

“STENDHAL”

“The genuine *melomaniac*, a farcical character who is rarely to be met with in France, where his obsession is usually no more than a snobbish affectation, is to be encountered with every step in Italy. When I was garrisoned in Brescia, I was introduced to a certain gentleman of the neighborhood, who was a really extreme case of excessive musical sensibility. He was exceedingly well-educated, and by nature very gentle; but whenever he sat at a concert, there would come a point when in sheer delight at the music, he would proceed quite unconsciously to remove his shoes. Then he would sit quietly, shoeless, until the coming of some really *superb* passage, at which, unfailingly, he would fling both shoes over his shoulders into the crowd of spectators grouped behind him.”¹

In *Beylism*, in the *Stendhal-Club*, and in other manifestations—especially marked in the case of Stendhal—of the fetishism of the author, there is at least one good thing: they save us, or divert us, from another sort of idolatry, which is no less serious, and today more dangerous, namely, the fetishism of the work—conceived of as a closed, complete, absolute object.

But, on the other hand, nothing could be more pointless than to seek in Stendhal’s writings, or in the evidence of his contemporaries, the trace of a defined, substantial being who might legitimately, in accordance with legal status, be called Henri Beyle. How much more preferable in its excess is the reserve of Mérimée, entitling with a laconic *H.B.* a sort of clandestine necrology, and

maintaining that the dead man never wrote a letter without signing it with some made-up name or dating it from whatever place happened to take his fancy, that he gave all his friends pseudonyms, and that "no one knew exactly whom he saw, what books he had written, what journeys he had made." The discoveries of scholarship since then have done little more than deepen the mystery by piling up further evidence.

The two caryatids of traditional literary studies were called, one may remember, the *life* and the *work*. The exemplary value of the Stendhal phenomenon derives from the way in which he shatters these two notions by altering their symmetry, blurring their difference, and reversing their relations. In that "pseudonym" which is Stendhal, the "person" of Henri Beyle and his "work" come together, intersect, and ceaselessly abolish one another, since if, for every Stendhalian, the work of Stendhal constantly designates Henri Beyle, Henri Beyle really exists only through the work of Stendhal. Nothing is more improbable, nothing more ghostlike, than the Beyle of the memoirs, eyewitnesses, documents, the Beyle "recalled by those who saw him," the Beyle whom Sainte-Beuve wished to discover by questioning Mérimée, Ampère, Jacquemont, "those, in a word, who saw him much and knew him in his first form." Beyle's first form, the Beyle before Stendhal whom Saint-Beuve was seeking, is merely a biographical illusion: the true form of Beyle is essentially *secondary*. For us Beyle is legitimately only one of Stendhal's characters.



He says of himself that "the true occupation of the animal is to write novels in a barn," which Balzac or Flaubert or any novelist might equally well have said—except that the very fact of having to say it designates the singularity of a "writer," of whom it could have been said, unlike most of his fellow-writers, that "he always preferred himself to his works,"² and who, far from sacrificing himself to them, seems above all to have wanted to place them at the service of what he himself called, with a word imported for the occasion, his "egotism."

But if the "presence of the author" is, in this *oeuvre*, generally regarded as fairly cumbersome, we should note its constantly ambiguous, almost problematic character. In this case, the pseudonymic mania assumes the value of a symbol: in his novels and in his correspondence, in his essays and in his memoirs, Beyle is always present, but almost always masked or in disguise, and it is not without significance that his most directly "autobiographical" work has as its title a name that is neither that of the author, nor that of the hero: Stendhal covers Henri Brulard, who covers Henri Beyle—who in turn imperceptibly displaces the Henri Beyle of legal status, who is not at all to be confused with the other three, and forever eludes us.



The paradox of egotism is more or less this: to speak of oneself, in the most indiscreet and most unrestrained way, may be the best way of concealing oneself. Egotism is, in every sense of the term, a parade.

The most effective demonstration of this is no doubt Brulard's highly disconcerting Oedipal admission:

My mother, Madame Henriette Gagnon, was a charming woman, and I was in love with her. . . . I wanted to cover my mother with kisses, and for her to have no clothes on. She loved me passionately and often kissed me; I returned her kisses with such ardour that she was often obliged to go away. I abhorred my father when he came and interrupted our kisses. . . . One evening, when by some chance I had been put to sleep on the floor of her room, on a mattress, this woman, as light and agile as a deer, bounded over my mattress to reach her bed more quickly.³

For specialists, such a text ought to be something of a scandal: what does it leave to interpret? One imagines Oedipus, as the curtain rises, declaring without preamble to the Theban people: "Good people, I have killed my father Laius and given my mother Jocasta four children: two boys and two girls. Don't look any fur-

ther: all the evil comes from this." Tiresias' head. (Sophocles' head.)

It is a scandal, in the etymological sense: *scandalon* means "trap," and to announce the unsayable is an infinite trap. Thanks to the *Vie de Henry Brulard*, a psychoanalysis of Stendhal is still cruelly lacking—which gives a sort of comic truth to Alain's declaration: "Stendhal is as remote as one would like from our Freudians."



In the margin of the manuscript of *Lucien Leuwen*, on the subject of a character trait of the hero, Stendhal wrote in English: "Model: Dominique himself.—Ah! Dominique himself!"⁴

This strange designation of self is typically Stendhalian, as a whole and in its parts. "Dominique," we know, was for a long time his most private nickname, one that he reserved, almost exclusively, for his own use: it was what he called *himself*. A sort of pidgin English was also one of his favorite cryptographical methods, in the notes intended only for his own use. But the convergence of both codes on the same object, which happens in this case to be precisely the *subject*, is striking in its effect. The Stendhalian "ego" is not exactly detestable: it is strictly (and profoundly) *unnameable*. Language cannot approach it without disintegrating into a multitude of substitutions, displacements, and deviations that are at once redundant and elusive. *Dominique*—an Italianizing Christian name, possibly borrowed, by way of homage, from the author of the *Matrimonio Segreto* (Domenico Cimarosa); *himself*—the English "reflexive," the distorted idiomaticism of which excuses, by throwing it into a vaguely ridiculous eccentricity, the unbearable relation with oneself. "Ah! Dominique himself!" Can one affirm more clearly the decentering of the subject, the otherness, the alien origin of the ego?

Or again in English, repeated several times in the *Journal*: "Mr. (or M.) Myself."

An Oedipal refusal of the patronymic, no doubt. But what is the meaning, in the first place, of the effacement or alteration of the

Christian name (an ordinary enough practice, of course) and, more unusually, of the taboo placed here on the *mother tongue*? (Unless one should say *father tongue* (*sermo patrius*), the original language, on the Gagnon side, being—mythically—Italian.)



The pseudonymic proliferation affects not only Beyle himself (there are over a hundred pseudonyms in the *Correspondence* and private papers,⁵ two literary pseudonyms, not to mention the various assumed names in *Rome, Naples et Florence* or *De l'amour*), and his closest friends (Mérimée becomes "Clara," Mme Dembowski "Léonore," Alberthe de Rubempré "Mme Azur" or "Sanscrit"), and familiar places (Milan is written "1,000 ans," Rome is "Omar" or "Omer," Grenoble "Cularo," Civita-Vecchia "Abeille"; and Milan is sometimes designated, gloriously, "Napoleon.") It also affects the titles of certain works. Thus *De l'amour* is constantly referred to as *Love*, and *Le Rouge et le noir* as *Julien*. We know that Stendhal hesitated, for *Lucien Leuwen*, between *Leuwen*, *L'Orange de Malte*, *Le Télégraphe*, *Le Chasseur vert*, *Les Bois de Prémol*, *L'Amaranthe et le noir*, *Le Rouge et le blanc*: but, rather than any real indecision being the cause, it might be said that it was due to a sort of chain reaction, as if the first title adopted immediately suggested a pseudonymic substitution, which, once it had become stabilized into a proper name, in turn suggested another substitution, and so on. This perpetual flight of denominations is a characteristic of slang, the principle of which is perhaps the wish, constantly frustrated and constantly revived, of naming otherwise what is already named. And pseudonymism, like other techniques of encoding dear to Stendhal (abbreviations, anagrams, Anglicisms, etc.) proceeds from this metalinguistic frenzy. The Stendhalian cryptographies no doubt reveal less an obsession with detection than a certain fascination with language, which is expressed in flight and self-emulation.

