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IN FRAGMENTED PERSONALITY

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STENDHAL'S CHARACTER TRIOS: A STUDY
IN FRAGMENTED PERSONALITY

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STENDHAL'S CHARACTER TRIOS: A STUDY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is an enormous body of critical material on Stendhal and his work, as those who are interested in this writer well know. There are numerous biographies, many volumes of commentary on his works. One might well wonder what if anything is left to say about such a man and his work. And yet, if one examines the current bibliographies of recent critical works in literature, there is sure to be a very large section of new articles and books concerning Stendhal. Interest in Stendhal seems to grow with the years. Succeeding generations have all found something new and meaningful in the work of this unique personality. The amount of criticism is great and so is the diversity in the kind of criticism. Despite its diversity there is one problem that is common, certainly not to all criticism on Stendhal, yet nevertheless, to a great amount of it, and it is this: many critics find it difficult to speak about

the writings of Stendhal without at the same time speaking about Stendhal the man. And this is true in spite of the strong trend in modern criticism to allow works to speak for themselves with a minimum of information about their author. This fault, if it is indeed a fault, is almost invariably present in works concerning studies of the characters in the novels of Stendhal. It is not unusual for a critic to begin talking about Julien Sorel or Fabrice del Dongo and to end up talking about Stendhal himself. The reverse is also true. Many biographies begin talking about Stendhal and end up discussing Julien or Fabrice. Here is an example taken from the writings of the distinguished French critic Paul Hazard:

Avec quelle grâce et quelle fierté Fabrice, son héros, réalisait ce qui était pour lui l'idéal de l'homme! Comme la Gina et la Clélia, l'une ardemment, l'autre tendrement éprise, incarnaient à elles deux la femme qu'il n'avait pas trouvée de par le monde!¹

It should be remembered that this quotation is taken from a biography of Stendhal, rather than from a book dealing with his writing. Critics are continually comparing and relating the characters and events of Stendhal's novels to the real people and events of his life.

This dissertation will study a trio of characters which occurs in some of the novels of Stendhal. It will

¹Paul Hazard, La Vie de Stendhal (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 243.

be a personality study, the exact nature of which will be discussed in some detail shortly. At the moment the problem of Stendhal's personality is reintroduced by the above quotation and needs to be dealt with further. What will the attitude of this writer be in regard to the personality of the author versus that of one of his characters? A stand in regard to critical method must be taken now.

There are certain types of literature (usually essays and certainly memoirs, for example) for which there are obvious and valid reasons for discussing the personality of the author in relation to his works. It could be argued that the types just mentioned belong to non-fiction, and therefore any comparison between them and novels is poor. And yet, some of the most excellent examples of the essay (Montaigne's Essais and even Pascal's Pensées) and the memoir (those of Saint-Simon) are esteemed for their imagination and artistic arrangement, as well as for their factualness and information. The novel on the other hand belongs to fiction and therefore the reality created by and within the work itself is often considered to be more important than any external reality. And yet, one of the most influential movements within literature, one that has been especially important in the development of the novel, is known by the name of "realism", and this movement was characterized in its beginning by a concern for establishing

the characters and events of the novel within a known and "real" environment, place, and time. By extension, part of the basis for the judgment of the characters was formed by comparing them to real persons. The goals of realistic fiction seem to justify this type of comparison. Moreover, it must be evident from such labels as the "historical novel", the "philosophical novel", the "psychological novel", that fiction, at least in the realm of the novel, does not always correspond to the hermetic reality that it sometimes claims to, but has strong ties to non-fictional areas of knowledge.

In this dissertation the "intrusion" of the personality of Stendhal into either his own literary works or into criticism about these works will not be considered a problem, but rather accepted as a basic fact about the writings of Stendhal and criticism of these works. This being accepted, it follows that no study of Stendhal's novels will be complete without some study of the author, and in this study the personality of Stendhal will be taken into account in analysing the literary trio that is the main object of this dissertation.

This trio is a group of characters that occurs in several of Stendhal's novels, namely Le Rouge et le Noir, La Chartreuse de Parme, and Lucien Leuwen. The trio consists of a man and two women. The man is the protagonist

of these novels and the two women are his loves. This trio of characters is a prominent feature of the novels just mentioned. The existence of the trio has been noted and discussed by a number of critics whose comments are worth examining.

The quotation on page two of this introduction gives the names of the three members of the trio to be found in La Chartreuse de Parme: Fabrice, Gina, and Clélia. Paul Hazard, in this quotation, gives an almost allegorical treatment of the trio. That is, Fabrice represents Ideal Man, Gina represents Ardent Woman, and Clélia represents Tender Woman. Thus interpreted the trio of characters can certainly not be any sort of key to real people in the life of Stendhal, but on the contrary become ideal types in an allegory on love. A rather good case can be made for this interpretation of the trio (although Hazard does not really try to make it), especially in La Chartreuse de Parme and Le Rouge et le Noir. Paul Hazard continues this interpretation in the following quotation concerning Le Rouge et le Noir:

En même temps, Julien Sorel sera passionné; et il sera si beau, que les femmes l'adoreront: que serait la plus belle vie, sans la passion? Deux femmes occuperont sa vie, symbolisant l'une la tendresse et l'autre l'orgueil; car il n'est rien de meilleur au monde que de se laisser aimer par une âme tendre, sinon de dompter une âme orgueilleuse qui peu à peu s'humilie devant son vainqueur.²

²Ibid., p. 173.

Hazard does not give all the names of the members of this trio. They are the following: Julien Sorel, madame de Rênal, and Mathilde de la Mole. Again, the protagonist, Julien Sorel, represents Ideal Man; madame de Rênal represents Feminine Tenderness; and Mathilde de la Mole represents Feminine Pride. Hazard evidently does not see a trio in Stendhal's third major novel, Lucien Leuwen, for in his comments on this novel he makes no mention of a group of three characters as he clearly and frequently does in discussing the other two novels.

Robert M. Adams in his book, Stendhal: Notes on a Novelist, mentions the trio, first in regard to Le Rouge et le Noir:

The book made no great stir in the world; "truth, bitter truth" was a strong dose to promise the novel-readers of 1830, and neither the petulant hero nor his two adoring mistresses seemed "natural" to the florid, rhetorical taste of the day.³

Adams also mentions the existence of the trio in La Chartreuse de Parme and compares the two novels in the following quotation:

. . . Stendhal is an extraordinarily repetitious writer. Not exactly in his situations and episodic inventions, though there is often a general similarity from novel to novel. As a striking example, the likeness between Julien and Fabrizio, already considerable on the surface, is enforced by subordinate parallels between

³Robert M. Adams, Stendhal: Notes on a Novelist (New York, The Noonday Press, 1959), p. 22.

Mme de Rênal and Gina, Mathilde and Clélia Conti.⁴

Neither of these two quotations is particularly revealing as far as interpreting the trio goes. As the title of the book implies, Adams is interested in Stendhal as a novelist, and he confines himself for the most part to comments about Stendhal's novelistic technique. The quotations are given in order to establish the existence of the trio from an entirely different source. The first source given (that of Hazard) was from a biography of Stendhal. This second source is from a work on novelistic technique. Like Hazard, Adams confines his statements about the trio to Le Rouge et le Noir and La Chartreuse de Parme. However, Adams does not rule out the possibility that the trio occurs elsewhere. He says that "there is often a general similarity from novel to novel", and that he mentions only these two because they offer "a striking example" of this similarity.

As a third source of critical mention of the trio, I have chosen Gilbert Durand's study of the mythological decor of the Chartreuse de Parme. Durand also makes note of the repetition in the novels of Stendhal and the redundancy that exists from one novel to the next:

Ainsi, la rédondance des grands romans stendhaliens, tous divisés en deux parties, correspond toujours

⁴Ibid., p. 62.

à un changement de régime imaginaire ayant pour thèmes significatifs le redoublement de la femme et l'accomplissement de l'oracle.⁵

Durand's division of the novels into two parts corresponds to the hero's involvement with the two women. This division is fairly clearcut in Le Rouge et le Noir where the protagonist leaves madame de Rênal and becomes involved with Mathilde. There is little overlapping of the two involvements. One relationship ends, and the other begins. This is also true in La Chartreuse de Parme, although Gina does not drop out of the picture in the same way that madame de Rênal does. While not mentioning all three characters together as a trio, it is clear that Durand is talking about the trio. His interpretation of it is somewhat different from the other two already given. Durand does not see the three characters as a trio, but rather as two duos. First, the protagonist paired with woman number one, usually an older woman, probably a mother figure. Second, the protagonist paired with woman number two, usually a very young and inexperienced woman. For Durand these are two separate stages in the development of the protagonist towards a true conversion to love. Thus he says:

C'est cette "Rücksicht" que nous allons examiner à travers les deux grands thèmes qui l'expriment: Le

⁵Gilbert Durand, Le Décor mythique de la Chartreuse de Parme (Paris: Librairie Jose Corti, 1961), p. 138.

redoublement de la femme et la conversion à l'amour qu'il sousentend.⁶

In a fourth source, a critic, Georges Blin, even in the title links the personality of Stendhal to a discussion of his works. He, like Adams, is more interested in novelistic technique than in personality. In the following quotation, which mentions the trio of Le Rouge et le Noir, he is specifically interested in point of view:

Il ne suffirait pas, même, de déclarer que de l'extérieur nous portons à Julien la sympathie emphatique que lui vouent les deux héroïnes, ce qui équivaudrait à soutenir que nous nous identifions à elles, non à lui: L'inverse est vrai, que nous regardons Mme de Rênal et Mathilde par les yeux troublants ou troublés de Julien.⁷

As a last critical source I turn to Martin Turnell who comes close to calling what I have termed the Stendhalian trio a trio. He says:

In Stendhal's three major novels the drama is always played out between a man and two women. I felt tempted to use the word "triangle," but it gives a misleading impression of uniformity.⁸

In contrast to the other critics quoted, Turnell includes Lucien Leuwen among those novels that have a trio. A great deal more critical evidence of the trio could be produced, but there would be no point to it. Enough has been given

⁶Ibid., p. 139.

⁷Georges Blin, Stendhal et les problèmes du roman (Paris: J. Corti, 1954), p. 157.

⁸Martin Turnell, The Novel in France (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), p. 174.

here to show that there is critical awareness and concern for the trio. And now the question--just what can a personality study of the trio and the author produce?

The noted psychoanalyst Theodor Reik, disciple and friend of Sigmund Freud, had an interesting experience with one of his patients, and this experience has some analogy to our interest in the personality of Stendhal as perceived through his literature. Reik was treating a young man who had a number of qualities and personality traits that reminded him of Hamlet. At first Reik could not pin down just why this young man's problems caused him (Reik) to think of Hamlet, but he began to reread parts and gradually the whole play and found a number of similarities between events of the play and events in the life of the young patient. These similarities extended to the type of reactions and remarks of the two characters (Hamlet and the young patient). Much later, at a performance of the play Reik found himself asking the question "If Hamlet's father hadn't been murdered--".⁹ Reik immediately brushed aside the thought as ridiculous and foolish for an intelligent man. But the thought kept coming back, and each time it became a little more complete. The short phrase just quoted became "If Hamlet's father hadn't been murdered, but had died a natural death, and if the queen hadn't

⁹Theodor Reik, The Search Within (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1958), p. 335.

remarried--.¹⁰ And once again the psychoanalyst abandoned the thought as ridiculous. But the idea plagued Reik and he simply could not get the question out of his mind. Finally, the question became a complete thought in the following sentence:

Even if Hamlet's father hadn't been murdered, but had died a natural death, and if the queen hadn't remarried, wouldn't Hamlet have felt hostility against his mother?¹¹

This statement, which at first appeared ridiculous to Reik, upon its completion provided the analyst with valuable insight into the personalities of both Hamlet and his patient. Since Freud and Reik, the psychoanalysis of Hamlet has become a rather commonplace matter.

The writer of this dissertation found himself asking questions similar to those of Reik when he was struggling with the problems of the personality of Stendhal. He found himself wondering what Stendhal would have been like if his mother had not died when he was seven. Would he still dislike his father? As Stendhal grew older would he continue to be passionately in love with his mother? Would his personality have been radically different? Would the character of his literary works have been radically different? As Reik has shown, it is not completely ridiculous to ask such questions, and if one pursues such questions

¹⁰Ibid., p. 339.

¹¹Ibid., p. 343.

until they are answered, they can give valuable information and insight into the problem of the personality.

It is interesting to note that Stendhal himself thought that he would not have changed, and when he was in his fifties he remarked that if he ever saw his mother again (presumably in heaven) he would tell her that he was still passionately in love with her. There is, however, another way to determine what he thought might have happened had his mother lived, and that is by examining his novels and other writings. In a novel the writer has the possibility to create a new reality with a freedom of choice about relationships and events that he does not have in real life. Some people will argue, however, that this so-called new reality will bear the mark of the old reality that fashioned its creator. Interestingly enough, in many of his novels, Stendhal allows the mothers of his heroes to live, presumably to a ripe old age. However, many of them might as well have died after giving birth to their sons for all the influence they seem to have had on their sons' lives, for Stendhal, if he mentions them at all, relegates them to obscure roles in Le Rouge et le Noir and La Chartreuse de Parme. The mother who has the largest role (in the three major novels) and is most sympathetically portrayed is that of Lucien in Lucien Leuwen. However, this novel is special in many ways, for the father

is also treated in some depth and, strangely enough for Stendhal, very sympathetically. These three novels will be discussed in some detail. We will, as we are studying these novels, ask ourselves the question "what if Stendhal's mother had not died when he was seven?" and see if there is any relationship that emerges out of the literary personality which might answer this question.

The basic goal of this dissertation will be the following: First, to describe and analyse the trio already mentioned to see if a consistent personality emerges from the major novels of Stendhal. Second, to describe and analyse the personality of Stendhal as it occurs in his autobiographical work Vie de Henry Brulard and then to compare it with the literary personality to see if a consistent total personality emerges. And lastly, to describe and discuss this total personality. Stated more simply, the purpose of this dissertation is this: to describe the trio, to describe the author, to compare both, not particularly in order to establish parallels between them, but rather to portray a total personality and to reveal a unique vision of reality.

CHAPTER II

ARMANCE

OU QUELQUES SCÈNES D'UN SALON

DE PARIS EN 1827

This is Stendhal's first published novel, which appeared in 1827, the year mentioned in the subtitle. In the Avant-propos Stendhal tried to pass it off as the work of someone else--a woman:

Une femme d'esprit, qui n'a pas des idées bien arrêtées sur les mérites littéraires, m'a prié, moi indigne, de corriger le style de ce roman.¹²

Claiming what one is writing to be the work of someone else is an old device. However, that Stendhal should want to attribute the imperfections of this his first work of fiction of any length to a woman is in itself interesting for the purposes of this dissertation. It is possible that some, upon reading the work, would say that Stendhal had a very low opinion indeed of the abilities of women in the sphere of artistic creation. Nevertheless, those who have read either Le Rouge et le Noir, La Chartreuse de Parme, or Lucien Leuwen will immediately recognize Armance as being

¹²Stendhal, Armance, Vol. I of Romans et Nouvelles (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 25.

from the same author. The title of the work is a misnomer; it should have been Octave, the name of the hero and protagonist. Armance is the name of one of the women in the novel. She is an important character, but only because of her relationship to the real main character--Octave. There are other important women in the novel, notably madame de Malivert, Octave's mother. Since this is a study of character and personality, it will be helpful for reference purposes to list the major characters and situate them within the framework of the novel.

As the subtitle suggests, the characters of this novel belong to the upper classes of France during the time of the Restoration. At this point in French history a number of émigrés, that is those who fled during the French Revolution, had returned with the monarchy. This posed a problem. What was to be done about the lands and wealth that had been confiscated from them during the Revolution? Often, the lands were restored. Furthermore, the parliament was considering at this time the voting of a payment of indemnities to these families. The protagonist of this novel, Octave, belongs to one of these émigré families. He is the only son of the marquis de Malivert. The family is reasonably well off, but could be considered poor by noble standards. However, the pedigree on the father's side is impeccable, going back to the Middle Ages. Moreover,

on the mother's side of the family there was wealth, which, with the payment of indemnities considered by parliament, would be restored. The payment of indemnities becomes a reality and through the mother, madame de Malivert, the family's fortune is assured and their prestige among the nobility is restored. The father's main concern for his only son is to contract an illustrious marriage for him as quickly as possible, for he is growing old and would like to see grandchildren before he dies. Octave falls in love with a poor cousin, Armance. The mother perceives this love and approves it for she sees that Armance has a good effect on her strange son. She tries to arrange a marriage. There are obstacles. One is her brother. He is poor and loves to play the stock exchange and plans to do so with Octave's money. In Armance he sees an échec to his plans, so he tries to prevent this marriage, even after it has been announced. He forges a note from Armance to a friend, in which she laments her future marriage to a man who has become boring to her. This message, of course, is allowed to fall into Octave's hands. It does not produce the desired effect, however, because he then resolves to marry Armance, make her his sole heir, then commit suicide in order to free her from a boring husband. This is what happens. All is explained in a series of letters. The Marquis does not long survive his son. Octave's mother and his wife then take vows and enter the same religious order,

retiring to a convent. This, then, is the meager plot of the novel, most of which is concerned with the inner turmoil and anguish of the two young people, Octave and Armance, who go through most of the novel in doubt about their feelings for each other.

Octave is first described by the narrator. We learn that he is about twenty, respects his father, loves his mother with a "kind of passion", and has given up a military career in order to humour their wish for their only son to be near them. Octave is strange, for, unlike most young men of his class, he is totally unconcerned with the conventions of the times. At the salons he does not observe the usual formalities and engage in the usual small talk. He is indifferent to the opinions of his fellow men. His only concern seems to be that of duty towards his parents and a fierce love for his mother. He is described thus:

Beaucoup d'esprit, une taille élevée, des manières nobles, de grands yeux noirs les plus beaux du monde auraient marqué la place d'Octave parmi les jeunes gens les plus distingués de la société, si quelque chose de sombre, empreint dans ces yeux si doux, n'eût porté à le plaindre plus qu'à l'envier. Il eût fait sensation s'il eût désiré parler; mais Octave ne désirait rien, rien ne semblait lui causer ni peine ni plaisir.¹³

If looks alone made the man, Octave would have been a success. But nothing seemed to give him pain or pleasure.

¹³Ibid., p. 29.

He appeared to be motivated by his sense of duty and nothing else. Octave's uncle, Commander de Soubirane, comments upon this sense of duty: "Que diable es-tu? Je ne puis te comprendre; tu es le devoir incarné."¹⁴

There were other things about the character of Octave that bothered people. Octave thought for a while about taking the vows and retiring to a monastic life, but later gave up this idea. He still loved to be alone to read and study. This upset Octave's father: "Le marquis voyait avec une sorte d'horreur un jeune gentilhomme se passionner pour les livres, . . ."¹⁵ The marquis feared that Octave's love of books would lead him into a monastery and he would then grow old without grandchildren. The marquis had good reason to worry. Octave did not want to marry. While speaking to his mother he describes his own character thus:

J'ai par malheur un caractère singulier, je ne me suis pas créé ainsi; tout ce que j'ai pu faire, c'est de me connaître. Excepté dans les moments où je jouis du bonheur d'être seul avec toi, mon unique plaisir consiste à vivre isolé, et sans personne au monde qui ait le droit de m'adresser la parole.¹⁶

Aside from being alone with himself, Octave's only pleasure is being alone with his mother. He realizes that his personality is unusual, but says he did not make himself

¹⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 34.

that way. Apparently, a good deal of his solitary study is aimed at trying to know and understand himself. His mother is not worried by her son's love to be alone with her, but she is worried about his love for solitary study, and predicts that he may one day end up like Goethe's Faust.

Character in Stendhal's writing, and here I am talking about caractère, is often revealed, or at least suggested, in the physical traits of his characters (personnages). So it is most important to discuss both the physical traits as well as the psychological make-up of his personnages when trying to study their personalities. Of particular importance in the revelation of caractère are the eyes. The importance of the eyes was already noted in the first quotation that describes Octave. They are beautiful, but people can see something somber in those eyes which causes them to pity their owner. In Octave's mother, these eyes inspire more than pity--they inspire terror:

Il n'y avait pas jusqu'à la physionomie si noble d'Octave qui n'alarmât sa mère; ses yeux si beaux et si tendres lui donnaient de la terreur. Ils semblaient quelquefois regarder au ciel et réfléchir le bonheur qu'ils y voyaient. Un instant après, on y lisait les tourments de l'enfer.¹⁷

The personality of Octave is charged with extremes. In this he would have to be called a truly romantic character

¹⁷Ibid., p. 36.

(personnage). It is typical of the romantic temperament to be either on the summits of happiness or in the depths of despair, rarely anywhere in between. In Stendhal this mixture remains just that--a mixture. There is never a blending of extremes which changes their nature and makes them into something else--that is, a medium that is not extreme. The extremes do not mix; they are always there in their most exaggerated forms, each struggling for dominance and ready to emerge in its full force. The impossibility of a reconciliation between these extremes forces the hero, in this case Octave, to live daily and constantly in torment and agony. Octave's suffering is an essential trait in his personality. As in the first quotation that described Octave, this last quotation is characteristically vague and lacking in concrete detail. The author offers the reader nothing in the way of metaphor or simile for comparison.

The reader of this novel often receives some of his most revealing insights into the character of Octave through Octave's mother, madame de Malivert. Octave is always completely frank and honest with his mother. He does not have any of the affectations of the noble society of his time, and he refuses to cater to social conventions which he considers not only useless, but also dishonest. Is then a mania for complete and open honesty one of his

character traits, similar to his devotion to duty? Quite the contrary. Octave's ability to pretend and dissimulate is one of his most amazing character traits. As an example of this, let us examine his relationship with his uncle, Commander de Soubirane. Octave loathes this man and can not enjoy his presence, because of his aversion to all that the man represents. And yet, from all outward appearances Octave and his uncle could not get along better. Octave is always friendly and respectful in his attitude towards his uncle. He always appears eager and enthusiastic when his uncle asks him to go out with him. The only person who knows of Octave's real feelings about his uncle is, as we have said, his mother. This aspect, like so many other aspects of Octave's personality, does not fill her with admiration, but rather with dread:

Cet exemple d'une dissimulation aussi facile effrayait madame de Malivert. "J'ai questionné mon fils sur le plaisir qu'il trouve à vivre avec son oncle, et il m'a répondu par la vérité; mais, se disait-elle, qui sait si quelque étrange dessein ne se cache pas au fond de cette âme singulière? Et si jamais je ne l'interroge à ce sujet, jamais de lui-même il n'aura l'idée de m'en parler. Je suis une simple femme, se disait madame de Malivert, éclairée uniquement sur quelques petits devoirs à ma portée. Comment oserais-je me croire faite pour donner des conseils à un être aussi fort et aussi singulier? Je n'ai point pour le consulter d'ami doué d'une raison assez supérieure; d'ailleurs, puis-je trahir la confiance d'Octave; ne lui ai-je pas promis un secret absolu?"¹⁸

There are a number of observations to be made about this

¹⁸Ibid., p. 37.

passage, aside from the fact that it points out Octave's ability to dissimulate and also his honesty with his mother. It is also revealing about his mother and the relationship that he has with her. For one thing their intimacy is exclusive. It especially excludes the father. Madame de Malivert, when she complains that she is a simple woman who would not think of advising a person so strong and unusual as her son, at the same time complains she has no friend of superior enough intelligence to consult. She does not once think about the possibility of consulting her husband. Neither would Octave think of showing his father the same honesty that he shows his mother. There is a kind of pact or special bond between the two. Octave's mother worries more about breaking the confidence of this pact than she does about consulting her husband concerning their son's behavior.

