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THE STENDHALIAN HERO:
PSYCHOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, AND MORAL

Examining Committee

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will be an examination of two of Stendhal's novels, Le Rouge et le noir and La Chartreuse de Parme, upon consideration of Stendhal's personal life and philosophy. I have relied principally on primary sources in my examination.

Much of my analysis is devoted to the study of the relationship between Stendhal and his heroes, for much of Stendhal's art is his technique of transferring his own self-analysis to a fictional projection of himself as the Stendhalian hero. It is my feeling that in developing this technique, Stendhal wishes to explore three main concepts of the personality of his hero: the psychological, the historical, and the moral. These three concepts were of great importance to Stendhal's own life; and as a novelist, he examines how they have crystallized in himself and in the society in which he lived.

Although Stendhal's novels examine the social plight of the nineteenth century, their author cannot be categorized with any of his literary contemporaries. He may be called the precursor of realism, but his imagination is as romantic as his social criticism is coldly realistic. Like his heroes, Stendhal is truly a "split personality." He "belongs" to no century; the characterization of the

Stendhalian hero could apply to individuals of all generations.

CHAPTER I

HENRI BEYLE, HENRI BRULARD, AND STENDHAL

Born in 1783 in Grenoble in southern France, Henri Beyle was the son of upper middle-class parents. His early life affected much of his writing as he describes it in *La Vie de Henri Brulard*, the autobiography of his first sixteen years. Young Henri's unusually intimate relationship to his mother had definite implications in his later novels; it was to determine much of the psychological character of the Stendhalian hero himself. As one critic so aptly puts it:

Suivent de forts détails sur l'intimité physique et on le voit couvrir de baisers le corps maternel dévêtu, avec une prédilection pour le corps. Les commentateurs se sont étonnés à l'approcher ces ardeurs, voire à les nier. Mais l'aveu est très clair, fort significatif et à retenir lorsqu'on tentera d'éclaircir la sexualité Stendhaliennne et ses stratagèmes.

This observer is strongly inclined to agree with this point of view. Throughout the two novels which will be discussed, the mother/mistress image is paramount. In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Julien's love for Madame de Rênal, a woman much older than he, is principally directed toward her maternal qualities. In *La Chartreuse de Parme*, the relation between

Claude Boncompagni and Francois Verzale, *Stendhal et la Vie de Henri Beyle* (Paris: Arlet-Dunant, 1955), p. 17.

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¹ Claude Boncompain and Francois Vermale, Stendhal ou La Double Vie de Henri Beyle (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1955), p.17.

Fabrice and his aunt, Gina Pietranera, again many years his elder, is one that specifically denotes a maternal attraction.

This unusually strong preoccupation with a mother image projected on his characters as well as on his own mistresses can be traced to the sudden death of Stendhal's mother, which profoundly affected the remainder of his life. Referring to her death in La Vie de Henri Brulard, he says:

Ainsi il y a quarante-cinq ans que j'ai perdu ce que j'aimais le plus au monde. ²

In addition, she is the background of his ethical conscience, for in referring to her death, Stendhal says:

Là commence ma vie morale. ³

Not only was his mother the embodiment of physical and ethical purity, but she was also his spiritual security. After her death, Beyle could never reconcile the physical passion and spiritual idealism which were equally strong in his character. In his novels he attempts to reconcile the two, but the love of his characters is usually either of the heart or of the intellect; the embodiment of the two comes closest to being realized in the personage of Clélia Conti in La Chartreuse de Parme. Without his mother, it can be said that Stendhal had no family, for his alienation from

² Henri Beyle, Pierre Larrive edition, Oeuvres Complètes de Stendhal, Vol. XVIII, La Vie de Henri Brulard, (Paris: 1956), p. 28.

³ Ibid.

his father never waned:

... il voyait clairement que je ne l'aimais point, jamais je ne lui parlais sans nécessité... ⁴

Stendhal's dislike of his father is evident in the social moralizing of his novels, for the elder Beyle was a typical bourgeois target for Stendhalian satire. The son says of him:

C'était un homme extrêmement peu aimable, réfléchissant toujours à des acquisitions et à des ventes de domaines, excessivement fin, accoutumé à vendre aux paysans et à acheter d'eux, archi-Dauphinois. ⁵

In view of these factors, it can be said that the combination of Stendhal's parentage, the cold Dauphinois character of his father and the warm Meridional nature of his mother, and his sharply contrasted reaction to each gave him a beginning for his split personality and the divided loyalties of his life.

In his youth, Stendhal's intellectual superiority motivated him to rebel against the conservatism which permeated his father's household. The boy escaped the oppressive atmosphere of the Beyle home in the home of his more liberal-minded grandfather, where he had access to the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Molière, and other writers whose works would have been forbidden in his father's.

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⁵ Ibid., p.47.

⁵

Ibid.

home. These works were almost a sole source of relief for him. In reading Don Quixote, he has the following reaction:

Don Quichotte me fit mourir de rire. Qu' on daigne réfléchir que depuis la mort de ma pauvre mère je n'avais pas ri, j'étais victime de l'éducation aristocratique et religieuse la plus suivie.⁶

Stendhal's boyhood encompassed the period of the French Revolution and the Terror; and although the Revolution did not have severe repercussions in Grenoble, the elder Beyle was forced, because of his noted royalism, to hide during the Terror. Young Henri further provoked his father's dilemma and his own alienation by his attendance at revolutionary meetings. Yet he was to find his niche for rebellion later in the Napoleonic era, when he traveled to Italy to join Napoleon's reserve troops. In the southern geographical setting, which he always preferred to his native France, Stendhal found a closer rapport to his own physical nature. Speaking of Milan, he says:

Cette ville devint pour moi le plus beau lieu de la terre. Je ne sens pas du tout le charme de ma patrie, j'ai pour le lieu où je suis né une répugnance qui va jusqu'au dégoût physique...⁷

Italy was to be his spiritual home, the object of his passion; France, merely his social home, the setting of his social plight. In his youth, Beyle's fascination

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 258.

with Napoleon was more a random outlet for his unbridled energy than an idealistic worship of Napoleon the man which developed in his later life. Though he traveled with the army throughout Europe, he remained behind the lines, witnessing the passion of battle but never being a true fighter or the military hero he would have liked to be. Like Beyle himself, two of his heroes, Fabrice and Julien, are frustrated in their military ambitions because of the limitations of their character and the time in which they lived. Stendhal gives history as one cruel factor which determines another fate for each; Julien is born too late to advance in the army, and Fabrice is led to the clergy by political intrigue. Their military frustrations take on a new objective in the psychology of their love affairs, which are treated, principally in Le Rouge et le noir, as a complex matter of military strategy.