If Mérimée is to be believed, the French consul at Civita-Vecchia was quite capable of sending to his Minister of Foreign Affairs a coded letter, with the code enclosed in the same envelope.

Mérimée explains this fact by absent-mindedness, but if one wishes to interpret absent-mindedness itself, it is tempting to see in this parapraxis an admission that the encoding is there only for the pleasure of it. And the pleasure of codes is at the same time to divide language, and to speak *twice*.



Mocenigo. What exactly does this Venetian name that haunts the *Journal* between 1811 and 1814 mean? A projected work, named after its hero? "I will be able to work to Mocenigo," Stendhal writes in (near) English. A certain social or psychological role or type? "The trade of Mocenigo makes *bashfull* by giving inner delights that one is very glad not to disturb with anything." Beyle himself? "Angélique Delaporte, now sixteen years and ten months old, and who is being judged as I write this, seems to me a being worthy of all the attention of Mocenigo." The dramatic genre, as Martineau believes? "We must understand by this word the art of the theater in which he always thought he would make his mark." More generally, "the knowledge of the human heart" and all literature of analysis? "The Memoirs written with truth. . . . True mines *for the Mocenigo*." Or, again, the *Journal* itself? "I was planning today to write the part *di* Mocenigo for yesterday. But I came back tired at midnight and had the strength only to jot down what happened today."⁶ It would seem that, in the present state of Stendhalian studies, all these questions remain unanswered, and perhaps they will remain so forever. But the fact that "Mocenigo" can appear equally well, on different occasions, as the name of a character, the title of a work, a pseudonym, or as the designation of some broader literary entity, this very polyvalence is revealing and, in a way, exemplary. "Mocenigo": neither the "man" nor the "works," but something like the reciprocal, or reversible, labor that unites them and provides each with its foundations. To do "Mocenigo," to be "Mocenigo" is all one.

Similarly, perhaps, in the years 1818–20, Beyle readily uses the name *Bombet*, with which he has signed them, to designate the *Vies de Haydn*, *Mozart et métastase*, and by *Stendhal*, the first version

of *Rome, Naples et Florence*: "Instead of writing an article on Stendhal, say something on Bombet. . . . The 158 Stendhals will have enough to say for themselves."⁷ This name of Stendhal is still for him only that of a book. He is to become Stendhal himself by metonymy, by identifying himself with this book and its problematic author.



The magnificent town-house built by Peter Wanghen occupies the northern end of the Friedrichgasse, the fine Königsberg street, which strangers find so remarkable for the large number of short flights of seven or eight steps that project into the street and lead up to the main entrances of the houses. The railings of these little flights of steps, which are kept sparkingly clean, are of cast iron made in Berlin, I think, and display all the rather bizarre elaboration of German design. Taken as a whole these twisted ornaments are not unpleasant, they have the advantage of novelty and match very well those of the windows of the best apartment which, at Königsberg, is on this ground floor raised four or five feet above the level of the street. The windows are provided in their lower parts with movable frames covered with wire gauze that produce a rather odd effect. These gleaming veils, so convenient for the curiosity of the ladies, are impenetrable for the eye of the passer-by, dazzled by the tiny reflections that spring off the metal material. The gentlemen can see nothing of the inside of the apartments, while the ladies who work near the windows have a perfect view of the passers-by.

This kind of sedentary pleasure and promenade, if I may be permitted so bold a phrase, forms one of the principal features of social life in Prussia. From noon to four in the afternoon, if one wishes to go riding and make a little noise with one's horse, one is sure to see all the pretty women of a town working right up against the lower pane of their casement. There is even a kind of toilette, which has a special name and which is indicated by the fashion for appearing in this way behind the window, which, in well maintained houses, is a sheet of highly transparent mirror.

The curiosity of the ladies is assisted by an additional expedient: in all the better houses one sees, on both sides of the ground-floor windows, raised four feet above the level of the street, mirrors a foot high, borne on a small iron arm and slightly inclined inwards. By means of these inclined mirrors the ladies see the passers-by arrive from the end of the street, while, as I have already said, the curious eyes of these gentlemen cannot penetrate into the apartment, through the metal gauzes that blind the lower parts of the window. But although they do not see, they know that they are being seen and this certainly gives a particular liveliness to all the little novels that animate the society of Berlin and Königsberg. A man is sure of being seen several times every morning by the woman of his choice; what is more, it is not absolutely impossible for the frame of wire gauze to be sometimes disturbed quite by chance and to enable the passer-by to perceive the pretty hand of the lady trying to put it back into place. It has even been said that the position of these frames may have a language of its own. Who would understand it or take offense at it?⁸

Indirect communication is one of the privileged situations of the Stendhalian topics. Rousseau's condemnation of the mediating function of language is well known and, for him, writing is doubly mediating: Stendhal, on the other hand, seems to reject, or at least to put aside, this relation of transparency in which "soul speaks directly to soul." The decisive moments of communication (avowals, ruptures, declarations of war) are with him usually expressed in writing: this is the case of the correspondence between Lucien Leuwen and Mme de Chasteller, which transposes into the mode of true passion the formidable technique of epistolary seduction borrowed from Laclos (of which the episode of the letters recopied for Mme de Fervaques, in the *Rouge*, constitutes, on the contrary, a sort of parody), or of the exchange of letters between Julien and Mathilde in chapters 13 and 14 of the second part of the *Rouge*. The mode of transmission, in this last episode, is also characteristic of him: Julien and Mathilde live under the same roof and meet every day, but the avowal that Mathilde has to make goes beyond words: "'You will receive a letter from me this evening,' she said

to him in a voice so faltering that he could scarcely hear her. . . . An hour later a footman handed Julien a letter; it was purely and simply a declaration of love." Julien entrusts this compromising letter to the care of his friend Fouqué, not without taking hyperbolic precautions: it is concealed in the binding of an enormous Bible bought specially at a Protestant bookshop. Then he writes a prudent reply, which he hands over personally. "He thought it his duty to speak to her; he could not have found a more convenient occasion, anyhow, but Mademoiselle de la Môle would not listen to him, and disappeared. Julien was delighted by this; he had not known what to say to her." A second letter arrives from Mathilde: "Mademoiselle de la Môle appeared on the threshold of the library door, flung him a letter and rushed away. It seems this is going to be a novel in letter-form, he said as he picked this one up." Then a third letter: "It was thrown to him through the library door. Mademoiselle de la Môle rushed off again. What a mania for writing, he said to himself with a laugh, when it's so easy for us to talk!"⁹ Julien can now talk about it quite happily: he is no longer in love. For Mathilde, not only does she not find it "easy" to say what she has to say, she can only with great difficulty hold and carry what she has written, which seems to burn her hand: she has her letters carried by others, or throws them from afar like grenades.

Writing, then, is quickly duplicated, as mediation, by an act or means of transmission that aggravates its indirect and deferred character. Lucien rides six leagues to post his letters at Darney, on the Nancy to Paris road. Mme de Chasteller replies to him at the supposed address of his servant. Messengers cross and fold into one another, a postal misunderstanding at the service of crystallization. Octave and Armance entrust their letters, true and false, to the box of an orange-tree. In *Ernestine ou la naissance de l'amour*,¹⁰ Philippe Aztézan's letters are attached to the knots of bunches of flowers laid in the hollow of a great oak-tree at the lakeside. It is also in a bunch of flowers fixed on the end of a series of rush canes that Jules Branciforte, in *L'Abbesse de Castro*, hoists his first letter up to the window of Hélène de Campireali; the favorable response is to be the dispatch of a handkerchief.