Octave is bored by people who like him and find him attractive (most people do). He becomes attracted to his cousin Armance, because she does not court him, nor does she seem impressed by the fact that he is going to be rich. In fact Armance seems to despise Octave when she learns that he will inherit a fortune. This indifference to money causes Octave to admire Armance and he becomes thrilled by the fact that this admirable creature dislikes him.

The narrator of the novel cannot seem to make up

his mind about the personality of Octave. He sometimes speaks of Octave's difficulties in communicating to other people and in making an altogether favorable impression upon society. Then in another passage he says the reverse:

Il possédait naturellement l'art difficile de communiquer sa pensée, quelle qu'elle fût, sans jamais offenser ou du moins sans jamais infliger d'offense inutile, et grace à cette mesure parfaite dans les relations ordinaires de la vie, l'idée de folie était éloignée.¹⁹

In all fairness to the author I should situate the quotation by saying that it is prefaced by a passage in which the strangeness of Octave's personality is discussed, especially as regards the possibility of his being considered insane. Nevertheless, the reasons the author gives to combat any suspicion of insanity in Octave's character do indeed contradict other descriptions of this person's character. Octave's personality obviously totally absorbs the narrator who tries to make it as attractive as possible for the reader.

We have already mentioned Octave's eyes as important to his good looks as well as his character. We must not overlook his hair:

Ses cheveux du plus beau blond qui retombaient en grosses boucles sur le front qu'il avait superbe, avaient surtout frappé la célèbre madame de Clair. Et à propos des modes suivies par les jeunes gens à Naples, d'où elle arrivait, elle lui faisait un compliment fort vif, lorsque tout à coup les traits

¹⁹Ibid., p. 45.

d'Octave se couvrirent de rougeur, et il quitta le salon d'un pas dont il cherchait en vain à dissimuler la rapidité.²⁰

We cannot be sure whether Octave's blushes of embarrassment are due to madame de Claix's compliments or to the fact that he found the comparison of his own looks to the "customs followed by the young people of Naples" unflattering. The latter consideration is most probable in view of the fact that after leaving the salon he felt it necessary to prove his manhood by engaging in a duel in which he received three sabre wounds. Upon being questioned by his mother, with whom he was usually honest, he replied:

J'étais furieux, j'ai cherché querelle à des soldats qui me regardaient en riant, je me suis battu et n'ai trouvé que ce que je mérite--²¹

Octave is attractive because of his beauté. In French the word is ambiguous, being applied to both men and women. In English if we were to translate the word it would become beauty when applied to women, handsomeness or good looks when applied to men. The ambiguity of the French is better suited to Octave's character and looks. For very often his traits would have to be described as beautiful rather than handsome, especially his hair and eyes. His hair and eyes are beautiful, as a woman's hair and eyes are beautiful. The narrator often dwells upon these aspects of

²⁰Ibid., p. 46.

²¹Ibid., p. 47.

Octave's looks and of their effect on other people. It is obvious from a number of passages that Octave is aware of his own beauty and considers it a problem. The two passages just quoted illustrate this awareness. Upon being complimented on his beautiful hair, Octave felt compelled to assert his maleness. He did this by provoking a sabre duel with some soldiers. The soldiers were looking at him and laughing, or so it seemed to him after the incident in the salon. At this moment the soldiers probably represented for him a symbol of maleness and male authority, and they were laughing at him, at his lack of masculinity, so he attacked them with a sword--an ancient symbol of the penis and of individual maleness.

Octave is different from other people, in looks as well as psychological make-up. He is aware of it; other people are aware of it. The effect of this awareness is to isolate him and set him apart. Octave comments upon this to Armande who seems to be his only friend:

Mais ce n'est pas tout, ces accès de malheur qui sont de la folie à tous les yeux, semblent faire de moi un être à part. Je vois les plus pauvres, les plus bornés, les plus malheureux, en apparence, des jeunes gens de mon âge, avoir un ou deux amis d'enfance qui partagent leurs joies et leurs chagrins. Le soir, je les vois s'aller promener ensemble, et ils se disent tout ce qui les intéresse; moi seul, je me trouve isolé sur la terre.²²

One is reminded of de Vigny's poem Moïse on reading these

²²Ibid., p. 47.

lines. Octave is, according to his mother, Armance, and the narrator, a superior person, isolated by the very qualities that make him superior. He is an alienated hero, an étranger, an exile on earth.

The foregoing pages have given copious illustrations of the character of Octave, the hero. Now let us turn our attention to Armance, one of the heroines, and the person for whom the book was named. Armance de Zohiloff is first mentioned and seen by Octave. We learn that she is a poor cousin living with a rich cousin, madame de Bonnivet. Since Armance and Octave were about the same age, and since they had nothing but indifference for one another, they always spoke frankly to each other. Armance was the only one who did not try to patronize Octave for his money, and for that, Octave held her friendship in great esteem. In fact, Armance's indifference to the news of Octave's pending wealth begins the process of cristalization which is the beginning of the development of their love. Octave finally decides that this indifference is really scorn or hate. He decides that anyone who scorns money in that day and age is worth noticing. However, this new image of Armance is soon shattered for the hero by these remarks which Octave overhears. They are said by one of the noble ladies at his cousin's house:

--Voyez cette petite sottise d'Armance, ne s'avise-t-elle pas d'être jalouse de la fortune qui tombe des nues à

M. de Malivert? Dieu! que l'envie sied mal à une femme!²³

Thus for the hero, as for us, the readers, the noble image of Armance as a poor but proud person is changed into that of a petty person, envious of another's good fortune. Yet there is hope that this is not true. Perhaps the woman who uttered these words was simply being vicious. Perhaps there is another reason for Armance's behavior. And there is. Armance is overheard talking to her best friend. She is talking about Octave:

Que veux-tu? Il est comme tous les autres! Une âme que je croyais si belle être bouleversée par l'espoir de deux millions!²⁴

And so, Armance is restored to the position of esteem that she was first given. These remarks, by the way, were overheard by Octave, who now becomes totally preoccupied with redeeming himself in Armance's eyes.

Armance was poor and lived with her cousin, madame de Bonnivet. Both women are cousins to Octave. Both are attractive and influential to him. He compares them:

Armance était pauvre, elle n'avait que dix-huit ans, et madame de Bonnivet avait trente ans passés; elle était fort belle encore, mais Armance aussi était belle.²⁵

One was rich, one was poor. Both were beautiful, but the

²³Ibid., p. 41.

²⁴Ibid., p. 53.

²⁵Ibid., p. 52.

comparison seems to imply that Armance may have the edge-- she is younger.

One of our first insights into the background and character of Armance, whose complete name--Armance de Zohiloff--has a most unFrench ring, is given by the narrator:

Née sur les confins de l'empire russe vers les frontières du Caucase, à Sebastopol où son père commandait, mademoiselle de Zohiloff cachait sous l'apparence d'une douceur parfaite une volonté ferme, digne de l'âpre climat où elle avait passé son enfance.²⁶

Armance is an étrangère in more ways than one. First, she is a poor cousin in the midst of a wealthy society. Second, she is unimpressed by and indifferent to the values of this society. Third, she is étrangère by birth and nationality--her father was Russian, and she was born in the Russian Empire. Moreover, in spite of looking sweet, she has a strong will which the narrator attributes to the environment in which she was raised.

Any differences between the external picture that Armance offers and the internal character that she possesses is revealed, as in the case of Octave, through her eyes. Thus, though outwardly Armance is indifferent and completely in control at all times, her suffering is sometimes revealed through her eyes:

Quelquefois il n'était pas impossible de lire dans ses yeux qu'elle pouvait être vivement affectée, mais on

²⁶Ibid., p. 56.

voyait que rien de vulgaire ne parviendrait à la toucher. Cette sérénité parfaite, qu'il eût été si flatteur de lui faire oublier un instant, s'alliait chez elle à l'esprit le plus fin, et lui valait une considération au-dessus de son âge.

Elle devait à ce singulier caractère, et surtout à de grands yeux bleus foncés qui avaient des regards enchanteurs, l'amitié de tout ce qui se trouvait de femmes distinguées dans la société de madame de Bonnivet; mais mademoiselle de Zohloff avait aussi beaucoup d'ennemies.²⁷

Again, as in the case of Octave, there is no real description given. We must accept the word of the narrator about Armance's sérénité parfaite, l'esprit le plus fin, and her eyes with des regards enchanteurs, since we are offered no concrete details nor any basis for comparison. Parfaite, fin, and enchanteurs are completely subjective and idealistic as is characteristic of Stendhal's descriptions of his heroes. However, these terms are handy in that they are equally applicable to physical and psychological traits, and Stendhal constantly mixes and confuses the two.

At the end of the above quotation it was mentioned that Armance was not without enemies. Envy was of course the main source of her troubles with others. She seemed to be unassailable in her perfections, and one of the main pastimes of this society was to malign one's friends and neighbors, and so naturally, anyone who was almost perfect was going to be disliked. And besides, the society of madame de Bonnivet found a way to malign Armance:

²⁷Ibid., p. 56.

Comme il est assez difficile d'attaquer les actions d'une jeune fille, on attaquait sa beauté. Octave était le premier à convenir que sa jeune cousine aurait pu facilement être beaucoup plus jolie. Elle était remarquable par ce que j'appellerais, si je l'osais, la beauté russe: c'était une réunion de traits, qui tout en exprimant à un degré fort élevé une simplicité et un dévouement que l'on ne trouve plus chez les peuples trop civilisés, offraient, il faut l'avouer, un singulier mélange de la beauté circassienne la plus pure et de quelques formes allemandes un peu trop tôt prononcées. Rien n'était commun dans le contour de ces traits si profondément sérieux, mais qui avaient un peu trop d'expression, même dans le calme, pour répondre exactement à l'idée que l'on se fait en France de la beauté qui convient à une jeune fille.²⁸

Armance was not exactly pretty according to French standards. The narrator considers her remarkable for her "Russian beauty". Even today, Russian beauty usually evokes the vision of a woman who possesses all the charms of a professional football player. Let us see if we can decipher from this passage, and from others, what exactly it was in the features of Armance that did not fit French notions of beauty. Her Russian beauty was a strange mixture which had, among other traits, "quelques formes allemandes un peu trop tôt prononcées." We cannot be certain what German traits (forms, shapes) that were a little too prominent is supposed to mean, but it can be deduced from other references that German traits probably meant features that were considered masculine, such as the set square jaw, and prominent forehead and brows. A little after the

²⁸Ibid., pp. 57-58.

passage quoted above we learn that the women sometimes made fun of the "mauvais effet produit par les fronts trop avancés et par des traits qui, aperçus de face, étaient peut-être un peu trop marqués."²⁹ Again, the passage is not really concrete in detail, but "les fronts trop avancés" seems to indicate the features I mentioned above. Here is another:

Un jour, par exemple, on attaqua la prédilection d'Armance pour les cheveux courts et retombant en fort grosses boucles autour de la tête, comme on les porte à Moscou.³⁰

Whether or not the women really wore their hair this way in the Moscow of the 19th century is open to question, but not terribly important. The fact is this type of short hair could be considered mannish, or perhaps boyish, but definitely not feminine. Armance is often described in terms that are not proper for a girl. Her looks and actions are often referred to as singulier. She too is alienated, an étrangère, on earth among her own species. But perhaps she, and at the same time Octave, is not among her own species. Armance often had an unusual expression upon her face. This was sometimes called un regard singulier by the narrator. One day when some women were making fun of this look, Octave's mother became annoyed:

²⁹Ibid., p. 58.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 62-63.

C'est ainsi, leur dit un jour madame de Malivert impatientée de leur méchanceté, que deux anges exilés parmi les hommes, et obligés de se cacher sous des formes mortelles, se regarderaient entre eux pour se reconnaître.³¹

Armance, and by implication Octave, is described as a supernatural being (an angel). The comparison is intended to show that this character's unusual qualities are not faults, but rather indications that we are dealing with a superhuman, or an extraordinary person. Armance's persona is therefore intrinsically romantic.

The other character I wish to describe is mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is madame de Bonnivet, a wealthy and older cousin of Octave. It is this same cousin who took Armance in after she learned of her parents' death. Earlier she was compared to Armance, and madame de Bonnivet was described as past thirty, but still quite beautiful. The narrator offers us several passages that describe this older cousin of Octave's:

Madame la marquise de Bonnivet pouvait passer pour l'une des femmes les plus remarquables de la société. Des traits d'une régularité parfaite, de fort grands yeux et qui avaient le regard le plus imposant, une taille superbe et des manières fort nobles, un peu trop nobles, peut-être, la mettaient au premier rang dans quelque lieu qu'elle se trouvât. Les salons un peu vastes étaient extrêmement favorables à madame de Bonnivet, et, par exemple, le jour de l'ouverture de la dernière session des chambres, elle avait été citée la première parmi les femmes les plus brillantes.³²

³¹Ibid., p. 58.

³²Ibid., p. 61.

Here we see the same lack of concrete detail as in the descriptions of Octave and Armance. Again, her eyes are remarkable as in the case of the other two characters. But their look is not described as singulier, but rather as imposant. This woman's biggest drawback is that she has no drawbacks. She is too good to be true. Her virtues are too imposing and they set her apart. For example, in the passage she is possessed of manners that are too noble. Even the parliament at its last session had mentioned her as the first of the most brilliant women (Parliament during the Restoration had no more important concerns than this). We are several times reminded that the reputation of madame de Bonnivet is impeccable, as in the following passage:

La haute vertu de madame de Bonnivet était au-dessus de la calomnie. Son imagination ne s'occupait que de Dieu et des anges, ou tout au plus de certains êtres intermédiaires entre Dieu et l'homme, et qui, suivant les plus modernes des philosophes allemands, voltigent à quelques pieds au-dessus de nos têtes.³³

Madame de Bonnivet's interest in religion caused some concern among the clergy, for she had become enamored of a new sect that talked about angels and solemnly pronounced the word Jehovah in secret meetings when referring to God. Aside from with the clergy, madame de Bonnivet's perfect reputation is not so perfect with Octave either. He

³³Ibid.

becomes her close companion for two reasons: First, it gives him a great deal of masculine pride to see this woman risk her impeccable reputation in trying to convert him to her own religious point of view; Second, Octave will be near Armance, the real object of his interest, by being near madame de Bonnivet. Octave has these thoughts about madame de Bonnivet:

... cette marquise de Bonnivet, si célèbre dans un certain monde, et qui, à ce qu'elle pensait, faisait sensation à la cour quand elle daignait y paraître. Quoique la marquise fût une fort grande dame tout à fait à la mode, et d'ailleurs fort belle encore, ces avantages ne faisaient aucune impression sur Octave; il avait le malheur de voir un peu d'affectation dans ses manières, et des qu'il apercevait ce défaut quelque part, son esprit n'était plus disposé qu'à se moquer.³⁴

These thoughts show that, in Octave's mind at least, madame de Bonnivet had too high an opinion of herself. Moreover she was somewhat affected and Octave held all affectation in derision.

Madame de Bonnivet's reputation in the eyes of Octave did not wear well with time. The more contact he had with this cousin, the more faults he found in her character. She began to appear to him to be totally absorbed by limitless ambition. He finally decided that he was playing with fire by courting madame de Bonnivet's favor. He then came to this conclusion about her character:

³⁴Ibid., pp. 61-62.

Madame de Bonnavet a besoin de pouvoir. Mais elle est fort délicate sur l'espèce de ce pouvoir. Les respects qu'on obtient par le grand état dans le monde, par le crédit à la cour, par tous les avantages que l'on peut réunir dans une monarchie, ne sont plus rien pour elle, elle en jouit depuis trop longtemps, ils l'ennuient. Quand on est roi, que peut-il manquer? -- d'être Dieu.³⁵

The passage speaks for itself.

Enough description of the three main characters has been given. There are others that could be mentioned, especially Octave's mother, madame de Malivert, who seems to hover like a goddess (or an angel) about her son and tries to insure for him a happy destiny. But the other characters are definitely minor, and it would be better at this point to discuss the interrelationship of the main characters to each other.

The main characters, that is Octave, Armance, and madame de Bonnavet, form a trio of which the pivotal character is the male, Octave. All three of the characters are related, that is they are cousins of sorts. The main interpersonal relationship in this trio is between Octave and Armance. Madame de Bonnavet's influence on Octave and her attraction for him are of short duration. The nature of this influence and attraction has already been mentioned. Madame de Bonnavet is a proud and powerful woman. It flatters Octave's male ego to manipulate this symbol of

³⁵Ibid., p. 85.

feminine power, but the pleasure he finds in doing so is easily and soon foregone. Octave's entire existence becomes centered upon gaining the esteem of a person who, he thinks, hates him. The thought of being hated by Armance causes pleasure and is the reason for the development of his love. The whole relationship is based on a misunderstanding. Both Octave and Armance think that they are scorned by one another. Both characters are excessively proud and sensitive. Octave, moreover, shows definite tendencies towards fetishism and necrophilia. As an example of Octave's fetishism let us examine his reaction to the news that Armance is going to marry (someone else, he thinks). Octave upon hearing that Armance will belong to someone else wanders off into the woods. He decides that in order to avoid involving Armance in a scandal he will allow her to marry, wait a year or perhaps two, then end his life. After this thought he leans against a tree and then faints. He revives when a peasant throws some water into his face. In order to repay the man for caring for him and also to keep him quiet about the incident, Octave takes out his purse and gives the man some money. He then realizes that the purse is a present from Armance and this realization provokes the following reaction:

Dès que le paysan l'eût quitté, Octave rompit une jeune tige de châtaignier, avec laquelle il fit un trou dans la terre; il se permit de donner un baiser à la bourse, présent d'Armance, et il l'enterra au lieu

même où il s'était évanoui. Voilà, se dit-il, ma première action vertueuse. Adieu, adieu, pour la vie, chère Armance! Dieu sait si je t'ai aimée!³⁶

There are other examples of Octave's tendency to make a fetish out of objects but this is one of the best. The sexual symbolism implied in the various objects and actions of this scene are fairly obvious. A branch or stick is an ancient symbol of the phallus. With this phallus Octave makes a hole in the earth, an ancient symbol of woman and fertility. He then places a womb-like article which contains his money (here perhaps money represents male power or semen) into the hole and buries it. After this action, which is a sort of ritual intercourse, he acclaims this his love and first virtuous action. This action can also be considered a ritual burial of Octave's hope of ever possessing Armance.

As an example of Octave's tendency to necrophilia I will only mention that he tended to treat Armance like a sister or a friend when he was in her presence, except once when she fainted. Then the following scene occurred:

Sans la secourir aucunement, Octave resta immobile à la regarder; elle était profondément évanouie, ses yeux si beaux étaient encore à demi ouverts, les contours de cette bouche charmante avaient conservé l'expression d'une douleur profonde. Toute la rare perfection de ce corps délicat se trahissait sous un simple vêtement du matin. Octave remarqua une petite croix de diamants qu'Armance portait ce jour-là pour la première fois.

³⁶Ibid., p. 117.

Il eut la faiblesse de prendre sa main. Toute sa philosophie avait disparu. Il vit que la caisse de l'oranger le dérobait à la curiosité des habitants du château; il se mit à genoux à côté d'Armance: --Pardon, o mon cher ange, dit-il à voix basse et en couvrant de baisers cette main glacée, jamais je ne t'ai tant aimée!³⁷

Only when Armance is unconscious and in a death-like pose (lying perfectly still with partially opened eyes) can Octave assume the role of a lover with her. When she is in this state he calls her his angel, kisses her chilled hand saying that never has he loved her so much (jamais je n'ai tant aimée!).

Neither of these tendencies in Octave foretells great happiness for the relationship of Octave and Armance. It is essentially a tormented one in which love and suffering are closely united. They are in a state of balance after the initial realizations of love, and once this balance is broken, as it is in the state of certainty and happiness that exists after the marriage of Octave and Armance, then the relationship comes to a rapid end with the suicide-like death of Octave.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 119-120.

CHAPTER III

LE ROUGE ET LE NOIR

CHRONIQUE DE 1830

This is Stendhal's second published novel and, some would say, his first published masterpiece. It appeared in 1830, the year he started writing under the pseudonym Stendhal. Julien Sorel, the youthful hero of the novel, has become a well known name among the character creations of French literature, so we will begin our study with him.

First mention of Julien Sorel is made by M. de Rênal, mayor of Verrières. M. de Rênal is very much concerned with maintaining himself and his family in a way that befits a mayor. He has done many things to glorify his administration in the town of Verrières, but never tires of thinking of new ways to improve his reputation. He has hit upon the plan of being the first person in town to have a private tutor for his children, and he is considering hiring Julien for this position. He has these thoughts which he communicates to his wife:

Je veux absolument prendre chez moi Sorel, le fils du scieur de planches, dit M. de Rênal; il surveillera les enfants qui commencent à devenir trop diables pour nous. C'est un jeune prêtre, ou autant vaut, bon

latiniste, et qui fera faire des progrès aux enfants; car il a un caractère ferme, dit le curé. Je lui donnerai 300 francs et la nourriture. J'avais quelques doutes sur sa moralité, car il était le benjamin de ce vieux chirurgien, membre de la Légion d'Honneur, qui, sous prétexte qu'il était leur cousin, était venu se mettre en pension chez les Sorel. . . mais le curé. . . m'a dit que ce Sorel étudie la théologie depuis trois ans, avec le projet d'entrer au séminaire; il n'est donc pas libéral, et il est latiniste.³⁸

The priest has told the mayor that Julien has a firm character. There was some question of Julien's morality because of his contact with a liberal, something loathsome to an ultra-conservative like the mayor. However, Julien's reputation as a "latiniste" drove away all thoughts that he might be tainted with liberalism. Even among the townspeople he was referred to as "ce petit abbé Sorel, qui, dit-on, sait le latin comme un ange."³⁹

This rather vague, though nevertheless favorable, impression of Julien is soon put into question by the reaction of Julien's father to the mayor's offer when he comes to call. Julien's father is amazed and filled with mistrust:

... l'esprit actif du vieux paysan cherchait à découvrir quelle raison pouvait porter un homme aussi considérable à prendre chez lui son vaurien de fils. Il était fort mécontent de Julien...⁴⁰

³⁸Stendhal, Le Rouge et le Noir, Vol. I of Romans et Nouvelles (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 228.

³⁹Ibid., p. 230.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 231.

