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Stendhal and the Nineteenth Century

The Writer and his Politics

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Thesis submitted
for the
Degree of Master of Letters
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Stendhal and the Nineteenth Century

The Writer and his Politics

Introduction

Stendhal and politics: one might be tempted to think that the subject has already been all but exhausted, that there is no place left for a full-length study of the political experiences and views of a writer whose life and works have been dissected, so many times and by so many critics and biographers. Indeed, articles entitled 'Stendhal et la politique', 'Stendhal politique', or 'La Politique de Stendhal' abound in criticism of the novelist, and there is scarcely a political idea of his which has not been examined or explained. Nevertheless, we believe that a new approach can be applied to Stendhal's writing which can shed light on his political involvements and opinions. Before outlining the method we shall attempt to adopt, however, it is perhaps useful to examine the treatment which the subject — Stendhal and politics — has had to date.

One can distinguish two main tendencies in the mass of criticism which has appeared both this century and last on the political attitudes of this great nineteenth-century novelist. In the first place, there is the marked tendency among critics to class Stendhal as a dilettante, an amateur, or a dabbler in political theories and affairs. Auguste Bussière, for example, writing shortly after Stendhal's death, charged the novelist with dilettantism in general:

En tout il est un dilettante; il fait du dilettantisme sur la métaphysique, la politique, l'économie politique, l'histoire, la physiologie, la morale, et enfin et surtout sur l'esthétique.¹

Émile Faguet, judging Stendhal at the turn of the century, was particularly sceptical about the novelist's powers of political thinking: 'Je dirai quelques mots des idées politiques de Stendhal, de si peu de conséquence qu'on les estime et que moi-même je les trouve'.² Twentieth-century critics have often made similar statements about Stendhal's presumed dilettantism in politics.

¹ Article on Stendhal in the Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 janvier 1843, pp.250-99 (p.278).

² Politiques et moralistes du XIXe siècle, troisième série, Paris, 1900, pp.1-64 (p.32).

For instance, Constant de Horion, writing in a Belgian review in 1935, said:

Certes, il serait vain de chercher, parmi ses oeuvres, un programme politique mis en formules précises. Écrivain, dilettante, Stendhal n'est pas un théoricien.³

And in 1959 a British critic described Stendhal as 'the most amateur of amateurs'.⁴ But since the 1950s several critics have attempted to prove the injustice of this claim. Victor Del Litto, H.-F. Imbert, and Fernand Rude in particular have tended to point out the vast amount of knowledge that Henri Beyle deliberately, if not quite systematically, accumulated from his reading.⁵ They show how his ideas on politics, society, institutions, philosophy, and a host of other subjects are almost always the result of an extensive reading programme which Beyle imposed on himself first of all during the Empire, and which instilled in him for life a constant curiosity to inform himself about as many topics as possible. Another critic who has contributed a great deal to the proper evaluation of Stendhal's knowledge of politics, sociology, and economics is Lucien Jansse.⁶ These writers have been able to trace the source of certain opinions put forward by Stendhal by studying the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century philosophers and political economists whom the novelist professed to have read.

Secondly, most critics testify to the extremely paradoxical nature of Stendhal's views on politics and society. In nineteenth-century criticism no attempt was made to analyze or

3 'Les idées politiques de Stendhal', Le Flambeau (Revue Belge), 1935, t.2, pp.475-82 (p.476).

4 Robert M. Adams, Stendhal: Notes on a Novelist, London, 1959, ch.ii, p.35.

5 Victor Del Litto, La Vie intellectuelle de Stendhal, Paris, 1959. H.-F. Imbert, Les Métamorphoses de la liberté, ou Stendhal devant la Restauration et le Risorgimento (henceforth referred to as Les Métamorphoses de la liberté), Paris, 1967. Fernand Rude, Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps, Paris, 1967.

6 Articles in Stendhal Club: 15 octobre 1963, pp.35-45; 15 juillet 1965, pp.295-308; 15 juillet 1967, pp.327-48; 15 octobre 1969, pp.25-48. Titles of the articles are to be found in the Bibliography.

explain the inconsistencies in Stendhal's thought; they were merely evoked in order to denounce his weakness as a political thinker. Auguste Bussière was one of the first to mention ambiguity:

Dans tout ce qui n'est pas beaux-arts, partie qu'il a spécialement fouillée, ses vues, arrêtées trop court, s'éteignent, faute d'issue, dans des impasses et parfois même s'entre-détruisent.⁷

Stendhal's closest literary friend, Prosper Mérimée, stated the paradox in simplistic terms:

Beyle, original en toute chose, ce qui est un vrai mérite par ce temps de mœurs effacées, se piquait de libéralisme, et était, au fond de l'âme, un aristocrate achevé.⁸