Stendhalian love is among other things a system and an exchange of signs. In such a system, the cipher is not only an auxiliary of passion: feeling tends naturally to cryptography, so to speak, as if by a sort of profound superstition. Amorous communication is carried out, then, willingly, sometimes with the help of accommodating retreats (convents, prisons, family confinements), through telegraphic codes the ingeniousness of which simulates that of desire rather well. In *Suora Scolastica*, Gennaro uses the manual alphabet of the deaf and dumb, which was well known, it seems, among Neapolitan girls, to get the following message to Rosalinda: "Since I no longer see you, I am unhappy. Are you happy in the convent? Are you free to come often to the belvedere? Do you still like flowers?" In the Farnese tower, Clelia communicates with Fabrizio while accompanying herself on the piano, pretending to sing a recitative from some fashionable opera. Fabrizio responds by tracing letters in charcoal on his hand: it is to ask for pencil and paper. The girl in turn,

hurriedly began to trace large letters in ink on pages which she tore out of a book, and Fabrizio was beside himself with joy on seeing at length established, after three months of effort, this method of correspondence for which he had so vainly begged. He was careful not to abandon the little ruse which had proved so successful. His aim was to begin a correspondence with her, and he kept on pretending not to catch the sense of the words, the letters of which Clelia was holding up in turn before his eyes.

The connection (of substitution) between the exchange of writing and the love relationship is here almost too obvious. Fabrizio is later to receive "a fair-sized loaf of bread, marked on every side with little crosses traced with a pen. Fabrizio covered them with kisses," then messages written in the margins of a breviary, the pages of which he tore out to make an alphabet, and this mode of correspondence was to last until his escape. With Gina, he communicates first of all through light signals: one for A, two for B, etc.

But anyone might see and interpret them; so that very night they began to arrange a system of abbreviations. Three flashes

in very quick succession would stand for the Duchessa; four, the Prince: two, Conte Mosca; two quick flashes followed by two slow ones would signify "escape." They agreed to use in future the old alphabet *alla Monaca*, which, so as to baffle inquisitive observers, changes the usual sequence of the letters and gives them another, arbitrary, order. A, for instance, is represented by 10, B by 3; that is to say, three consecutive intermissions of the light mean B, ten consecutive intermissions A, and so on. A short interval of darkness marks the separation of the words.¹¹

But certainly none of these alphabets surpasses either in charm or in usefulness the mysterious language of the frames of Königsberg, which no one can understand, and at which no one can take offense.



I walked this morning with a handsome, highly-educated and quite delightful young man. He was writing his confessions, and with so much elegance that his confessor has forbidden him to go on. "You enjoy your sins a second time by writing about them in this way. Tell them to me aloud."¹²



All Stendhalians know the strange habit of commemorative inscription that leads Beyle, for example, to trace in the dust of Albano the initials of the women who had variously occupied him in the course of his life, or to write on the inside of his belt, on October 16, 1832, "Je vais avoir la cinquantaine, ainsi abrégé pour n'être pas compris: J. Vaisa voirla 5" (I will soon be fifty, abbreviated so as not to be understood to . . .).¹³ Twenty years earlier, secretly celebrating the second anniversary or his "victory" over Angela Pietragua, he noted in his journal the following, which illustrates in a very odd way the *scripta manent*: "I see on my braces that it was on September 21, 1811, at half-past eleven in the morning."¹⁴

We do not know, when dealing with these private graffiti, if we

should concern ourselves rather with the message, the code, or perhaps the nature of the support. Valéry, who was already irritated by the papers sewn into Pascal's linings, expressed surprise (concerning the second example) at "this uncommon action" and asks a pertinent question: "What is the point of the second act of noting it?"¹⁵ There is in fact, in the *Journal* and in *Brulard*, a duplication of the inscription that compounds this eccentricity. A secondary question, no doubt, but one no less irritating: between the Beyle who writes in dust, on his belt, on his braces, and the Stendhal who writes on paper, at what point does literature begin?

This epigraphic fetishism also affects at least two other Stendhalian heroes, with whom, we will note in passing, it is accompanied by a certain physical impotence (in the case of Octave) or emotional impotence (in the case of Fabrizio before he meets Clelia). Octave consigns to a small notebook secretly hidden in his desk: "14th December 182. . . : Pleasant effect of two m.—Redoubling of friendships—Envy in Ar.—End.—I shall be greater than he is.—Saint-Gobain mirrors."¹⁶ Stendhal transcribes this note without elucidation or commentary, as if its obscurity served him as a light. As for Fabrizio, he engraves on the face of his watch, in abbreviated signs, this important resolution: "When I write to the D[uchess] never say: *When I was a prelate, when I was in the Church*; that annoys her."¹⁷



For the reader of *Brulard*, the first surprise comes from the importance of the sketches in relation to the text. The habit of drawing in the margin or between the lines of his manuscript is a constant one with Stendhal, but here the graphism proliferates and invades the page. It is not content to illustrate what is said, it is often indispensable to its understanding, and the numerous references to the sketches make the idea of an edition of *Brulard* without them impossible or absurd. Or rather, the drawing here becomes part of the text: it extends the writing by a natural movement that confirms how much Stendhal, even in haste and improvisation, and even if he occasionally dictated certain of his pages, remains

very far from any declaimed, murmured, or confessed "oral" literature. His very acts of negligence are bound up with the act of writing: ellipses, gaps, breaks. It is a style of notes, abbreviations, impatiences, and boldnesses proper to writing. *Oratio soluta*.

The presence of the sketches strangles any temptation to eloquence, and sometimes exerts strange effects on the language: "On that day I saw the first bloodshed of the French Revolution. It was an unfortunate journeyman S who was wounded to death by the stab of a bayonet S' in the small of his back."¹⁸



We also know that the margins of books that belonged to Stendhal, and particularly copies of his own works, are full of private notes, generally encoded and almost illegible, which Stendhalian scholars have striven to decipher and translate for us. This material in particular makes up the two small volumes of *Marginalia et mélanges intimes*, the sanctuary of devout Beylism. When these notes occupy the margins of a manuscript, as in the case of *Lucien Leuwen*, the role of the posthumous editor is obviously of crucial importance: it is up to him to decide between what belongs to the *work* in the strict sense, what to the *notes* permitted at the foot of the page, and what to the *margins* banished to a critical appendix with variants, outlines, plans, sketches, erasures, etc. Thus, for *Leuwen*, Henri Martineau left as footnotes such reflections as "It is a Republican who is talking," or "That is the opinion of the hero, who is mad and who will correct himself," the Beylist sincerity of which is open to question, and which are therefore to be attached to the comedy of the work: it is not Beyle who is talking, it is the "author." But can the same be said for that other footnote, which responds with some brutality to Mme de Chasteller, who, suddenly tempted to kiss Lucien's hand, wonders whence such horrors can come to her: "From the vagina, my girl!" And in that case, why not admit on the same grounds the "Model: Dominique himself" or "With Métilde, Dominique has talked too much," or the "Letters sent al giardino per la cameriera. And 16 years after I write upon! If Méti had known,"¹⁹ which, in the spirit of the true Stendhalian, have

every right to be part of the text of *Leuwen*. The Stendhalian text, margins and braces included, is *one*. Nothing allows us to isolate some preciously elaborated super-text in it that would qualify, *ne varietur*, as Stendhal's *oeuvre*. Whatever is traced by Beyle's pen (or his cane, or his penknife, or God knows what) is Stendhal, without either distinction or hierarchy.

He himself knew this very well, no doubt, or some already Beyle's printer's foreman, who let through into the printed text of *Le Rouge et le noir*, the *Chartreuse de Parme* or *Promenades dans Rome* such notes as: "Esprit per.pré.gui.II.A.30," meaning "Esprit perd préfecture, Guizot, 11 août 1830" (Spirit loses prefecture, Guizot, 11 August 1830—an allusion to Beyle's greatest professional disappointment); "Para v. P. y E. 15 X 38," meaning "Pour vous Paquita et Eugénie: dédicence de Waterloo aux demoiselles de Montijo" (For you Paquita and Eugenie: dedication of Waterloo to the young ladies of Montijo); "The day of paq. 1829, nopr. by lov," meaning "Le jour de Pâques 1829, pas d'épreuves corrigées, par amour" (Easter Sunday 1829, no proofs corrected, out of love):²⁰ *cryptological asides* (Georges Blin's expression), which, no doubt, are not exactly addressed to us. But does one ever know exactly whom Stendhal is addressing?