This is the first indication that Julien and his father do not get along. Julien did not like his father and brothers. The paternal reaction of amazement at the good fortune of a "vaurien de fils" suggests that the feeling was mutual, which it was. The clash between Julien and his father is more than just a generation gap. In this clash the Romantic ideals of sensitivity come into conflict with the peasant ideals of "bon sens" and practicality. Julien's qualities have never pleased his father. His extreme pensiveness and pale look made his father think that he would not live, or if he did, he would be a burden to his entire family. In general, this was how he was treated by his family--as a burden. It must be admitted that Julien often gave his father cause to be angry with him. For example, when he goes to the sawmill to tell Julien about the offer of the mayor he finds his son thus:

Au lieu de surveiller attentivement l'action de tout le mécanisme, Julien lisait. Rien n'était plus antipathique au vieux Sorel; il eût peut-être pardonné à Julien sa taille mince, peu propre aux travaux de force, et si différente de celle de ses aînés; mais cette manie de lecture lui était odieuse, il ne savait pas lire lui-même.⁴¹

The passage again puts into relief the two types of people that Julien and his father represent: the tough peasant who admires physical strength and work and who mistrusts books and learning, and Julien, the epitome of all that his

⁴¹Ibid., p. 232.

father dislikes--he is physically rather delicate, and he prefers reading to working. Within the society of the family Julien is a misfit and has been from birth. Following the passage just quoted Julien's father tries to get his attention. He is unsuccessful, so he climbs up to the rafters to Julien and slaps him twice, causing him to drop the book he was reading into the millstream. The book was Napoleon's Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène. The narrator gives us this picture of Julien at this moment: "Il avait les larmes aux yeux, moins à cause de la douleur physique que pour la perte de son livre qu'il adorait."⁴² The act and Julien's reaction to it are significant for Julien's character and fate. Napoleon's book is the only one that Julien really believes in. Napoleon, the nobody who by sheer force of character became the emperor of all Europe, was Julien's ideal. However, since the downfall of Napoleon and the advent of the Restoration, Napoleon's way, the military way to fortune and glory--the Red--was now closed to the young men who were not of noble birth, and the only way for a nobody to become somebody was to don the black robes of the clergy, which was exactly what Julien was going to do. Nonetheless, Julien never gave up his cult of Napoleon, the man of energy that he wanted so much to be like. He chose a deliberate course of hypocrisy to

⁴²Ibid., p. 232.

make his fortune in a society that he neither liked nor respected.

Thus far, we have seen Julien through the eyes of the small-town aristocracy in the person of the mayor and through the eyes of the peasantry in the person of Julien's father. Now the narrator steps in to give us our first lengthy description of Julien and his family situation:

C'était un petit jeune homme de dix-huit à dix-neuf ans, faible en apparence, avec des traits irréguliers, mais délicats, et un nez aquilin. De grands yeux noirs, qui, dans les moments tranquilles, annonçaient de la réflexion et du feu, étaient animés en cet instant de l'expression de la haine la plus féroce. Des cheveux châtain foncé, plantés fort bas, lui donnaient un petit front, et, dans les moments de colère, un air méchant. Parmi les innombrables variétés de la physionomie humaine, il n'en est peut-être point qui se soit distinguée par une spécialité plus saisissante. Une taille svelte et bien prise annonçait plus de légèreté que de vigueur. Dès sa première jeunesse, son air extrêmement pensif et sa grande pâleur avaient donné l'idée à son père qu'il ne vivrait pas, ou qu'il vivrait pour être une charge à sa famille. Objet des mépris de tous à la maison, il haïssait ses frères et son père; dans les jeux du dimanche, sur la place publique, il était toujours battu.⁴³

For the most part this description is still romantically idealistic rather than realistically concrete in detail. However, it is a great improvement over the descriptions we saw in Armance. There are a few concrete details, such as the aquiline nose, black eyes, dark brown hair, low forehead, and pale complexion. Physical traits still

⁴³Ibid., p. 233.

reflect inner psychological realities, the eyes being very important. Julien's eyes indicate a combination of thoughtfulness and energy which might be capable of anything. The hate they now reflect is caused by the beating and the loss of his favorite book. The combination of delicate and almost beautiful physical traits along with a personality capable of great fierceness and energy give Julien an attraction that has a deadly quality about it. Add to this the cult of hypocrisy which we suggested earlier and one has the composite of a possibly dangerous person. There are many instances of this hypocrisy. Upon being questioned by his father about a possible amorous involvement with madame de Rênal through his church activities Julien replies:

Vous savez qu'à l'église je ne vois que Dieu, ajouta Julien, avec un petit air hypocrite, tout propre, selon lui, à éloigner le retour des taloches.⁴⁴

Julien's willing acceptance of the expediency of hypocrisy enables him to go to fantastic lengths to make an impression and win somebody's confidence. He is of course helped by a most remarkable mind and memory, as this passage shows:

Avec une âme de feu, Julien avait une de ces mémoires étonnantes si souvent unies à la sottise. Pour gagner le vieux curé Chélan, duquel il voyait bien que dépendait son sort à venir, il avait appris par coeur tout le Nouveau Testament en latin, il savait

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 234.

aussi le livre du Pape de M. de Maistre, et croyait à l'un aussi peu qu'à l'autre.⁴⁵

Here is a final example of Julien's hypocrisy which also shows how natural it was for him. He is on his way to the mayor's house: "Il jugea qu'il serait utile à son hypocrisie d'aller faire une station à l'église."⁴⁶

So far, the impression one might have of Julien could be that he is a cold-blooded and shrewd schemer, possibly a dangerous psychopath, and that nothing really good could be said of him. This is not at all the case. Nonetheless criticism has been harsh on Julien. Alvin A. Eustis summarizes and criticizes this attitude quite well:

Julien Sorel is one of the most misunderstood and maligned characters in fiction. Critics have called him a schemer, an anarchist, an evil force, and a menace to organized society. Such twaddle can only come from a complete misreading of the novel.

.....
What, then, is Julien? He is a young man who, because of a stifling environment, dares not express his essential nobility of character and is obliged to take refuge in hypocrisy. He is determined to succeed; it is hardly his fault that a change of regime has replaced the Red by the Black. He plans every move in his existence; but, comically, his plans usually go awry and if he succeeds, it is often by mistake.⁴⁷

The last sentence of the quotation brings up an essential trait of Julien's character--his complete unpredictability.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 235.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 238.

⁴⁷Alvin A. Eustis, Jr's introduction to the Laurel Language Library edition of Stendhal, Le Rouge et le Noir (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 16-17.

One can never be sure that he will react in a rational way to any given situation. This is, to some extent, due to his being an outsider. Since he does not feel a solidarity with the social classes he finds himself with, he does not know what being part of the established social order is like, and therefore he does not react to events the way other people do. This accounts for some of his highly irregular reactions to what most people would consider completely ordinary events. An example of what is being discussed can be seen in his unexpected response to the mayor's offer. In spite of his miserable situation at home, the opportunity of living in the luxurious home of the mayor, the chance for advancement both socially and economically, he objects to the offer on the grounds that he might have to eat with the servants. The narrator comments on this:

Cette horreur pour manger avec les domestiques n'était pas naturelle à Julien, il eût fait pour arriver à la fortune des choses bien autrement pénibles. Il puisait cette répugnance dans les Confessions de Rousseau. C'était le seul livre à l'aide duquel son imagination se figurât le monde. Le recueil des bulletins de la grande armée et le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène complétaient son coran. Il se serait fait tuer pour ces trois ouvrages. Jamais il ne crut en aucun autre.⁴⁸

Upon being reassured that he will not have to eat with the servants, but will take his meals with the family, he again

⁴⁸Stendhal, Op. cit., p. 235.

has an unexpected reaction. He runs off to hide and dream like a child:

Il voulait penser à cette annonce imprévue qui changeait son sort, mais il se sentit incapable de prudence; son imagination était tout entière à se figurer ce qu'il verrait dans la belle maison de M. de Rênal.⁴⁹

Julien is an ambitious person. Yet his rejection of religion, morality, all the beliefs and conventions of the society in which he lives, makes one wonder what there is for this ambitious young man to expend his energy on. We learn that his goal in life is to "faire fortune". There is a frightening earnestness in his determination to achieve this aim:

Qui eût pu deviner que cette figure de jeune fille, si pâle et si douce cachait la résolution inébranlable de s'exposer à mille morts plutôt que de ne pas faire fortune!⁵⁰

Julien's portrait would remain much too bleak and would not be complete without a description of him as seen by the other two members of the trio.

Madame de Rênal first sees Julien when he comes to her house to assume his duties as preceptor. She had expected a dirty and slovenly looking priest, but what she saw was

... la figure d'un jeune paysan presque encore enfant, extrêmement pâle et qui venait de pleurer. Il était

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 239.

en chemise bien blanche, et avait sous le bras une veste fort propre en ratine violette.

Le teint de ce petit paysan était si blanc, ses yeux si doux, que l'esprit un peu romanesque de madame de Rênal eut d'abord l'idée que ce pouvait être une jeune fille déguisée, qui venait demander quelque grâce à M. le maire. Elle eut pitié de cette pauvre créature, arrêtée à la porte d'entrée, et qui évidemment n'osait pas lever la main jusqu'à la sonnette.⁵¹

This first impression of madame de Rênal is one that will stay with her. She has a tendency to think of Julien as of a child and of herself as his mother.

By the time the last member of the trio, Mathilde de La Mole, sees Julien, he has gone a long way. He is no longer just an ambitious peasant boy. He has been preceptor of the mayor's children, he has seduced the mayor's wife, he has been to the seminary, and he is now the private secretary to one of the most powerful nobles in all of France. Julien still wears the black of the clergy, but there is no longer much thought about his assuming priestly duties. He has come a long way, and yet he still has a long way to go. He knows nothing about life in Paris and the ways of the aristocracy. He is suspicious of every one and everything. He is soon bored with life in the Hôtel de La Mole, especially with the dinners in the evening which he has to attend. He says as much to the Abbé Prirard, another secretary of the marquis. Mathilde de La Mole overhears his remarks and begins to have some esteem

⁵¹Ibid., p. 241.

for Julien. Upon knowing that Julien is not at all impressed by noble company she thinks to herself: "Celui-là n'est pas né à genoux, ...".⁵² There is no description of Julien as seen by Mathilde. By a slow process she begins to find Julien attractive, basically because of the sentiment expressed in the quotation above.

Now the other two members of the trio will be described, beginning with madame de Rênal. Madame de Rênal first appears rather quietly, walking along beside her rather pompous and loud-mouthed husband, the mayor of Verrières: "Madame de Rênal paraissait une femme de trente ans, mais encore assez jolie."⁵³ Then the narrator gives us a more detailed description:

C'était une femme grande, bien faite, qui avait été la beauté du pays, comme on dit dans ces montagnes. Elle avait un certain air de simplicité, et de la jeunesse dans la démarche; aux yeux d'un Parisien, cette grâce naïve, pleine d'innocence et de vivacité, serait même allée jusqu'à rappeler des idées de douce volupté. Si elle eût appris ce genre de succès, madame de Rênal en eût été bien honteuse. Ni la coquetterie, ni l'affectation n'avait jamais approché de ce coeur.⁵⁴

This description is even more lacking in concrete detail than most of Stendhal's descriptions. We know that madame de Renal is tall and bien faite, but the rest is totally

⁵²Ibid., p. 459.

⁵³Ibid., p. 224.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 229.

idealistic. What we have here is the description of an ideal "older" woman. She is beautiful, quiet, and without affectation. Because of her fame as a beauty in the area and also because of her social position as the mayor's wife, madame de Rênal was constantly being paid court by the most distinguished members of the provincial society in which she lived. Among those who paid her court was M. Valenod, who, next to the mayor, was the most influential person in town and was also considered to be very witty. M. Valenod's attentions for madame de Rênal do not, however, produce the desired effect:

Madame de Rênal, fort timide et d'un caractère en apparence fort inégal, était surtout choquée du mouvement continu et des éclats de voix de M. Valenod.⁵⁵

It soon becomes apparent that madame de Rênal is also an étrangère to her environment. While she has not been rejected in the same way that Julien was rejected by his family, she is nevertheless an outsider who remains apart from the society in which she lives. In contrast to the aggressive ambition of Julien, her protest against her environment takes the form of passive resistance and "pourvu qu'on la laissât seule errer dans son beau jardin, elle ne se plaignait jamais."⁵⁶ Thus, madame de Rênal has

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

retreated into a private dream world that is all her own. Her withdrawal is complete, however, and it even touches so intimate a relationship as that between husband and wife:

C'était une âme naïve qui jamais ne s'était élevée même jusqu'à juger son mari et à s'avouer qu'il l'ennuyait. Elle supposait, sans se le dire, qu'entre mari et femme il n'y avait pas de plus douces relations.⁵⁷

Madame de Rênal's withdrawal from others is not so complete that it extends to her children. As is often the case with women who find themselves in an unpleasant family or social environment, what might be called her active participation in life is devoted entirely to the care and raising of her children. Madame de Rênal exemplifies above all a mother, especially the possessive and protecting mother. Since this is the most important function of her life, anything which might in any way disturb or change the relationship between herself and her children is something to be feared. Thus, the announcement of a preceptor for her children is disturbing news for her, as is shown by this passage:

L'extrême timidité de madame de Rênal était déconcertée par l'idée de cet étranger, qui, d'après ses fonctions, allait se trouver constamment entre elle et ses enfants.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 240.

The narrator later comments that "la délicatesse de femme était poussée à un point excessif chez madame de Rênal."⁵⁹

Madame de Rênal is first seen by Julien when the latter is about to ring the bell at the gate of the Rênal home. When she approaches and speaks to him he is completely taken by surprise:

Julien se tourna vivement, et, frappé du regard si rempli de grâce de madame de Rênal, il oublia une partie de sa timidité. Bientôt, étonné de sa beauté, il oublia tout, même ce qu'il venait faire.⁶⁰

To the inexperienced Julien, madame de Rênal is completely dazzling. This is the first time in his life that a well dressed lady, who is at the same time very beautiful, has spoken to him in a nice way. This beautiful lady is also quite impressed by Julien:

Madame de Rênal, de son côté, était complètement trompée par la beauté du teint, les grands yeux noirs de Julien et ses jolis cheveux qui frisaient plus qu'à l'ordinaire, parce que pour se rafraîchir il venait de plonger la tête dans le bassin de la fontaine publique.⁶¹

It is interesting that the narrator used the word trompée when referring to madame de Rênal's reaction to the beauty of Julien. One could say of madame de Rênal that she was fooled all along by Julien until it was too late and she no longer cared what was happening to herself, for she was

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 241.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 241-242.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 242.

by that time hopelessly in love with Julien. Her mother attitude is what fooled her. She saw Julien as a beautiful child.

It took both Julien and madame de Rênal a long time to get over the shock of meeting one another. Neither turned out to be what the other expected. It is characteristic of all three members of the trio to build fantastic images of what they do not know; hence their utter amazement sometimes at how things turn out to be in reality. It takes madame de Rênal an especially long time to realize that Julien is not the slovenly priest she was expecting him to be. The following two passages illustrate this reaction well:

De sa vie une sensation purement agréable n'avait aussi profondément ému madame de Rênal, jamais une apparition aussi gracieuse n'avait succédé à des craintes plus inquiétantes.⁶²

.....
Ce fut en ce moment seulement, quand son inquiétude pour ses enfants fut tout à fait dissipée, que madame de Rênal fut frappée de l'extrême beauté de Julien. La forme presque féminine de ses traits et son air d'embarras ne semblèrent point ridicules à une femme extrêmement timide elle-même.⁶³

This last passage again points out that when madame de Rênal reacts, it is first of all as a mother. She is first the possessive and protecting mother for her own children. When her own children are safe in her mind, she is able to

⁶²Ibid., p. 243.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 243-244.

extend this attitude to someone who will present the persona of a child.

Now let us consider the third and last member of the trio, Mathilde de La Mole. She makes her first appearance at the dinner table in the Hôtel de La Mole, and she is seen through the eyes of Julien:

... il aperçut une jeune personne, extrêmement blonde et fort bien faite, qui vint s'asseoir vis-à-vis de lui. Elle ne lui plut point; cependant, en la regardant attentivement, il pensa qu'il n'avait jamais vu des yeux aussi beaux; mais ils annonçaient une grande froideur d'âme.⁶⁴

There are some immediately noticeable differences between this description and that of madame de Rênal. Madame de Rênal was described as bien faite, but Mathilde is fort bien faite. Moreover, Mathilde's eyes are remarkably beautiful, and whenever a character of Stendhal has remarkably beautiful eyes, this is a sure sign that this character is important. The eyes of Mathilde, like the eyes of Julien, are not only an external feature of beauty, but they are the windows which allow one to see an inner trait of character. Mathilde's eyes reveal an inner coldness. After looking her over at the dinner table, Julien pays her no more attention, for he had just decided that she would never be a woman in his eyes.

Julien's second description of Mathilde renders her

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 450.

no more attractive than the first encounter. He meets her in her father's library where she has come to look for a spicy novel to read: "Julien lui trouva en papilotes, l'air dur, hautain et presque masculin."⁶⁵ Again a feeling of coldness in regard to this young lady whom he describes as looking almost masculine. This look stands in contrast to Julien's look as seen by madame de Rênal where he was described as having an almost feminine face. Another unfeminine trait of Mathilde's is her reading of spicy novels. The narrator comments on this: "cette pauvre fille, à dix-neuf ans, avait déjà besoin du piquant de l'esprit pour s'intéresser à un roman."⁶⁶ Mathilde's outlook is rather jaded for a nineteen year old girl of the nineteenth century.

Mathilde as seen by herself is a bored and unhappy young girl. Yet she is the daughter of one of the wealthiest and most influential nobles of France. She does not relate well to her own society and seeks escape in her reading and dreaming. It becomes apparent that she too is an outsider, an étrangère. In a fit of unhappiness and despair she says to herself: "Et pourtant j'ai dix-neuf ans! pensait-elle: c'est l'âge du bonheur, dissent tous

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 453.

⁶⁶Ibid.

ces nigauds à tranches dorées."⁶⁷ And the narrator adds sympathetically: "Elle avait le malheur d'avoir plus d'esprit que MM. de Croisenois, de Caylus, de Luz, et ses autres amis."⁶⁸ The people mentioned are the young men who come to pay her court and they are for the most part her only friends. This could perhaps be considered another masculine trait of Mathilde's: her friends are all men, she has no real women friends.

About all the advantages of being young and rich Mathilde has this to say: "Quels avantages le sort ne m'a-t-il pas donnés: illustration, fortune, jeunesse! hélas! tout, excepté le bonheur."⁶⁹ And further, she adds: "Je suis belle, j'ai cet avantage pour lequel madame de Staël eût tout sacrifié, et pourtant il est de fait que je meurs d'ennui."⁷⁰

Here is a last description of Mathilde as seen by a friend who is the chief pretender for her hand in marriage:

Mathilde a de la singularité, pensa-t-il; c'est un inconvénient, mais elle donne une si belle position sociale à son mari!... Et d'ailleurs, cette singularité de Mathilde peut passer pour du génie. ... Elle a si bien d'ailleurs, quand elle veut, ce mélange

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 485.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 492.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 492-493.

d'esprit, de caractère et d'à-propos, qui fait
l'amabilité parfaite ...⁷¹

This is the view of a person who is an insider in the established social order. He is an insider by social position, but more important by mentality and personal character. To a member of this group Mathilde is weird and strange. Her personality is of course offset by her social position, which is all that counts during the Restoration. Moreover, she is capable of complete about-faces of mood that offset her strangeness and make her highly attractive.

These few passages will give an indication of the personalities of the members of the trio. To gain more information we must observe some of their actions and the kind of interrelationship that exists among the members of the trio. The nature of these relationships has to some extent already been suggested by the type of character that has been revealed for each personality. For example, we have already pointed out the basic relationship of madame de Rênal and Julien by indicating that she relates to her surroundings and to other people first as a mother. The mother-son relationship is the basis for her involvement with Julien, even after she has fallen in love with him. Julien on the other hand sees the whole world as a challenge, as a series of obstacles to overcome. Overcoming

⁷¹Ibid., p. 490.

these obstacles is a duty he imposes upon himself in order to maintain his self esteem. For example, madame de Rênal, from the beginning of their encounter, has been well disposed towards Julien. And yet this is not what encourages Julien to seduce her. In fact, any encouragement is an imposition for Julien, for then he thinks to himself that anyone in his position would seduce the woman. He, Julien Sorel, is in such a position. Therefore it is necessary for him to do so in order for him to prove that he is as good as anybody else. All of Julien's great accomplishments come about in such a manner. He imposes these goals upon himself as duties which he must accomplish. The must of the last sentence is most emphatic, for he left himself no choice. For example, once he decided that he was going to hold madame de Rênal's hand in the dark without her withdrawing her hand from his (he had tried several times before). This became a duty which had to be accomplished within a certain time period. If he did not accomplish the duty, the penalty was death--he would go up to his room and blow his brains out. Needless to say, he accomplished the task. The seduction of madame de Rênal was accomplished in the same manner. The seduction was imposed as a duty, and after this nothing else mattered. Julien did not think about the beauty of madame de Rênal, nor about the pleasure he would have in making love to the woman, nor of the gentle and friendly consideration that

the woman had shown him . . . he had a duty to perform:

L'idée d'un devoir à accomplir, et d'un ridicule ou plutôt d'un sentiment d'infériorité à encourir si l'on n'y parvenait pas, éloigna sur-le-champ tout plaisir de son coeur.⁷²

When Julien finally has the success he has been striving for, he has this reaction: "Son âme fut inondée de bonheur, non qu'il aimât madame de Rênal, mais un affreux supplice venait de cesser."⁷³

The difference between Julien and madame de Rênal is highlighted in this passage:

Madame de Rênal, transportée du bonheur d'aimer était tellement ignorante, qu'elle ne se faisait presque aucun reproche. Le bonheur lui ôtait le sommeil. Un sommeil de plomb s'empara de Julien, mortellement fatigué des combats que toute la journée la timidité et l'orgueil s'étaient livrés dans son coeur.⁷⁴

The narrator later comments about Julien: "Chez cet être singulier, c'était presque tous les jours tempête."⁷⁵

Madame de Rênal was a married woman and a mother. She could have had strong reasons for having remorse about her affair with Julien. Yet she is completely happy. Julien, on the contrary, who has accomplished what he had set out to accomplish soon becomes plagued by doubt and torment.

This aspect of Julien's character is similar to the

⁷²Ibid., p. 265.

⁷³Ibid., p. 267.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 269.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 277.

character of Mathilde. Julien's experience with Mathilde de La Mole was anything but that of mother and child. Of course Mathilde was much younger than Madame de Rênal. Mathilde was not at all motherly, and sometimes not very feminine. Both Julien and Mathilde disliked each other upon first meeting. This is the opposite of the meeting between Julien and madame de Rênal. Julien's obvious dislike of Mathilde was one of the reasons that she began to take an interest in him. Boredom, though, played its part in her initial attraction for him, as seen in this passage:

Ces yeux si beaux, où respirait l'ennui le plus profond, et, pis encore, le désespoir de trouver le plaisir, s'arrêtèrent sur Julien. Du moins, il n'était pas exactement comme un autre.⁷⁶

The fact that Julien is strange and different is what attracts Mathilde in the beginning. Then her romantic mind decides that this strange person is capable of carrying out all the fantastic adventures that she has read about in the history of her ancestors and she indeed finds Julien attractive. Julien, in the beginning, continues not to like Mathilde:

Que cette grande fille me déplaît! ... Elle outre toutes les modes, sa robe lui tombe des épaules ... elle est encore plus pâle qu'avant son voyage ... Quels cheveux sans couleur, à force d'être blonds! on dirait que le jour passe à travers! ... Que de hauteur dans cette façon de saluer, dans ce regard!⁷⁷

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 485.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 485-486.

Some of the hautiness and disdain which Julien dislikes in the beginning is nevertheless attractive to him. This tower of aristocratic pride presents a challenge to him. And, as in the case of madame de R  nal, Julien makes the conquest of Mathilde a duty. He is helped by Mathilde, but again this help only heightened the necessity of the duty for Julien. As in the former case, Julien manages to accomplish his duty, either oblivious or mistrustful of any encouragement on the part of Mathilde. After conquering these two different images of woman, Julien seems to want nothing more, and despite all outside efforts goes to an apparently unnecessary death. Perhaps after fulfilling all of his earthly objectives he is not really succumbing, but rather going forth to meet the ultimate challenge that is death.

