, which is somewhat crude, given Stendhal's usual practice. We seem to have the intrusion within the novel of the crime, trial, and execution of Antoine Berthet, the story that Stendhal found in *La Gazette des Tribunaux* and used as outline—a *fait-divers* covered over by the narrative discourse but only half-accommodated to its new context.¹³ That Louis Jenrel is an anagram of Julien Sorel may indicate something about the partially concealed, half-assimilated status of this anecdote in the novel: the anecdote is present in the manner of a statement displaced into a corner of a dream, demanding expansion and relocation in the process of dream interpretation. How do we read the newspaper in the novel?

The ending of the novel appears to mark a new intrusion of newspaper into novel, dictating that Julien must finish in the same manner as the prototype from whom he has so markedly deviated. That is, maybe Julien shoots Mme de Rênal and goes to the guillotine *because* that original monster Antoine Berthet shot Mme Michoud de la Tour and went to the guillotine, and here my “because” does not belong to source studies or psychological explanation but to narratology, to a perverse logic of narrative. Julien is handed over to the guillotine because

the novel is collapsed back into the anecdote, the *fait-divers*, in which it originated and from which it has diverged.¹⁴ This turn of events may on the one hand suggest that Julien's plot, finally, is not his own to shape as he wills. On the other hand, it may suggest a more general suspicion of narrative invention, which apparently is subject to interference from outside texts—to the uncontrollable intrusion of a newspaper fragment, for example, which at the last constitutes a mortal intertext.

Saying that Julien attempts murder and suffers execution because he must be made to fulfill Berthet's scenario is of course critically perverse, but it has the advantage of not concealing the perverse relations of Stendhal's novel to Julien's. The climactic moment of *Le Rouge et le noir* may be what is known in classical rhetoric as a "metalepsis of the author": the assigning to the author of an action that should normally have been given to an agent in the text, as when one says that Vergil "makes" Dido die in book 4 of the *Aeneid*, or when Sterne or Diderot invokes the author's power to accomplish (or defer) some event in the narrative.¹⁵ Neither Stendhal nor the narrator so overtly appears to stage-manage events—Julien's fatal act indeed inaugurates a period of diminished narratorial intervention, as we shall see—yet the effect is similar, a denuding of the very act of narrative invention. One cannot get around the problem or the effect by claiming that Julien's narrative fills in the "details" that are torn off from the newspaper story, thus providing a new, fuller motivation for the crime and the execution; for it is precisely in the details pertaining to the motives for crime and execution that the text radically frustrates us. Remotivating the text here, to make it a well-behaved, docile narrative, will always require ingenious extrapolation, classically psychological in type. It may be better to recognize that the *fait-divers* in the novel remains somewhat diverse, resisting assimilation to our usual models of seamless novelistic worlds. Although it may be perverse to read Julien's plot as motivated in its very undoing by Berthet's plot, such a reading at least forces us to face the rhetorical problem of the ending, putting before us the question of Julien's novel—whose end Julien announces before the pistol shot at Verrières—in relation to Stendhal's, with

its peculiar leftover, whose status we need to determine.

We may now want to knit closer ties between Julien's two remarks, "My novel is finished" and "I would no longer be a monster." We have seen that "monster" alludes to the irrepressible presence of class conflict and politics, which turn on the ultimate questions: Where does legitimate authority lie? and, Who shall inherit France? "Monster" hence connotes ambition, mobility, the desire to rise and to change places, to be somewhere one does not belong, to become (as by seduction and usurpation) something one cannot be by definition (by birth). The monster is the figure of displacement, transgression, desire, deviance, instability. Thus the monster is conjointly the figure of politics and of plottedness, of politics as plot and plot as politics. Plot itself—narrative design and intention—is the figure of displacement, desire leading to a change of position. The plotted narrative is a deviance from or transgression of the normal, a state of abnormality and error, which alone is "narratable." What Julien identifies as his "novel" at the moment he declares it finished is precisely a deviant trajectory that has led him away from the authority of his legal origins, which has deauthorized origins and all other principles of legitimate authority, to the point where he can postulate a new authority in the theory of natural nobility. Yet, since that nobility, that legitimacy through illegitimacy, has been achieved through the deviance and usurpation of a highly political career, it is ipso facto tinged with monsterism. Later in the century, novels by Balzac, Hugo, Eugène Sue, Dickens, Dostoevsky, and others exploit a world of the criminally deviant, as if the underworld of transgressive and dangerous social elements were the last fund of "narratable" material in an increasingly bland social and literary system. Julien has no connection to the underworld, which was still undiscovered in 1830; yet his plot is already criminally deviant and transgressive, politically usurpatory. Hence what must be punished is not so much any specific act or political stance but rather the fact of having had a plot.¹⁶