Many people will disagree with what I have to say now, but I shall confine myself to those who have been, shall I say, unhappy enough to love passionately for many years, unrequitedly and against hopeless odds.

The sight of anything extremely beautiful, in Nature or the arts, makes you think instantly of your beloved. This is because, on the principle of the bejewelled bough in the Salzburg mine, everything sublime and beautiful becomes a part of your beloved's beauty and the unexpected reminder of happiness fills your eyes with tears on the instant. In this way a love of the beautiful, and love itself, inspire each other.

One of life's misfortunes is that one cannot remember distinctly the happiness of seeing and speaking to the beloved. Apparently you become too emotionally upset to notice the

causes or the circumstances. You are aware only of your own sensations. Perhaps it is because you cannot wear out these pleasures by deliberate recollection that they are so strongly renewed by anything which diverts you from the sacred inner contemplation of your beloved and recalls her more vividly by some new relevance.*

A dried-up old architect used to meet Léonore evening after evening in society. In the course of the conversation, and without paying much attention to what I was saying,† I one day waxed eloquent in his praise. She laughed at me, and I was too cowardly to tell her it was because he saw *her* every evening.

This feeling is so powerful that it extends even to an old enemy of mine who is often with Léonore. Whenever I see this other woman, however much I want to hate her, I cannot, because she recalls Léonore so strongly to my mind.

You might say that by some strange quirk of the heart, your beloved communicates more charm to her surroundings than she herself possesses. The picture of a distant town‡ where you once glimpsed her for a moment throws you into a deeper and sweeter reverie than even her actual presence would evoke. This is because of the hardships you have suffered.²¹

Where does the work begin? Or end? Even if one wished to regard as pathological (but is the most pathological the most significant?) the extreme cases just mentioned, every reader of Stendhal who has not stopped at the five or six canonical "masterpieces" knows very well that an unbreakable continuity has been established from the *Correspondence* to the *Journal*, from the *Journal* to the essays, from the essays to the stories. The "novelistic" work

* Scents.

† It is for the sake of *brevity*, and in order to depict experience from the inside, that the author, by using the first person singular, brings together a number of feelings quite alien to him. He has none of his own that are worth mentioning.

‡ . . . Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.

Dante, *Francesca*

enjoys no definable authority in relation to the writings as a whole. *L'Histoire de la peinture, De l'amour, Rome, Naples et Florence, the Promenades dans Rome, the Mémoires d'un touriste* contain dozens of more or less developed anecdotes, which fully belong, and sometimes with quite special vividness, to the empire of Stendhalian narrative. The frontier between the Italian essays and the *Journal* of 1811, on the one hand, and the *Chroniques* and the *Chartreuse* on the other, is indiscernible. The first pages of the *Chartreuse* come from the *Mémoires sur Napoléon*. The first idea for the *Rouge* was consigned to the *Promenades*. And what reader of *Leuwen* could not find the essence of the book in these few lines from *Racine et Shakspeare*:

So it is that a young man, to whom heaven has given some delicacy of soul, made a second-lieutenant by chance and thrown into a garrison, where he sees the successes of his comrades and the nature of their pleasures, believes in good faith, when he finds himself in the company of certain women, that he is incapable of love. Then at last, one day, chance presents him with a simple, natural, honest woman, worth loving, and he feels that he has a heart.²²



None of the great Stendhalian novels, even the complete ones, is absolutely closed upon itself, autonomous in its genesis and signification. Neither Julien nor Fabrizio quite manage to break the cord that ties them to the Antoine Berthet of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* and to the Alexandre Farnese of the *Chronique*. The *Rouge* is again decentered in another respect by the existence of the draft of an article that Stendhal was going to write for Count Salvagnoli,²³ which is not only a commentary on the novel, of crucial importance in many respects, but also, in a more disturbing way, a summary, and therefore a duplication of the narrative that both challenges it and confirms it, and certainly displaces it, not without a curious effect of "shift" in the comparison of the two texts. Such a duplication also accompanies the *Chartreuse*, namely, the famous article by Balzac; but this is rather in the nature of a translation: a transposition, which is also disturbing, of the Stendhalian uni-

verse into the Balzacian register. The counter-text for *Leuwen* is missing, but we are at least aware of its existence, since we know this novel is in principle, at least as far as the first part is concerned, merely a sort of rewriting, a correction of the manuscript of *Le Lieutenant* handed over to Stendhal by his friend Mme Jules Gauthier. We also know that *Armance* originated in a sort of competition with Mme de Duras and Henri de Latouche on the theme of impotence; and above all this novel constitutes the perhaps unique example in all literature of a work with a secret, the key to which is to be found *elsewhere*: namely, in a letter to Mérimée and in a note written in the margin of one of his own copies, which formally asserts Octave's impotence.²⁴ It is an extreme case of decentering, since here the center is outside: one has only to imagine a detective novel in which the murderer would be indicated solely by some posthumous comment left by the author. Indeed, he finds himself in an almost less paradoxical, but more subtle situation, neither quite inside nor quite outside. Stendhal had indeed thought of entitling his novel, like those of his competitors, *Olivier*, which in 1826 could not have failed to "give the game away." This was to be the case of *Ulysses*, except that Octave's infirmity is much more essential to the signification of the Stendhalian narrative than the reference to the *Odyssey* is to Joyce's novel. And certainly the reader himself may very well "guess" this infirmity: but in that case it remains a hypothesis, an interpretation. The fact that this interpretation is then corroborated in a marginal note radically alters, one has to admit, its status in relation to the work, and in particular it alone authorizes the use of the verb *to guess*: for one can only guess what is, and to say "Octave is impotent" signifies nothing more than "Stendhal says that Octave is impotent." He says so, but he says so elsewhere, and that is the whole point.

Similarly, the reader of the *Chartreuse*, especially if he is familiar with the Beylist theme of illegitimacy as a refusal of the father, will certainly be able to entertain some "suspicions" as to Fabrizio's "true" heredity. But this is different from finding these suspicions attributed to Milanese public opinion, as in the corrections entertained by Stendhal in the Chaper copy: "In time he was even thought to be the son of that handsome lieutenant Robert."²⁵ For

Armance, the *hors-texte* (or rather the *extra-text*, the text from the outside) resolves the mystery; for the *Chartreuse*, it helps rather to create it; but in both cases the transcendence of the work—the opening of the text on to the extra-text—dismisses the notion of an "immanent" reading.



As for the *Chroniques italiennes*, everyone knows, or thinks he knows, that they are mostly made up of translation and adaptation. But, without reference to the original texts, who can assess the amount of Stendhalian "creation" involved in them? (And who cares how much there is?)

This other extreme case reminds us in time that many of Stendhal's works, from the *Vie de Haydn* to the *Promenades dans Rome*, do not entirely and unquestionably belong to him. The degree of plagiarism, borrowing, pastiche, and the apocryphal is almost impossible to determine where Stendhal is concerned. Mérimée, it will be remembered, said in 1850 that nobody knew exactly what books Beyle had written, and in 1933 Martineau, prefacing his edition of the *Mélanges de littérature*, admitted that he could not say for sure what pages were authentically Stendhal's and added: "It is very likely that not everything from his pen has yet been brought to light."²⁶ No one can yet, and no doubt no one ever will, mark the limits of the Stendhalian corpus.



Uncompleted work forms an enormous part of Stendhal's *oeuvre*. Works as important as *Henry Brulard*, *Lucien Leuwen*, *Lamiel*, and the *Souvenirs d'égotisme* were abandoned in midstream and lost, as was *Napoléon*, the sketch for a novel called *Une poisiton sociale*, and several essays and novellas, including *Le Rose et le Vert* which, taking up once again the themes of *Mina de Vanghel*, was intended to be turned into a proper novel. If one adds the obviously hasty ending of the *Chartreuse* and the interrupted or abbreviated publication of the *Histoire de la peinture*, and the *Mémoires d'un touriste*,

it is not too much to say that a destiny of mutilation weighs on most of this *oeuvre*. The sketches and rough drafts that he left do not prevent his reader from dreaming about the hypothetical continuation of *Leuwen* and of *Lamiel* or of imagining what would have become of a *Brulard* that rejoined the *Journal*, taking in and going beyond the *Souvenirs d'égotisme* and advancing to that bank of Lake Albano where the "Sleeping Baron" traces in dust the sad litany of his past loves. Or, again, from observing that the *Chartreuse* begins, more or less, where *Brulard* breaks off, with the arrival of the French in Milan: linking without break fiction to autobiography, the destiny of Lieutenant Robert to that of Second-Lieutenant Beyle—with all the consequences that follow.