Stendhal was never as successful as Julien in his innumerable love affairs. It is fruitless to elaborate here on the names of his mistresses; suffice it to say that Stendhal never fulfilled his own self-image with the women by whom he wished to be loved. His egotism made him wish to be loved for himself rather than to love; nevertheless, his acute sensitivity evoked an emotion that was never less than profound in all these affairs:

En effet, l'amour a toujours été pour moi
la plus grand des affaires, ou plutôt la seule. 8

The self-image that Beyle required as a lover was lacking; however, he never gave up the search to fulfill his desire to succeed in love. With all his mistresses he sought the crystallization of an ideal that he never found- the ideal that had originally been embodied in his mother. A primary obstacle to his happiness was his overt physical sensitivity, which produced a constant fear of impotence. His physical fears were also an immediate obstacle to the satisfaction of a spiritual image in his mistresses. Stendhal's heroes find their physical and spiritual counterparts, but rarely do they find them embodied in the same being. For despite the author's declarations, he sought a self-image rather than an analysis of others; he saw only his own reflection in them, and even then, only very dimly;

In the knowledge of men it is finesse that I lack most. I know well that a certain passion P has an effect P₁; but I do not know yet how to recognize in the individuals I meet in society the passions that animate them. Besides, my damnable mania for trying to glitter leads me to be more absorbed in leaving a deep impression of myself than in divining the motives of others... 9

The intellectual perceptivity with which Stendhal is credited stems from his own powers of psychological self-analysis. The portrayal of his heroes is a dissection of his own ego. In their virtues, he compensates for his own failures; in their shortcomings, he reveals the justification for his own actions. That Stendhal was an avid student

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Matthew Josephson, Stendhal or the Pursuit of Happiness (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1946), p. 94. (correspondence relative to the *Filosofia Nova*)

of the new psychology is well-known. From his findings he incorporated facts of man's psyche and physical nature into a personal philosophy based on his own social observations. This he called the *Filosofia Nova*.¹⁰ In it, he searched the ultimate in his powers of analysis; but out of necessity, Beyle could never be purely scientific, for he believed that passions were as much a source of truth as was objective analysis of the mind:

To be the greatest poet possible, I must know man perfectly... one must observe the passions of man as he is. And to observe the passions it is necessary to know what truth is.¹¹

The reconciliation of the passions and the mind is perhaps the principal problem of Stendhal's personal life, and correspondingly, it is the principal synthesis in the portrayal of the Stendhalian hero. Born Henri Beyle, the child who was so early exposed to parental discrimination and a split infantile ideal, Stendhal as a child never experienced family security. His idealism was also broken by the suppression of his intellectual curiosity. Henri was never actually a true child; thus, it might be said that Henri Beyle never really existed. Had he done so, his being would have reflected his environment in part; rather, it reflects only a rebellion to that environment. Henri, instead, was rather Henri Brulard, the name given to him because of his resemblance to a relative known for his "bon vivant" character,

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 81. (correspondence relative to the *Filosofia Nova*)

which he kept, at least physically, for the remainder of his life.¹² Henri was the child of ambition and energy; this fact motivated his continual search for personal freedom. The attempt to justify his elevated mind within the context of his acute physical sensitivity was to be a constant frustration throughout his adult life.

It was principally in the person of Stendhal the novelist that he found happiness. His books are a psychological projection of his being and a satisfaction of the of the frustrations that were so evident in Henri Brulard. In the novel the synthesis between passion and mind is achieved; it is here that the childhood ideal is fulfilled. For all of Stendhal's novels are at least in part autobiographical; his heroes are a fulfillment of the unsatisfied beings of Henri Beyle and Henri Brulard. Stendhal is their manipulator; he can fool the reader more easily than he can fool the real world. Thus, he achieves psychological catharsis in the form of the Stendhalian hero.

It may be said that Stendhal never really achieved true existence until the twentieth century, when his novels were given world-wide acclaim. His characters seem to be manipulated by the same combination of social and personal pressures that motivate men of today, faced with the inability to transcend their social level and the limit of time. But this Stendhal does for his hero in the novel, for he is

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Boncompain and Vermale, p. 11.

years ahead of his contemporaries. Thus, the Stendhalian hero is primarily significant in a historical context, for he forms a bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in historical perspective.

Finally, the Stendhalian hero has a definite moral existence, for the rapport between Stendhal and the heroes he creates is one of examining the "pourquoi" of a particular action or event in the hero's life. This constant self-examination and self-evaluation result in frustration; he searches a self-awareness of his being which eventually fulfills the desires of his life. This phenomenon is projected in the effect of the prison in Le Rouge et le noir and La Chartreuse de Parme.

The morality of the Stendhalian hero is self-determined; he can find no justification for his action within a social or historical context of morality. His passions conflict with the social and historical limitations of his life; however, his self-doubt produces a profound concern for the social repercussions of his actions. In prison, the social concern is entirely removed, and it is only at this point in his life that the hero is free. This new freedom allows the Stendhalian hero to discover himself; his passion is truly uncovered. With this self-revelation, the Stendhalian hero discovers the "pourquoi" of his existence. He is then ready to face death.

But did Stendhal intend his novels to be a serious attempt at self-analysis or a "joke" on society and the

men who people it? Actually, he intended to do both. He was profoundly concerned with the social evils of his day, but he believed that individual passion could transcend social obstacles. Thus, he could reflect on the time in which he lived, refusing to despair of the ills of society, realizing that the interplay of human passions is the source of all of man's actions. His books are dedicated to the "happy few" who recognize this double edged aspect of existence. Stendhal himself summed up his own life in this manner in La Vie de Henri Brulard:

Mais au fond, cher lecteur, je ne sais pas
ce que je suis: bon, méchant, spirituel, sot.
Ce que je sais parfaitement, ce sont les choses
qui me font peine ou plaisir, que je désire ou
que je hais. 13

13

La Vie de Henri Brulard, p. 162.