CHAPTER IV

LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

This novel, to which Stendhal gave no subtitle, is the only major novel without a contemporary French setting and characters. However, there are many references and a few scenes of contemporary France. The characters and setting of La Chartreuse de Parme belong to Stendhal's beloved Italy. The story of the first member of this trio, Fabrice, starts about a year before he was born. The time is that of the Napoleonic invasion of Italy, and there are subtle implications that Fabrice is the result of a liaison between his mother and a young French lieutenant named Robert. After the French had occupied Milan for about a year they were finally driven out by the Austrians. The narrator comments about this:

Nous avouerons que, suivant l'exemple de beaucoup de graves auteurs, nous avons commencé l'histoire de notre héros une année avant sa naissance. Ce personnage essentiel n'est autre, en effet, que Fabrice Valsera, marchesino del Dongo, comme on dit à Milan. Il venait justement de se donner la peine de naître lorsque les Français furent chassés, et se trouvait, par le hasard de la naissance, le second fils de ce marquis del Dongo si grand seigneur, et dont vous connaissez déjà le gros visage blême, le sourire faux et la haine

sans bornes pour les idées nouvelles.⁷⁸

Fabrice's childhood was spent among the peasants of his father's estate at Grianta where he did nothing and learned nothing, not even how to read:

Nous glissons sur dix années de progrès et de bonheur, de 1800 à 1810; Fabrice passa les premières au château de Grianta, donnant et recevant force coups de poing au milieu des petits paysans du village, et n'apprenant rien, pas même à lire. Plus tard, on l'envoya au collège des jésuites à Milan. Le marquis son père exigea qu'on lui montrât le latin, non point d'après ces vieux auteurs qui parlent toujours de républiques, mais sur un magnifique volume orné de plus de cent gravures, chef-d'oeuvre des artistes du XVIIe siècle; c'était la généalogie latine des Valserra, marquis del Dongo, publiée en 1650 par Fabrice del Dongo, Archevêque de Parme. La fortune des Valserra étant surtout militaire, les gravures représentaient force batailles, et toujours on voyait quelque héros de ce nom donnant de grands coups d'épée. Ce livre plaisait fort au jeune Fabrice.⁷⁹

While Fabrice was at the Jesuit school in Milan he was looked after by his aunt Gina Pietranera, sister to the marquis del Dongo, and one of the heroines of the trio. Gina has this impression of the young Fabrice:

Elle le trouva singulier, spirituel, fort sérieux, mais joli garçon, et ne déparant point trop le salon d'une femme à la mode; du reste, ignorant à plaisir, et sachant à peine écrire.⁸⁰

This is the first passage to describe Fabrice. We again encounter the adjective singulier, which is one of Stendhal's

⁷⁸Stendhal, La Chartreuse de Parme, Vol. II of Romans et Nouvelles (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 33.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 34.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 35.

favorites. Of course, the hero is good looking, and of course we do not know much about his good looks except that he is good looking.

Gina and her husband started taking Fabrice out of school now and then for little excursions to the country, picnics, and other amusements. Due to the influence of Gina, there was never any complaint on the part of the school authorities, and in fact, Fabrice graduated with five first places, although he knew little more than when he entered the school.

Fabrice was finally forced to leave his aunt and go back to the family estate at Grianta. This is how his mother finds him on his return:

La marquise fut émerveillée des grâces de son fils. Mais elle avait conservé l'habitude d'écrire deux ou trois fois par an au général comte d'A***; c'était le nom actuel du lieutenant Robert. [It was hinted earlier that this is the real father of Fabrice] La marquise avait horreur de mentir aux gens qu'elle aimait; elle interrogea son fils et fut épouvantée de son ignorance.

Si l me semble peu instruit, se disait-elle, à moi qui ne sais rien, Robert, qui est si savant, trouverait son éducation absolument manquée; or maintenant il faut du mérite. Une autre particularité qui l'étonna presque autant, c'est que Fabrice avait pris au sérieux toutes les choses religieuses qu'on lui avait enseignées chez les jésuites. Quoique fort pieuse elle-même, le fanatisme de cet enfant la fit frémir; si le marquis à l'esprit de deviner ce moyen d'influence, il va m'enlever l'amour de mon fils. Elle pleura beaucoup, et sa passion pour Fabrice s'en augmenta.⁸¹

This passage points out the complicated family situation of

⁸¹Ibid., p. 37.

Fabrice, who, fortunately, is unaware of any complications in his situation. Fabrice's mother is worried about two things: first, that Fabrice's real father (not his legal one) should find out about his ignorance; second, that Fabrice's legal father (not his real one) should find out about his religious fanaticism and use this knowledge to alienate her son's affection for her. The worries of Fabrice's mother also point out two basic characteristics of Fabrice's personality. One is that he is completely unlearned and as a result does not grasp and understand the world intellectually, but rather intuitively. Also the attractiveness of Fabrice's personality for others is not intellectual, but rather emotional. Second, and in keeping with his antirational bias, is his complete belief in the spiritual things he is taught. This latter includes not only the Christian, but also the occult. For example, it was decided that Fabrice should continue his education in Latin which he had started with the Jesuits. He was sent to the local priest, the abbé Blanès, for this purpose. This presented a bit of a problem, because the abbé Blanès did not know any Latin, that is, no more than enough to say what he had to say to perform his duties. This priest did, however, have a reputation of being a very learned man. His field of learning was science, if one wants to call astrology by that name. This man of God was an enthusiastic disciple of the occult art of astrology.

He spent hours at night in the bell-tower of the church where he had his telescope set up. He had a reputation for being a magician. His influence on Fabrice was great:

Fabrice l'adorait: pour lui plaire il passait quelque fois des soirées entières à faire des additions ou des multiplications énormes. Puis il montait au clocher: c'était une grande faveur et que l'abbé Blanès n'avait jamais accordée à personne; mais il aimait cet enfant pour sa naïveté. Si tu ne deviens pas hypocrite, lui disait-il, peut-être tu seras un homme.⁸²

The abbé Blanès did not manage to teach Fabrice any Latin. Nor, for that matter, did he teach him astrology, which Fabrice did not believe in. From his association with Blanès Fabrice gained a firm belief in signs and fore-warnings. In fact in the nightly exploits of the young people Fabrice gained a certain reputation for being able to predict the outcome of an adventure, and his presentiments and hunches were respected by everybody:

Or, il arrivait souvent qu'au moment du départ, et à l'instant qui suivait l'Ave Maria, Fabrice était frappé d'un présage. C'était là le fruit qu'il avait retiré des études astrologiques de son ami l'abbé Blanès, aux prédictions duquel il ne croyait point. Suivant sa jeune imagination, ce présage lui annonçait avec certitude le bon ou le mauvais succès; et comme il avait plus de résolution qu'aucun de ses camarades, peu à peu toute la troupe prit tellement l'habitude des présages, que si, au moment de s'embarquer, on apercevait sur la côte un prêtre, ou si l'on voyait un corbeau s'envoler à main gauche, on se hâtait de remettre le cadenas à la chaîne du bateau, et chacun allait se recoucher. Ainsi l'abbé Blanès n'avait pas communiqué sa science assez difficile à Fabrice; mais à son insu, il lui avait inoculé une confiance illimitée dans les signes qui peuvent prédire l'avenir.⁸³

⁸²Ibid., p. 39.

⁸³Ibid., p. 40.

This belief in signs remained strong throughout Fabrice's life, and it accounts for some of the complete unpredictability of his actions and rationalizations. He can explain calmly and seriously any of his most absurd reactions because of the signs and presentiments he had beforehand. This is what occurs when he explains to Gina why it is necessary for him to go to France and join the army which Napoleon is now assembling for the last time:

Tout à coup, à une hauteur immense et à ma droite j'ai vu un aigle, l'oiseau de Napoléon; il volait majestueusement se dirigeant vers la Suisse, et par conséquent vers Paris. Et moi aussi, me suis-je dit à l'instant, je traverserai la Suisse avec la rapidité de l'aigle, et j'irai offrir à ce grand homme bien peu de chose, mais enfin tout ce que je puis offrir, le secours de mon faible bras.⁸⁴

Some mention has already been made of Fabrice's physical description. It is typically vague, and like all Stendhalian heroes the eyes are important, for women are moved "par la pâleur et les beaux yeux de Fabrice."⁸⁵ As regards behavior, Fabrice has all the passionate emotional reactions of an Italian plus a few childish ones of his own. Once, while sitting at a cafe, Fabrice was insulted by a gentleman. The normal way for gentlemen to settle such incidents is to have a duel. However, Fabrice became enraged and leaped upon him with a dagger:

En ce moment de passion, Fabrice oubliait tout ce qu'il

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 49.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 56.

avait appris sur les règles de l'honneur, et revenait à l'instinct, ou, pour mieux dire, aux souvenirs de la première enfance.⁸⁶

Fabrice often had a superior and disdainful attitude toward women. When it is suggested that he should tell his mother before leaving to join Napoleon's army, he replies: "--Elle le dira à mes soeurs, et ces femmes me trahiront à leur insu! s'écria Fabrice avec une sorte de hauteur héroïque."⁸⁷ Upon which his aunt Gina prophetically remarks:

Parlez donc avec plus de respect, dit la comtesse souriant au milieu de ses larmes, du sexe qui fera votre fortune; car vous déplairez toujours aux hommes, vous avez trop de feu pour les âmes prosaïques.⁸⁸

This statement of Gina's is true, but it was not so much Fabrice's feu which men disliked, but rather his good looks. For example, a young gentleman, who is a rival of Fabrice for the affections of Gina, describes him thus:

Au fait, ce jeune Fabrice est plein de grâces, grand, bien fait, une figure toujours riante ... et, mieux que cela, un certain regard chargé de douce volupté ... une physionomie à la Corrège, ajoutait le chanoine avec amertume.⁸⁹

Fabrice has the following opinion of himself and the society that surrounds him:

Fabrice n'avait nulle envie de conspirer: il aimait

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 95.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 51.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 107.

Napoléon, et, en sa qualité de noble, se croyait fait pour être plus heureux qu'un autre et trouvait les bourgeois ridicules. Jamais il n'avait ouvert un livre depuis le collège, où il n'avait lu que des livres arrangés par les jésuites.⁹⁰

The second member of the trio that we shall describe is actually the first member of the trio to appear. She is Fabrice's paternal aunt and in the beginning of the story is known as Gina del Dongo. She is later known as Gina Pietranera after her first marriage, and after subsequent marriages as the duchess of Sanseverina and Gina Mosca. Since her last name changes so often during the novel, we shall refer to her simply as Gina. From the first mention of her we learn that she is an exceptional person:

... personne dans la prospérité ne la surpassa par la gaieté et l'esprit aimable, comme personne ne la surpassa par le courage et la sérénité d'âme dans la fortune contraire.⁹¹

Gina became a very beautiful woman at an early age, and at the age of thirteen she looked eighteen. Gina's brother, the marquis del Dongo, arranges a brilliant marriage for her with a wealthy noble. However, she ruins her chances for this marriage by insulting her prospective husband: when she is presented to the man for the first time, she bursts out laughing at him because he is wearing a wig. Contrary to her brother's wishes and much to his chagrin, she marries

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 108.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 29.

a poor count whom she loves in preference to the rich man. To make matters worse, her husband is a liberal in politics and only a second lieutenant in the army. His name was Pietranera.

When the French come to Milan, fortune changes for Gina and her poor husband. Count Pietranera obtains a very lucrative and influential position at court and Gina becomes "une des femmes les plus brillantes de la cour du prince Eugène, vice-roi d'Italie."⁹²

We have already seen that Gina is an exceptional person for her strength of character in good or bad fortune and because of her beauty. As with other Stendhalian characters her exceptional qualities are not limited to her looks. Her moral and ethical sense is exceptional--her actions show no real concern for either. Gina would do anything for those she loves. Above all, in any situation, she is a woman of action who cannot remain passive to the events which occur around her. The narrator comments on this:

Ce courage ridicule qu'on appelle résignation, le courage d'un sot qui se laisse pendre sans mot dire, n'était point à l'usage de la comtesse.⁹³

An early episode in the novel illustrates Gina's courage and moral sense quite well. When the French are

⁹²Ibid., p. 35.

⁹³Ibid., p. 43.

forced out of Milan, Gina and her husband find themselves in bad circumstances. The ultra conservatives come back into power, and a liberal, such as Count Pietranera, has many enemies among them. Some of these enemies manage to have Count Pietranera put in prison under false charges. When Gina learns of this, she immediately hires a carriage to drive all the way to Vienna so that she can tell the truth to the emperor. When the authorities hear of her plans, they become frightened and set Count Pietranera free. But a short time after this incident, the count goes hunting with some of the young "ultras" of the nobility. One of them makes some unpleasant remarks to the count and the two start fighting. The count, being the only liberal in the group, is all alone against the others, and he is beaten up and killed. This group spreads the news around that the count was killed in a duel. However, Gina learns the truth about the death of her husband and wants vengeance against his assassin. To induce a young noble named Limercati to kill her husband's assassin, she is willing to go to bed with him and writes him the following note:

"Voulez-vous agir une fois en homme d'esprit?
 "Figurez-vous que vous ne m'avez jamais connue.
 "Je suis, avec un peu de mépris peut-être, votre
 "très humble servante,
 "Gina Pietranera."⁹⁴

⁹⁴Ibid.

All this, Gina is willing to do for the love of her husband. Her one true love in life, however, is her nephew Fabrice. She loves him with a fierce and passionate love that would have been carried to the point of a physical liaison had she not checked herself from letting this happen. She would do anything, to the point of having a king assassinated, to protect Fabrice from danger.

Gina is as unpredictable in her moods and actions as is Fabrice. In her unceasing search for amusement she is very often attracted to the novel and the bizarre. To keep from being bored she is in constant need of change, and she herself is constantly changing. This seems to be one of the main reasons why she is so fascinating to other people. Gina is beautiful, but it is not her beauty that makes her so attractive. One is reminded of Shakespeare's description of Cleopatra, whose principal charm he attributes to her infinite variety, when one reads the following description of Gina, as seen through the eyes of one of her lovers:

Jeune, brillante, légère comme un oiseau, ... elle n'a pas vingt-cinq ans. Sa beauté est son moindre charme; où trouver ailleurs cette âme toujours sincère, qui jamais n'agit avec prudence, qui se livre tout entière à l'impression du moment, qui ne demande qu'à être entraînée par quelque objet nouveau?⁹⁵

The lover who describes Gina in the above passage is Count Mosca, a witty and intelligent courtier who is the right

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 115-116.

hand man of the king of Parma. Gina has met him during one of her visits to the opera at Milan. She immediately likes him, and he falls madly in love with her. Count Mosca is a married man, but begs Gina to live with him, saying he would give up his position at court and go to live wherever she might want, if only she would become his mistress. Gina, for her part, is bored living on the family estate at Grianta. Also, though she is not yet thirty, she thinks she is getting old and does not have much time left to have fun in life, so she decides to accept the offer of the count. She does not, however, want to go to some remote place and live a modest and secluded life, even with so likable a person as the count. She has need of the gaiety and diversions of living in brilliant and witty society. She and Count Mosca therefore devise a plan whereby she can legitimately establish herself in the court of Parma--she marries an aging duke from the kingdom of Parma who is living in exile. And so Gina becomes the duchess of Sanseverina. Shortly thereafter, she moves to Parma. This arrangement is perfect for Gina and the count. She is not bothered by her husband, whom she had only seen long enough for the wedding ceremony to take place and whom she has not seen since. She and Count Mosca are able to be together. Gina dazzles the society of Parma and soon becomes the court favorite. The narrator remarks about this situation:

Tout souriait à la duchesse; elle s'amusait de cette existence de cour où la tempête est toujours à craindre; il lui semblait recommencer la vie. Elle était tendrement attachée au comte, qui littéralement était fou de bonheur. Cette aimable situation lui avait procuré un sang-froid parfait pour tout ce qui ne regardait que ses intérêts d'ambition.⁹⁶

Gina now has a position in society which allows her to lead a gay life. She also is in a position of power and influence which will enable her to do the one thing she most wants to do: love, protect, and secure a brilliant career for her nephew Fabrice. Gina lives her whole life for Fabrice. He is her reason for living, and when he dies, she dies shortly thereafter.

Gina has an interesting opinion of court life, which sums up her attitude towards life in general:

Une cour, c'est ridicule, disait la comtesse Gina à la marquise, mais c'est amusant; c'est un jeu qui intéresse, mais dont il faut accepter les règles. Qui s'est jamais avisé de se récrier contre le ridicule des règles du Whist? Et pourtant une fois qu'on s'est accoutumé aux règles, il est agréable de faire l'adversaire chlemm.⁹⁷

The first appearance of the third member of the trio, Clélia Conti, is an unhappy one. The place of her appearance is Lake Como near one of the frontiers of the Austrian controlled part of Northern Italy. Clélia and her father have crossed this frontier without their passports and are captured by the Austrian police who have also

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 119.

arrested Gina and Fabrice for the same reason. Fabrice sees Clélia and her father as they are dragged out of the fields, each of them between two gendarmes. As he sees Clélia, she is "couverte de poussière, une jeune fille de quatorze à quinze ans qui pleurait timidement sous son mouchoir."⁹⁸ Gina was also present at this scene, and "elle avait été frappée de sa beauté."⁹⁹

Fabrice finally has time to take more careful notice of Clélia Conti and thinks to himself:

Ce serait une charmante compagne de prison, se dit Fabrice: quelle pensée profonde sous ce front! elle saurait aimer.¹⁰⁰

After this incident, which is referred to as the incident at Lake Como, Clélia is not mentioned again till much later. It turns out that Clélia and her father are from Parma. General Conti is the guardian of the prison of Parma. He is somewhat in disfavor at the court, because he has the reputation of being the head of the liberal party (Parma is controlled by the ultra conservatives). Clélia, however, is very much liked, because of her beauty. Count Mosca, speaking to Gina about Clélia, remarks:

Elle est ma foi charmante, et passait encore, il y a huit jours, pour la plus belle personne des états du prince.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 98.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 126.

When it becomes obvious to Gina that Clélia is coming into favor at the court, she cultivates Clélia's friendship. Gina calls her her young friend from Lake Como (referring to the incident in which they were arrested for not having passports). And Clélia's reaction to all this:

La jeune Clélia, quoique un peu pensive, fut aimable dans ses façons de parler de la petite aventure près du lac, et de sa vive reconnaissance. On la disait fort dévote et fort amie de la solitude.¹⁰²

Years pass, and Clélia reaches the age for marriage. Yet she evades all the profitable matches which her father manages to manoeuvre her way. It seems she has never forgotten Fabrice, whom she has loved since their first encounter at Lake Como. He, for these several years, has been studying at a seminary in Naples and has now become a priest. Through the influence and endeavors of Gina and Count Mosca Fabrice has become a bishop, and it seems likely that he will become the next archbishop of Parma. On one of his fantastic escapades, however, which he cannot seem to avoid even when wearing priestly garments, he kills a man. He is taken to the prison in the citadel where Clélia lives. Fabrice is in handcuffs, and the guards are mistreating him. In this miserable state he sees Clélia again for the first time in several years. She is standing in the doorway watching:

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 130.

Fabrice ... leva les yeux et rencontra le regard de la jeune fille. Il fut frappé surtout de l'expression de mélancolie de sa figure. Comme elle est embellie, pensa-t-il, depuis notre rencontre près de Côme! quelle expression de pensée profonde!... On a raison de la comparer à la duchesse; quelle physionomie angélique!¹⁰³

Clélia is so stunned and confused at meeting Fabrice again that she is unable to say anything when he speaks to her.

She later has great remorse about this:

Il m'aura trouvée bien ridicule! Puis tout à coup elle ajouta: Non pas seulement ridicule; il aura cru voir en moi une âme basse, il aura pensé que je ne répondais pas à son salut parce qu'il est prisonnier et moi fille du gouverneur.¹⁰⁴

The last passage points out a very characteristic trait of Clélia's personality: a rather neurotic tendency to misunderstand the attitudes of other people towards herself.

The interrelationship of the members of this trio is a little more complicated and more difficult to state than that of Le Rouge et le Noir. The two heroines in the latter novel are clearly the antithesis of one another: Madame de Rênal, the gentle, protecting woman, the mother-figure for Julien who never had a mother; Mathilde de La Mole, the aggressive, sensual woman. In the Chartreuse de Parme, however, the division between the two heroines is not this clear. Gina, the older of the two women, is clearly the mother-figure. She openly and symbolically

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 268-269.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 270.

assumes this role in the very beginning of the novel during the incident at Lake Como. Fabrice, his real mother, and Gina were traveling to Milan and were stopped by the gendarmes. When Fabrice was questioned as to his identity, Gina broke in and lied to the police by telling them that Fabrice was her son. Gina assumes, and maintains, the role of the protecting mother throughout the novel. She is not, however, gentle and tender. These words must be applied to Clélia. Gina is ardent and aggressive, and only an incest taboo prevents her from seducing her nephew. Gina is a complex character who has absorbed many of the qualities that were divided more evenly among the trio of Le Rouge et le Noir. She has Julien's ability to scheme, his hypocrisy, and his ambition; she has Mathilde's passion and aggressiveness; and she has madame de Rênal's protective mother instincts.

It appears that the gentle Clélia might turn into a mother figure when she actually becomes the mother of Fabrice's child. However, both are failures as parents, and their tormented relationship with each other eventually causes the death of the child. This novel is unique among the major novels of Stendhal because of this incident. Fabrice and Clélia are the only couple to have children.

All three members of this trio share the common trait of being outsiders or étrangers to their society.

This is both a physical reality as well as a psychological attitude on the part of the individuals. A great deal of Fabrice's life is spent in exile, starting with his exclusion from the love of his father, his running away from home and subsequently being excluded from it, his expulsion from Parma, his imprisonment in Parma's citadel, and finally his retreat into the Charterhouse of Parma. Clélia makes her appearance as a fugitive from the law and lives most of the time secluded in the citadel. Gina shows a similar pattern of retreats and exiles.

The progression of the action as regards the characters is the same for the three members of the trio. All three move forward and up until they reach their maximum intensity and height. Then they fall, and the novel draws to a rapid close.

CHAPTER V

LUCIEN LEUWEN

The very first words in the first chapter of this novel are the name of the hero and first member of the trio:

Lucien Leuwen avait été chassé de l'École polytechnique pour s'être allé promener mal à propos, un jour qu'il était consigné, ainsi que tous ses camarades: c'était à l'époque d'une des célèbres journées de juin, avril ou février 1832 ou 1834.¹⁰⁵

The time is Stendhal's own time, that is, the days of the Restoration. The hero is a republican, something which sets him against the establishment of that time, which was of course the restored monarchy. We can deduce that he is intelligent because he is in the École polytechnique and that he is wealthy (again because he is in the École polytechnique). He is without a vocation. Because he was caught demonstrating for a republican cause, he was expelled from school and was without an occupation. This catastrophe means a bad beginning for the hero of this novel. How does he react to it?

¹⁰⁵Stendhal, Romans (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952), Vol. I, p. 768.