The aporia of Stendhalism. It might be formulated more or less as follows: what one calls Stendhal's *oeuvre* is a fragmented, elliptical, repetitive, yet infinite, or at least indefinite, text, no part of which, however, may be separated from the whole. Whoever pulls a single thread must take the whole cloth, with its holes and lack of edges. To read Stendhal is to read the whole of Stendhal, but to read all of Stendhal is impossible, for the very good reason, among others, that the whole of Stendhal has not yet been published or deciphered, or discovered, or even written: I repeat, all the Stendhalian *text*, because the gaps, the interruptions of the text are not mere absences, a pure non-text: they are a lack, active and perceptible as lack, as non-writing, as non-written text.

Against all expectations, this aporia does not kill Stendhalism, which on the contrary lives only upon it, just as every passion feeds on its impossibilities.



The ambiguous status of Stendhal's Italy: exotic, eccentric, a constant alibi of eccentricity and difference, the "Italian soul" covers and justifies the most flagrant offences against the implicit code of common psychology; a locus of problematic feelings and un-

predictable acts, locus of a fiction delivered from the constraints of vulgar verisimilitude. At the same time, a central, primary locus, intimately bound up with the maternal link and the negation of the father. For the exclusive descendent of the Gagnons (Guadagnis, Guadaniamos), the departure for Italy is a return to one's origins, a return to the mother's breast. The "French character," dominated by concern for money and by vanity, is no longer, for the former disciple of Helvetius and Destutt de Tracy, anything more than an external reference, a foil. The heart of the true Stendhalian debate is in Italy: a debate between energy (Rome, Ariosto) and tenderness (Milan, Tasso). Italy is the paradoxical center of the Beylist decentering, the fatherland (motherland?) of the expatriate, the locus of the unlocated, of the non-locus: an intimate utopia.



Pesaro, 24 May 1817. —Here people don't spend their lives *judging* their happiness. *Mi piace*, or *non mi piace*, is the great way of settling everything. The true fatherland is where one meets the most people like oneself. I fear that in France I always find a basic coldness wherever I go. In this country, I feel a charm that I cannot account for: it's like love and yet I'm in love with no one. The shadow of the beautiful trees, the beauty of the sky at night, the view of the sea, everything has a charm for me, a vividness that reminds me of a feeling I had quite forgotten, which I had felt, at sixteen, during my first campaign. I see that I am unable to convey my thoughts: all the circumstances I employ to depict them are feeble.

The whole of nature is more touching for me here; it seems new to me: I see nothing that is flat and insipid. Often at two in the morning, returning home, in Bologna, past those great porticos, my soul obsessed by the beautiful eyes I had just seen, walking in front of those palaces which, with its great shadows, the moon drew for me, I would stop, weighed down with happiness, and say to myself: How beautiful it is! Contemplating those hills, covered with trees that advance to the edge of the city, lit by that silent light in the midst of that glittering sky, I would begin to shake; tears would come into

my eyes. —I would say to myself, for no particular reason:
My God! What a good thing I came to Italy!²⁷

The (fragmented) unity of the Stendhalian text, the absence of autonomy in any of his works, the constant perfusion of meaning that circulates from one to the other, appear best by contrast if one compares this situation to that, for example, of *La Comédie humaine*. Each of Balzac's novels is an enclosed, completed narrative, separated from the others by the uncrossable barriers of the dramatic construction, and we know that it needed the device, adopted at a later stage, of the return of characters to give some unity, somewhat after the event, to the Balzacian world.

The Stendhalian universe is based on quite different presuppositions. There is no unity of place or time, no recurrence of characters, no trace of that wish to compete with the legal status by creating an autonomous, complete, and coherent society; a few erratic novels, devoid of any linking principle, scattered throughout a heterogeneous *oeuvre*, of which they are far from constituting the main body, at least in quantity: like Rousseau, or Barrès, or Gide, Stendhal is quite obviously an impure novelist. For all that, though, the unity of Stendhalian fiction is unquestionable, but it is not one of cohesion, still less of continuity. It stems entirely from a sort of strictly *thematic* constancy: a unity of repetition and variation, which relates, rather than links, these novels to one another.

Gilbert Durand has brought out the most important of these recurrent themes.²⁸ The solitude of the hero and the reinforcement of his destiny by the duplication (or uncertainty) of his birth and oracular overdetermination; testing trials and temptations; feminine duality and symbolic opposition between the two types of the Amazon (or "sublime whore"—Mathilde, Vanina, Mina de Vanghel, Mme de Hocquincourt, la Sanseverina) and the tender woman, guardian of the heart's secrets (Mme de Rênal, Mme de Chasteller, Clelia Conti); the conversion of the hero and the passage from the epic register to that of tender intimacy (symbolized at least twice, in *Le Rouge et le noir* and the *Chartreuse*, by the paradoxical motif of the happy prison), which defines precisely the *moment* of Stendhalian fiction: even, it seems to me, contrary to the view expressed

by Durand, in the first part of *Leuwen*, where we see a hero originally convinced, like Fabrizio, of being incapable of love, and forewarned against this feeling by political prejudice ("What! while all the youth of France has joined the fray, and so much is at stake, I am to spend my whole life gazing into a pair of beautiful eyes!" — "Since 1830," as the *Mémoires d'un touriste* comments, "Love seems to be the worst of dishonors for a young man"),²⁹ discover "that he has a heart" and become converted to his passion.

This fundamental theme of the *Rücksicht*, of the abandonment to female tenderness as a return to the mother, reinforced still more by the typically maternal appearance and function of the triumphant heroine (including Clélia, who is more maternal, despite her age and kinship, than the conquering Sanseverina), lies therefore at the basis of what is most essential in Stendhal's fictional creation, which scarcely alters, from one work to another, except in rhythm and tonality. The reader is thus led to make endless comparisons between situations, characters, feelings, actions, instinctively bringing out correspondences by superimposition and change of perspective. A network of interferences is thus set up between Julien, Fabrizio, and Lucien, between Mathilde and Gina, Mme de Rênal, Mme de Chasteller, and Clélia, between François Leuwen, M. de la Môle, and Conte Mosca, Chélan and Blanès, Sansfin and Du Poirier, Frilair and Rassi, the suspect paternities of Julien and Fabrizio, their common devotion to Napoleon, between the Farnese tower and Besançon prison, between the seminary, the garrison at Nancy, and the battlefield of Waterloo, etc. More than any other, no doubt, Stendhal's *oeuvre* invites a *paradigmatic* reading, in which the consideration of narrative links fades before the evidence of relations of homology: a harmonic, or vertical, reading, then, a reading on two or several registers, for the reader for whom the true text begins with the duplication of the text.



Some months ago a married woman of Melito, renowned as much for her ardent piety as for her rare beauty, had the

weakness to grant her lover an assignation in a mountain forest, two leagues from the village. The lover was happy. After this moment of delight, however, the enormity of her sin oppressed the soul of the guilty woman: she remained plunged into gloomy silence. "Why are you so cold to me?" asks the lover. "I was thinking how we would see each other tomorrow; that abandoned hut, in the dark wood, is the most convenient place." The lover leaves her; the unhappy woman did not come back to the village, but spent the night in the forest, busy, as she admitted, praying and digging two ditches. The next morning the lover arrives and is killed at the hands of this woman whom he believed adored him. This unhappy victim of remorse buries her lover with the greatest care, comes back to the village, where she confesses to the priest and embraces her children. She returns to the forest, where she is found dead, lying in the ditch dug next to that of her lover.³⁰



This brief anecdote is a fairly representative example of what one might call, without exaggerating its specificity, *Stendhalian narrative*. We will not dwell on the (striking) illustration of the "Italian soul," a mandatory element in Beylist verisimilitude, but take a closer look at the characteristic elements of the narrative treatment by which this "little true fact" becomes a text by Stendhal.