La Vie de Henri Brulard, p. 162.

CHAPTER II

LE ROUGE ET LE NOIR

The plot of Stendhal's best-known novel, Le Rouge et le noir, was not¹⁴ an originally inspired one. Stendhal devised it from reading the story of a murder trial of a young seminary student in his native Grenoble, Antoine Berthet, whose crime had been much the same as that which was to be Julien Sorel's.

However, though the plot is not original, the autobiographical implications of the novel are of paramount importance. The characterization of the Stendhalian hero is a truly original analysis of the human intellect and the human passions, because the hero is but a projection of Stendhal's own self-image.

The bourgeois atmosphere of the small town of Verrières, in which the novel opens, is easily recognizable as that of Stendhal's native Grenoble, and Julien Sorel comes to despise it as much as Henri Brulard detested it in his youth:

Tout ce qui est bas et plat dans le genre bourgeois me rappelle Grenoble me fait horreur, non, horreur est trop noble, mal au coeur. ¹⁵

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Josephson, pp. 331-332.

15

La Vie de Henri Brulard, p. 61.

Julien becomes the tutor of the mayor's children in Verrières. Although born the son of a peasant farmer, he is educated by the Abbé Chélan and early shows signs of promise which to the bourgeoisie of provincial society in 1830 meant the advancement of a career in the clergy. The position of tutor is seen as the first step away from the peasantry. As he leaves his father at the home of Monsieur de Rênal, the mayor, Julien's father hatred is evident as the same father hatred of Henri Brulard. His ambition and energy are now his only means for securing a place in the world, and he rationalizes for his hesitancy to channel his fate in a clerical career:

Mais à peine hors de la vue de son terrible père, il ralentit le pas. Il jugea qu'il sera utile à son hypocrisie d'aller faire une station à l'église. 16
 (Le Rouge et le noir, I, 238)

As Henri Beyle became the Henri Brulard of Italy and of the army, so Julien's existence changed radically with the realization that his new position would be a concrete assurance of his advancement.

The reader is acquainted early with Julien's secret admiration of Napoleon and the association of his own energy and will with a "military duty," which is incongruous with the clergyman's duty he was later to be so

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After this point, all quotations from Stendhal in my text refer to the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade edition, Stendhal: Romans et Nouvelles, 2 vols., Paris, 1952.

unsuccessful at masking. At this point in the story, it is merely Julien's native pride and his attempt to transcend his own social position which motivates him to make the conquest of the mayor's wife, Madame de Rênal:

Si je veux être estimé d'eux et de moi-même, il faut leur montrer que c'est ma pauvreté qui est en commerce avec leur richesse, mais que mon coeur est à mille lieues de leur insolence et placé dans une sphère trop haute pour être atteint par leurs petites marques de dédain ou de faveur.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 282)

Because of his alienation to his family and social position and because of his own superior intellect, he relies on individual merit to attain equality. But society is to frustrate his ambition throughout the plot, and in this sense, Stendhal projects Julien as a "historical martyr." Julien never recovers from the feelings of inferiority that he experiences because of his own social station. Born too late to rise above his poverty in the glory of the Napoleonic army, Julien must choose the priesthood which is so unsuited to his real sensitivities and passions. This is one reason why the subtitle of the novel is "Chronique de 1830." The failure of society to accept a strong intellect and passion in the same individual is precisely what makes Julien unsuited to live in 1830, just as Stendhal was unsuited to live in the same era.

Julien's first efforts to overcome the stigma of his mediocre origin through his individual talent take the form of an intense psychological drama in which the hero

constantly questions his own motivations and the effects of his behavior, as if he were performing a "social experiment." The hero, having taken his first ambitious step toward social advancement as one of military strategy with Madame de Rênal, a totally naive but profoundly passionate woman "who "n'avait aucune expérience de la vie"¹⁷ begin to mark a decided military victory for him:

À force de songer aux victoires de Napoléon, il avait vu quelque chose de nouveau dans la sienne. Oui, j'ai gagné une bataille, se dit-il, mais il faut en profiter, il faut écraser l'orgueil de ce fier gentilhomme pendant qu'il est en retraite. C'est là Napoléon tout pur...
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 279-280)

Contradictorily, Julien's concentration on military strategy leads him to rationalize the success of his efforts and and to realize that the charm of Madame de Rênal's femininity is a worthy object of his pursuit. Here one sees the emergence of the psychological hero. The historical obstacle being somewhat supplanted by Julien's "military" success, he is now left personally unsatisfied, and he is open to the play of the psychology of love. His affair with Madame de Rênal, at first involving no "love" whatsoever, becomes to a certain extent an "affaire du coeur," although Julien never ceases to dissect his own emotion. He begins to feel that his influence is responsible for the few instances of cleverness that Madame de Rênal demonstrates; thus, she is

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Le Rouge et le noir, I, 280.

merely an object for the reflection of his ego:

Voilà une femme de génie réduite au comble du malheur, parce qu'elle m'a connu, se dit-il...
Que puis-je pour elle? Il faut se décider...
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 323)

Nevertheless, Julien is not free to disassociate himself from the moral responsibility he has assumed in his liaison with Madame de Rênal:

La méfiance et l'orgueil souffrant de Julien, qui avait surtout besoin d'un amour à sacrifices, ne tinrent pas devant la vue d'un sacrifice si grand, si indubitable et fait à chaque instant. Il adorait Madame de Rênal. Elle a beau être noble, et moi le fils d'un ouvrier, elle m'aime... Je ne suis pas auprès d'elle un valet de chambre chargé des fonctions d'amant. Cette crainte éloignée, Julien tomba dans toutes les folies de l'amour, dans ses incertitudes mortelles.
(Le Rouge et le noir, 326)

As the reaction of Julien now assumes this moral overtone, Madame de Rênal, having satisfied his psychological need to establish a self-image, now becomes a moral "conscience" for Julien. Julien's self-doubt thus colors his passion, and he is somewhat constrained to withhold his capacity to give himself over entirely to his passions. His attempt to reconcile his psychological self-analysis to his moral conscience now assumes the form of an entirely self-determined morality. Thus, Julien's concern for his "moral conscience" is only a temporary phenomenon; Julien's concept of sympathy for Madame de Rênal is merely an obtuse one. He is to become a pure Henri Brulard of ambition. This is evident as he leaves Verrières:

Il était fort ému. Mais à une lieue de Verrières, où il laissait tant d'amour, il ne songea plus qu'au bonheur de voir une capitale, une grande ville de guerre comme Besançon.
 (Le Rouge et le noir, I, 367-368)

Before Julien can leave the context of his bourgeois environment, he must affirm the mediocrity of his own social position and deny any attraction that "la vie simple" might hold for him. Stendhal provides Julien with a choice in the form of his friend Fouqué's offer to live with him in a secure commerce as a woodsman. Confused by his new life and position in the Rênal home, his weakness almost counteracts his seemingly insatiable ambition. In rejecting Fouqué's offer, however, Julien affirms Stendhal's minimization of the validity of historical determinism in establishing social position. In effect, Julien has succeeded in transcending the historical limitations of his humble birth, thus demonstrating his "historical heroism." The historical hero is again free to attempt to determine his own fate. It is again his association with the Napoleonic image that drives him on:

Mais tout à coup, Julien fut heureux, il avait raison pour refuser. Quoi! je perdrais lâchement sept ou huit années! J'arriverais ainsi à vingt-huit ans; mais, à cet âge, Bonaparte avait fait ses plus grandes choses! Quand j'aurai gagné obscurément quelque argent en courant ces ventes de bois en méritant la faveur de quelques fripons subalternes, qui me dit que j'aurai encore le feu sacré avec lequel on se fait un nom?
 (Le Rouge et le noir, I, 286)

In sharp contrast to the preceding scene, we later see Julien leading a military group in the parade at which

the king is being led into Verrières. The external appearance of this event bolsters Julien's pride immensely; for the first time his public self-image is fulfilled, if only through a deviation of his imagination:

Son bonheur n'eut plus de bornes, lorsque, passant près du vieux rempart, le bruit de la petite de canon fit sauter son cheval hors du rang. Par un grand hasard, il ne tomba pas, de ce moment il se sentit un héros. Il était officier d'ordonnance de Napoléon et chargeait une batterie.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 312)

This serves to illustrate that the passions of the hero can transcend historical reality. The military glory that Julien experiences through the workings of his imagination is as real to him as if he were a captain of the cavalry. At this point in the story, the disparity between the red of the military and the black of the clergy is most evident, for Julien realizes that glory through the red is possible only through this sort of imagination and that the only alternative for him is the black. That the black may be equally as glorious as the red is made real to him in the same day, when the bishop, in blessing the King, appears to have a higher authority. This demonstration of what Julien deems a higher power creates a complete reversal in his thought:

Il ne songeait plus à Napoléon et à la gloire militaire.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 317)

It would seem, from an examination of the passages

just quoted, that Julien requires concrete images to stay his drive to find his psychological self-image. His physical sensitivity heightens his drive for self-assertion, and with the little opportunity he has to do this in public, he must resort to his imagination. However, Julien is forced to remain within a context of historical reality in his career, and he is thus limited to a choice that society has made for him. In this sense, it is only the resistance of his being to historical reality through his passions that creates his historical heroism. In refusing to give up his ambition in view of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, he demonstrates the courage of a superior being with a genius for the exertion of his own willpower. Indeed, it is the factor of willpower that initiates the psychological, historical, and moral heroism in the Stendhalian hero. The attempt of the hero to reject traditional standards of morality, to embark upon an analysis of his mind, and to "resist" historical forces are all manifestations of the willpower that allows Julien to become a self-determined being.

Henri Brulard has now fully emerged in the novel. The central conflict of his life is demonstrated as he makes his way through the school of experience. He is thus torn between his own frustrated sense of history, his own psychological self-analysis, and the moral conscience he has rejected in favor of his own self-determined morality. The struggle of the hero to reach maturity is the same struggle

that Henri Brulard experienced before he reached his essence as Stendhal the novelist. The genesis of the true, self-determined being of the hero is the major object of Stendhal's youthful hero. Victor Brombert describes this technique as a conflict of the reasonable and adult point of view and the increasing idealism of the adolescent:

C'est toujours l'adolescence de ses personnages qu'il met en relief pour ensuite la critiquer, cette adolescence qui constitue le ressort de leur dynamisme. 18

Julien exhibits this idealism after he leaves behind the stepping-stone of Madame de Rênal and transfers his ambition and energy to the priesthood as he leaves for the seminary at Besançon.

Dans tout service, il faut des gens intelligents, car enfin il y a du travail à faire, se disait-il. Sous Napoléon, j'eusse été sergent; parmi ces futurs cures, je serai vicaire.

(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 384)

However, the lack of real challenge in competition with the dull priests soon lowers Julien's estimation of his own performance at Besançon. He soon rebels against the channel of advancement that society has determined for him.

While at the seminary, Julien becomes the protégé of the Abbé Pirard, a man who is the elder counterpart

of Stendhal's historical hero. A Jansenist, he is persecuted for his inflexible will and intellect, which accounts for the cynicism in his advice to Julien:

Ta carrière sera pénible. Je vois en toi quelque chose qui offense le vulgaire. La jalousie et la calomnie te poursuivront. En quelque lieu que la providence te place, tes compagnons ne te verront jamais sans te haïr; et s'ils feignent de t'aimer, ce sera pour te trahir plus sûrement...
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 403)

In effect, this is Stendhal himself warning Julien of the blind vulgarity of the society of 1830, which offered so little recognition of Julien's intellect. Since society will not recognize the hero, the hero must at least retain the control of his own fate rather than surrender it to society.

After the Abbé Pirard is dismissed from the seminary, he secures a position for Julien as secretary to the Marquis de la Mole, a member of the Paris élite. The Henri Brulard of Verrières, of the Renal household, and of the seminary is to face his greatest psychological, historical, and moral obstacles amidst Parisian nobility; however, Julien is to demonstrate the development of these three parts of his character to their greatest extent in Paris.