This tendency to categorize Stendhal's contradictions, so to speak, to label them neatly as a clear conflict between, say, aristocratic taste and liberalism, continued into the twentieth century, with critics at first accepting the simple view put forward by Mérimée and other contemporaries. Stendhal's political views were summed up in neat, but careless, little sentences such as:

Stendhal n'est pas démocrate; il est monarchiste, monarchiste libéral, avec de secrètes préférences républicaines. (1929)

Stendhal est, à la fois, aristocrate et libéral . . . C'est cette dualité dans son tempérament qui, en politique, le fait perpétuellement osciller entre des partis opposés. (1929)⁹

The paradoxical nature of Stendhal's political thought began to be viewed in terms of the head versus heart or philosophy versus poetry dialectic with which most writers find themselves charged. Thus Constant de Horion, for example, stated simply: 'En un mot, Stendhal est un individualiste forcené, démocrate, par raison et anticlérical par sentiment' (1935). Léon Blum, for his part, explained the opposition more fully:

7 Article in the Revue des Deux Mondes, p.274.

8 'Henri Beyle (Stendhal)', in Portraits historiques et littéraires, Paris, 1908, pp.157-94 (p.159),

9 Maxime Leroy, Stendhal politique, Paris, 1929, p.20. Henry Dumolard, 'Stendhal et la politique', Extrait des Annales de l'Université de Grenoble, VI, 1929, p.126.

En politique, toutes ses convictions réfléchies entraînent Stendhal vers la démocratie . . . Mais, tandis que la raison reconnaît la démocratie pour le meilleur des gouvernements et proteste contre toute distinction sociale entre les hommes, le coeur et les nerfs exigent des sensations parfaitement harmonieuses que le contact d'une élite peut seul procurer.¹⁰

However, such tidy interpretations of Stendhal's political opinions by no means accounted for the complexity of his writing, and more recently critics have begun to analyze Stendhal's self-contradictory political beliefs in a more meaningful way.

Dennis Porter, for example, though he also expresses the ambiguity in terms of the poetry versus philosophy opposition — 'In short, the ambivalence in Stendhal's political and social thinking derives from what he saw as conflict between the philosopher and the poet'¹¹ — goes on to discern that Stendhal was more concerned with individual happiness than with liberty when he considered politics:

The answer to Henry Brulard's question — 'Y a-t-il bonheur sur la terre?' — is, then, yes. But such happiness is both rare and tragically brief . . . It follows, therefore, that from such a perspective, political and social issues lose much of their relevance. And it is this fact which goes a long way to explain those ambivalences in Stendhal's own political and social attitudes to which critics have frequently pointed . . . In other words, at the core of Stendhal's liberalism is a celebration of unrestrained individual liberty that largely transcends politics.¹¹

The same critic is also aware that artistic creation was a major consideration for Stendhal which often clashed with his liberal views:

The point is that for Stendhal politics and even liberty are not themselves an end but the happiness and creativity to which they give rise. There are ultimately certain higher pleasures which are more serious than politics.¹²

Irving Howe realizes that Stendhal often judged politics from

¹⁰ Stendhal et le beylisme, Paris, 1947, ch.iii, p.139.

¹¹ 'Stendhal and the Limits of Liberalism', Modern Language Review, July 1971, vol.66, pp.542-53 (pp.552-3).

¹² 'Politics, Happiness and the Arts: a Commentary on Stendhal's Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817', French Studies, July 1970, pp.254-61 (p.261).

the point of view of the concerned intellectual:

He is one of the first creative writers to look upon politics and society from the exclusive standpoint of the intelligentsia, one of the first to measure history by its effects on the intellectuals as a special, marginal and imperilled group.¹³

The image begins to emerge of a Stendhal who is deliberately rejecting politics on the grounds that other pursuits are more important in life. No longer is the novelist accused of being a dilettante in the sense of an amateur in political matters; if he is a dilettante, then he is so by choice; he sets out consciously to debunk politics which he has observed and which disillusion him. Roger Fayolle sees Stendhal's contradictory politics in the light of his idealism and dilettantism:

Jacobinisme radical qui déclare la guerre à la société ou dilettantisme supérieur qui s'amuse des bassesses du jeu politique, ce sont là les deux tentations de Stendhal.¹⁴

But still the analysis is too simply and neatly stated. Critics begin to regard Stendhal as being in many ways a-political:

Stendhal est un athée en politique, chose à peine croyable, et de son temps, et du nôtre. (1961)

Comment un esprit peut-il concilier tant d'écarts et tant d'opposition si palpables? Le désir de se rendre énigmatique et paradoxal, qui a frappé tant de ses amis, semble une explication qui n'explique rien. La notion d'apolitisme apporte peut-être une méthode plausible de réflexion. (1969)¹⁵

Not only did Stendhal deliberately stress the limited influence of politics and ridicule the political game in the name of higher forms of living, but he also approached politics, according to recent critics, in terms that had little to do with political beliefs at all. Irving Howe makes this point: 'No other modern novelist has so consistently approached political life in terms that so consistently evade political categories'.¹⁶

¹³ Politics and the Novel, London, 1961, ch.ii, p.32.