Can we then say that Julien Sorel is handed over to the guillotine because he has had a plot? There must be the guillotine at the end because there has been the novel, that strange excres-

cence of telling produced by the tissue of living. The telling perpetuates itself through more telling—scenarios for its further development, adumbrations of how it might be told otherwise—and then the simple monstrous anecdote of Antoine Berthet obtrudes again at the end, as Stendhal's reminder (to himself, to us) that to have lived in the divergence of plot, to have lived as the narratable, means somehow to be deviant and hence, in some cosmic narratological court, to be guilty. To frame Julien's novel within his own novel—to continue beyond Julien's novel and take it to pieces—is Stendhal's way of having a plot and punishing it, of writing a novel and then chopping its head off.

The narrative “leftover” that follows Julien's shooting of Mme de Rênal presents a Julien already castrated of the desiring that creates the novelistic plot: no longer interested in ambition, he judges his whole Parisian experience to have been an error; no longer interested in Mathilde and his worldly marriage, he returns to the explicitly maternal embrace of Mme de Rênal.¹⁷ “He never thought of his successes in Paris; he was bored with them” (471). His mode of thought and being here passes beyond the self-conceptualization and the invention of roles necessary to the plotted existence; he rejects the mediating figures essential to the creation of scenarios of desire and displacement: “One dies as one can. . . . What do *others* matter to me?” (475). Not only does Julien appear to renounce his model in these final chapters, he seems also to move beyond the control and guidance of the paternal narrator. There is far less commentary by the narrator in these chapters; indeed, his voice nearly falls silent, leaving the stage to Julien's almost uninterrupted monologue. The last four chapters (chs. 42–45), following Julien's sentencing, also lack titles and epigraphs, a departure from the rest of the novel that accords with the notable effacement of the narrator's discursiveness and dramatic presence. Julien has simultaneously moved beyond paternal authority and beyond the plotted novel. He is no longer narratable material; his novel has closed shop, and the extranovelistic perspective of its closing chapters serves to underline the disjuncture between plot and life, between Julien's novel and Stendhal's, between authoritative meaning and the violent rupture of meaning.

It is as if Stendhal had decided to enclose within *Le Rouge et le noir* the scenario for what he liked to refer to, contemptuously, as a “novel for chambermaids.” Not that Julien and his plot have much to do with chambermaids, except in his social origin and in the offer, early in the novel, of Mme de Rênal's chambermaid, Elisa, as a suitable wife—an offer whose acceptance would have effectively ended the plot of ambition. We may take the “chambermaid's novel” more generally as the figure of seductive literature. To read a novel—and to write one—means to be caught up in the seductive coils of a deviance; to seduce, of course, is to lead from the straight path, to create deviance and transgression. Stendhal seduces us through Julien's story; then he denounces the seduction. With the fall of the blade of the guillotine, he puts an end to the artificiality of the plotted story.

Something similar, though perhaps inverse, happens to the plotting of history in Stendhal's novel. The Revolution of 1830, as I mentioned, never manages to get represented in the novel, even though in strict chronology it should be; the novel as concert waits in suspense for this historical pistol shot, which never comes. Yet the entire political dynamic of Julien's career tends toward that revolution: his personal transgression will be played out on the national theater in 1830—and then again, more savagely, in 1848 and 1871. The whole novel motivates and calls for the Revolution of 1830: it should be the forty-sixth chapter of book 2, the one beyond the last. In refusing to furnish us with that last chapter, Stendhal performs a gesture similar to his dismantling of Julien's novel, suggesting that one cannot finally allow even History to write an authoritative plot for the novel.

The issue of authority, in all its manifestations, remains unresolved. Julien achieves no final relationship with any of his figures of paternity. It is indeed Sorel the carpenter who reemerges in the place of the father at the end, and Julien attributes to him the jolly thought that the expectation of a legacy of three or four hundred louis from his son will make him, like any father, happy to have that son guillotined. The fathers inherit from the sons. As for Julien's own paternity, his plan that Mme de Rênal take care of his son—whom Mathilde will neglect—goes for naught when Mme de Rênal dies three

days after he does. The fate of this son—if son it be—never is known. The novel rejects not only specific fathers and authorities but the very model of authority, refusing to subscribe to pater- nity as an authorizing figure of novelistic relationships. Ultimately, this refusal may be why Stendhal has to collapse his novels as they near their endings: the figure of the narrator as father threatens domination, threatens to offer an authorized version. He too must be guillotined.