The first of these features is no doubt the almost systematic displacement of the narrative in relation to the action, which results both in the elision of the principal events and the accentuation of the incidental circumstances. The act of adultery is designated three times by a sort of narrative metonymy: the assignation given to the lover; the lover's "happiness" (a banal figure, revived here by the conciseness of the statement); the "moment of delight," qualified retrospectively on the basis of the virtuous state of conscience that follows. Not by itself, therefore, but by the events that lead up to it, accompany it, or follow it. The murder of the lover is subtly relegated, by an academic periphrasis, to a subordinate proposition the main stress of which is elsewhere. Lastly, and above all, the suicide of the young woman undergoes a complete

ellipsis between her return to the forest and the moment when she is found dead; an ellipsis reinforced still further by the temporal ambiguity of the narrative present, and the absence of any adverb of time, which make the two verbs apparently simultaneous, thus eliminating the entire duration that separates the two actions.

This elision of the strong tenses is one of the features of Stendhalian narrative. In the *Chartreuse*, the first embrace of Fabrizio and Clelia, in the Farnese tower, is so discreet that it generally passes unnoticed ("She was so beautiful, with her gown half torn off, and stirred to such a pitch of passion, that Fabrizio could not refrain from following an almost unconscious impulse. No resistance was offered him"), and Gina's "sacrifice" with Ernesto-Ranuccio V disappears between two sentences: "He had the temerity to reappear, trembling all over and extremely miserable, at three minutes to ten. At half past ten the Duchessa stepped into her carriage and set off for Bologna." Fabrizio's death is implied rather than mentioned, on the last page: "She [Gina] lived for a very short time only after Fabrizio, whom she adored, and who spent but one year in his Charterhouse."³¹ In this case one may blame the forced mutilation of this epilogue, but in the *Rouge*, the execution of Julien, so long expected and prepared for, is eclipsed at the last moment: "Never had that head such poetic beauty than at the moment when it was about to fall. The sweetest moments he had known in the past in the woods of Vergy came thronging back into his mind with the most eager insistence.

"Everything passed off simply and decently, with no trace of affectation on his part." There follows a flashback (a method, on the contrary, very little used by Stendhal, who tends, seemingly, to accelerate duration rather than retard it), which contributes still more to this effacement of the death by resuscitating Julien for the space of half a page.³² Jean Prévost remarked quite rightly of these silent and nearly disguised deaths that they constitute a sort of "literary euthanasia."³³

This discretion concerning the cardinal functions of the narrative contrasts, obviously, with the importance given to incidental and almost technical details: the precise location of the forest, the abandoned hut, the digging of the two ditches. This "attention to small

things," which Stendhal praised in Mérimée, is even more characteristic of his own manner: we have already met with some of the effects of this. Stendhal himself carries Mérimée's precision still further: "He helped her down from her horse on some pretext," Clara would say. Dominique says: "He helped her down from her horse on the pretext that he had seen that the horse was losing one of its shoes and he wanted to fix it with a nail.'"³⁴ But it should be noted above all that this attention to objects and circumstances—which is accompanied, however, as we know, with great disdain for description—almost always serves to mediate the evocation of important actions or situations by allowing various kinds of material substitutes to speak in their place. In the last scene of *Vanina Vanini*, the "cold, sharp chains" that hold Missirilli and separate him from Vanina's embraces, the "diamonds" and "little files," the traditional tools of escape, that she gives him and which in the end he throws to her "as much as his chains allow him," all these details shine with such intensity of presence, despite the dryness of their expression, that they eclipse the dialogue between the two lovers: they bear the meaning far more than the words exchanged.³⁵

Another form of ellipsis and perhaps an even more specific one might be called the ellipsis of intentions. It consists in reporting the actions of a character without informing the reader of their purpose, which will appear only after the event. The second meeting arranged for the following day in the abandoned hut misleads the reader as much as it did the lover, and if the digging of two graves hardly leaves any doubt as to what will follow, the fact remains that the narrative is deliberately silent about the purpose that gives meaning to a series of actions (coming back to the village, confessing, embracing her children), leaving us the task of filling this gap retroactively. Thus, in *L'Abbesse de Castro*, Stendhal tells us that Vanina notices her father's anger against Branciforte. "She went at once," he adds, "and threw a little powder on the wood of the five magnificent arquebuses that her father had hanging next to his bed. She also covered with a light layer of dust his daggers and swords." The connection between the father's anger and the fact of throwing dust on his weapons is not obvious, and

the function of this action remains obscure until the moment we read that "visiting her father's weapons that evening, she saw that two arquebuses had been loaded and that almost all the daggers had been handled":³⁶ she had spread the dust in order to know what preparations her father was making, but the narrative carefully concealed this motivation from us. The most famous example of this Stendhalian habit is obviously the end of chapter 35 of the second part of *Le Rouge et le noir*, when we see Julien leave Mathilde, dash off in a post-chaise to Verrières, buy a brace of pocket-pistols from the gunsmith and enter the church, without our being informed of his intentions other than by their fulfillment in the line: "He fired a shot at her with one pistol and missed her. He fired a second shot; she fell."³⁷

We must stress here the necessarily deliberate character of the method: if the Stendhalian method were, like the later manner of Hemingway, a purely "objective" relation of the actions performed, with no incursion into the consciousness of the characters, the ellipsis of intentions would conform to the overall attitude, and therefore would be much less marked. But we know that Stendhal never confined himself to this "behaviorist" prejudice, and even that recourse to interior monologue is one of his innovations and one of his most constant habits. Here, he in no way refrains from informing the reader that "the enormity of her crime oppressed the soul of the guilty woman" and if Stendhal does not let the reader know more about his heroine's intentions it is obviously by voluntary omission. Similarly, when Vanina hears Missirilli announce that with the next defeat, he will abandon the cause of Carbonarism, Stendhal simply adds, that this word "threw a fatal light into her mind. She said to herself: 'The Carbonari have received several thousand sequins from me. No one can doubt my devotion to the conspiracy.'" ³⁸ This interior monologue is as misleading as the narrative of the criminal-narrator in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, for Stendhal, pretending to relate Vanina's thoughts at this point, is careful to conceal the most important thing, which is more or less, as we learn some pages later: "So I can denounce the sale without Pietro suspecting." The incidental, here again, is substituted for the essential, just as in the story about Melito the

details concerning the abandoned hut conceal, for both the future victim and the reader, the planned murder.³⁹

This type of ellipsis implies great freedom in the choice of narrative point of view. Stendhal, as we know, inaugurates the technique of the "restrictions of field,"⁴⁰ which consists in reducing the narrative field to the perceptions and thoughts of a single character. But he alters this choice, on the one hand, as we have just seen, by keeping from him some of his thoughts, often the most important ones; but also by frequently changing the focal character: even in a novel as centered on the character of the hero as the *Rouge*, the narration sometimes adopts the point of view of another character, such as Mme de Rênal, or Mathilde, or even M. de Rênal. Here, the focal point is almost constantly the heroine, but the narrative makes at least one incursion, and a retrospective one at that, into the consciousness of the lover ("this woman whom he believed adored him"). Lastly, and above all, the focusing of the narrative is disturbed, as it almost always is in Stendhal, by the practice of what Georges Blin has called "the intrusion of the author," and which it would no doubt be better to call intervention of the *narrator*, making a distinction, particularly necessary in the case of Stendhal, between the identity of these two roles.