¹⁴ 'Stendhal et la politique', La Pensée, février 1967, pp.67-78 (p.78)

¹⁵ René Girard, Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, Paris, 1961, ch.v, p.139. Michel Crouzet, 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', Romantisme et politique 1815-1851, Colloque de l'École Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud, Paris, 1969, pp.220-43 (p.220).

¹⁶ Politics and the Novel, ch.ii, p.26.

René Girard, in his analysis of Stendhal's views on the nobility, comes to a similar conclusion: 'Pour comprendre ce romancier qui parle sans cesse politique il faut d'abord échapper aux modes de pensée politiques'.¹⁷ In short, recent analyses of Stendhal's politics have recognized the inadequacy of the old aristocrat/liberal duality which seems to have satisfied so many critics regarding the novelist's ambiguous political views. Stendhal's concern for happiness and the arts are now seen to contribute largely to his scepticism in matters of political importance, despite his professed liberalism.

One critic in particular has led the analysis of Stendhal's politics beyond the confines of ideology or philosophy and related them to a wider field of interests. Michel Crouzet, in a far-reaching article entitled 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', insists on Stendhal's mobility in political matters and his determination not to be duped:

Tel est le contraste inquiétant: une doctrine nette et carrée, mais que ronge le scrupule, ou le regret de la vérité opposée . . . Car l'apolitisme, c'est aussi cette tendance à brouiller les pistes, à sortir de son parti, et en quelque sorte à passer de l'autre côté, par un souci appliqué de nier les limites entre les vérités de chaque bord, et les partis eux-mêmes.¹⁸

He suggests that Stendhal's tendency to take a cynical, or sceptical, view of politics is one symptom of his anguished desire for self-knowledge:

Et au-delà de la vérité politique, de la vérité de la politique, c'est la vérité de soi que le beylisme recherche; les variations ont un sens, et une direction plus cachés, hors de l'histoire réelle ou imaginée, hors du problème de la politique lui-même . . . L'apolitisme n'est pas une vérité, mais un moyen de vivre la vérité, de bien l'utiliser pour être plus vraiment soi.¹⁸

M. Crouzet's analysis is based on the view that Stendhal's contradictory political beliefs are structural rather than evolutive in nature:

Dans son fonds la politique stendhalienne ne change pas, ou si peu, qu'une vision évolutive rend compte de certains

¹⁷ Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, ch.v, p.134.

¹⁸ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', pp.221-3, p.243.

tournants, par exemple concernant Napoléon, ou le problème américain, mais non pas de la structure contradictoire de cette politique; car les jugements contraires sont tout de même et toujours contemporains, et coexistent.
(p.221)

But such an approach necessarily ignores the biography of the writer, and Stendhal must surely be one of the few novelists for whom life and letters are most crucially and inextricably linked.

Excellent as the analyses of critics like Crouzet and Porter are, therefore, they are necessarily limited, by their article form, to certain aspects of Stendhal's political views. Even some recent books which deal specifically with Stendhal's politics are disappointing. In Marcel Heisler's study of Stendhal and Napoleon,¹⁹ for example, the documentation is fragmentary and the analysis thin. He appears to present an inventory of Stendhal's many and varied comments on Napoleon throughout his life, without any attempt to evolve a meaningful explanation of them. In short, there does seem to be room for a detailed analysis of all Stendhal's political experiences and views. In addition, a different approach to the contradictions involved in Stendhal's politics seems to impose itself.

It is clear that the contradictory nature of the novelist's political views is undeniable. One can, however, study the ambiguities in different ways. Perceptive critics have pointed out the confusion which exists between Stendhal's ideological liberalism and his artistic and 'aristocratic' conservatism. Politics cannot, in Stendhal's case, be classed and categorized as they are linked too closely with concerns of a non-political nature. Consequently an attempt to consider his writing from a narrowly ideological point of view fails to explain the contradictions. Michel Crouzet makes an interesting point in passing:

Sans regrets, ou presque, sans retour en arrière, il a complété et modifié sa pensée et ses jugements sans rupture et, semble-t-il, par un simple déplacement des accents.
(p.220)

19 Stendhal et Napoléon, Paris, 1969.

If one takes up this idea of a shifting of emphasis or of perspective on Stendhal's part, many of the ambiguities can be explained.

It is therefore the intention here to approach Stendhal's political ideas through the diverse viewpoints from which he made his judgements. Politics must be understood in the widest possible sense where Stendhal is concerned, since considerations of an aesthetic, moral, or personal nature can contribute to the formation of his opinions on politics or society. In Part I the 'political' content of Stendhal's life, his actual experiences of the different regimes through which he lived, will be investigated. His views, spontaneous or retrospective, on the various governments of nineteenth-century France will also be examined, and in particular the biography of Henri Beyle must always be considered. The analysis will begin with the French Revolution and the First Republic, which came to an end only one year before the nineteenth century began and whose reforms were to have lasting consequences for French society. An attempt will also be made to situate Stendhal in relation to the political trends and movements of his day.