Fort affligé d'abord, depuis deux ans il se consolait du malheur de n'avoir plus à travailler douze heures par jour. Il passait très bien son temps chez son père, homme de plaisir et riche banquier, lequel avait à Paris une maison fort agréable.¹⁰⁶

The mock heroic-epic tone of the narrator leads us to believe that Lucien is not too heroic--after all, two years is a rather long time for a hero to console himself for being expelled from school. Monsieur Leuwen, Lucien's father, with good-natured wit says that if Lucien were to die right now, they would have to put the following inscription on his tomb: "Siste, viator! Ici repose Lucien Leuwen, républicain, qui pendant deux années fit une guerre soutenue aux cigares et aux bottes neuves."¹⁰⁷

For a member of the bourgeoisie Lucien's situation is ideal. Granted he is not noble, which is important at this time, but aside from a title of nobility, he has just about everything. For the bourgeoisie everything else generally means money, and the material comforts that money can bring. And yet, Lucien has even more. For along with bourgeois affluence there usually goes an equally affluent insistence on conformity to bourgeois ideals of behavior and morality. But this is not the case with Lucien, for his parents did not want to influence him too much, and they let him do almost anything he wanted to do.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

He has bourgeois material comforts, and, at the same time, an intellectual freedom and lack of restraint that is totally alien to the bourgeois society to which he belongs. Lucien has spent the two years of his consolation attending the salon of his mother. She is still rather young, pretty, and very sensitive. Her salon is one of the most brilliant in Paris. Lucien's father is much older than she, witty, congenial, and a financial genius.

During his two year sojourn there Lucien made the following impression on the salon society of his mother:

On trouvait dans sa société que Lucien avait une tournure élégante, de la simplicité, et quelque chose de fort distingué dans les manières; mais là se bornaient les louanges: Il ne passait point pour homme d'esprit. La passion pour le travail, l'éducation presque militaire et le franc parler de l'École polytechnique lui avaient valu une absence totale d'affectation. Il songeait dans chaque moment à faire ce qui lui plaisait le plus au moment même, et ne pensait point assez aux autres.¹⁰⁸

The idealistic Stendhalian terms that we have come to expect in descriptions are again presented to us: "une tournure élégante" and manners or ways full of "simplicité" and "quelque chose de fort distingué" are all expressions singularly lacking in concrete detail. Censure of the Parisian ideals of the salons is implicit in the statement concerning his reputation in the salons. He was not considered witty or intelligent because of his frank speech

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 770.

and lack of affectation, which the narrator attributes to his education in the École polytechnique. He is somewhat innocently egocentric--that is he usually acts according to the way he feels, rather than in order to produce a certain effect. Thus the narrator says: "Lucien ne pensait point assez aux autres."

It must be admitted that Lucien's egocentrism is hard to take at times, especially when one of his strongest regrets about being expelled from the École polytechnique is that he can no longer wear the sword of the school, and, one of the prettiest women in Paris had told him that he wore it very well. Lucien was tall and cut a dashing figure on horseback. The narrator comments on the rest of his looks:

De jolis cheveux, d'un blond foncé, prévenaient en faveur d'une figure assez irrégulière, mais dont les traits trop grands respiraient la franchise et la vivacité. Mais, il faut l'avouer, rien de tranchant dans les manières, point du tout l'air colonel du Gymnase, encore moins les tons d'importance et de hauteur calculées d'un jeune attaché d'ambassade. Rien absolument dans ses façons ne disait: "Mon père à dix millions." Ainsi notre héros n'avait point la physionomie à la mode, qui, à Paris, fait les trois quarts de la beauté. Enfin, chose impardonnable dans ce siècle empesé, Lucien avait l'air insouciant, étourdi.¹⁰⁹

The narrator gives a few physical traits, but these cannot be considered realistic, as they must also serve as indications of inner psychological realities. For example,

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 771.

the features given "respiraient la franchise et la vivacité." Nothing in Lucien's bearing indicated his education in the École polytechnique nor the fact that his father was worth millions. This is a grave defect in the time of the Restoration, and, according to the narrator, accounts for three fourths of what is considered beauty.

Lucien's rather serious-minded and ambitious young cousin, Ernest Develroy, takes Lucien to task for his childlike happiness and lack of seriousness and with this warning gives a rather ominous picture of Lucien:

A te voir, on dirait un enfant, et, qui pis est, un enfant content. On commence à te prendre au mot, je t'en avertis, et, malgré les millions de ton père, tu ne comptes dans rien; tu n'as pas de consistance, tu n'es qu'un écolier gentil. A vingt ans, cela est presque ridicule, et, pour t'achever, tu passes des heures entières à ta toilette, et on le sait.¹¹⁰

Lucien laughs off this sermon of his cousin, as he usually does with things of a serious nature. But he remembers his cousin's words, and they begin to bother him. After much sober reasoning he comes to the conclusion that he must take the initiative to act and accomplish some goal, without the help of his father, to gain the esteem and respect of society, and thereby amount to something in life.

In order to efface Lucien's short-lived, but nevertheless damning association with republicanism, his

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 771.

influential father procures him a commission of second-lieutenant in the 27th Regiment of Lancers. Lucien, allowing his youthful imagination to run wild, dreams of exciting battles, dangerous military adventures, and his own eventual return from it all as a hero, covered with medals, honor, and glory. An even more important enticement to becoming a second-lieutenant is, for Lucien, the splendid green uniform with gold epaulettes, which he had already tried on. After several turns in front of the mirror, and his admiring family, who assured him that he looked quite dashing and handsome in his uniform, Lucien decided that the way for him to make something of himself was to join the army. This he did. The story of his career in the army, and his subsequent involvement with the provincial aristocracy of Nancy, and in particular his love affair with Bathilde, is filled with many unpleasant moments for Lucien. This inexperienced young man had some bitter lessons to learn. One of the most difficult, for a person as natural and unaffected as Lucien, was the art of pretending to be something that he was not, that is, the art of hypocrisy.

The remaining two members of the trio of this novel, mesdames de Chasteller and d'Hocquincourt, by coincidence are introduced to the reader at the same time. One of the military chiefs of the province of Nancy, in

answer to the question "Quelles sont ces dames?"¹¹¹, has this answer:

C'est de la noblesse très riche et très fière. Madame d'Hocquincourt est la plus jolie femme de la ville et mène grand train.

--Et Mme de Chasteller? dit le comte N... avec intérêt;
--Celle-là est tout jeune et cependant elle est veuve d'un maréchal de camp attaché à la cour de Charles X.¹¹²

Madame d'Hocquincourt, the second member of the trio, will be the subject of study at this point.

We know from the passage quoted above that madame d'Hocquincourt is a member of the rich and proud nobility of Nancy. We also know that she is one of the most beautiful women in town. The keeper of the post-horses adds further that madame d'Hocquincourt is "la plus pimpante de nos dames."¹¹³ This placed her at the peak of what is chic and elegant among the women of the town. For a while the keeper continues comparing madame d'Hocquincourt to various women, giving madame de Chasteller the advantage of having had only one lover and of having the prettiest eyes. He goes on about madame d'Hocquincourt, saying:

Mais madame d'Hocquincourt est bien plus gaie et a bien plus d'esprit; elle a toujours quelque chose de drôle à dire. Madame d'Hocquincourt mène son mari, qui est un ancien capitaine, blessé dans les journées de Juillet, un fort brave homme, ma foi! ... Mais elle

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 790.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 802.

en fait tout ce qu'elle veut et change d'amant sans se gêner, tous les ans.¹¹⁴

Madame is the outgoing extrovert type that manages to please so many people both in Stendhal's time and in our own. She gives the impression of happiness and wit, and is full of funny things to say. She is married, but this fact does not keep her out of circulation, and, as the keeper says, she changes lovers every year without any trouble at all.

The keeper of the post-horses has one impression of madame d'Hocquincourt; Lucien has quite another. He first sees her when he is out looking for Bathilde de Chasteller. His reaction: "Ce n'est pas la jeune femme de ce matin, se dit-il un peu désappointé."¹¹⁵ Some time later, however, he sees her at the house of one of the aristocratic families of Nancy, and has this impression:

"Il est impossible d'être plus jolie, se dit-il, et, pour la première fois, la renommée n'a pas menti." Il y avait dans ces yeux-là un velouté, une gaieté, un naturel, qui faisaient presque un bonheur du plaisir de les regarder. En cherchant bien, il trouva cependant un défaut à cette femme charmante. Quoique à peine âgée de vingt-cinq ou vingt-six ans, elle avait quelque tendance à l'embonpoint.¹¹⁶

Lucien is truly impressed by Madame d'Hocquincourt's beauty. Typically, one of her strong features is her eyes.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 803.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 812.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 868.

They reveal a personality completely given over to happiness. After looking very hard, he finds a fault--she is a little plump. Lucien is now quite impressed with madame d'Hocquincourt. He is above all amazed at her wit and humor. So far, in comparison to Parisian society, he has found provincial society rather stuffy and dull. But here, in the person of madame d'Hocquincourt, is a brilliant and charming young lady who, in the repressive atmosphere of the ultraconservatives of the town, is allowed to be witty.

Lucien begins to take an interest in madame d'Hocquincourt and continues his scrutiny of her:

Madame d'Hocquincourt pouvait avoir vingt-quatre ou vingt-cinq ans. Elle était blonde avec de grands yeux bleus, point langoureux et d'une vivacité charmante, quelquefois languissants quand on l'ennuyait; bientôt après, fous de bonheur à la première apparition d'une idée gaie ou seulement singulière. Une bouche délicieuse de fraîcheur avait des contours fins, nobles, bien arrêtés, qui donnaient à toute la tête une noblesse admirable. Un nez légèrement aquilin complétait le charme de cette tête noble à la fois et cependant variant à chaque instant, comme les nuances de passion qui agitaient madame d'Hocquincourt. Elle n'était point hypocrite; ce genre de mérite eût été impossible avec une telle figure.¹¹⁷

Madame d'Hocquincourt, like most Stendhalian heroes, is very sensitive to boredom. All Stendhalian heroes and heroines are somewhat affected by the nineteenth-century "mal du siècle". Her other amazing features include a

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 869.

frankness that renders her incapable of hypocrisy. This frankness is perhaps one of the most striking characteristics of madame d'Hocquincourt. Lucien is very much impressed by this: "Par un hasard bien étonnant en province et qui frappa profondément Lucien, Madame d'Hocquincourt ne pouvait se plier à la moindre hypocrisie."¹¹⁸ Madame d'Hocquincourt's lack of hypocrisy is quite astonishing, considering that the possession of this quality is de rigueur in order to be successful during the period of the Restoration in France. This makes madame d'Hocquincourt an exceptional person, a prerequisite for all of Stendhal's protagonists, as well as for most romantic heroes.

As Lucien becomes better acquainted with madame d'Hocquincourt, he discovers another very rare and for him a very precious quality in her: "Elle n'avait pas le moindre souvenir aujourd'hui de ce qu'elle avait dit ou fait hier. C'était un être gai qui vivait exactement au jour le jour."¹¹⁹ Madame d'Hocquincourt is one of the joys of the society of nobles of Nancy. She is the special object of adoration of most of the men of the town. It is not just her beauty, but her wit, gaiety, and love of change insure those in her company against boredom. Whenever something becomes unpleasant or boring, she either

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 870.

leaves it and goes to something else, or ridicules whatever it may be out of existence with her brilliant wit. She undergoes a change, however, after she meets Lucien. She falls in love with him, and the more difficult and indifferent he becomes with her, the more madly she loves him. In fact, Lucien produces in her something that has never happened before--tears: "Leuwen se retourna en riant, il fut bien surpris de voir qu'il y avait des larmes dans les yeux qui étaient fixés sur les siens."¹²⁰

I have already indicated that the third member of the trio, Bathilde de Chasteller, is first mentioned along with the other heroine of the novel, madame d'Hocquincourt. All we know about her at this point is that she is very wealthy, very noble, and very beautiful.

She is next seen through the eyes of Lucien upon his entering Nancy for the first time. She is looking out of her window at the soldiers passing by: "C'était une jeune femme blonde qui avait des cheveux magnifiques et l'air dédaigneux."¹²¹ She immediately arouses the interest of the hero. From this quick look at Bathilde begins Lucien's involvement with her, and the story of these two from this point on is one of the best examples to be found of Stendhal's theory of the "crystalization" of love. It

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 1043.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 794.

is especially the smile of Bathilde which arouses Lucien and acts as a sort of catalyst on this crystalization. As Lucien continues to gaze at Bathilde, he elaborates on her portrait:

Elle pouvait avoir vingt-quatre ou vingt-cinq ans. Lucien trouva dans ses yeux, une expression singulière; était-ce de l'ironie, de la haine, ou tout simplement de la jeunesse et une certaine disposition à s'amuser de tout?¹²²

The keeper of the post-horses, who has an inexhaustible supply of information on everybody in town, sees that Lucien is taken with this woman, so he agrees with Lucien's description of her beauty, and then fans Lucien's growing flame by adding that Bathilde has "des cheveux blond cendré, qui tombent jusqu'à terre."¹²³ Lucien keeps trying to find out more about the woman and in answer to the question of who the lady is the keeper replies:

C'est madame de Chasteller, une veuve que tous ces beaux messieurs de la noblesse cajolent, parce qu'elle a des millions. Elle plaide en tous lieux avec chaleur la cause de Charles X, et si j'étais de ce petit préfet, je la ferais coffrer; notre pays finira par être une seconde Vendée. C'est une ultra enragée, qui voudrait voir à cent pieds sous terre tout ce qui a servi la patrie.¹²⁴

It appears that madame de Chasteller's wealth is not the least of her attractions for the local males. However, in

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., p. 800.

¹²⁴Ibid.

the opinion of the post-horse keeper she is a trouble maker and should be locked up.

Lucien, one day at church, discovers that one of madame de Chasteller's most attractive features, her eyes, is also one of her most vulnerable points:

Il eût été difficile d'avoir l'air plus distingué que madame de Chasteller; seulement Lucien, qui s'était placé de façon à la bien voir comme elle sortait, remarqua que, lorsqu'elle ne tenait pas les yeux strictement baissés, ils étaient d'une beauté si singulière, que, malgré elle, ils trahissaient sa façon de sentir actuelle. "Voilà des yeux, pensa-t-il, qui doivent souvent donner de l'humeur à leur maîtresse: quoi qu'elle fasse, elle ne peut pas les rendre insignifiants."¹²⁵

Madame de Chasteller looks distinguished. Also, her eyes are very important features, as they are with all Stendhalian characters.

The interaction of the members of this trio, in some ways resembles that of the other novels, but more particularly that of Stendhal's other unfinished novel, Lamiel. The plot does not resemble very much that of the Rouge et le Noir nor la Chartreuse de Parme. Lucien never actually physically possesses either madame d'Hocquincourt or madame de Chasteller. Here there is a strong resemblance to Armance (it is implied that Octave is impotent). The development of Lucien's love for Bathilde takes up the greater part of the first half of the novel. After that,

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 900.

it is not taken up again at all. Lucien's involvement with madame d'Hocquincourt is of short duration and is rather onesided. She is the one who falls in love with him, and he scarcely pays her any attention.

Lucien is rather unlike Julien Sorel. He compares better to Fabrice del Dongo. Lucien's main problem seems to have been just exactly what one must do in order to have esteem for oneself. He was never sure he had done or accomplished anything, even when it was most evident that he had. This was one of his worst problems in the development of his love for Bathilde. He was never quite sure that he was loved and esteemed by this woman, even though she made it very clear that she did love him.

In this trio, madame d'Hocquincourt corresponds to Gina, Mathilde, and Lamiel. She is clearly the aggressive, ardent woman. This type of woman in Stendhal is always characterized by her wit and love of change. She is always an extrovert.

Bathilde, of course, corresponds to madame de Rênal and to Clélia Conti, and to Armance. She is the tender mistress. She is definitely an introvert and is not known for her wit, but rather for her sensibilité.

The interrelationship and development of this trio is treated in only the first half of the novel. The novel is unfinished and consequently the trio is unfinished.

From notes left by Stendhal it appears that the ending of this novel would have been radically different from the three novels already dealt with, in that Stendhal apparently intended to allow these characters to live happily ever after.

CHAPTER VI

LAMIEL

The purpose of this dissertation is to study a literary trio of characters and to compare it to the character of Stendhal, its author, to see if a consistent literary personality emerges. Stendhal's unfinished novel, Lamiel, does not have the trio we have been describing in the previous chapters. Is there, then, any justification for including it in this dissertation? This writer believes that the answer to this question is a most emphatic yes. To begin with, any kind of study of the major novels would be incomplete without considering Lamiel, one of the last novels Stendhal wrote. There are two collections of works, sometimes referred to as short novels, sometimes as long stories (I am referring to Chroniques italiennes and to the collection usually designated as Romans et nouvelles.), but Lamiel is never included among these because of its length and development. The fact that this novel does not have the usual Stendhalian trio makes it "the exception which proves the rule" that the major novels do indeed have the trio; and, for this reason alone, it should be studied.

But there are other reasons for studying Lamiel. In many ways the central character of this novel resembles the trios previously described, with all their characteristics fused into one character. As such Lamiel offers an interesting deviation in the treatment of character from the usual Stendhalian trio.

There are other differences from the usual Stendhalian novel, especially on the structural level. For the first time Stendhal seems to be aware of the third person omniscient narrator, and of the fact that his presence might present a problem in credibility to the reader. So, contrary to his previous practice, Stendhal goes to some trouble to establish the narrator within the novelistic world of Lamiel. This world begins in Normandy, in the small town of Carville, and the narrator explains his own presence in Carville by saying:

Moi, fils de notaire peu riche, j'allais prendre quartier dans le château de Mme d'Albret de Miossens, femme de l'ancien seigneur du pays, rentrée en France seulement en 1814. C'était un grand titre vers 1826.¹²⁶

And further:

J'étais reçu chez Mme de Miossens à titre de fils et petit-fils des bons MM. Lagier, de tout temps notaires de la famille d'Albret de Miossens, ou plutôt de la famille Miossens qui se prétendait d'Albret.¹²⁷

¹²⁶Stendhal, Romans (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952), Vol. II, p. 878.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 879.

After thus establishing the narrator within the world of the novel, Stendhal takes no more pains with him, and goes on as if he had not introduced the narrator at all. It is obvious from the tale that is told, only part of which takes place in Carville, that the narrator is privy to more information than he could have possibly gained simply by being on the estates of the duchess de Miossens. Stendhal apparently abandoned the idea of integrating the narrator into the world of the novel shortly after he started the project. Perhaps if he had actually finished the novel, he would have corrected this discrepancy. But then one wonders if it was really a discrepancy, since there are other aspects of this novel that do not go in the usual Stendhalian manner, not the least of which is the treatment of the protagonist.

Critics have said time and again (see the introduction of this dissertation) that the world of Stendhal's novels is seen through the eyes of their hero, who is always a male. And yet, the indisputable protagonist of Lamiel is Lamiel, that is, a woman. What is she like? Let us start with her background. Lamiel was an orphan brought up by foster parents. By adopting Lamiel, the Hautemares, Lamiel's foster parents, disenherited a brother with many children. This caused indignation among the Norman townspeople of Carville, who henceforth referred to Lamiel as

la fille du diable. Lamiel's parents are very religious and conservative bourgeois who give her a strict education. However, she receives a noble education from the duchess de Miossens. This was arranged by a hunchback physician called Doctor Sansfin. Doctor Sansfin, despite his deformity, had the reputation of being a Don Juan. He was an atheist and a liberal, and he had a great deal to do with the formation of Lamiel's character. His liberal cynicism offset the conservative education that Lamiel received from her parents and also from the duchess de Miossens. The duchess de Miossens becomes a widow and her only son is at school in Paris. Through the intrigues of Doctor Sansfin, Lamiel becomes indispensable to the duchess de Miossens, who lavishes all kinds of attention on her. Lamiel reaches the age of sixteen, innocent, and yet, with a clear mind. One of the first portraits of her at about this time is given by the gentle abbot Clément:

Cette fille étonnante dont vous me reprochez de parler trop souvent n'est point encore une beauté, elle est un peu trop grande et trop maigre. Sa tête offre le germe de la perfection de la beauté normande, front superbe, élevé, audacieux, cheveux d'un blond cendré, un petit nez admirable et parfait. Quant aux yeux, ils sont bleus et pas assez grands; le menton est maigre, mais un peu trop long. La figure forme un ovale et l'on ne peut, il me semble, y blâmer que la bouche, qui a un peu le coin abaissé de la bouche d'un brochet. Mais la maîtresse de cette âme qui, quoique âgée de plus de quarante-cinq ans, a trouvé depuis peu un été de Saint-Martin, revient si souvent sur les défauts réels de la jeune fille que j'y suis presque insensible.¹²⁸

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 937-938.

This was written in the form of a letter to a friend. There are some familiar terms of description for the Stendhal reader, such as "cheveux d'un blond cendré" and "yeux ... bleus". However, this description seems to dwell more on physical defects than do previous descriptions. Lamiel is a little too tall and too thin; eyes, too small; a chin slightly too long. And yet her head, to which most of these defects belong, has the germ of perfection. The highly critical appraisal by the abbot shows that he, at the very least, is not indifferent to Lamiel's charms.

Lamiel does not realize that the abbot is interested in her, but she overhears some people say that the abbot is in love with her. For some time she has been wondering what love is--qu'est-ce que c'est que l'amour? The narrator comments on this:

Le lecteur trouvera peut-être cette question ridicule de la part d'une grande fille de seize ans, élevée au milieu des plaisanteries grossières des soirées de village, mais d'abord Lamiel n'avait pas d'amies intimes parmi les filles de son âge, et en second lieu elle s'était trouvée fort rarement à des soirées de ce genre. Les jeunes filles de son âge l'appelaient la savante et cherchaient à lui jouer des tours.¹²⁹

This passage reveals that Lamiel had no friends her own age. This explains her ignorance on many matters. Adults were often frank in front of her, but never went into

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 943.

detail. For this she would have needed the talk and gossip of people her own age and she was deprived of this. She was disliked by the young ladies of her age, who called her "la savante" and tried to play tricks on her. She is, in the tradition of all Stendhalian heroes, an outsider. The narrator continues in his description of Lamiel:

... elle se sentait une incapacité complète pour cette hypocrisie de tous les instants sans laquelle il était impossible, suivant le docteur, d'arriver au moindre succès; elle ne trouvait rien d'ennuyeux comme les soins d'un petit ménage pauvre, tels qu'elle les voyait pratiquer par sa tante Hautemare; elle se sentait une répugnance extrême pour épouser un bon villageois de Carville; le but de tous ses désirs était d'aller à Rouen, lorsqu'elle serait privée de la protection de la duchesse et là de gagner sa vie en tenant les comptes dans une boutique. Elle n'avait aucune disposition à faire l'amour; ce qu'elle aimait par-dessus tout, c'était une conversation intéressante. Une histoire de guerre, où les héros bravaient de grands dangers et accomplissaient des choses difficiles, la faisait rêver pendant trois jours, tandis qu'elle ne donnait qu'une attention très passagère à un conte d'amour. Ce qui déconsidérerait l'amour à ses yeux, c'est qu'elle voyait les femmes les plus sottes du village s'y livrer à l'envi.¹³⁰

More reasons for Lamiel's being an outsider: hypocrisy was necessary for commoner and noble alike, and yet Lamiel was incapable of this. She was repulsed by the village life as exemplified by her foster parents, the Hautemares, and wanted to get out of the village after she lost the protection of the duchess (she had no illusions about this protection). She had a very romantic nature, and stories filled with danger interested her more than anything else.

¹³⁰Ibid., pp. 943-944.

She was not at all interested in making love, because the most stupid women of the village loved it so much. And yet, Lamiel is interested in finding out what love is, since she knows that somebody is in love with her. Her interest, however, is not in the least tinged with passion.