Julien's naïveté concerning Parisian life is evident before he leaves for Paris:

Le bonheur d'aller à Paris, qu'il se figurait peuplé de gens d'esprit fort intrigants, mais aussi aussi poli que l'évêque de Besançon... éclipait tout à ses yeux.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 419)

However, the reality of his position in the luxury and magnificence of the Hôtel de la Mole soon discourages his hopes of grandeur. His feeling of inferiority almost destroys his capacity to use ambition and will in demonstrating his individual merit. Julien is more than ever persecuted by society, which would leave his superiority unnoticed. Social interplay is here at its height; Julien becomes the historical martyr. His rude baptism into Parisian society occasions superb Stendhalian irony:

Tel est encore l'empire de la nécessité de s'amuser que même les jours de diners, à peine le Marquis avait-il quitté le salon que tout le monde s'enfuyait. Pourvu qu'on ne dit du bien ni de Béranger, ni des journaux de l'opposition, ni de tout ce qui permet un peu de franc-parler; pourvu surtout qu'on ne parlât jamais politique on pouvait librement raisonner de tout.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 457)

Although his alienation from all forms of security, his inability to exercise his pride, and his constant feeling of social inferiority cause him to experience a profound loneliness, Julien continues somewhat successfully in adapting himself to the moeurs of Parisian society. He soon finds that men of experience in Paris have objectively analyzed their society, such as the Prince Korasoff:

Vous n'avez pas compris votre siècle, lui disait le Prince Korasoff: faites toujours le contraire de ce qu'on attend de vous. Voilà, d'honneur, la seule religion de l'époque. Ne soyez ni fou, ni affecté, car alors on attendait de vous des folies et des affectations, et le précepte ne serait plus accompli.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 480)

Julien succeeds in

Julien succeeds in developing this subtlety which smooths the rough edges of the provincial peasant who first entered the Hôtel de la Mole.

Nevertheless, Julien remains unable to fulfill his own self-image until he wins the favor of the daughter of the household, Mathilde de la Mole. His conquest of her provides him with the actual grandeur that he could never hope to find by his own merit among the nobility; he has reached a much higher level of society, if only imaginatively, than he had by the conquest of Madame de Rênal.

Mathilde is clearly Julien's intellectual equal: she is also the "amant" that Stendhal would have been without the fears that accompanied his love affairs. In her relationship to Julien, she is clearly the stronger of the two, thus minimizing Julien's self-image of grandeur in establishing the liaison. Mathilde's attraction for Julien is primarily an intellectual one; she initially loves him no more than Julien had loved Madame de Rênal at first. Her goal is merely a strategy for personal happiness through rebellion:

Quelle est la grande action qui ne soit pas un extrême au moment où on l'entreprend? C'est quand elle est accomplie qu'elle semble possible aux êtres du commun. Oui, c'est l'amour avec tous ses miracles qui va régner dans mon coeur; je le sens au feu qui m'anime. Le ciel me devait cette faveur. Il n'aura pas en vain accumulé sur un seul être tous les avantages... Il y a déjà de la grandeur et de l'audace à oser aimer un homme placé si loin de moi par sa position sociale...

(le Rouge et le noir, I, 512)

This rationalization of her liaison with Julien resembles the same attitude with which he entered his affair with which he entered his affair with Madame de R enai. Morally, intellectually, and psychologically, Mathilde is Julien's counterpart: she is the heroine of the novel. It is equally as difficult for her to bridge the social gap to love Julien as it is for him to elevate himself to her social level. In addition, Mathilde, though equally devious and calculating as her lover, is a passionately romantic creature who shares the romanesque tendencies of Julien.

Julien responds somewhat eagerly to Mathilde, but only through his imagination. He must conjure up an illusion of her to find a worthy objective for his passion. Yet he can find no other than his victory over society. It is now that he fully realizes his moral position, and it is at this point that he recognizes the same egotism and self-centeredness that are so deep in him and which permit his emotional disassociation from his psychological pursuits. His self-image of power is not destroyed by this moral realization. He calls his opportunity with Mathilde:

...une source limpide qui vient  tancher ma soif dans le desert brulant de la m diocrit  que je traverse si p niblement! Ma foi, pas si b te! Chacun pour soi dans ce d sert d' goisme qu'on appelle la vie.
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 524)

Here he demonstrates the new morality, the concept which was later reflected as the "survival of the fittest."

The affair continues with the same intellectual, moral, and social interplay, but it never embodies the

same depth of emotion that Julien had begun to experience with Madame de R[^]enal. Mathilde is too much like her lover to be a mystery to him; she is merely a challenge and a means to social elevation. Furthermore, she has none of the mother/mistress image that Madame de R[^]enal had provided and none of the qualities of self-sacrifice which, though St[^]endhal hesitated to admit it, were a consolation to Julien's ego.

Just as Julien seems to have succeeded in the self-determination of his fate, and won in the victory of his will over his psychological, historical, and moral limitations, Mathilde discloses her pregnancy. An impending marriage promises a closing of the social gap for Julien. However, a letter denouncing Julien written by Madame de R[^]enal is received by Mathilde's father. It produces the inevitable flaw which shatters Julien's ambitions. With a melodramatic sense of Shakespearean tragic fate, Julien attempts to shoot Madame de R[^]enal as she prays in a church. This premeditated crime is motivated by Julien's own sense of heroism; he must defend the victory he had earned, so he must destroy the obstacle to his happiness.

In prison, Julien achieves a total self-awareness. The culmination of his ambitions assumes an objective totality now that he is removed from it. Madame de R[^]enal spends the last few days of Julien's life in prison with him; the image of the mother/mistress security promotes Julien's happiness. In retrospect, Julien is equally as happy in

prison as he had been in his "victory" over society. In prison, he is free to justify his moral position without social responsibility. Looking back over his deeds, Julien achieves the same purpose of catharsis, or conscious self-expression, that Stendhal does as a novelist. Julien's passions are heightened in the realization of the few days he has to live; the security of the prison and of Madame de Rênal's love provide at the same time a stable background for the culmination of his thought. Julien projects his psychological being into the prison, admits his weakness, and strongly defends his moral position in court. This is Stendhal's "summing up" of the social injustice of 1830:

... Messieurs, je n'ai point l'honneur d'appartenir à votre classe, vous voyez en moi un paysan qui s'est révolté contre la bassesse de sa fortune... Je ne me fais point illusion, la mort m'attend: elle sera juste... Mais quand je serais moins coupable, je vois des hommes qui, sans s'arrêter à ce qui ma jeunesse peut mériter de pitié, voudront punir en moi et décourager à jamais cette classe de jeunes gens qui... ont le bonheur de se procurer une bonne éducation, et l'audace de se mêler à ce que l'orgueil des gens riches appelle la société...
(Le Rouge et le noir, I, 674-675)

The hero again refuses to let society determine his fate; he avows his guilt and avoids a testimony which might have set him free. This is the final justification for his actions; he has succeeded in counteracting the social injustice of his time by the truth he embodies as an individual.