It will become apparent that the 'varying standpoints' approach can be applied to Stendhal's writing in particular because of his lucidity about his own age. His understanding of the undercurrents in the society in which he was living, and his perceptive interpretation of the legacy left to France by the Revolution in particular, enabled him to avoid the pitfalls which other nineteenth-century figures — Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, for example — could not escape. These men took an active part in politics, but the continuing instability of governments and the frequent changes of fortune in the political life of France left them with a difficult choice of policy: they could either stand by their convictions and thus risk possible oblivion, or they had to swim with the tide and thereby incur the contempt of non-committed writers like Stendhal himself. Stendhal, on the other hand, cannot be accused of girouettisme, since his 'political' beliefs were not always made from an ideological standpoint, and his opinions on political institutions and theories cannot be abstracted from his views on

nineteenth-century French society as a whole.

It is imperative, therefore, to see Stendhal in terms of the historical moment in which he lived and wrote. The very character of the man — his volatile mind and his reluctance to be caught up in the limits of any one system of thought to the exclusion of another — contributes to the lack of definition surrounding his politics and makes him a suitable subject for our proposed method. But such a character itself was also to a large extent a product of the times in which he lived. The confidence of the eighteenth century, the belief of Enlightenment thinkers in human perfectibility and a basically stable order in society had been swept away by the tide of the French Revolution. The early eighteenth century's conviction that political progress would be achieved through the agency of man's natural goodness and his willingness to sacrifice personal gain for the sake of the majority proved to be optimistic in the extreme. Nineteenth-century Frenchmen were to become increasingly aware that there was a price to pay for the political improvements which had been made: fear, doubts, and instability were the disappointing features of post-revolutionary society. It was only in such an unhappy and unstable social climate that a writer like Stendhal could extend the context of politics to include a concern for the quality of life in general. The virtue of political progress itself was called into question when it brought with it so many disadvantages for French society.

The conclusions reached in Part I will also tend to explain the choice of main title as Stendhal and the Nineteenth Century rather than simply Stendhal and Politics. In the first place, the term 'politics', as we have suggested, is really too narrow to be applied to Stendhal's writing, since his 'political' ideas often incorporate considerations of a more general nature, and refer frequently to life in nineteenth-century French society as a whole. Secondly, although Stendhal died in 1842, it seems legitimate to talk of his views on nineteenth-century France in general, since by the mid-1820s he had already arrived at a fairly fixed opinion about contemporary society. His view derived directly from his observations of the effects of the Revolution and was therefore not substantially modified by the changes of government which characterized the first half

of the century in France. By the time he began writing novels, therefore, he had already passed judgement on nineteenth-century France, and this was only to be confirmed throughout the remaining years of his life. This judgement was, on the whole, a pessimistic one; for if his interpretation of the way in which French society was evolving satisfied the progressive political thinker in him, from a personal, ethical, and artistic point of view he was far from happy.

The second part of the study will be an examination of Stendhal's first major novel, Le Rouge et le Noir, using the same method as that applied to Part I. In other words, the ambiguities encountered in any attempt to interpret the novel 'politically' will be explained, or at least illuminated, by reference to the different standpoints which Stendhal adopted as he wrote.

It may seem strange to choose Le Rouge et le Noir as the novel of the nineteenth century, in preference to Lucien Leuwen, for example. The former is, after all, usually regarded as both a document about and a condemnation of the Restoration, with critics like Claude Liprandi and Kosei Kurisu relating incidents or characters in the book to various historical episodes and personages of the regime. It is, however, also possible to regard Le Rouge et le Noir as Stendhal's first and perhaps most powerful novel of disillusionment with the nineteenth century as a whole.

In the first place, Stendhal subtitled his novel Chronique du XIXe siècle, and he often suggested in the text itself that he was portraying the moral and social climate of the century, and not just that of Restoration France. On one occasion, for example, during a description of Mathilde's excesses, his irony at the expense of the century as a whole is particularly bitter:

Ce personnage est tout à fait d'imagination, et même imaginé bien en dehors des habitudes sociales qui, parmi tous les siècles, assureront un rang si distingué à la civilisation du XIXe siècle.²⁰

20 II, ch.xix, p.223. The following editions are used to quote from Stendhal: Oeuvres complètes, Geneva, 1967-73; Correspondance, Paris, 1967-8; Courrier Anglais, Paris, 1935-6.

Subsequent remarks made by the novelist in an article intended for the Italian press in 1831 tend to justify this reading of the book as a condemnation of the nineteenth century in general.