The question, Who shall inherit France? is left unresolved. The question, Who shall inherit from Julien Sorel? is resolved only on the financial plane; and perhaps the victory of Sorel *père* over his son ironically represents the novelist's final and absolute paternal power to put his creatures to death. But the novel comments further on its close and perverse relation to the guillotine when Julien, in prison, recalls Danton's grammatical musings on the eve of his death: "It's singular, the verb *to guillotine* can't be conjugated in all its tenses; one can say: 'I will be guillotined, you will be guillotined,' but one doesn't say: 'I have been guillotined' "

(485). For very good semantic reasons, the verb is grammatically defective: one cannot, in the first person, use it retrospectively. We encounter again, even here at the end, Stendhal's typical prospectivity, his predilection for the future perfect: "I will have been guillotined"—the tense of deferral, the tense that denies retrospective satisfaction. Deferral haunts, as well, Stendhal's relation to the "happy few" he designated as the inheritors of his message. In *La Vie de Henry Brulard*, he famously inscribes these happy few, his readers, in a future fifty or a hundred years after his time. To do so is to defer the question of readership and to temporalize the spatiality of the dialogue in which readership might be thought to consist. The uncertain reader may then, too late, want to ask of the novel why it should be thus and not otherwise: or, in the words ascribed to Beaumarchais that serve as epigraph to book 2, chapter 32: "Hélas! pourquoi ces choses et non pas d'autres?"

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Notes

¹ For the classic exposition of the way historical perspective pervades representation in Stendhal, see Auerbach (400–13).

² Henri Martineau summarizes critical objections to the end of the novel and offers his own psychological interpretation (343–51). For another useful summary of critical commentaries on the denouement and for an attempt to remotivate Julien's acts on a rational basis, see Castex (124–55).

³ Martineau establishes a careful fictional chronology of the novel in the Garnier edition (533–37). On the problem of chronology, see also Stivale. Concerning revolution and the guillotine, see Stendhal's account of his joy—at age ten—on learning of the execution of Louis XVI, an event he explicitly contrasts with the failure of the July monarchy to execute the Comte de Peyronnet and the other ministers who signed the "ordonnances de juillet," which touched off the Revolution of 1830 (*Henry Brulard* 94).

⁴ For a fuller discussion of social comedy and the novel of manners, see Brooks, *Novel* (219–26). Stendhal's argument is largely adumbrated in *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823, 1825).

⁵ Rereading the "Bucci copy" of his novel in 1835, Stendhal noted in the margins of bk. 1, ch. 21—where Mme de Rênal has been maneuvering her husband to the conclusion that the anonymous letters come from

Valenod—"Here is a scene of comedy." He then went on to lament that it could not be put on the stage and to explain why (see Garnier ed. 553).

⁶ Julien states, "[J]e ne me plaindrai plus du hasard, j'ai retrouvé un père en vous, monsieur." And the Abbé replies: "Il ne faut jamais dire le hasard, mon enfant, dites toujours la Providence" 'Never say fortune, my child, always say Providence.' Substituting "Providence" for "fortune" of course indicates a belief in an overall direction to human plots—that of the Father—which the novel as a whole tends to discredit.

⁷ The filigree of the Duc de Chaulnes in the novel presents many curiosities. The Marquis dubs Julien "the younger brother of the Comte de Chaulnes, that is, the son of my friend the old Duc" (272). Julien dispels his remorse at seducing his benefactor's daughter by recalling with anger that the Duc de Chaulnes has called him a "domestique" (306), a remark that Julien recalls again on receiving Mathilde's declaration of love (322): to be put in the role of Julien's father, even fictively, is to assume the burden of Julien's oedipal hatred. Mathilde, reflecting on the dishonor she is courting, mentions the Duc de Chaulnes as father of her official fiancé, the Marquis de Croisenois (328). Yet elsewhere in the novel the Duc de Chaulnes is given as the Marquis de la Mole's father-in-law, and after Mathilde announces her pregnancy and her determination to

marry Julien, the Marquis thinks of passing on his peerage to Julien, since the Duc de Chaulnes has "several times, since his only son was killed in Spain, spoken of his desire to transmit his title to Norbert [de la Mole] . . ." (442). One is tempted to conclude that the shadowy Duc de Chaulnes, representative of the ancien régime and of legitimate authority, is par excellence the figure of paternity in the novel, pressed into service whenever Stendhal needs a reference to paternity. As a figure of legitimation for Julien, he is alienating, perhaps necessarily, and he may also be guilty of putting his biological son to death. And as a figure of paternal authority, he is curiously absent and trivial. The more one probes the mystery of paternity in this novel, the more mysterious it appears.