Throughout the novel, the rapport between the author and his hero has determined Julien's reactions. Time and time again Stendhal intervenes to voice an ambition, advise Julien, and to motivate him to action. Julien is Stendhal the man: he has combatted Stendhal's moral conscience, the historical background with which Stendhal was faced, and the psychological composition of Stendhal's character. The events of his life have sometimes provided a victory over the obstacles of his character; they have sometimes emphasized his weakness. And like Stendhal, throughout life, the psychological, historical, and moral facets of his character are never reconciled; Julien is a schizophrenic being. In prison, he seems to find a justification for his actions through the reflection on his life, just as Stendhal did in writing his novels. Nevertheless, Julien's life has been a constant interplay between his passion and his willpower. He has felt all his experiences deeply, and in a sense, this very factor of the exertion of energy has fulfilled his ambition. With his individual being thus realized, Julien is ready to face death. He has refused to allow society to defeat his efforts of self-determination. His last act was the affirmation of his own death penalty. Thus, even in death he exerts his will.

The social plight remains; Julien has made his protest against it; he can do no more. Nevertheless, the hero's individual passions have transcended his generation: the chronicle of 1830 remains for the reader a chronicle of today.

CHAPTER III

LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

In contrast to Le Rouge et le noir, which is a novel of Stendhal the man, La Chartreuse de Parme is a novel of Stendhal the artist. Stendhal had transferred the complexities of French provincial society and of Parisian society to Julien Sorel: however, Fabrice del Dongo, the hero of La Chartreuse de Parme, is an Italian of noble society and of necessity does not share Julien's social ambitions, nor does he manifest his pride in the manner of Julien. He is nevertheless as much a character of pure energy as is Julien; but as he does not carry the burden of trying to establish a social niche for himself, his energy is free to vent itself in the current of high adventure, political intrigue, and petty romance. Fabrice is the idealized Stendhal.

Perhaps this idealization may be accounted for by the fact that it was in Italy that Stendhal spent the happiest years and developed his artistic taste. Here his physical sensitivities were at their height; he developed a warm rapport with the Italian people which he was never able to find among his fellow Frenchmen. This again emphasizes the heterogeneous parentage of Stendhal, as he despised his father's cold Dauphinois nature and idealized his mother's

warm Meridional temperament.

Although Fabrice's nationality and social position predetermine a part of Stendhal's analysis of him, he shares Julien's rebelliousness and romanesque character. Fabrice, however, does not share Julien's intellectual perceptivity. The heroes share the same individual, though not social difficulties. However, throughout the plot, the self-determination of the hero tends to outweigh social position in importance as part of the Stendhalian characterization. Julien and Fabrice react equally profoundly to society's attempt to suppress their tendency toward self-determination.

As in Le Rouge et le noir, the idea for the plot of La Chartreuse de Parme is not an original one. The events of the novel were transferred from the story of the Farnese family of the sixteenth century.¹⁹ Stendhal's acute sense of history enables him to translate the story into the terms of nineteenth-century Italy; this again points up the timelessness of Stendhalian characterization, which though put in the chronological context of the author's own generation as a means of satirizing the society of his day, could nevertheless carry over to the present as well.

The thread of the plot is exceedingly complex, and at times, Fabrice plays little part in the action, be it political intrigue, the affairs of his aunt, or those of the court. Since this paper is an examination of the Stendhalian hero, who in this novel is personified by Fabrice del

¹⁹

Josephson, p. 418.

Dongo, the following analysis is devoted rather to his character than to an analysis of the plot.

Born the son of a wealthy nobleman of Milan, whom Fabrice despises for his acute sense of materialism as much as Julien despises the petty peasant concerns of his father, the hero is early alienated from his immediate family. Like all Stendhalian heroes, however, he seems to establish a stronger sense of loyalty to women than to men and spends his young life closest to his mother and to his aunt, the lovely Gina Pietranera, to whom the mother/mistress role is soon transferred. The fact that the security of the young Stendhalian hero, be it Julien or Fabrice, is based to such a great extent on the acceptance of women and largely ignores the fruits of male camaraderie is also a sign of the irreconcilable egotism of Stendhal's main characters. Competition with the male contemporary alone would be too great a burden for the pride of the Stendhalian hero to bear. This is a part of Stendhal's inference of inherent weakness in his characters. Instead, the heroes "win" over their competition by using their mistresses as a means to social advancement, flattering and not wounding their pride.

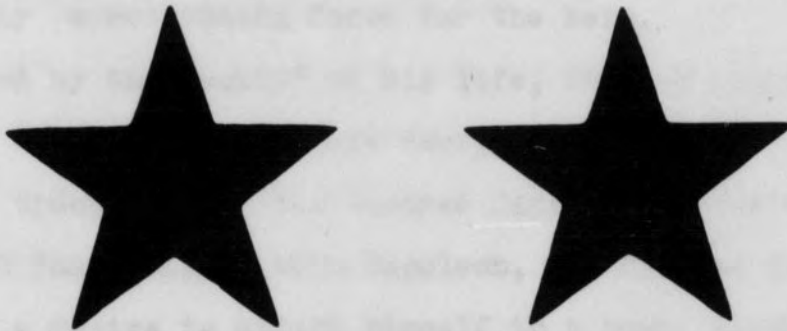
As with Julien and Stendhal, Fabrice spends a childhood of despair and loneliness. He is fated to renounce his childhood idealism, just as Julien renounces Henri Beyle. The happiest moments of his childhood are spent at the salons of his aunt in Milan; when Fabrice is compelled to return to his family's summer home at Grianta, he ex-

periences an unalterable trauma. There, his only consolation is the friendship of the servant people of the vicinity and the rapport he feels with the physical world in the beauty of the setting around Lake Como. A most instrumental figure in his boyhood is the Abbé Blanès, who is for Fabrice what the Abbé Chélan had been for Julien, a substitute for the father-image. The Abbé Blanès was an astrologer, and the sense of prophecy he left with Fabrice was a constantly a motivating force for the hero.