Lamiel is finally deprived of her life among the nobility at the castle of the duchess de Miossens. She returns to the house of her parents where she is so bored that she goes back to the castle just to get some spicy books to enliven her existence. Lamiel herself comments upon this action:

... je suis donc à seize ans comme le docteur Sansfin dit que sont les femmes de cinquante! Je m'irrite de tout et je suis en colère contre le genre humain.¹³¹

She continues her investigation of love. So far, all that she has learned from the adults is rather negative: one must not let young men "te serrer dans leurs bras" or young people must not "aller se promener au bois". Since this is all she knows about love, Lamiel decides to try both. She tells a twenty-year-old villager named Jean Berville to come into the woods with her, and, once there, she tells him to embrace her, which he does. This action produces no effect on Lamiel who tells him to go after a short while. She returns to the village thinking that love is stupid. She confesses. Jean Berville loses his job.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 967.

Lamïel reconsiders. She decides that anything which produces such an effect in other people must have something to it, so she decides to try again. She finds Jean and tells him that she will give him ten francs if he will come into the woods with her again. Jean is quite willing to do this (or anything else) for that price. For ten francs Lamïel gets more than a hug. The scene is worth repeating:

--Embrasse-moi, lui dit-elle.
 Il l'embrassa. Lamïel remarqua que, suivant l'ordre qu'elle lui en avait donné, il venait de se faire faire la barbe; elle le lui dit.
 --Oh! c'est trop juste, reprit-il vivement, mademoiselle est la maîtresse; elle paye bien et elle est si jolie!
 --Sans doute, je veux être ta maîtresse.
 --Ah! c'est différent, dit Jean d'un air affairé; et alors sans transport, sans amour, le jeune Normand fit de Lamïel sa maîtresse.
 --Il n'y a rien autre? dit Lamïel.
 --Non pas, répondit Jean.
 --As-tu eu déjà beaucoup de maîtresses?
 --J'en ai eu trois.
 --Et il n'y a rien autre?
 --Non pas que je sache; ...¹³²

Lamïel's reaction to her first sexual experience sounds something like Stendhal's reaction to his first battle:
Tiens! ce n'est que cela!

It is easy to see that Lamïel is not an ordinary girl. She is not at all bothered by ordinary concerns of morality. This is partly due to the education she received from Doctor Sansfin. After this experience, Lamïel is no longer at all concerned by morality. Her biggest concern

¹³²Ibid., p. 972.

is to overcome her great boredom. Boredom is the least tolerable thing in the world for Lamiel. She begins her emancipation from boredom by becoming the mistress of the young Duke de Miossens. She completely dominates the duke who is rather inexperienced in the ways of women. She runs off with him to Rouen, where the duke falls completely in love with her. When he is fully devoted to her, she becomes very bored and decides to move on. She goes to Paris alone and with very little money. She takes a room in a very expensive hotel, where she becomes attracted to a drunken boarder of the noble class who is named count d'Aubigné. Lamiel asks the landlady if the count gets drunk every evening. She answers:

--Tous les jours, je crois; sa vie est un tissu de folies; il tient à passer pour le jeune homme le plus fou de tous ceux qui brillent dans les loges de l'Opéra. Dernièrement, il n'était pas aussi complet que ce soir, est-ce qu'il ne s'avisait pas de rouer à coups de canne le cocher qui le ramenait?

"Ah! ce n'est pas une poupée polie comme mon duc." L'idée de le voir rosser le cocher qui le ramena plut beaucoup à Lamiel,...¹³³

There is quite a difference between the count and the duke, as Lamiel remarks. Her summary of the duc de Miossens is "une poupée polie". So the count's image as a drunkard does not bother her at all. And the knowledge that the count was capable of giving someone rough treatment delights Lamiel. Anything out of the ordinary is likely

¹³³Ibid., pp. 1000-1001.

to interest her, especially if it is in some way violent. For example, one day the count says that he is going to blow his brains out. He does not mean it, but Lamiel thinks that he does and this makes her interest in the count greatly intensify. The count notices this impression which the threat of violence produces on Lamiel, and therefore he plays the role of the violent person to the hilt. He is, however, playing a role and this becomes apparent to Lamiel. For her it does not matter. She compares him to the duc de Miossens and he (the count) comes out ahead:

... c'était l'opposé de ce jeune étourdi sans réflexion qu'elle s'était figuré et qu'elle aimait d'amour, comme le contraire du jeune duc. L'idée du coup de pistolet, car elle croyait tout ce qui était extraordinaire, chassa bien vite l'ennui. Elle regardait Nerwinde.¹³⁴

She has had some second thoughts about the character of the count, but the idea of the pistol shot removed all her doubts and boredom. Again, it is the idea of violence that has attracted Lamiel.

The novel ends shortly after the involvement mentioned above. Stendhal left a few indications of more involvements in Paris for Lamiel, but no resolution to her fate.

One could construct a sort of trio in reverse by taking the three characters, Lamiel, the Duke of Miossens,

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 1009.

and the Count de Nerwinde, and concentrating upon them. It must be admitted that the reader sees the world of this novel through the eyes of Lamiel and/or the narrator. Also, the male members of this trio are quite different--one representing innocence and gentleness, and the other representing aggressiveness and nonconformity. One wonders how complete this trio would have become if Stendhal had managed to complete the novel. There are numerous character traits common to Lamiel and to some of the feminine members of the other trios. For example, her strength, her boredom, her blond hair and blue eyes, resemble very much the character and description of Mathilde de La Mole in Le Rouge et le Noir. And yet, much of Lamiel's essential innocence at the beginning of the novel resembles the traits of Armance, especially her inability at hypocrisy. One could say that the character of Lamiel combines much of the strength and vigor of the male heroes with the traits of the feminine members of the trio that always accompany him. This is why it was said earlier that the protagonist of this novel resembled a trio in one character. But any further considerations of this sort would be better left to the later chapter which deals specifically with the comparison and interpretation of the trios.

CHAPTER VII

VIE DE HENRY BRULARD

The title of this work sets it apart from the novels of Stendhal, and indeed, it is not a novel. It is not the fact that it contains a man's name, for Lucien Leuwen is just that--a man's name. It is the word vie at the beginning of the title which sets it apart from such titles as Le Rouge et le Noir and La Chartreuse de Parme, and reminds one of other works by this author beginning in this way--Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Metastase and the Vie de Rossini. These works, even if they are not rigorously factual, are biographies, and as such belong to non-fiction. La Vie de Henry Brulard belongs in this category, for the Henry Brulard of the title is a thinly disguised Henri Beyle. It does not take the reader long to realize that this is an attempt by Stendhal at writing an autobiography. Aside from Henry Brulard, all the other names, whether of people, places or events, are as authentic and factual as a fifty-year-old man, writing as long as forty-three years after the event, can make them. How does the reader know this is so? To begin with the work was not published during Stendhal's lifetime. Stendhal left a

manuscript which he did not have time to edit, and which, for the most part, was published in toto. This manuscript contained some notes the author had written to himself. One such note was a reminder to himself that he should leave instructions to the future printer of the work to change all the women's names in the manuscript, but leave the men's names as they were. We shall comment later on the obvious discrepancy in attitude towards men and women, but the note points out that the names are for the most part real names of real people whom Stendhal knew. If the other names were real, why was there not a Vie de Henri Beyle, instead of a Vie de Henry Brulard? Stendhal slips up several times in the manuscript and does in fact use Henri Beyle instead of Henry Brulard. In any case, Stendhal seldom signed anything he wrote--outside of his personal correspondence--with the name Henri Beyle. He signed his published writings with many different pseudonyms, finally settling on the one by which he is generally known--Stendhal. Of all his pseudonyms Henry Brulard is one of the least difficult to decipher. The initials of his real name and of Henry Brulard are the same. The first names are the same except for the anglicizing of Henri to Henry. This anglicizing is to be found throughout the book and goes much further than the respelling of proper names. Stendhal frequently inserted English words and phrases into the French text. The use of English, like the fabrication

of an Italian genealogy, and like the use of pseudonyms, is an attempt at disguise. The question is why?

The answer is fairly obvious. Stendhal tries to disguise himself precisely because it is himself and not some fictitious character that he is describing. If what Stendhal had written were entirely fictitious, then there would be no need for him to alter or disguise anything about Henry Brulard. This is not the case, and we are justified in using the Vie de Henry Brulard as a source for biographical information.

Stendhal began his Vie de Henry Brulard when he was about to turn fifty, and he asked himself the same questions that we must ask: Who is this man? What is he like?

Je vais avoir cinquante ans, il serait bien temps de me connaître. Qu'ai-je été, que suis-je, en vérité je serais bien embarrassé de le dire.¹³⁵

These are hard questions for anyone to ask of himself and Stendhal has to admit upon first asking the questions that he does not know the answers. Autobiographies are not written by young men. They are usually written by middle aged or old men. Stendhal started at the age of fifty, and he was beset by two problems, both of them having to do with the kind of perspective he wanted his work to have. The first problem is the problem of time; the second, that

¹³⁵Stendhal, Vie de Henry Brulard (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961), p. 6.

of point of view. How can a fifty year old man recapture the early years of his life without coloring them with his fifty years of age? And secondly, how does one portray and translate to the outside world a personality that one is used to feeling from within? From what point of view does one describe this person? And in Stendhal's words: "quel oeil peut se voir soi-même?"¹³⁶

Stendhal, in the first chapter of this book, decides to skirt these issues, at least for a short while, by trying to give what he thinks other people think of him.

Je passe pour un homme de beaucoup d'esprit et fort insensible, roué même, et je vois que j'ai été constamment occupé par des amours malheureuses.¹³⁷

But this tactic does not work, for Stendhal sees a contrast in the image he has of himself and the image others have of him. He imagines that others see him as a witty person, an insensitive man, and even a roué. And yet he knows that he has been constantly occupied with unhappy loves. The unhappy lover image is not consistent with that of an insensitive roué. This image does not satisfy him at all, so he must ask again:

Qu'ai-je donc été? Je ne le saurais. A quel ami, quelque éclairé qu'il soit, puis-je le demander? M. di Fiori lui-même ne pourrait me donner d'avis. A quel ami ai-je jamais dit un mot de mes chagrins

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 9.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 6.

d'amour?¹³⁸

Still no satisfaction, but he still prefers that others give him the answers. He even mentions a close friend as a possible candidate, but then has to admit that he has never mentioned the sorrows love has caused him to anyone. Stendhal wants very much for someone to tell him that he is the way he feels he is, and yet, he has striven very hard to hide the way he feels from others, even from his closest friend. So, in a sense, he has lied to others about the kind of person he is. This kind of lying, that is, lying to protect and draw attention away from a sensitive area, is easy to understand psychologically and is to some extent common to all of us. The trouble is, that we soon forget to realize what we are doing, and it becomes difficult to tell truth from fiction. Stendhal was acutely aware of this problem in trying to write the true story of his life when he said: "Mais combien ne faut-il pas de précautions pour ne pas mentir!"¹³⁹

Stendhal often grumbled about the two problems mentioned, that is the problem of time and that of point of view. The latter he often referred to as the problem of the I's and Me's (Je et Moi). Stendhal loved to read autobiographical works, such as memoirs (Duc de Saint-Simon),

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 7.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 11.

and confessions (Rousseau), plus works such as Chateaubriand's Mémoires d'outre-tombe. But he was very conscious of the egotism basic to all these works and of the constant danger that the egocentric point of view might tire out the reader and ruin the work. Stendhal read Chateaubriand and called him the king of egotists. He loved to read this author, and yet he claimed that Chateaubriand insulted the reader with all of his I's and Me's. Stendhal believed in the cult of the ego, but had a horror of imposing it in a vulgar manner. He ruminates about this while contemplating writing his autobiography:

... je devrais écrire ma vie ...
 Cette idée me sourit. Oui, mais cette effroyable
 quantité de Je et de Moi! Il y a de quoi donner de
 l'humeur au lecteur le plus bénévole.¹⁴⁰

The problem of point of view here becomes tied up with a problem of narrative technique. How is Stendhal to write his own life story with authenticity and sincerity without overusing I and Me? One can of course avoid the use of I by using the third person. Stendhal considered this possibility:

On pourrait écrire, il est vrai, en se servant de
 la troisième personne, il fit, il dit. Oui, mais
 comment rendre compte des mouvements intérieurs de
 l'âme?¹⁴¹

Here is the heart of the problem. If he abandons the use

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

of I and Me, how will he be able to "rendre compte des mouvements intérieurs de l'âme"? Stendhal considers a true history of a person to be an interior history, that is, what goes on inside a person, what his soul and mind are like. When one remembers that it is the "mouvements intérieurs de l'âme" which Stendhal is trying to portray about his life, then the discrepancies of fact and chronology become less important. The discrepancies of chronology bring up again the question of time.

The problem of time is in reality very closely related to the problem of the I's and Me's. It is again a problem of point of view and narrative technique. It is typical of Stendhal in the Vie de Henry Brulard to begin describing a certain period in his life and then to become sidetracked by some notion which occurs to him and then takes him into a completely different period of his life. Stendhal has great difficulty in telling events in chronological order. He tried to begin at the beginning of his life and work forward chronologically, but found it difficult to do so, because things and events from other times kept surging into his consciousness and occupying his attention. Stendhal realized that this was happening and complained about it several times, as he does here:

Mais je me laisse emporter, je m'égare, je serai
inintelligible si je ne suis pas l'ordre des temps,
et d'ailleurs les circonstances ne me reviendront pas

si bien.¹⁴²

Since the advent of Freud and his successors, the workings of the mind in regard to chronology are more understood. There is often order where there is apparent chaos. One thing we have learned is that in dealing with states of consciousness, or unconsciousness, chronology is often set aside. The progression of events in dreams or in other states of unconsciousness is often determined by what is known as psychological association rather than by time sequence. In contemporary literature there has been a shift from portraying events as seen from the outside to a portrayal of events as seen from inside a person, or, in the most extreme examples, no longer a portrayal, but rather a recording of what is felt by a consciousness. This is a shift in point of view, not only from the standpoint of who is doing the viewing, but also of what is being viewed and what is felt to be important for viewing. This shows a change in what is felt to be reality. This shift led to the development of a number of changes in the structure of modern fiction, such as the interior monologue and the stream of consciousness technique in writing. In the efforts of Stendhal we see a definite transition taking place which would lead to these developments. He is one of the first to struggle with the problems of time and the

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 12.

recording consciousness. His problems with time and point of view are very modern and are essential characteristics of his personality. His treatment of both time and point of view is wavering and ambiguous, and this ambiguity is also a personality trait of Stendhal. It permeates time, point of view and interpersonal relationships, especially the man-woman relationship, which Stendhal tried to understand all of his life. Before going into this last and very important aspect of Stendhal's personality, that is his attitude towards the man-woman relationship, it will be helpful to give a brief resume of Stendhal's life as it is given in the Vie de Henry Brulard. It should be remembered that the structural format of this work is mainly chronological, despite what has been said about Stendhal's problem with time.

Henry Brulard (Marie Henri Beyle) was born in the city of Grenoble, France. His family belonged to the wealthy bourgeoisie. They had some pretensions to nobility, which were soon forgotten during the days of "la Terreur" of the revolution. His family consisted of himself, the only son and the oldest child; two sisters, Pauline and Zenaïde; his father, Chérubin; his mother, Henriette. The Beyle house was very close to the house of Henry's maternal grandfather, Henri Gagnon, and he seems to have spent as much time in one household as the other. The Gagnon household consisted of the grandfather Henri

Gagnon; a great aunt, Elizabeth, an aunt, Seraphie; and an uncle, Romain.

Chérubin, Henry's father, was a lawyer. Henry sums up his life as follows:

Joseph Chérubin Beyle, avocat au Parlement, depuis ultra et chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, adjoint au maire de Grenoble, mort in 1819 à soixante-douze ans, dit-on; ce qui le suppose né en 1747. Il avait donc en 1790 quarante-trois ans.¹⁴³

These rather meager statements, devoid of sentiment, are as nice as any Henry ever made about his father. His father was almost a stereotype of the conservative provincial bourgeois. He talked constantly about making money and acquiring lands. He was completely insensitive to music, literature, and art. To top it all off, at least as far as Stendhal was concerned, his father was ugly. Henry always talked about his mother as a beautiful woman, and he did not like the idea of an ugly and brutish creature like his father making love to his beautiful mother.

It is pertinent for the purposes of this study to examine the character of Stendhal's mother and the extraordinary influence which she had upon her son. Henry adored his mother. She was a sensitive person who loved literature. She was fond of Dante and possessed copies of his works in the original Italian, which she read quite

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 64.

well. She died when Henry was about seven. He never got over his love for his mother and was forever comparing his love for other women to that for his mother. Henry describes her thus:

Elle avait de l'embonpoint, une fraîcheur parfaite, elle était fort jolie et je crois que seulement elle n'était pas assez grande. Elle avait une noblesse et une sérénité parfaite dans les traits; très vive, aimant mieux courir et faire elle-même que de commander à ses trois servantes et enfin lisant souvent dans l'original la Divine Comédie de Dante dont j'ai trouvé bien plus tard cinq à six exemplaires d'éditions différentes dans son appartement resté fermé depuis sa mort.¹⁴⁴

Henry was very proud of his mother's abilities in Italian. For a number of reasons Henry was very fond of Italians. First, he considered them radically different from the French bourgeois which he hated so much. He considered them passionate, sensuous people. Passion was a quality Stendhal admired and which he found lacking in the French, who are so rational. This admiration for passion is an instance of Stendhal's ambiguity of attitude, for at the same time he admired rational people with mathematical minds. He tried to cultivate this attitude in himself, and it will be remembered from the previous quote that he was considered to be a witty and unemotional person by many people. The wavering between reason and passion could almost be called a classical trait, since these two struggled for supremacy during the seventeenth century. However,

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 29.

in Stendhal, reason seldom wins out, and there is very little of the honnête homme about him. Reason and passion are present in such extremes that they must be called romantic. Stendhal had a keen mind and he could make Gargantuan efforts with it when he wanted to. He took first prizes in mathematics, literature, and other subjects at school, but all for one reason--to get sent to the polytechnic school in Paris and thereby get out of Grenoble, which he hated.

But to get back to the subject (Stendhal's love of Italians), passion was not the only thing Stendhal admired about Italy. Stendhal loved music and considered the Italians a very musical people. He loved music sung in Italian, especially Italian opera. He detested opera sung in French and considered French a very bad language for singing. He complained that the pronunciation of the mute e's in singing grated on his nerves.

Stendhal's love of Italy and Italians led him to derive for himself an Italian genealogy on his mother's side of the family. He even mused about the possibility that his Italian ancestor might have been an outlaw who had to flee from Italy into France and settle there (because nobody in his right mind would willingly leave Italy and settle in France). Deriving an Italian outlaw for an ancestor was a very romantic thing for Stendhal to do. It is possible that he had an Italian ancestor, since the

story persisted within the family that the Gagnon branch came originally from Italy. Stendhal even devised for himself an Italian epitaph for his tombstone, describing himself as a Milanese. So it is easily seen that Stendhal was proud of his mother's abilities in Italian and of her family's supposed Italian origin. His mother died "in the flower of her youth and beauty" in 1790. She could have been twenty-eight or thirty years old. This was one of the most awesome and important events in Stendhal's life. About his life at the time of his mother's death Stendhal states "La commence ma vie morale."¹⁴⁵

Stendhal loved his mother; he often said so. This state of affairs is not remarkable nor unusual between a mother and son, and normally it would call for no comment. But it must be noted that with Stendhal "love" when used in reference to his mother includes much more than the usual notions of innocent filial love which one might expect from a son talking about his mother. For example, Stendhal rarely made such statements as "I loved my mother very much", but rather he preferred "loving with a fury" (aimant à la fureur) and "I was in love with my mother" (j'étais amoureux de ma mère). Stendhal's expressions of love are not confined to sentiments of spiritual love or agape, but are quite clearly and explicitly used in reference to

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 29.

sensual, physical love or eros. Stendhal several times compared the manner in which he made love to his mistresses in later life to the way in which he loved his mother as a child. The following passage states this comparison quite plainly, if not to say quite bluntly:

En l'aimant à six ans peut-être, 1789, j'avais absolument le même caractère qu'en 1828 en aimant à la fureur Alberthe de Rubempré. Ma manière d'aller à la chasse du bonheur n'avait au fond nullement changé, il n'y a que cette seule exception: j'étais, pour ce qui constitue le physique de l'amour, comme César serait s'il revenait au monde pour l'usage du canon et des petites armes. Je l'eusse bien vite appris et cela n'eût rien changé au fond de ma tactique.¹⁴⁶

There are several observations to be made about this passage. First, not to be overlooked is the phallic imagery contained in the terms canon and petites armes, which were of course intentional on the part of the author, especially in view of the fact that he preceded what he was saying with "pour ce qui constitue le physique de l'amour". "Small arms inspections" is a phrase known to most people who have ever been in the army either in this country or in Europe and refers to the periodic examinations for venereal disease which are given on military posts where there is a possibility that the troops might come into contact with this disease. "Small arms" is of course military slang for the penis. Stendhal spent several years in the military and was familiar with barracks-room talk. Further along

¹⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 28-29.

in the passage quoted, such an expression as "aller à la chasse du bonheur" when referring to women rather closely parallels "chasser les poules" and other similar expressions. It seems quite obvious that the man-woman relationship of this passage is physical and sexual. But if this is not sufficient evidence for the reader then let him examine the next paragraph:

Je voulais couvrir ma mère de baisers et qu'il n'y eût pas de vêtements. Elle m'aimait à la passion et m'embrassait souvent, je lui rendais ses baisers avec un tel feu qu'elle était souvent obligée de s'en aller. J'abhorrais mon père quand il venait interrompre nos baisers. Je voulais toujours les lui donner à la gorge. Qu'on daigne se rappeler que je la perdais par une couche quand à peine j'avais sept ans.¹⁴⁷

These points are clear: Stendhal wanted to cover his mother with kisses and he wanted her to have no clothes on. He often kissed her so passionately that she was obliged to leave. He always wanted to kiss his mother on the bosom. These statements leave little doubt as to the reality of the desire of the author to physically possess his mother. The only perplexing part of the passage is the last sentence. In this sentence the author begs the reader to remember that his mother died in childbirth when he was scarcely seven years old. Now why does Stendhal give the reader this last admonition? He is obviously asking for indulgence from the reader because he thinks he has said a few things which might seem indelicate or offensive. For

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 29.

whom is Stendhal asking for this indulgence? Himself? or perhaps his mother? This is not clear. It is also not clear why the loss of his mother in childbirth should in any way explain a relationship which existed between mother and son before this loss occurred. Stendhal is not being logical here nor honest with himself. Furthermore, it is not typical of Stendhal in this work to try to justify anything about his past, so why is he doing so now? This is a sensitive area and Stendhal cannot resist the impulse to deceive the reader. This attempt at justification occurs several times in connection with Stendhal's relationship to his mother. This in itself is a good indication that Stendhal thought that there was something wrong with it, although he always protested that his mother had nothing to do with it and that the whole situation must be attributed to the mind of a seven year old boy. Should we then attribute the wrongness which Stendhal feels about the relationship to the seven year old and place all the blame on the boy? It is difficult to place all the blame of an unbalanced relationship between mother and son on a son who is not much more than a child. Surely the parents, perhaps both parents, had something to do with the formation of the relationship.