Secondly, Stendhal's awareness of the irrevocable changes brought about by the impact of the 1789 Revolution on French society is revealed by his representation of the various social classes in the novel. By the 1820s he had, as we have mentioned, reached certain fixed conclusions about the evolution taking place in French society since 1789, an evolution which largely resisted the attempts of successive Restoration governments to revert to a pre-revolutionary situation. The Courrier Anglais, a collection of Stendhal's journalistic-writings of the 1820s which is normally regarded as of interest chiefly for its documentary value, contains in fact not only specific pictures and criticism of French Restoration society, but also an under-current of ideas which show Stendhal's lucidity about fundamental movements in post-revolutionary society as a whole. In the same way, Le Rouge et le Noir presents certain episodes which epitomize the character of the Restoration regime, but it also embodies Stendhal's interpretation of the social evolution which was largely defying the tactics of Restoration politicians, and which had more lasting implications for the future of France.

Thirdly, it is possible to view the problem of the confused chronology of the book, the fact that according to the internal logic of the narrative the revolution of July 1830 and the advent of Louis-Philippe should enter into the novel, but do not, as yet another pointer to Stendhal's intentions. If one adopts the approach of examining Stendhal's political ideas, as they are expressed in his fiction and non-fictional works alike, in the light of his frequent shifts of emphasis from an ideological to a moral, aesthetic, or simply selfish standpoint, it becomes clear that he was ultimately more concerned with the quality of life and art than with political freedom, democracy, or republicanism. From this perspective the revolution of 1830 and the inauguration of the July Monarchy were of little consequence to the novelist, since in his view the gaiety and artistic standards he admired had disappeared with the Revolution

of 1789, and his ultimate judgement on nineteenth-century society remained the same. It could be argued, therefore, that if the novelist deliberately omitted to register the change of regime in Le Rouge et le Noir, it was because the novel represented for him a condemnation of, or at any rate an unfavourable judgement on, nineteenth-century French life in general, and not simply his views on the politics of one regime, the Restoration.

Stendhal also gave the subtitle Chronique de 1830 to this novel, and in his Avertissement de l'éditeur he claimed that the events in it took place in 1827. The interchangeability of 1830, 1827, or simply the nineteenth century as the author's temporal setting for the book indicates, not carelessness on Stendhal's part, so much as a desire to convey to the reader his judgement on a society whose specific and lasting characteristics he had already apprehended.

In short, it is possible to consider Le Rouge et le Noir as the most dynamic fictional representation of Stendhal's views on nineteenth-century French society. One more consideration can help to justify the application of the 'variety of stand-points' approach to this rather than any other novel: the vast amount of criticism which has been devoted to Le Rouge et le Noir. The controversial nature of the debate which surrounds its 'political' interpretation makes it a particularly pertinent choice for the adoption of our proposed method. The difficulty evidently arises because of the ambiguities in the novel itself, but these contradictions can be explained, to some extent at least, in the light of the diversity of viewpoint employed by its author.

Our argument will therefore be, that the contradictions inherent in Stendhal's 'political' views, expressed in his non-fictional works and in his first major novel in particular, are not entirely inexplicable if one takes account of the shifts of emphasis, of the different criteria which contribute to the formation of his so-called 'political' judgements.

Part I: Stendhal and Politics

Chapter 1: The Revolution

The French Revolution brought about an immense change in the political and social conditions of France and throughout Europe, and Stendhal, who was only six when the revolutionary events began, is undoubtedly one of the first major nineteenth-century writers to have understood and recorded its impact on French society. If a study were made of the principal themes in his writing, then the French Revolution would certainly have to be listed; for in almost every one of his works, published or private, completed or fragmentary, there are allusions to the events and consequences of the revolutionary period. Moreover, Stendhal's mature political opinions derive more or less directly from his knowledge of the events of 1789 to 1799. In other words, his judgements on the different nineteenth-century regimes which followed the First Republic were based to a large extent on the degree to which they took account of revolutionary changes. But, as critics of his political thinking have often shown, his attitude, particularly where the consequences of the Revolution in French society were concerned, was essentially ambiguous. In this study, it is hoped that an explanation of the contradictions and ambiguity will be found in an analysis of the different viewpoints from which Stendhal made his judgements.