Plagued by the "ennui" of his life, Fabrice decides to satisfy his passion and pure energy by leaving to join Napoleon's troops during the Hundred Days. He shares the Stendhalian fascination with Napoleon, but Fabrice in his youth felt a desire to attach himself to a power figure in a drive toward security rather than for the glory Julien had desired. Napoleon is the logical ideal of the Stendhalian hero. Like Stendhal himself, his temperament was a blend of the French and the Italian. Like Julien and Fabrice, energy and genius alone elevated him to greatness, as it does in the self-determined hero. Unlike the Stendhalian hero, however, Napoleon had the good fortune to have synthesized historical reality with his own willpower.

Stendhal follows Fabrice to the scene of the Battle of Waterloo, which is described with the clarity and vividness of a romantic artist who captures every color of the atmosphere. This transferral of actual history to the plot of the novel is achieved with an amazing facility. But, never-

CORRECTION



***PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN
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CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR***

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theless, here the author is primarily concerned with a description of the hero's reaction to the reality of battle. Fabrice's weakness in view of the dynamic conflict of the battlefield minimizes the passion of his romantic longings. Stendhal seems to be laughing at Fabrice in the following passage from the description of the battle:

Mais le tapage devint tellement fort en ce moment , que Fabrice ne put lui répondre. Nous avouerons que notre héros était fort peu héros en ce moment...
(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, 63)

Stendhal here again demonstrates his superb irony. As Brombert describes it, this irony is a part of the simultaneous revelation and concealment of the real personality of the author:

L'ironie, chez Stendhal, devient le signe même de son instabilité devant son oeuvre et de sa schizophrénie. Il désire émouvoir, mais non point se compromettre. Il veut des héros héroïques, mais qui ne soient pas conscients de l'être. Il cherche à exprimer sa sensibilité, mais craint de se révéler. ²⁰

Here the historical hero seems to be part of a great joke, for Fabrice seems to be completely disassociated from any reality as great as the reality of war, and thus he fails to fulfill his own concept of the historical hero. The scene of the battle is most valuable for the dynamic quality of Stendhal's artistic description. Just as Fabrice has a greater opportunity to exercise pure energy than does Julien, so does Stendhal have a greater opportunity to ~~portray his artistic energy in La Chartreuse de Parme,~~

portray his artistic energy in La Chartreuse de Parme, for his principal concern is not as great in establishing an image of Stendhal the man as it had been in Le Rouge et le noir.

As he grows older, Fabrice's inward rebellion against the advice of his elders is clearly apparent, but it is more or less a mental rebellion:

Fabrice n'avait nulle envie de conspirer: il aimait Napoléon, et en sa qualité de noble, se croyait fait pour être plus heureux qu'un autre et trouvait les bourgeois ridicules.
(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, 108)

His fate is again restricted by society in the designs of his family. It is decided that he should renounce his predisposition for the military and pursue a career in the clergy. The Count Mosca, lover of Fabrice's aunt, Gina Pietranera, outlines this fate:

Ainsi la carrière militaire pour Fabrice, c'est la vie de l'écureuil dans la cage qui tourne; beaucoup de mouvement pour n'avancer en rien. Il aura le chagrin de se voir primer par tous les dévouements plébéiens. La première qualité chez un jeune homme aujourd'hui, c'est-à-dire pendant cinquante ans peut-être, tant que nous aurons peur et que la religion ne sera point rétablie c'est de n'être pas susceptible d'enthousiasme et de n'avoir pas d'esprit.
(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, 133)

Thus Fabrice is faced with the same dilemma as was Julien: he cannot suppress his passions, yet he is fated to accept the hypocrisy of acting under the cloak of the clergy. In contrast to Julien, Fabrice's psychological self-image is not dependent on the concrete manifestation of social conquest

but on the exertion of his passion alone. Mosca and Gina, now a duchess, were never successful in destroying this. When offered this life of comparative stability and ease, Fabrice's reaction is one of scorn. The duchess is, however, attracted by Fabrice's virtuous denunciation of happiness that is too easily won:

Elle insistait avec délices sur la description de ce bonheur vulgaire qu'elle voyait Fabrice repousser avec dédain. C'est un héros, pensait-elle.

(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, p. 135)

There is a striking similarity to Mathilde de la Mole's idealization of Julien as a hero. Gina's attraction for Fabrice becomes more intense until it eventually provokes the jealousy of Mosca. Stendhal seems to delight in seeing his hero be the source of competition to a figure so powerful as Mosca; such a situation is truly a psychological pretense for him, for Stendhal was plagued by fears of being an inadequate and impotent lover. Although Gina satisfies his need for motherly attention, Fabrice tacitly refuses to entertain the idea of having her as his mistress, an idea which seems to attract her. In making this refusal, Fabrice demonstrates his psychological inability to face a situation with an incestuous connotation, again emphasizing that he is not Stendhal the man as is Julien Sorel, but that he is the idealized Stendhal, Stendhal the artist.

Fabrice returns to Parma after preparing for the clergy at Naples, but he nonetheless does not embody in himself the

concept of the nineteenth-century priest; he is as rebellious and high-spirited as ever:

Le goût de la liberté, la mode et le culte du bonheur du plus grand nombre, dont le dix-neuvième siècle s'est entiché, n'étaient à ses yeux qu'une hérésie qui passera comme les autres, mais après avoir tué beaucoup d'âmes, comme la peste tandis qu'elle règne dans une contrée tue beaucoup de corps et malgré tout cela Fabrice lisait avec délices les journaux français, et faisait même des imprudences pour s'en procurer.

(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, pp. 148-149)

This shows at the same time Fabrice's perceptivity of the social dilemma of the nineteenth century and his hypocrisy, a characteristic of all Stendhalian heroes. Fabrice is not the man of action as was Julien. His hypocrisy is not motivated by his ambition, but it is merely a product of his environment. Unlike Julien, Fabrice allows himself to be directed by others. It may be said that he lacks the will/power that Julien possessed; he is a being merely manipulated by his own passions.

Although Fabrice's position as vicar-general to the archbishop of Parma insures him continual social recognition, he continues his love adventures with women who are his social inferiors, purely as a result of his passion. This contrasts sharply with Julien's love adventures as a means for social recognition.