Nothing, in fact, is more difficult than to determine at each moment what the virtual source of the Stendhalian discourse is, the only two constants being that this source is highly variable and that it is rarely identical with the person of Stendhal. We know his almost hysterical taste for travesty, and we know for example that the supposed traveller of the *Mémoires d'un touriste* is a certain M. L. . . . , a commercial traveller in hardware, whose opinions do not always coincide with those of Beyle. In the novels and novellas, the situation of the narrator is generally indeterminate. The *Rouge* and *Lamiel* begin with a chronicle told by a narrator-witness who belongs to the diegetic world: that of the *Rouge* is an anonymous inhabitant of Verrières who has often observed the valley of the Doubs from the promenade widened by M. de Rênal, and who praises the Mayor, "though he is on the extreme right, and I am

a Liberal." The narrator of *Lamiel*, who is more precisely identified, is the son and grandson of Messrs. Lagier, notaries at Carville. The first slips away after a few pages without his disappearance being noticed by anyone, the second announces his departure with more fuss in these terms: "All these adventures . . . concern the young Lamiel girl. . . . And I have taken it into my head to write them down so that I may become a man of letters. So, O benevolent reader, farewell, you will hear no more of me."⁴¹ As for the *Chartreuse*, Stendhal certainly acknowledges, in antedating it, the writing of this "novella," but not without placing most of the responsibility for it on the shoulders of a supposed canon of Padua, whose memoirs he seems merely to have adapted. Which of the two assumes the "I" that appears three or four times at least,⁴² and always in an unexpected way, in the course of a chronicle that in principle is quite impersonal?

The situation of the *Chroniques italiennes*, and in particular *L'Abbesse de Castro*, is both clearer and more subtle, for Stendhal claims to be acting only as a translator, but an indiscreet and active translator, who does not deny himself the pleasure of commenting on the action ("Candor and uncouthness, the natural results of the liberty suffered by republics, and the habit of passions openly expressed, and not yet contained by the morals of monarchy, are revealed for all to see in the person of the Signior di Campireali as soon as he takes a step"), or of authenticating his sources ("Now, my sad task will be limited to providing a necessarily dry extract of the trial at the end of which Elena met her death. This trial, the report of which I read in a library, whose name I must not reveal, comprises no less than eight volumes in-folio"), or of judging the text that he is supposed to be recopying ("That evening, Elena wrote to her lover a naive and in my opinion very moving letter"), or even of practicing on several occasions a rather insolent censorship: "I think I ought to pass over in silence many circumstances which, in turn, depict the morals of that period, but which seem to me sad to relate. The author of the Roman manuscript took infinite pains to arrive at the exact date of these details which I am suppressing."⁴³

It is often as if Stendhal had transported this *marginal* situation in relation to a text of which he is not supposed to be the author and for which he appears to accept no responsibility, from the *Chroniques* and the anecdotes collected in the first Italian essays, into his great works of fiction: Blin has shown the quite natural passage that leads from the supposed cuts of *L'Abbesse de Castro* to the famous etc.'s which, in the novels, cut short so many tirades supposedly regarded as too flat or boring.⁴⁴ But what is true of censorship is equally so of the other forms of commentary and intervention. It is as if Stendhal, having got into the habit of annotating the texts of others, continues to gloss his own without seeing the difference. We know in particular how he burdens his young heroes with judgements, admonitions, and advice, but critics have also noticed the dubious sincerity of those paraphrases in which Stendhal sometimes seems to separate himself hypocritically from his favorite characters, to present as a defect or blunder what in actual fact he regards as sympathetic or admirable characteristics. "Why," he says in the sixth chapter of the *Chartreuse*,

why should the chronicler who follows faithfully all the most trivial details of the story that has been told him be held up to blame? Is it his fault if his characters, led astray by passions which he, most *unfortunately* for himself, in no way shares, descend to actions that are profoundly immoral? It is true that things of this sort are no longer done in a country where the sole passion that has outlived all the rest is lust for money, that gives vanity its chance.⁴⁵

It is almost impossible in such examples to distinguish between the ironic intervention of the author and the supposed intervention of a narrator distinct from him whose style and opinion Stendhal is playing at counterfeiting. Antiphrasis, satirical parody, the *style indirect libre*, pastiche ("This Minister, in spite of his light-hearted air and his lively manners, did not possess a soul of the French type; he could not *forget* the things that grieved him. When there was a thorn in his pillow, he was obliged to break it off and to blunt its point while getting many a prick from it in his trembling limbs. (I must apologize for this extract, which is translated from

the Italian)"⁴⁶) follow one another and sometimes overlay one another in a counterpoint of which the opening pages of the *Chartreuse* form a characteristic example, mingling the epic bombast of the victory announcements published by the revolutionaries, the bitter or furious recriminations of the despotic party, the irony of the Voltairian observer, popular enthusiasm, the cautious expressions of administrative language, etc. With Stendhal, then, the image of the narrator is essentially problematic, and when the Stendhalian narrative gives way, however little, to discourse, it is often very difficult and sometimes impossible to answer the apparently quite simple question: *who is speaking?*

From this point of view, our text of reference is distinguished first of all by its sobriety of discourse, the absence of any explicit comment (this is what Stendhal calls "recounting narratively"). This absence is not insignificant: on the contrary, it has a great value, indeed, for any reader who is at all familiar with Stendhal's Italy, an obvious one. The silence of the narrative emphasizes most eloquently the grandeur and beauty of the action: it contributes therefore to describing it. It is a zero degree commentary, precisely the one that classical rhetoric recommended for *sublime* moments, when the event speaks for itself better than any sort of speech could; and we know that the sublime is not for Stendhal an academic category, but one of the most active terms in his system of values.

Discourse is not, however, totally absent from this narrative—such an exclusion is indeed only an academic hypothesis, almost impossible in narrative practice. Here, we should note first the initial temporal indicator "some months ago," which situates the event in relation to the instance of discourse constituted by the narration itself, in a relative time that emphasizes and authenticates the situation of the narrator—a single chronological point of reference. Also there is the testimonial formula "as she admitted," which connects, according to Roman Jakobson's categories, the process of the statement (the action), the process of the enunciation (the narrative), and "a process of stated enunciation": the evidence, or more specifically in this case the avowal, which it seems could

only have been received during the confession mentioned below, a confession thus designated in an oblique way as the source of most of the narrative, and in particular of everything concerning the motivations of the action. These two "shifters" place the narrator therefore in the situation of a historian, in the etymological sense, that is to say, as investigator-reporter. Such a situation is quite normal in an ethnographical text like *Rome, Naples et Florence* (or the *Promenades*, or the *Mémoires d'un touriste*), but as we have seen Stendhal, perhaps simply out of habit, maintains certain signs of it even in his great works of "fiction"; hence such strange precautions as that "I think" which crops up quite naturally, it seems, in the middle of a chronicle in the page mentioned above from *Le Rose et le vert*, but which reappears more surprisingly in a sentence like the following from *Leuwen* (it concerns Mlle Berchu's dress): "It was made of a material from Algiers, and had very wide stripes, brown, I think, and pale yellow," or from the *Chartreuse*: "The Contessa smiled—as a measure of precaution, I fancy."⁴⁷

The case of the demonstrative ("That unfortunate woman . . ."), of which Stendhal makes a very marked use, is rather more subtle, for it consists essentially (apart from its stylistic value as—perhaps Italianate—emphasis) of an anaphoric reference by the narrative back to itself (the unfortunate woman already mentioned): this reference back necessarily passing through the instance of discourse and therefore by the relay of the narrator, and consequently of the reader, who imperceptibly finds himself called upon as a witness. The same goes for the intensive "so," also typically Stendhalian, and which again implies a return of the text upon itself. Indeed the two turns of phrase are often frequently found together: "that woman so tender. . ."

As for expressions implying a measure of judgment, they remain, despite their discretion, difficult to assign. "The unfortunate woman," "unfortunate victim of remorse" may express Stendhal's sympathetic opinion, but "gave in," "sin," "guilty," and even "delight" involve a moral judgment that it would be very imprudent to attribute to him. These moralizing terms stem rather from the heroine herself, with a slight inflection of indirect discourse,

though they may reflect the common opinion of the village, the vehicle of the anecdote, whose judgments Stendhal would not hesitate to reproduce without necessarily agreeing with them, as when he reports in italics certain expressions borrowed from vulgar speech for which he refuses to take responsibility himself—too anxious to preserve a dignity that he lets us perceive without allowing us to judge it; faithful to his policy, which is to be always present, and always out of reach.