It is essential to remember that Stendhal observed the immediate impact of Revolution and First Republic as a child in Grenoble, and his personal experience is crucial to the initial formation of his views. Since he did not begin to keep a diary until April 1801, we must rely on his memories of the revolutionary period as they are expressed in his autobiography La Vie de Henry Brulard (1835-6). The main point which emerges from this work is the attitude of young Henri Beyle to his family. After the traumatic experience of the loss of his mother (in November 1790), he presents himself to the reader as a persecuted victim of tyranny:

Deux diables étaient déchaînés contre ma pauvre enfance, ma tante Séraphie et mon père qui, dès 1791, devint son esclave. . . Je n'ai presque aucun souvenir de la triste époque 1790-1795 pendant laquelle j'ai été un pauvre petit bambin persécuté. (I, vii, 107)

From December 1792 to August 1794 the sensitive child was subjected

to additional torment: l'abbé Raillane, former tutor to the illustrious Périier family, became Beyle's private teacher:

Je haïssais l'abbé, je haïssais mon père, source des pouvoirs de l'abbé, je haïssais encore plus la religion, au nom de laquelle ils me tyrannisaient. (I, viii, 125)¹

The mature Stendhal frankly admits that his childhood views of the period were formed in direct rebellion against his family:

Mes parents, comme les r[ois] d'aujourd'hui, voulaient que la re[ligion] me maintînt en soumission, et moi je ne respirais que révolte. (I, xx, 295)

Thus he retrospectively places the source of his strong anti-clericalism in an episode during which he was scolded, unjustly he felt, by his pious Aunt Séraphie:

Je me révoltai, je pouvais avoir quatre ans: de cette époque date mon horreur pour la religion, horreur que ma raison a pu à grand-peine réduire à de justes dimensions. (I, iii, 37)

Three years later, on his mother's death, the words of consolation offered to his father by another priest, l'abbé Rey, confirmed the child in his anti-clerical revolt:

Mon ami, ceci vient de Dieu dit enfin l'abbé; et ce mot, dit par un homme que je haïssais à un autre que je n'aimais guère, me fit réfléchir profondément . . . Je me mis à dire du mal de God. (I, iv, 55)

The period known as the 'tyrannie Raillane' which followed evidently strengthened the victim's opposition.

In the same way, Beyle reacted against the political opinions of his family, who had strong royalist convictions; inevitably, the youngster became an emotional republican:

Bientôt arriva la politique. Ma famille était des plus aristocrates de la ville, ce qui fit que sur-le-champ je me sentis républic[ain] enragé. (I, ix, 144)²

¹ See also I, ch.ix, p.146: 'Sous un autre rapport j'étais absolument comme les peuples actuels de l'Europe: mes tyrans me parlaient toujours avec les douces paroles de la plus tendre sollicitude, et leur plus ferme alliée était la religion'.

² The family were bourgeois. Chérubin Beyle, as a member of the Grenoble Parlement, mixed with the noblesse de robe, and, according to Stendhal, aspired to the title himself.

It followed, therefore, that he favoured the execution of Louis XVI in 1793:

Mais j'avouerai qu'il m'eût suffi de l'intérêt que prenaient au sort de Louis XVI M. le grand vicaire Rey et les autres prêtres, amis de la famille, pour me faire désirer sa mort. (I, x, 161)

The element of reaction, of taking the opposite view to that expected of him by his family, was crucial to the initial formation of Henri Beyle's views on religion and politics, and Stendhal was lucid enough to diagnose correctly the source of his anti-clericalism and his republican leanings.

It seems that the first actual event of the Revolution which he recalled was the famous Journée des Tuiles (7 June 1788) during which the people of Grenoble, defending their magistrates, threw down tiles from the roof of the Palais de Justice at the royal troops below. Stendhal's nostalgia for the period leads him at first to claim that he had witnessed the event: 'Ce jour-là, je vis couler le premier sang répandu par la Révolution française', but honesty forces him on the next page to admit that he had not ~~been~~ there: 'Mais tout ceci est de l'histoire, à la vérité racontée par des témoins oculaires, mais que je n'ai pas vue' (I, v, 82-3). A few years later he watched the revolutionary soldiers marching through Grenoble on their way to Italy: 'Je voyais passer les beaux régiments de dragons allant en Italie . . . Je les dévorai des yeux; mes parents les exécraient' (I, ix, 144). The news of Louis XVI's execution, which also dismayed his monarchist family, delighted this ten-year-old Jacobin: 'Je fus saisi d'un des plus vifs mouvements de joie que j'aie éprouvés en ma vie' (I, x, 162). His experience of the Terror was limited, and he explains that events in Grenoble were really very mild: 'La Terreur fut donc très douce, et j'ajouterai hardiment fort raisonnable, à Grenoble' (I, xi, 173). Indeed, his family continued to harbour priests and practise their religion without much fear of repression:

La Terreur, qui jamais ne fut Terreur en Dauphiné, ne s'aperçut jamais que quatre-vingts ou cent dévotes sortaient de chez mon grand-père tous les dimanches à midi.