It is difficult to know whether to take this description of the relationship between Stendhal and his mother seriously or not. Certainly, we must take the

relationship as given by Stendhal seriously in discovering and understanding the personality of Stendhal, but whether the relationship was a physical reality, as well as a psychological one, or merely the product of the imagination of the author, is open to conjecture. Be that as it may, we are forced to evaluate what the author has given us. What the author has described for us is this: a family situation that contains a father, alienated from his son, and probably to some extent from his wife, by his grasping petty bourgeois nature; a mother with a very sensitive nature who is very indulgent with and extremely attached to her son; a sensual and sensitive son who has a strong attachment for his mother. Some people would say that the boy described by Stendhal has what has come to be known as an Oedipus Complex. Some psychologists believe that this complex is a stage that exists in every normal man's development. That is, every man goes through a stage during which he is his father's rival for his mother's affection and is jealous of her love. At this stage a boy is supposed to "hate" his father and to display a great deal of aggression towards him, and a great deal of affection towards his mother. Thus, in the last quoted passage, one might consider the phrase "J'abhorrais mon père quand il venait interrompre nos baisers," as a manifestation of a "normal" Oedipus complex, if I may be allowed to use this phrase. There are, however, two considerations which, I

think, rule out the possibility that we are dealing with a normal Oedipus complex. First, these are not merely the feelings of a seven year old boy, but rather the reflections of a fifty year old man. Perhaps the Oedipus complex can be considered normal for the seven year old, but not for the fifty year old man. Second, for the sake of argument, let us suppose we are dealing with a normal seven year old, and that his desire to kiss his mother on the bosom while she is naked is a normal physical desire for a seven year old. Can a mother who would encourage or indulge such sensual physical attention from her seven year old son be included in the "normal" category? Again, for an adult this attitude is not acceptable. Perhaps an argument could be made for the child. However, a woman's naked bosoms are usually attractive only to small baby boys of less than a year of age (in Europe nursing goes on longer than one year in some areas) and do not become attractive again for men until they reach puberty. A boy of seven is past the suckling stage and is not really close enough to puberty for consideration in this category. By the age of seven our psychological makeup is largely formed. I am inclined to say that this is not a description of a child going through an Oedipus phase, but rather the description of a fully developed Oedipus personality. The fact that this description is given by a man in his fifties who certainly had this complex gives more weight

to the argument that the seven year old probably already had the complex also (the seven year old and the fifty year old are the same person).

It has been mentioned before that Stendhal often tries to justify the relationship he had with his mother. He actually seems to be trying to absolve his mother of having any part in the formation of this complex. Thus he writes:

Elle ne peut pas s'offenser de la liberté que je prends avec elle en révélant que je l'aimais; si je la retrouve jamais je le lui dirais encore. D'ailleurs elle n'a participé en rien à cet amour. Elle n'en agit pas à la vénitienne comme Madame Benzoni avec l'auteur de Nella. Quant à moi j'étais aussi criminel que possible, j'aimais ses charmes avec fureur.¹⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that Stendhal tries to establish the innocence of his mother and contrast it to his own guilt, as if he were talking about a crime. He even uses the term "criminel" when referring to his own attitude towards his mother's attractions. This relationship is conceived, often unintentionally, in terms of crime and punishment, in terms that point to guilt. Despite all Stendhal's efforts to prove the contrary, his own terminology in describing his relationship to his mother shows that he felt it to be unnatural, wrong, or "criminel". This feeling is true not only of his relationship to his mother but it also colors his entire attempt at an

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 31.

autobiography. He feels guilt and tries to cover up when he gets this feeling. He goes on doggedly, like Oedipus, in his search for the real self, but unlike Oedipus, he stops short of the final and irrevocable revelation. He would prefer to parade a number of possibilities before some other person and have that other person decide who the real Stendhal is.

Much has been made of Stendhal's relationship with his mother. She died when he was seven. He kept on living without her. He studied, first with tutors and then in school. There were a number of other influential people in his life. First, his grandfather, who was probably the kind of father he would have liked to have had in real life. This grandfather was urbane and intelligent. He was a gentleman of the eighteenth century. He was curious about everything and mildly skeptical in his attitude towards religion and morality. Stendhal admired him very much. Then there was the Jesuit priest that his father hired to come live with him and teach him after his mother's death. Probably a great deal of Stendhal's hate for Jesuits came from his relationship with this man, whom he considered a tyrant and a despicable person. There was also the kind abbé who tutored Stendhal in Latin and gave him a love for astronomy. There was the towering figure of Napoleon himself whom Stendhal admired and idolized and for whom for a short while he worked. But still, the most influential

person in the life of Stendhal was his mother. He never got over her death and remained always under the spell of her influence. At fifty-two years of age, Stendhal had these thoughts about the death of his mother: "Ainsi il y a quarante-cinq ans que j'ai perdu ce que j'amais le plus au monde."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 29.

CHAPTER VIII

TRIOS: REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSIS

In the title of this chapter we have used the plural for "trios". We are of course referring to the various trios of characters described in the different novels. Now it is time to compare these trios and decide if indeed we are dealing with five different trios or if, on the other hand, there is a single trio which is basically the same in all of the novels. In the previous chapters some comparing was done and certain implications and generalizations about the trio were made. The notion of the trio needs to be examined in more detail. This will be done in this chapter from three essential points of view: first, the physical appearance of the characters and the personality traits which go with these physical traits; second, the family, social, and political background of the characters; third, the life goals and motivation of the characters.

The first point of view, that is, physical appearance and personality traits, may seem like two to the reader. Yet it must be remembered that the two are intimately linked in Stendhal's manner of character

presentation. Physical features always reflect inner psychological traits or vice-versa. Let us begin with the men, first within the four following novels: Armance, Le Rouge et le Noir, La Chartreuse de Parme, and Lucien Leuwen. Later, we shall discuss the male characters of Lamiel. These characters are by name Octave, Julien, Fabrice, and Lucien. First of all, it can be said that not one of these men is ugly; they are all handsome. We know this, because the narrator told us so. Otherwise, we have little concrete knowledge of these people that tells us or impels us to say that they are handsome. The few concrete physical details that we have do not always coincide. Thus, Octave is tall, Julien is short, Fabrice is tall, and we are never told exactly anything about the height of Lucien. Lucien was probably medium to tall, for like Octave and Fabrice, he did not have to fight for a position in society nor for his material well-being. Such features as eye color and hair color, complexion, do not correspond either. Most of the heroes have large, dark eyes. Julien's hair is dark (chatain foncé), but the other heroes are either dark or ash blond. (This includes the men in Lamiel, even though they are not heroes.) We have already stated that the heroes are not ugly. Their physical traits are almost always attractive to the point that one could surmise that they are physically perfect. This is not true. It should be apparent from the previous chapters that there is always

some feature or features that are not regular and therefore call attention to their irregularity by their contrast to the other regular and almost perfect features. Thus, Julien is "faible en apparence, avec des traits irréguliers". Further, the combination of features is not just good, but rather exceptionally good. This exceptional combination is brought about by the presence of some irregularity plus something unusually perfect; in most cases the unusually perfect feature is the eyes. Here of course, we have the romantic mixture of extremes without any middle ground. This mixture is characteristic of all of the Stendhalian heroes. If the preceding chapters are reviewed, it will be seen that one of the striking aspects of the physical appearance of the heroes is the combination of their unusually beautiful eyes plus some irregularity in the face or head. One is reminded of the romantic love for the mixture of extremes: the sublime and the grotesque, the happy and the sad. This is certainly the source of attraction, at least for the narrator, of the Stendhalian hero. There is a corresponding mixture of perfection and flaw in the psychological make-up of the characters. Their outward control over their emotions is often shattered by unexpected outbursts of passion. The mixture of opposites is carried to its limits in the mixture of masculine and feminine traits. The male protagonists of the novels often are noted for their almost feminine looks. For some critics

the feminine characteristics of the male protagonist are necessary to explain his energy and aggressiveness:

"Julien, frequently described as feminine in appearance, has a record of being bullied. ... once victimized, he has since sought a position of dominance."¹⁵⁰ This was said about Julien Sorel. It could be used as a basis for analysis of his character motivation. Julien is the most special case of all the male protagonists in regard to his excessive male energy and aggressive attitude toward others. If the other male protagonists are examined it will be found that they too have many of the physical attractions that Julien has. By saying that the heroes have the same physical attractions we do not mean that they have the same physical features, which, as we have already pointed out, are often quite different. But let us examine for a moment the several physical attractions which all the heroes have in common, beginning with their eyes.

If the chapter on Armance be re-examined, it will be noticed that Octave's eyes are quite beautiful (de grands yeux noirs les plus beaux du monde) and gentle (or perhaps sweet? ... ces yeux si doux); and yet, they reflect something which is disturbing to others (quelque chose de sombre ... n'eût porté à le plaindre). Octave's eyes terrified his mother (ses yeux si beaux et si tendres lui donnaient de la

¹⁵⁰W. D. Redfern, "The Prisoners of Stendhal and Camus." French Review, Vol. 41, 1969, p. 652.

terreur). It may be argued that beautiful eyes are not enough to make a man feminine in appearance; that there must be more, such as effeminate mannerisms to go along with the feminine features. Nowhere is it suggested that Octave or any of the other heroes has effeminate mannerisms. To combat this argument we must simply remind the reader that for Stendhal and the early part of the nineteenth century there was a definite correspondence between outer physical appearance and inner psychological reality. Thus, when Octave was compared to the young Italians of Naples because of his beautiful curly blond hair, he felt disgraced and humiliated to the point of leaving a party and then seeking to prove his masculinity by fighting a duel.

Mention has already been made of Julien's feminine appearance, but for comparison some of the characteristics will be given. His face is several times compared to that of a young girl (cette figure de jeune fille). Again the eyes are important for the feminine impression of Julien's features, and they are described with the very same words that are used in describing Octave's: ses yeux si doux; les grands yeux noirs. And, although the color is different, Julien has curly hair (ses jolis cheveux qui frisaient). Another facial feature common to both Octave and Julien is a beautiful complexion (teint) noted for its pale color (pâleur).

Fabrice also has beautiful eyes which were once

said to express un certain regard chargé de douce volupté. He also has curly blond hair and a beautiful pale complexion, but one does not receive quite as strong as impression of feminine beauty as with Octave and Julien, although his aunt Gina considers him to be a joli garçon. Rather than feminine, Fabrice's characteristics are often described as boyish or childlike. This characteristic is shared by Lucien.

Lucien Leuwen also has beautiful eyes and beautiful dark blond hair (de jolis cheveux, d'un blond foncé). He is several times described as having the happy look of a child. Both Fabrice and Lucien, although described as happy-go-lucky children, are well aware of their good looks and both spend a great deal of time grooming themselves so that they will look their best. One friend accuses Lucien of spending des heures entières à ta toilette.

As a final word about the physical appearance of the men it might be said that they tend not to have physiques of the muscular he-man type, although Octave, Fabrice, and Lucien are described as being grand and bien fait.

Leaving aside the purely physical and moving into personality traits of the various heroes, there are again many features shared in common. Octave's good looks and tall physique are paralleled by des manières nobles. He

also has a good mind (beaucoup d'esprit). But there is something amiss. Octave does not behave like other young people. He is overly attached to his mother. Most of his actions seem motivated by a strong, overly strong, sense of duty. Aside from his mother and his sense of duty, he does not respond to anything. For this reason other people consider him strange (singulier). He does not relate well to other people and to his surroundings. He does not have any friends his own age. His outward calm is offset by an inner turmoil. Octave suffers. He is an alienated person, an étranger.

Julien Sorel has many traits in common with Octave. Julien has a good mind, in fact, a fantastic mind, capable of great efforts when Julien wants to impress someone. There is also something amiss in his personality, although not the same things to be found in Octave. Julien has no mother to be devoted to, so this energy must be directed elsewhere. He has a very strong sense of duty, but not for his lone surviving parent. Julien imposes actions upon himself as duties that must be performed in order for him to maintain his self-esteem. Other people also consider Julien strange (singulier). He, too, has trouble relating to people and surroundings. He also lacks friends his own age. Inside Julien a storm rages, but he does not abandon himself to melancholy suffering. He suffers, but he also acts. He, too, is an alienated person, an étranger.

At first glance, it would appear that Fabrice's personality has very little in common with those of Octave and Julien. Fabrice was born rich and good-looking. He does not worry and suffer. When he was young he had the companionship of other children his own age. He is carefree and not at all studious. He has the love of his mother, to whom he is not overly attached. As an adult, one would expect this sort of person to be a "good guy", one who is easy to get along with, one who makes friends easily. Yet Fabrice, as an adult, had no friends his own age. If one examines the comrades he had as a child, one sees that they were all peasant children who lived on his father's estates and who could never grow up to be his friends because of the difference in social status. Furthermore, the fact that Fabrice was allowed to have such friends as a child is due to paternal neglect rather than to parental indulgence. Fabrice's legal father, the person who gave him a name, clearly disliked him. Fabrice was a bastard, abandoned by his natural sire. Fabrice, also, had a phenomenal mind, which he used only when he wanted to impress someone. He had no interest at all in studies and learning. He is considered strange (singulier) by others. His good looks make him disliked by the men, much liked by the women. He has no goals and leaves to the others the choice of a vocation for himself. He, too, is alienated from his surroundings; he is an étranger.

Lucien has many traits in common with the other three heroes. In common with Octave and Fabrice, Lucien seems to have no vocation; and, in common with Julien, Lucien decides that he must act and do something on his own in order to have self-esteem. He had a remarkable mind which he used when he wanted to impress people. Like Octave, Lucien enjoyed the company of his mother, but he did not have the passion for her that Octave had. Lucien does not have friends his own age. He is alienated, an étranger. Of course, there are some differences between Lucien and the other heroes. One of the most striking differences is the warm and loving relationship that Lucien has with his father. This is indeed a unique situation for a Stendhalian hero. But it must be pointed out that this father is much older than Lucien's mother, so much so that one is tempted to see in Lucien's father a grandfather figure. The difference in age and the preoccupation of the father with his business interests keep him busy and away from home much of the time, and so this father never interferes with the relationship that mother and son have. Father and son never compete for the affection of the mother. All three get along well together. It is perfect, just too perfect, and Stendhal was never able to finish the story he was writing about this hero with such an idyllic family background.

As we compare the feminine members of the trios, we can also include Lamiel, although it must be remembered that she is the protagonist of the novel by that name and that she is not a member of a trio in the sense that we have been using the word in the other chapters. As with the males, we shall begin by physical appearances. We mentioned that there is not an ugly male in the trios, and we can say that there is not an ugly female either. They are all beautiful. The words used to describe them are often the same from one novel to another; and often they are the same words used to describe the men. Thus Armance was, of course, beautiful (belle). One of her greatest attractions is her eyes; which, like the men's, are large, but unlike the men's, are dark blue in color. Some of her physical features are not considered assets. For example, her set, square jaw, prominent forehead and brows, and her short hair gave her a decidedly masculine look. She is considered strange-looking.

If we look for a counterpart to Armance in Le Rouge et le Noir, it must certainly be Mathilde de La Mole. She is beautiful. She is blond (so was Armance). She looks almost masculine (presque masculin). She is considered strange-looking. Her masculine appearance, unlike that of Armance, is not caused by her physical features, but rather by the harsh and haughty look she keeps on her face. Her most striking attraction is her eyes.

In the Chartreuse de Parme, the character that corresponds to Armance and Mathilde in age is Clélia Conti. However, the correspondence does not go much further than that. She is, of course, beautiful and her eyes are very expressive and beautiful, but there is nothing in her physical make-up that would suggest masculinity.

In Lucien Leuwen, again, because of her age, Bathilde de Chasteller corresponds to Armance, Mathilde, and Clélia. But like Clélia, there is nothing in her looks that suggests masculinity. She, like the others, is beautiful, blond, and possessed of magnificent eyes. She has a disdainful look that reminds one of Mathilde de La Mole. At times she appears haughty, again like Mathilde. There is a strange look in her eyes.

Lamiel, with certain reservations, must be compared to the above-mentioned characters. She is young like them, and, in fact, we get to see her grow up. This is reminiscent of the two looks we get of Clélia Conti, first as a young girl and then years later as a mature young lady. However, we see Lamiel grow up from babyhood to young womanhood. When first described she is not beautiful, being considered too tall and too thin. However, from her later successes, it must be assumed that she overcame the problem. She has the expected blond hair (blond cendré). Her blue eyes are not a surprise either; however, this time, they are not considered big enough (pas assez grands). She has a

thin chin that is a little too long. She has a fairly nice face, but her mouth is somewhat crooked. All in all, she has more physical defects than the characters just mentioned.

The personalities of these women have some agreements, but not a few differences. Armance is strong-willed. She is an outsider, both by birth and by temperament. She is alienated from those who surround her. She is an étrangère. She is obedient and dutiful to her cousin and benefactress. Her behavior in this respect is unassailable. She has one close girl friend, but generally she has no friends her own age. She is considered rather strange.

Mathilde is also considered strange. She is bored and will do almost anything to break the monotony of her life. She is unhappy. She is also alienated, an étrangère. She is definitely attracted to the unusual and the out-of-the-ordinary. She is especially attracted to violence. She is very proud. She is disdainful of the people by whom she finds herself constantly surrounded.

Clélia is a quiet and pensive person, and in this she resembles Armance. She is very devout and loves to be alone. She is gentle and tender and tends to be melancholy.

Bathilde resembles Clélia somewhat. She is rather quiet and loves to be alone. She is also rather devout.

Lamiel resembles Mathilde de La Mole, but also several of the heroes. Like many of the women already

discussed, Lamiel had no intimate friends her own age. This aspect she shares with all of the heroes. She very much resembles Mathilde in her rather unpassionate investigation into what love is. However, in her reaction to the event she resembles Julien Sorel, but even more Henri Beyle. She, too, is alienated, an étrangère, but she does not withdraw from life in the manner of many of the Stendhalian women. Rather, she rushes forth to conquer it much in the manner of Julien Sorel. She lacks Julien's intensity and seems to be motivated by boredom much in the way Mathilde de La Mole is. Her attraction to violence is shared also by Mathilde. In Lamiel many of the characteristics of both Julien Sorel and Mathilde de La Mole are combined.

A review of the physical characteristics of the older women in the trios reveals many qualities already mentioned. And in true Stendhalian fashion we are "told" rather than "shown" these qualities, to use the expression of Wayne C. Booth.¹⁵¹ There is no point in listing all the characteristics of these women separately. They are, without exception, beautiful. They are all elegant and distinguished looking. With the exception of Madame de Rênal, they are all extroverted and outgoing. Most of them are very active socially. Most are noble. They are powerful

¹⁵¹Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 3-20.

figures in the community in which they find themselves. They are in a position of great influence from which they can either protect or injure. The names of these women are, starting with Armance, madame de Bonnivet; in Le Rouge et le Noir, madame de Rênal; in the Chartreuse de Parme, Gina; in Lucien Leuwen, madame d'Hocquincourt. With the exception of madame de Rênal, none of these women has a physical liaison with the hero, although it is often evident that such a liaison was desired by these women.

We have compared the various members of the trios, and it has been seen that there is no exact correspondence between one character and another, between any trio and another. And yet, there are certain constants that are important. All of the trios consist of a young (in the beginning of the novel) man, a young woman, and an older woman. All members of all the trios are "beautiful" (the ambiguity of the French word beau must be kept in mind). Where there is a marriage situation between members of the trio, it is never a successful or happy one. Even sexual liaisons are rare; and when they occur, they are short-lived and do not bring happiness. Rarely is there progeny from the sexual liaisons, and in the one case where there is, the child soon dies. The heroes and most of the women are alienated from the society in which they live. The best rapport between society and the trios is always through the older woman, and this is important, for in nineteenth-century

France social prominence means political power. The time in which the heroes and heroines live is that of post-Napoleonic France, or the period of the Restoration. With one exception, the Chartreuse de Parme, the place in which the trios live out their lives is France. Often they start in the provinces and then move to Paris. There is usually some moving back and forth between Paris and the provinces. While the trios are usually idealistically portrayed, the time and place of their drama is thoroughly grounded in reality. The events and places of their lives are always real events and places in history. This real time and place of the heroes' lives happens to correspond to the real time and place of their author's life, and comparisons between the two are in order.

How does Stendhal compare with his heroes? Physically there is little resemblance between the portraits that have come down to us of Henri Beyle and that which he gave us of his heroes. From the looks of the portraits Beyle was stout, perhaps even fat, and probably short in stature. His face is rather pleasant-looking, but it is rather round and fat. His hair is dark and looks very curly. He has a low forehead. His dark hair and low forehead would fit Julien Sorel, but this is where the resemblance ends. Julien was slender of build; Beyle looks stocky like a peasant. He certainly does not resemble the tall and

handsome blond heroes of most of his novels. There is no doubt that Stendhal would have liked to have the good looks of his heroes. This would have been a distinct advantage for someone like Beyle who was so interested in love and in being a good lover. Yet, by his own admission, he was neither handsome nor a good lover. It has been mentioned before that physical characteristics often revealed inner psychological realities in the characters of Stendhal. Is Stendhal, then, condemned by his own method to be something stupid or loathsome, or at best mediocre? We must qualify our previous statements. Pretty blond hair does not reveal anything in the Stendhalian world of the inner workings of the personality. It may be an indication of noble birth, but never of the psychological make-up of the man. The only physical feature which does this is the eyes, and they do not perform this function because of their color or shape, but because of the way they behave. By the looks they give, they reveal inner feelings. So, Stendhal's peasant looks may tend to disqualify him for the social position of some of his heroes, but not for comparison to the inner man. Excessive attention has often been given to the correspondences that exist between physical appearance and personality within the romantic tradition without realizing that physical appearance is often described in behavioral terms rather than purely physical ones. So we can ascribe the discrepancy between the looks of Stendhal and

his heroes to wishful thinking. It is not unusual for people to desire to be handsome or beautiful, and if the author of a work chooses to identify with the hero (as it is hard to imagine that he would not) we should not be surprised that the hero is handsome, even if the author is not. We have already pointed out that the true story of an individual for Stendhal is the inner one, so let us leave the comparison of looks and turn to the behavior of the author and his heroes. Let us compare the behavior and psychological make-up of Henri Beyle to each one of his novelistic creations and see what happens. We shall begin with Octave from the novel Armance.