An equivocal relation between the "author" and his "work"; the difficulty of separating the "literary" text from the other functions of writing and graphism; borrowings of subjects, plagiarisms, translations, pastiches; an almost invariable failure to complete works, a proliferation of sketches, variants, corrections, marginal notes, a decentering of the *text* in relation to the "work"; a strong thematic relation between one work and another, which compromises the autonomy and therefore even the existence of each of them; a confusion of the discursive and the narrative; a displacement of the narrative in relation to the action; an ambiguity of narrative focus; an indetermination of the narrator, or, to be more precise, of the source of the narrative discourse: everywhere, at every level, in every direction, the essential mark of the Stendhalian activity is to be found—a constant and exemplary transgression of the limits, rules, and functions that apparently make up the literary game. It is characteristic that, beyond his admiration for Tasso, Pascal, Saint-Simon, Montesquieu, or Fielding, his true models were musicians, Mozart or Cimarosa, and a painter, Correggio, and that his dearest ambition was to restore through writing the scarcely definable qualities (lightness, grace, limpidity, gaiety, sensuousness, tender reverie, the magic of distant places) that he found in their works. Always *in the margin*, a little to one side, beneath or beyond words, moving in the direction of that mythical horizon that he designates by the terms "music" and "tender painting," his art constantly exceeds and perhaps rejects, the very idea of literature.



Ave Maria (twilight), in Italy the hour for tenderness, for the pleasures of the soul and for melancholy: sensation enhanced by the sound of those lovely bells.

Hours for pleasure unrelated to the sense except through memories.⁴⁸



The particular quality of Stendhalian discourse is not clarity; still less is it obscurity (of which he had a horror, and which he regarded as the accomplice of stupidity and "hypocrisy"); but something like an enigmatic transparency, which always, here or there, disconcerts some resource or habit of the mind. Thus he writes for the "happy few" and offends or, as he himself said,⁴⁹ "Stendhalizes" all the others (pronounced "standhalizes").



(*On the steamer, in Toulon bay*) I was amused by the gallantry of a bashful (?) sailor toward a very pretty woman of comfortably well-off family, who had been driven from the room below, with one of her companions, by the heat. He covered her with a sail to shelter her a little, she and her child, but the violent wind swelled up the sail and moved it; he tickled the beautiful traveller and uncovered her while pretending to cover her. There was much gaiety, naturalness and even grace in this action, which lasted for an hour. It took place a foot and a half away from me. The woman's friend, who had not been treated to such gallantry, was paying attention to me and said to me: "This gentleman is sticking his neck out." I ought to have talked to her; she was a fine creature; but the sight of the graceful action before me gave me more pleasure. The beautiful woman warned the sailor when she could. To one of his first gallantries, which was a phrase with a double meaning, she replied in the most lively fashion: *Merde*.⁵⁰

[1968]

NOTES

1. Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini* (Divan), 1:30–31; *Life of Rossini*, Richard N. Coe, tr. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), p. 24. [The reference *Divan* refers here to the edition in 79 volumes (1927–37); *Divan critique* refers to the critical editions, edited by Henri Martineau, for the Divan collection—Tr.]
2. Jean Pouillon, "La création chez Stendhal," *Les Temps modernes* (1951), no. 69.
3. *Vie de Henry Brulard* (Divan critique), 1:41–42, 45; *The Life of Henry Brulard*, Catherine A. Phillips, tr. (London, 1925), pp. 27–28.
4. Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen*, Henri Martineau, ed. (Paris: Hazan), p. 671.
5. Cf. Jean Starobinski, "Stendhal pseudonyme," *L'Oeil vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), pp. 193–244.
6. *Journal* (Divan), v:258, 94, 85; Henri Martineau, *Le Coeur de Stendhal* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1952–53), p. 361; *Journal*, iv:254, v:153. [Italicized words in English in the original—Tr.]
7. *Correspondance* (Divan), v:108–9.
8. *Le Rose et le vert in Romans et nouvelles* (Divan), 1:17.
9. *Le Rouge et le noir*, Henri Martineau, ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1973), pp. 306–7, 315–16; *Scarlet and Black*, Margaret R. B. Shaw, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), pp. 333, 341–42.
10. *De l'Amour* (Divan critique), pp. 320–43; *Love*, Gilbert and Suzanne Sale, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 293–315.
11. *L'Abbesse de Castro in Chroniques italiennes* (Divan), 1:33–37; *Suora Scolastica* (Divan), II:236; *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Henri Martineau, ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1973), pp. 352, 355, 363; *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Margaret R. B. Shaw, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), pp. 327, 328, 330, 337–38.
12. *Mémoires d'un touriste* (Paris: Calmann-Levy), II:140.
13. *Vie de Henry Brulard*, 1:15; *H.B.*, p. 6.
14. *Journal*, v:211.
15. Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres*, Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 1:567; "Stendhal" in Valéry, *Masters and Friends*, Martin Turnell, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 192–93.
16. *Armançe*, Henri Martineau, ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1950), p. 27; *Armançe*, Gilbert and Suzanne Sale, tr. (London, 1960), p. 27.
17. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 231; *Charterhouse*, p. 220.
18. *Vie de Henry Brulard*, 1:68; *H.B.*, p. 43.
19. Martineau, *Le Coeur*, pp. 257, 671, 680, 675 [italicized words in English in the original—Tr.]
20. *Le Rouge et le noir*, p. 311; *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 56; *Promenades dans Rome* (Divan), III:237; *A Roman Journal*, Haakon Chevalier, tr. (New York: Orion Press, 1957), p. 250.

21. *De l'Amour*, p. 33; *Love*, pp. 62–63.
22. *Racine et Shakspeare* (Divan), p. 112. A similarity indicated by Martineau, *Lucien Leuwen*, p. xi.
23. *Le Rouge et le noir*, pp. 708–26.
24. *Armance*, pp. 249–53, 261; *Armance*, pp. 166–69, 174.
25. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 614.
26. *Mélanges de littérature* (Divan), p. 1.
27. *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817* (Divan critique), pp. 118–19.
28. Gilbert Durand, *Le Décor mythique de la Chartreuse de Parme* (Paris: J. Corti, 1961).
29. *Lucien Leuwen*, p. 145. (Cf. p. 146: “Any moment the voice of the fatherland may be heard; I may be called. . . . And that’s the moment I choose to make myself the slave of some little provincial reactionary!”); *Mémoires d’un touriste*, i:59.
30. Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence*, Pléiade, p. 554.
31. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, pp. 472, 508, 537; *Charterhouse*, pp. 433–34, 463–64, 488.
32. *Le Rouge et le noir*, p. 487; *Scarlet and Black*, p. 510.
33. Jean Prévost, *La Création chez Stendhal* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1951), p. 260.
34. *Marginalia*, ii:96.
35. *Chroniques italiennes* (Divan), ii:125.
36. *Chroniques italiennes*, i:39–40.
37. *Le Rouge et le noir*, p. 432; *Scarlet and Black*, p. 456.
38. *Chroniques italiennes* (Divan), ii:103.
39. Here is another example of this ellipsis of intentions, accompanied by another, very beautiful effect of silence:
 “The priest was not old; the servant girl was pretty; there was gossip, which did not prevent a young man from the next village from courting the servant girl. One day, he hid the tongs from the kitchen fire in the girl’s bed. When he came back a week later, the girl said to him: ‘Whatever did you do with my tongs? I’ve been looking everywhere for them since you went. It really isn’t funny.’
 The lover kissed her, tears in his eyes, and left.” *Voyage dans le Midi* (Divan), p. 115.
40. Georges Blin, *Stendhal et les problèmes du roman* (Paris: J. Corti, 1954).
41. *Lamiel* (Divan), p. 43.
42. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, pp. 1, 2, 156; *Charterhouse*, pp. 17, 18, 154.
43. *Chroniques italiennes*, pp. 31, 157, 107, 154.
44. Blin, *Stendhal*, p. 235.
45. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 118; *Charterhouse*, p. 119.
46. *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 107; *Charterhouse*, p. 109.

47. *Lucien Leuwen*, p. 117; *La Chartreuse de Parme*, p. 87; *Charterhouse*, p. 92.
48. *De l'Amour*, p. 233; *Love*, p. 230.
49. "Vous allez encore vous *Stendhaliser*" (to Mareste, January 3, 1818), *Correspondance*, v:92.
50. *Voyage dans le Midi*, pp. 284–85.