(I, xviii, 270)

Nevertheless, the Terror did have two important effects on the life of Henri Beyle which must have strengthened his devotion

to the revolutionary cause. Firstly, the Convention's anti-clerical policy rid him of his hated tutor Raillane, and Stendhal comments that the extreme relief caused by this deliverance has robbed him of any distinct memory of the affair:

Peut-être M. Raillane fut-il obligé de se cacher pour refus de serment à la constitution civile du clergé. Quoi qu'il en soit, son éloignement fut pour moi le plus grand événement possible, et je n'en ai pas de souvenir. (I, x, 152-3)

Secondly, in April 1793 his father and grandfather were placed, justly he considered, on the list of suspects drawn up by the Committee of Public Safety, and it seems that Chérubin Beyle was even imprisoned for a time. These two events represented a reversal of roles for the persecuted child who until then had regarded himself as prisoner and slave to his family and tutor.³ Now it was his hated tyrants who were imprisoned, and the young child's faith in the Revolution can only have been confirmed.

Continuing in his revolt against his royalist family, the self-confessed young republican attempted, unsuccessfully, to join the Bataillons de l'Espérance being formed by Jacobins in Grenoble (I, xii, 181). Some time later he slipped into a meeting of the Société des Jacobins, but he was disappointed at the scene: 'L'impression ne fut pas favorable: je trouvais horriblement vulgaires ces gens que j'aurais voulu aimer' (I, xv, 235). However, he remained unshaken in his Jacobinism because of the continuing conservative reactions of his family: 'Cette saleté laissée à elle-même fut bientôt effacée par quelque récit de bataille gagnée qui faisait gémir ma famille' (I, xv, 237).

In November 1796 Beyle began to attend the newly instituted École Centrale in Grenoble, and for nearly three years he received the liberal education brought about by the revolutionary reforms of 1795. In later life Stendhal regarded this period as one of the most important factors in forming his character, and he always judged himself fortunate to have attended such

³ See La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.xv, p.228: 'Mentir n'est-il pas la seule ressource des esclaves?'

an institution instead of being educated under the system of the ancien régime:

Cela peut nous aider à prévoir les résultats de la lutte qui continue en France, dans la politique aussi bien que dans la littérature, entre les hommes nés avant 1780 et ceux qui, nés après cette époque, ont reçu malgré eux une éducation énergique . . . D'où pour les enfants un grand avantage sur leurs parents. (1828)⁴

During this period he was to be disappointed at the defeat of the revolutionary armies:

Vers la fin de l'été 1799 mon coeur de citoyen était navré de nos défaites en Italie, Novi et les autres, qui causaient à mes parents une vive joie.⁵

In the autumn of the same year, having taken a brilliant first prize in mathematics at the École Centrale, citizen Beyle set off for Paris to sit the entrance examination for the École Polytechnique, arriving in the capital the day after 18 Brumaire. His initial reaction to this event was one of joy, for he had admired the exploits of Bonaparte in Italy. But the mature Stendhal admits that he had not really understood the historic event: 'Je n'y comprenais pas grand'chose, et j'étais enchanté que le jeune général Bonaparte se fît roi de France'.⁶ Thus the end of the Revolution and First Republic coincided with Henri Beyle's deliverance from his family and Grenoble.

Clearly the youngster at once identified himself with the revolutionary and republican forces in the country, but his attitude was emotional rather than ideological. Beyle's initial devotion to the Revolution was formed in direct reaction to the political views of his family. Emotionally he was ready to support anything that his horrid relatives valued, and the feeling went further than purely political or clerical allegiances. For example, young Henri Beyle refused to acknowledge the beauty of the scenery surrounding Grenoble which his

⁴ Courrier Anglais, Paris, 1935-6, III, pp.418-19.

⁵ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xxxiv, p.218.

⁶ Ibid., II, ch.xxxiv, p.226.

hated aunt adored, and in later life Stendhal claimed that the same element of reaction in his attitudes had affected the style of his writing:

C'est ainsi que, tant d'années après, les phrases nombreuses et prétentieuses de MM. Chateaubriand et Salvandy m'ont fait écrire le Rouge et le Noir d'un style trop hâché . . . C'est la même disposition d'âme qui me faisait fermer les yeux aux paysages des extases de ma tante Séraphie.⁷

In the same way he hated his father's country house at Claix, despite the extra freedom gained there and despite the excellent library, because his father tried to instil in him an interest in property and agriculture and would not let him alone.⁸ The revolutionary events were dear to him because they gave his futile conspiring and opposition a glorious historical framework. John Atherton comments:

By casting himself in the role of persecuted victim he transforms his differences of opinion with his family into a heroic struggle, and thus justifies the intensity of his resistance.⁹

Indeed, it was fitting for Stendhal to look back on his miserable childhood as a parallel to the struggles of the young and vital republican armies to overcome the forces of ignorance and despotism. There was nothing specifically political about Henri Beyle's attitude, therefore, and yet, as Victor Del Litto points out, the emotional opposition he offered his relations as a young boy was to prove important for the later formation of political views:

Sans le savoir, il se prépare à regarder et à juger la société et les événements politiques avec de tout autres yeux que ceux du fils d'une famille bourgeoise aux idées réactionnaires, étreiquées, tel qu'il aurait dû être.¹⁰

In addition, there was a marked lack of political commitment in his youthful views; basically, his concern was purely personal.