The character of Octave and the story of Armance were considered incomprehensible by many contemporaries of Stendhal. As writer of this dissertation, I must admit that I to a large degree concur. Octave is a strange person. Some of his strangeness I pointed out in indicating his tendency to necrophilia and fetishism. There is another aspect of Octave's personality that is not at all apparent from a reading of the novel, but which Stendhal revealed in a letter to his friend Prosper Mérimée, and that is--Octave was sexually impotent. Without the letter from Stendhal to Mérimée it would be impossible to assert this. It is obvious from Octave's tendency to fetishism and necrophilia that there is some sort of imbalance, but there is not any concrete evidence of impotence. At least, for this

reader such expressions as je suis un monstre, which Octave said to Armance, do not clearly and obviously indicate that Octave was impotent. Furthermore, Octave is known to have frequented houses of prostitution. This fact is misleading for the reader. For, why should any male go to a house of prostitution for any reason other than to gratify his sexual needs? If we are to believe the letter of Stendhal, Octave went there for companionship, or some other reason, for he says in his letter to Mérimée:

J'ai pris le nom d'Olivier, sans y songer, à cause du défi. J'y tiens parce que ce nom seul fait exposition et exposition non indécente. Si je mettais Edmond ou Paul, beaucoup de gens ne devineraient pas le fait du Babilanisme (mot italien pour le cas de M. Maurepas). Je veux intéresser pour Olivier, peindre Olivier. Le dénouement que vous proposez avec la surprise de lord Seymour, etc, vient d'une bonne tête dramatique, mais, en fin de compte, mon pauvre Olivier est odieux. Les gens sages diront: "Que diable! quand on est babilan, on ne se marie pas. Olivier vient gêner sa femme et lord Seymour, qu'il s'en aille, bon voyage!" Le Babilanisme rend timide, autrement rien de mieux que de faire l'aveu. Ce mari du lundi, M. de Maurepas, M. de La Tournelle l'ont bien fait. M. de La Tournelle est mort désespéré et amoureux fou de sa femme. Olivier, comme tous les Babilans, est très fort sur les moyens auxiliaires qui font la gloire du Président. Une main adroite, une langue officieuse, ont donné des jouissances vives à Armance. Je suis sûr que beaucoup de jeunes filles ne savent pas précisément en quoi consiste le mariage physique.¹⁵²

It is clear from this letter that the name Olivier would indicate to the public of the times the notion of an impotent man. In any case, the author thought that any other

¹⁵²Stendhal, Romans (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1952), p. 190.

name would have been unclear. For some of his contemporaries it remained just that--unclear. He, of course, did not use the name Olivier, but Octave; which, as far as I know, is not at all clear. Nevertheless, Stendhal rightly concludes that his readers will say that when one is impotent, one does not marry. He then goes on to make a generalization that may seem shocking to people who are used to thinking of the early nineteenth century in terms of idealistic naïveté; that is that Octave, like all impotent men, is adept at causing orgasm in women other than by an erect penis--by using his hand or by cunnilingus. The meaning of jouissances is unmistakable in this context, and, moreover, in modern times the meaning is still the same.

If we return to our original intention of comparing Stendhal's personality to that of Octave, we can say that there is some similarity in that Stendhal was known to suffer from sexual impotence at times. In fact, he probably suffered from impotence most of the time, and only under unusual circumstances was he sexually potent. He does not indicate this in Henry Brulard. Again we must refer to a letter, this time one of Mérimée's letters to an English friend. The letter is written in rather curious English. It is curious because Mérimée misspells Stendhal's name several times. One can only assume that the pseudonym was not thoroughly established at this time. This is an extract of the letter:

...de Mar^e. is still in high favour with Mrs. Azur. She is desperately in love with him. Mar^e. is so proud of it that he becomes every day more unmerciful for Stendhal, who is in love too and extremely jealous. Stendhal will not see her any more, he confirmed to me the story of the grand tr^{io} which he play his part so well, and says that he never knew before what p^{leasure} was.¹⁵³

De Mar^e. is the Baron de Mareste, a friend of Stendhal for many years. Mrs. Azur is Alberthe de Rubempré, so-named because she lived on a street named bleue. Alberthe was the cousin of Eugène Delacroix, who had introduced her to Stendhal and others. Delacroix liked his cousin so much that he gave up an old mistress in order to make his cousin his mistress. Stendhal became head over heels in love with Alberthe, who finally gave in to him and became his mistress also, without, however, giving up her cousin Delacroix. It is evident from other comments by Stendhal and Mérimée that Delacroix, Stendhal, and Alberthe had their sexual experiences together and at the same time, thus forming the trio to which Mérimée refers in the letter. When Stendhal was able to watch others perform sexually, he was stimulated himself and was not bothered by the problem of impotence. Indeed, under such conditions he seems to have performed exceptionally well, so well, in fact, that Alberthe bragged about his sexual prowess. Stendhal was not bothered by this, in fact he rejoiced,

¹⁵³ A. W. Raitt, "An Unpublished Letter by Mérimée," The Modern Language Review, April 1970, Vol. 65, No. 2, p. 282.

because he already had the reputation of being impotent and Alberthe's gossip counteracted this reputation. Stendhal comments upon his reputation as an impotent:

Cette belle réputation se répandit dans le monde et, peu ou beaucoup, m'a duré jusqu'à ce que Mme Azur ait rendu compte de mes faits et gestes.¹⁵⁴

Thus, there was a definite connection between the psycho-sexual problems of Octave and those of Stendhal. Stendhal made his first novel focus on one of his most difficult problems as a lover, and in true romantic fashion he idealized it to the point that the physical details became lost and obscured for the reader.

How does the personality of Stendhal compare to that of Julien Sorel? Here, the correspondences are many. Both came from little towns in the provinces. Both lost their mothers at an early age. Both detested their fathers and their family and social background. Both were capable of tremendous energy. (If the reader wonders what evidence there is of this energy in Stendhal, he need only consider the sheer bulk of Stendhal's writing and the way it was written in rapid bursts of energy. Those novels that were not written speedily were usually never finished, viz. Lucien Leuwen and Lamiel.) Both Julien and Stendhal had phenomenal minds which could accomplish gargantuan

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 284, footnote 3, which quotes from Stendhal's Souvenirs d'égotisme, in Oeuvres intimes, edited by Henri Martineau (1916), p. 1409.

tasks when they wanted to achieve some goal or impress someone. (Julien memorized the new testament and the book of saints in Latin just to impress the village priest and further his advancement in the clergy; Stendhal went to great efforts to study mathematics in order to win all the first prizes at school and thereby persuade his father that he should be sent to Paris to study at the Ecole Polytechnique.) Both Julien and Stendhal were continually conscious of other people as a judging audience. Both were insecure and feared the judgment of others. This fact led one critic to remark that "it is no exaggeration to say that in his fear of being deceived and mocked by his fellowman, Stendhal resembled his own protagonist."¹⁵⁵ The protagonist referred to in this case was Julien Sorel. Both Julien and Stendhal lived at a time when all the old ideals had been destroyed by the French Revolution and any new ones were soon crushed by the downfall of Napoleon. This fact placed both of them in a peculiar dilemma. If they were to have any ideals and goals, they would be forced to study and decide for themselves just what these ideals and goals were to be. This made the quest for unity and self-identity a most agonizing process; for, in effect, both Stendhal and Julien are forced to play the

¹⁵⁵Robert T. Denomme, "Julien Sorel and the Modern Conscience", Western Humanities Review, Summer 1967, Vol. XXII, No. 3, Published and Printed by the University of Utah, p. 229.

part of the god in which they no longer believe. This gives them the terrible burden of restructuring the universe so that their lives and the human condition have some meaning. They are both forced into a metaphysical quest that seems quite modern. As the critic just quoted rightly observed:

Stendhal's protagonist emerges as the prototype of the modern hero who is obliged to choose and define his ideals before he is able to pursue them.¹⁵⁶

When such a situation exists, self-knowledge becomes all-important. In order to choose one's own ideals and goals it is necessary to know and understand the self in order to know what the self needs and wants. Thus, Stendhal's almost compulsive need for self-analysis is explained, a trait he shares with Julien Sorel and other of his heroes. Robert Denomme links this need to the existing political and social situation in France during the Restoration:

Stendhal's preoccupation with character analysis betrays a nearly compulsive need to analyze himself. The realization that the Revolution had destroyed the existing social and political structures of France made him self-conscious and insecure.¹⁵⁷

There are many points of similarity between the personalities of Julien Sorel and Stendhal, but the one we have just mentioned is the most striking and basic. As a last example of similarity between Julien and Stendhal it would be

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 227 - 228.

well to mention Stendhal's and Julien's worship of Napoleon. This is one of the most misunderstood and maligned aspects of Stendhal's, and consequently of Julien's, personality. Even people with the best intentions, trying to explain this love for Napoleon, usually end up giving an apology for what appears to them to be a contradiction between the ideals of the Revolution and the despotism of Napoleon. Her is an example of a fairly recent article on this subject, the quotation being the opening sentence of the article:

It seems at first sight paradoxical to the twentieth-century reader that a writer so deeply and obviously committed to the ideals of the French Revolution should be such a passionate partisan of the general whose military coup d'état overthrew constitutional government in France and who went on to have himself crowned Emperor of the French.¹⁵⁸

This statement, since it reflects the attitude of not a few people who are interested in Stendhal, warrants some comment. It is based on a misunderstanding of Stendhal. The beginning of the misunderstanding is apparent when the author of this article characterizes Stendhal as a person "so deeply and obviously committed to the ideals of the French Revolution". It is difficult to imagine how anyone who has read any one of Stendhal's major novels could make such a statement. Octave, Julien, Fabrice, and Lucien

¹⁵⁸Dennis Porter, "Stendhal and the Lesson of Napoleon", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, May 1970, Vol. 85, No. 3, p. 456.

are hardly people committed to the ideals of the French Revolution. Lucien at times expressed republican sentiments. But then, it would be hard to imagine a Lucien Leuwen without his father's millions, not that millions in wealth rule out republicanism. Lucien did not spend his time trying to further the aims of democracy, but courting the beautiful women of the local aristocracy of Nancy. Most of his republican sentiment is hardly supported by his actions or by his taste, which was decidedly aristocratic. It is hard to imagine Lucien as the corner grocer. Stendhal also found it difficult to fulfill such a role. Julien might conceivably have tried such a thing if it would further some other goal. This was apparently what was behind the attempt of Stendhal to play such a role when he went to Marseille in the pursuit of an actress with whom he was infatuated. The adventure did not last long. It is everywhere apparent in his novels and in his other writing that he was not "committed to the ideals of the French Revolution" of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. And yet, the writer of the article just quoted was eventually led to conclude that

Hence the conviction that there is no civic virtue and no happiness without liberty and the path to both lies through constitutional government. In the long run the condition of a nation's well-being is an alert citizenry and government responsive to its needs. It was Stendhal's belief that such a happy state of affairs could only effectively be achieved through effective "representative government," including

the classic libertarian institution of a bicameral legislature.¹⁵⁹

This is pure nonsense. Stendhal was a pragmatist who recognized fully that the French Revolution had destroyed the old values. He does not, however, embrace the values and ideals of the Revolution. They are no more of a reality for him than the old values which the Revolution just destroyed. For Stendhal, as for his contemporaries, the Revolution did away with the old, but it was obvious from the historical events immediately following, that it did not bring in the new. There was a restoration of the old even though it was no longer a reality in the minds of the people. What the Revolution did, in effect, was to bring in a new freedom, from which no one could really escape. It produced a situation which forced the individual to choose for himself the governing ideals of his life. It also recognized the growing importance of money and capital as the new standard against which all things are measured.

Napoleon himself is an example of what we have been talking about. He is an example of a man who realized the new freedom the Revolution gave to the individual. The fact that he chose older forms or many short-sighted goals for his new freedom does not alter the fact that he still represents the embodiment of the new freedom and its

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 462.

possibilities:

For he was the living and historical embodiment of his own phrase: "Careers open to talent." One ought even to say "careers open to genius" since he was no common performer in anything he undertook. He was extra-ordinary, and as the dominant figure of his half century he centered upon himself the gaze of all those who were pondering the nature of man's fate.¹⁶⁰

Napoleon's energy took him to the heights. It is no wonder that Stendhal and his protagonist Julien Sorel worshipped him.

If we continue the comparison of the personality of Stendhal to the two remaining personalities, Fabrice del Dongo, and Lucien Leuwen, we shall have to repeat many of the things that we have said before. We have already mentioned Lucien's republican sentiments, and it can be said that they probably correspond to Stendhal's--that is, they are not consistent with his aristocratic ideals and his behavior. They are not serious. Nothing can be gained at this time by continuing the comparison of Stendhal with his heroes. We can end the topic by saying that physically they resemble him very little; psychologically they resemble him very much.

It is time to try to account for the women in the trios and their relationship, not to the heroes, so much as to their author, Stendhal. Stendhal had a number of

¹⁶⁰Jacques Barzun, Classic, Romantic and Modern (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961), p. 80.

mistresses that could have served, and probably did help, to describe the heroines of his novels. Yet the origins of their physical descriptions and types do not compare to the importance of their occurrence in pairs and to the difference in their ages and functions in the lives of the various protagonists. To explain the presence of these two women in the lives of the protagonists in relationship to Stendhal, we shall have to look outside of a purely physical relationship between or resemblance between real person and fictional character.

Outside of pure wishful thinking on Stendhal's part, how can we account for the two adoring mistresses that are an integral part of the life of the eternally young and energetic heroes of Stendhal's novels? An answer to this question might be found in the work of the psychologist Carl Jung. Jung took a great deal of interest in literature, and his writings abound in references to literary authors and their works. He has provided not only psychology, but also literary criticism, with many acute observations and with many useful new terms. Three of them are worth considering in dealing with this trio. They are persona, shadow, and anima. It might be well to define these terms as Jung uses them, because this is the meaning they will have in the following discussion.

The term persona is of course not new or original with Jung, having been used since ancient times to designate

the mask worn by actors in dramas, and, much later, the characters that these masks represented. Frieda Fordham, a Jungian psychologist, defines persona in this way:

The process of civilizing the human being leads to a compromise between himself and society as to what he should appear to be, and to the formation of the mask behind which most people live. Jung calls this mask the persona, the name given to the masks once worn by the actors of antiquity to signify the role they played.¹⁶¹

The persona, then, is the face that is offered to the rest of the world by an individual. The persona is both an individual and a collective phenomenon. The individual can choose the role he wants to play in society. He can, for example, choose to be a preacher. But in order to succeed, he must adopt to some extent the characteristics expected of a preacher. In this way the persona is both individual and collective.

Stendhal seems to have had difficulty in establishing a persona. He wanted to offer the world the picture of a dashing personality, witty, and irresistible to women. He also wanted to establish himself as a writer. During his own time Stendhal had only partial success. Later, people readily conceded him the title of great writer, but during his own time recognition was slow in coming, although it was not non-existent, as some would have us believe (this includes Stendhal himself, who thought he would not be

¹⁶¹Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 47.

recognized until 1880). He was also considered witty, but his success with women was plagued with problems and failures. Fordham comments that "people who neglect the development of a persona tend to be gauche, to offend others, and to have difficulty in establishing themselves in the world."¹⁶² This would certainly fit some of the difficulties that Stendhal had, and it would also apply to the majority of his heroes.

Jungians define the term shadow thus:

Jung calls that other side of ourselves, which is to be found in the personal unconscious, the shadow. The shadow is the inferior being in ourselves, the one who wants to do all the things that we do not allow ourselves to do, who is everything that we are not, the Mr. Hyde to our Dr. Jekyll.¹⁶³

The shadow is, then, what is behind the persona, or mask. It can be strikingly different from the persona to the point of being its exact opposite. Thus, Stendhal's heroes, while similar to their creator in many ways, often do things he would not dare do; and they have physical attributes that really do not resemble him at all. In Jung's psychology shadow refers to an aspect of the personality that is not usually expressed, except under situations of stress. Normally the persona is in control. But sometimes we do things that embarrass us and we say "I don't know what came over me" or "I wasn't myself" meaning some other aspect of me

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid.

was in control. This happens sometimes to Stendhal's heroes (when Fabrice forgets his gentleman's code of conduct and leaps on another man with a dagger). But the shadow does not have to be the bad things you are and do not normally express; it can simply be things you are not or do not normally express. Thus, the inadequacies of Stendhal are compensated for by his literary creations. They amplify and at the same time complement his character. Stendhal and his heroes could be discussed at length using the terms shadow and persona. But we still need to account for the two women in the lives of the protagonists. To do this by using the Jungian vocabulary that we have started we must consider the term anima.

Jung believed that the unconscious of a man contains a complementary feminine element, and that of a woman, a male element. Jung calls these elements the anima and the animus, respectively. Even though we shall be trying to account for the two feminine members of the trio, we shall not analyze them as separate entities but as projections of the male personality. Therefore, we shall dispense with the term animus and confine ourselves to explaining anima.

Jung, speaking of the anima, said that "a collective image of woman exists in a man's unconscious, with the help of which he apprehends the nature of woman."¹⁶⁴ The first

¹⁶⁴Carl Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (London: Routledge, 1953), p. 188.

and most important experience of woman comes to a man through his mother. This is a most powerful experience in its ability to shape him and influence him. There are some men who never succeed in freeing themselves from the fascinating power of the mother. Stendhal seems to have been one of these men. Martin Turnell referred to Stendhal's feeling for his mother as a classic example of the "Oedipus complex", citing the passage from La Vie de Henry Brulard which describes Stendhal's love for his mother and his desire to kiss her on the bosom when she was naked. (We quoted this passage in the original French and talked about it at some length in the chapter on La Vie de Henry Brulard).¹⁶⁵ We believe that we have given sufficient evidence in the chapter on Henry Brulard to state that Stendhal did indeed have an Oedipus complex. What then is the connection between this situation and the Jungian term anima, which we have stated will explain the presence of the two women in the trio? First, it will have to be remembered that for an Oedipus personality the anima, the collective image of woman, is the same as mother. This presents a problem when the Oedipus personality looks for a love object toward which he can direct his sexual libido, for he will, no matter what woman he directs his attention to, be directing this libido towards mother. An instinctive

¹⁶⁵Turnell, Op. cit., p. 133.

taboo against incest will try to prohibit this from happening. The mind has no trouble in projecting agape on the mother, but has great difficulty in accepting eros for the mother. It would then seem that the only thing that a mother-oriented anima could do would be to split in two--one image retaining the attributes of mother, the other image being different enough from the first to allow the projection of eros onto it. This split will be unstable and often confused, since it is still basically formed out of the mother-image. This concept of the split anima will, I believe, explain quite well the presence of the double heroine in the novels of Stendhal. One of the women is an older woman. She is socially and politically powerful. She is in a position to protect and guide. In the case of Fabrice of La Chartreuse de Parme, Gina, the older woman, almost completely dominates and directs his life and he shows a very weak ego himself. In each novel, with the exception of Lamiel, there is an older woman, who fulfills this role of the protecting mother. In most cases there is no sexual activity between this older person and the hero. The exception is of course Le Rouge et le Noir. Here the Oedipus drama is most completely acted out, with the mother-figure acting also as bed-partner. But in most of the novels eros is never directed towards this older protecting woman. Rather this aspect of the libido is directed towards the younger member of the trio, the one

that does not have the all-powerful, protective aspects of the mother-image. One of the reasons they do not conform to the mother-image, besides their younger age, is due to their physical traits, which in the case of Mathilde de La Mole and Armance are described as being masculine. This is interesting in that the only other alternative for the Oedipus personality, if woman is ruled out as an object of his sexual libido, is of course homosexuality. This theme is a strong undercurrent in the novels of Stendhal.

Within the Oedipus situation of Stendhal's personality, some of the parallels to the Oedipus myth are quite striking. Consider, for example, the actual killing of his father that Oedipus carried out. We know that Stendhal never did this, at least physically. And yet, Jean Starobinski quite rightly links Stendhal's use of pseudonyms to the legendary act of killing Oedipus's father:

To take a pseudonym is, first of all, either out of shame or resentment, a repudiation of the name transmitted by one's father. A name, like the effigy whose heart (or "heart region") is pierced, contains in substance the life one wishes to annihilate. If a name is truly an identity, if through it the essence of a human being can be reached and brutalized, the refusal of a patronym is a substitute for patricide. It is the least cruel form of murder in effigy.¹⁶⁶

If Oedipus killed his father and married his mother, in a sense Stendhal did too, along with several of his heroes.

¹⁶⁶Jean Starobinski, *L'Oeil vivant* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1961), as quoted in *Stendhal*, edited by Victor Brombert, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 114.

By refusing his father's name he symbolically killed his father. Stendhal refused this name (Beyle) for his mother also. He usually referred to his mother by her maiden name of Gagnon. This in a sense left her unattached and available for someone else, namely himself. This is another point of agreement between Stendhal and his heroes. In the case of Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo, the heroes deny their fathers in much the same way that Stendhal did, even to the point of implying that they were not sired by their lawful fathers, but by someone else.

There was a curse on Oedipus and all his descendants. This is a leading motif in the Theban plays of Greek tragedy. It is also strongly felt in the novels of Stendhal. For the Greeks, as well as for the society of Stendhal's time, the Oedipus love is taboo, and should never be physically realized. In Greek legend this love was realized and it brought disaster. Again, there are interesting parallels between this legend and the novels of Stendhal. For the most part the heroes of these novels are sterile and do not produce offspring. In the one case where there is a child from the liaison (Fabrice and Clélia have Sandrino), the result is death and tragedy. In the one case where the hero succumbs to the attractions of the mother-figure and there is a physical liaison, this also ends in tragedy and death: it is madame de Rênal's letter which eventually sends Julien to the guillotine. The curse

of Oedipus is a strong force both in the life of Stendhal and in the novelistic world which he created.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction of this dissertation we asked several questions which it is now time to answer. There were a number of "if's" based upon analogy with Theodor Reik and his patient and Hamlet. What if Stendhal's mother had not died when he was seven, or more important and more analogous to the Hamlet comparison, what if Stendhal's mother had not died in childbirth--a fact which could be construed as murder by the father, since he was, or at least in the mind of the son, could be held responsible for the pregnancy and subsequently for the death of the mother--but had died of some "natural" or other cause. Any wishful changes on the part of Stendhal in portraying the family situation could be expected to show up in his novels. But we can conclude, on the basis of the novels, that even if Stendhal's mother had lived, or even if she had not died in childbirth, Stendhal would have disliked his father. Octave disliked his father, Julien hated his, Fabrice was disliked by his father. One could only hope that this situation, which is decidedly unbalanced, would somehow be complemented by a happy father-son relationship in at least one of the novels, and of course we have seen that this occurs in the

novel Lucien Leuwen. This novel is an attempt by the Oedipus personality to complement the essential unbalance of the Oedipus situation. It was too much of a task. It was an attempt to deal with a situation that the Oedipus personality is not used to coping with. The attempt failed. The novel was never finished. Stendhal's other attempt at escaping the Oedipus situation was also a failure (in the sense that it was never completed). I am of course referring to Lamiel, Stendhal's other unfinished novel. Stendhal got bogged down in these two novels and could never untangle the situations that he developed in them.

We have concluded that the attitude towards the father would not have changed if the mother had lived or if she had died in another way. We must now examine the mother-son relationship in the same light. What happens to the mothers in the novels? Octave's mother outlives him. Octave loves her excessively and the mother returns the love. She seems to prefer her son to her aging husband. Octave's impotence with women seems to indicate a mother-oriented anima and again indicates an Oedipus situation. Julien never knew his real mother. He fell in love with the woman who was for him a mother-figure and even had sexual relations with her. Fabrice's mother lives presumably to a ripe old age and she prefers her son to her husband. Fabrice's seeming indifference to his mother does not change the fact that he was raised in an Oedipus

situation. His lack of an ego and his troubles with Clélia clearly point to this type of situation. Lucien, as we have said, was clearly intended to complement and offset the Oedipus situation. And yet Lucien's problems with women were analogous to those of Fabrice in the finished part of the Novel. That, according to sketchy notes left by Stendhal, he had intended to rectify this situation does not alter the fact that he really did not, and apparently could not. The characteristics of Lucien are those of the Oedipus personality and do not go with the situation of family balance that the author presented to us. The conflict between the mother-son relationship and the father-son relationship in this novel was too much for the author to resolve. The two relationships do not really go together.

It seems that we can answer the "what if's" of the introduction conclusively in the same manner that such questions were answered for Hamlet. The Oedipus personality is the basic reality in Stendhal as well as in his character creations. We can also conclude that there is no key between the trio characters and the life of their author. The relationship that exists between the two cannot be correlated in terms of one to one correspondance between real life and fictional character. The trio, together with the personality of Stendhal, form a total personality. This personality, basically an Oedipus personality as we have

shown, is seen to break up into its component parts in the fictional works of Stendhal. It is not complete in the characters of the trio, nor is it complete in the personality of Stendhal. The two must be taken together to form a total personality that has become fragmented between author and literary creation.

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