Throughout the plot, there are scenes which provide relief between moments of intrigue and adventure. A significant one in La Chartreuse de Parme is Fabrice's visit to the Abbé Blanès, in which the structure of his moral being is examined. The Abbé warns Fabrice that his ambition and energy will be a prison for him in the society in which he lives:

... lorsque tu as essayé de voir Waterloo, tu n'as trouvé d'abord qu'une prison... ton âme peut se préparer à une autre prison bien autrement dure, bien plus terrible! Probablement tu n'en sortiras que par un crime, mais, grâce au ciel, ce crime ne sera pas commis par toi. Ne tombe jamais dans le crime avec quelque violence que tu sois tenté; je crois voir qu'il sera question de tuer un innocent, qui, sans le savoir, usurpe tes droits...

(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, p. 171)

This is Stendhal's warning much as was the advice that the Abbé Pirard had given Julien. Again, the intervention of the author gives the reader the greatest insight into the principal questions of the plot. Fabrice, who adheres to a superstitious belief in prophecy, doubts the worth of his life, realizing the hypocrisy of his actions and the limitations that society imposes upon him. Like Julien, it is his passion that composes his true being. He tells himself:

Je ne vau^x réellement quelque chose que dans de certains moments d'exaltation...

(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, p. 189)

Thus, like Julien, he is able to suppress much of his moral conscience in his actions, but in the final analysis it is his moral being that transcends his actions.

The prophecy of the Abbé Blanès is fulfilled when Fabrice is put into prison after his murder of Giletti, whom he kills in self-defense. Contrary to Fabrice's expectations, the prison is not the culmination of all his fears. It is rather, like the prison of Julien, a symbol of security and scene of evocation of the self-awareness of the character of the hero. It is also the scene of the love between Fabrice and Clélia Conti, which is the fulfillment of Fabrice's psychological being. Clélia is the essence of the Stendhalian concept of

femininityⁱⁿ: she is sensitive, intelligent, and sympathetic. The love of Fabrice and Clélia is not promoted by social design nor by rebellion: it is an idealized love, a masterpiece of Stendhal the artist. Carried out between Fabrice's window in the Farnese tower and Clélia's garden below, the communication of the two embodies the simplest yet most direct human sentiments. An idealized love such as this, far removed from the pressures of society, captures the essence of moral and psychological perfection for Stendhal. Here Fabrice need not reflect upon his deeds, for what he has done in the past is irrelevant compared to the new beginning of his life in the Farnese tower. Unlike the complete self-awareness Julien experienced in prison, which came at the end of his life, Fabrice's self-awareness begins his life.

However, the idealization of the prison is to be contrasted to the realities of society in the rest of the plot. Clélia is torn in a classical dilemma between her loyalty to her father, the director of the prison, and her love for Fabrice. She, along with Gina and Count Mosca, persuades Fabrice to escape. Leaving his ideal existence in prison, Fabrice resumes his ecclesiastical career. Clélia is married to the Marquis de Crescenzi; Gina and Mosca are married, and the action that began the novel declines considerably. Clélia and Fabrice are secretly reunited, however, and a son is born to them.

Thus, the final chapters of the novel serve the purpose of emphasizing the existence of the ideal hero versus that of the social man. Stendhal thus ends his novel:

Les prisons de Parme étaient vides, le comte immensément riche, Ernest V adoré de ses sujets qui comparaient son gouvernement de celui de Toscane.

(La Chartreuse de Parme, II, p. 493)

The empty prisons of Parma symbolize the ability of the ideal hero to transcend, if only in this ideal existence, the temporal concerns of society. Society will continue to exhibit hypocrisy and to ignore individual merit, but as Stendhal demonstrates, the true being of man resides in the passion of the individual.

Fabrice felt the greatest passion of all Stendhalian heroes; in the prison, he found love removed from vulgarity, social concerns, and physical passion--a truly Platonic existence. He thus transcended, be it only for a short while, the limitations of history and fulfilled his psychological and moral being in a totally ethical situation. Although he did not contend with the social obstacles of Julien Sorel, Fabrice was a character of the same passion and energy. He did not live by the social pressures of his day; although endowed with social advantage, his individual being was the most significant part of his existence; left without the concern of society or of time, he experienced the ideal existence. Stendhal was sufficiently romantic to allow this luxury to his hero; La Chartreuse de Parme is the artistic manifestation of his imagination. Although Fabrice was not forced to experience the same realistic "inquiétude" as that of Julien, he shared the psychological, moral, and historical nature of the Stendhalian hero.

CONCLUSION

The psychological, moral, and historical being of the Stendhalian hero are all parts of the many-faceted existence of Stendhal himself and the reflection of that existence on his characters. At times Stendhal idealizes this existence, especially in La Chartreuse de Parme. More often, however, he treats the ideal character of the hero in a realistic content of society, as in Le Rouge et le noir. But always, he emphasizes that the hero attempts to determine his own psychological, historical, and moral existence by his passion or by his will power. The Stendhalian hero is a self-determined being frustrated by society.

The synthesis thus achieved is a complex interplay between the irony of Stendhal's social attitude and the moral conscience that underlies the passions of the Stendhalian hero. Stendhal provides neither a social nor an individual solution to the conflict between the psychological, historical, and moral being of an individual hero and the society in which he lives. As one critic, Victor Brombert, describes this inaccessible character of the Stendhalian novel:

Ainsi l'ironie Stendhalienne, loin d'être un agent de corrosion ou de dislocation est à la base même de l'intégrité et de l'unité de son oeuvre. Aussi l'oeuvre Stendhalienne n'atteint-elle jamais ce statisme qui permet les définitions faciles: elle continue à osciller entre l'auto-punition et le rêve de victoire, toujours fuyante, toujours insaisissable. Ce n'est pas sans une ultime malice que Stendhal montre cette terre promise à son héros, pour ensuite lui en défendre l'accès.²¹

Although it would be impossible to analyze the Stendhalian hero without considering the hero as a projection of the author, Stendhal did not intend that his entire purpose be easily discerned. He depicts the irreconcilable concerns of his existence- the psychological, historical, and moral being- but he leaves only the infinite passion and frustration of the hero for the reader to discern. His art truly lies in the dichotomy between the simultaneous revelation and concealment of himself. The Stendhalian hero recognizes himself and his motives only with alternative glimpses: life is no more capable of being reduced to a generalization for Stendhal than it is for his reader. The true value of Stendhal's novels lies in the richness of this realization.

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Brombert, pp. 146-147.

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