⁸ The remark occurs, I believe, in Stendhal's *Filosophia Nova*. On these questions, see also Starobinski (191–240). Robert André gives a detailed account of Beyle's oedipal conflict and the forms of hatred for the father presented in the novels, especially *La Chartreuse de Parme*. See also Micheline Levowitz-Treu. Henri-François Imbert perceptively discusses how Julien's search for a father relates to political questions (535–46).

⁹ "Oui, mon père est comme tous les pères, ce que je n'avais pas su voir jusqu'ici; avec infiniment plus d'esprit et même de sentiment qu'un autre, il n'en veut pas moins me rendre heureux à sa façon et non à la mienne" (*Lucien Leuwen* 1355).

¹⁰ See Jean Prévost; also Gérard Genette's remarkable essay "'Stendhal,'" which touches on a number of the questions that interest me here, and the excellent discussion of Stendhal's avoidance of closure by D. A. Miller 195–264.

¹¹ On Stendhalian temporality, see also Genette, "'Stendhal,'" and Georges Poulet.

¹² Here are some examples of the use of "monster" in the novel: when Julien enters his post at the Hôtel de la Mole, the Abbé Pirard, noting the magnitude of what the Marquis is doing for Julien, says, "Si vous n'êtes pas un monstre, vous aurez pour lui et sa famille une éternelle reconnaissance" 'If you are not a monster, you will be eternally grateful to him and his family' (235); when Julien reflects on the calumny that will attach to his name if he is killed while climbing to Mathilde's bedroom, he says to himself, "Je serai un monstre dans la postérité" 'I will be a monster for posterity' (336); when the Marquis berates him for seducing Mathilde—and Julien has just cited, in his defense, Tartuffe's "je ne suis pas un ange . . ." 'I'm no angel!—the Marquis calls Julien "Monstre!" (434); when the Abbé Chélan comes to visit Julien in his prison cell, the Abbé addresses Julien: "Ah! grand

Dieu! est-il possible, mon enfant . . . Monstre! devrais-je dire" 'Ah! Lord! is it possible, my child . . . Monster, I should say' (458). Note also this remark of Stendhal's about his relations with his own father: "J'observai avec remords que je n'avais pas pour lui une *goutte* de tendresse ni d'affection. Je suis donc un monstre me disais-je, et pendant de longues années je n'ai pas trouvé de réponse à cette objection" 'I observed with remorse that I hadn't a *drop* of tenderness or affection for him. I am thus a monster, I said to myself, and for many years I found no answer to this objection' (*Henry Brulard* 217–18).

¹³ Using the terms of the Russian formalists, one could say that the *fabula* (the order of event referred to by the narrative) intrudes into the *sjuzhet* (the order of event in its presentation by the narrative discourse). But to do so would mean reducing the *fabula* to the bare-bones anecdote from which Stendhal worked, whereas the *fabula* is properly understood as the whole of the story to which the narrative discourse refers, the order of events that a reading of the narrative enables one to construct, an order that of course has no existence beyond this construction. What invades the narrative discourse of *Le Rouge et le noir* is distinctly heterogeneous—another order of discourse, another genre, another story.

¹⁴ Some earlier critics of *Le Rouge et le noir*—Léon Blum, Henri Rambaud, Maurice Bardèche—noted that Stendhal seems to insist on returning to his documentary scenario at the end; see the summary of their comments in Castex 126–27. Here again, I find the more "traditional" critics closer to the mark: they have noted real problems, though their treatment of them does not fall within the analysis of narrative that interests me here.

¹⁵ On the metalepsis of the author, see Genette's discussion of Fontanier in "Discours du récit" (244).

¹⁶ For a more theoretical development of some of these questions, see Brooks, "Freud's Masterplot."

¹⁷ Possessing the mother-mistress, Julien may realize a final desired confusion of origins, enacting the oedipal story according to Claude Lévi-Strauss as well as Freud. He has answered the problem of origin by its confusion, "sowing where he was sown": not only does Julien want Mme de Rênal to be mother to his unborn child, Mme de Rênal herself earlier expresses the wish that Julien were father to her children—curiously, sometimes three children and sometimes two, further confusing the question of generation and perhaps thereby further confirming Lévi-Strauss' view that the Oedipus myth tells the story of an insoluble problem. As with the postulated paternity of the Duc de Chaulnes, we are here faced with a significant confusion.

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