7 Ibid., II, ch.xxii, p.28.

8 Ibid., I, ch.ix, p.138; ch.xvii, p.265.

9 Stendhal, London, 1965, Part II, p.22.

10 La Vie de Stendhal, Paris, 1965, ch.ii, p.32.

If he claimed that he first became a republican at the tender age of five — 'Presque en même temps prit sa première naissance mon amour filial instinctif, forcené dans ces temps-là, pour la république'¹¹ — nevertheless his affiliation remained completely emotional, and on several occasions throughout his autobiography Stendhal admits to having been more preoccupied with the self than with the fate of his country:

De 1796 à 1799 je n'ai fait attention qu'à ce qui pouvait me donner les moyens de quitter Grenoble, c'est-à-dire aux mathématiques.

Bientôt une crainte égoïste vint se mêler à mon chagrin de citoyen. Je craignais qu'à cause de l'approche des Russes il n'y eût pas d'examen à Grenoble.

Je ne veux pas me peindre comme un amant malheureux à mon arrivée à Paris, en novembre 1799, ni même comme un amant. J'étais trop occupé du monde et de ce que j'allais faire dans ce monde si inconnu pour moi.¹²

It is clearly impossible, then, to make out a case for premature political engagement in Henri Beyle; his admiration for the revolutionary period was the result of a purely emotional revolt against his family, and in any case could not hide a definite lack of political commitment in the face of his personal problems. Yet throughout his autobiography Stendhal stresses the consistency of his views:

Tel j'étais à dix ans tel je suis à cinquante-deux. Je conclus de ce souvenir, si présent à mes yeux, que, en 1793, il y a quarante-deux ans, j'allais à la chasse du bonheur précisément comme aujourd'hui; en d'autres termes plus communs: mon caractère était absolument le même qu'aujourd'hui.

Il y a plus, il y a bien pis. I am encore in 1835 the man of 1794.¹³

Indeed, his mature reflections on the French Revolution itself do tend to corroborate this claim. Nevertheless, ambiguities and contradictions abound.

Stendhal gave considerable thought to the events of the

¹¹La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.iii, pp.37-8.

¹² Ibid., I, ch.x, p.166; II, ch.xxxiv, p.219; ch.xxxvi, p.246.

¹³ Ibid., I, ch.x, p.162, p.164, ch.xvi, p.243.

Revolution throughout his life and work, and it is true to say that he remained unambiguous to the end in his admiration for the events of the revolutionary period itself. As H.-F. Imbert puts it, 'La Révolution demeurera toujours pour lui symbole de pureté politique'.¹⁴ In January 1803 Beyle wrote:

La Révolution Française devient pour les poètes français qui existeront dans quatre cents ans la plus belle source de gloire qui ait jamais existé.¹⁵

In 1814 he said:

La Révolution est née des progrès de l'esprit humain et de la faiblesse des anciennes institutions; je pourrais dire de la nécessité. Les principes qu'elle a fait germer en France, et comme nous le voyons aujourd'hui, en Europe, sont éternels; c'est elle qui rend libre l'Espagne, la Hollande et l'Italie.¹⁵

But his praise and admiration were not restricted to abstract musings, for he also gave specific consideration to the reforms and institutions of the period 1789 to 1799. For example, he was particularly impressed by the liberal education of the First Republic, and his pride at having himself attended a college offering such an education has already been noted.¹⁶ Stendhal always treated the question of education very carefully, and he was convinced that a man's schooling was all-important in determining his future character and political opinions. In the early 1800s, for instance, he noted his aims in his unfinished drama Les Deux Hommes:

Je montre que l'éducation philosophique a produit un homme vraiment honnête, tandis qu'au contraire l'éducation dévote a produit un homme faible inclinant à la scélératesse. (1803)
Il faut qu'ils montrent leur caractère comme une suite de leur éducation. (1804)¹⁷

Later he was acutely aware of the problems in post-1815 French

¹⁴ 'Stendhal et Napoléon', Europe, 480-1, avril-mai 1969, pp. 154-62 (p.155).

¹⁵ Journal Littéraire, I, p.92; Mélanges, II, p.7.

¹⁶ See also Napoléon, II, ch.iii, p.105: 'Les Écoles centrales, l'École polytechnique sont fondées; ce fut le plus beau temps de l'Instruction publique'.

¹⁷ Théâtre, I, p.243; Journal Littéraire, II, p.127. See also Correspondance, Paris, 1968, I, p.52 and Théâtre, I, p.414.

society where different generations with different educational backgrounds had to coexist:

Les jésuites se sont bien chargés de former la jeunesse de France, mais que va-t-on faire des hommes qui ont été élevés dans les écoles centrales de la République de 1792 à 1800 ou dans les lycées semi-libéraux de Napoléon de 1800 à 1814? (1824)

A Paris, un homme de soixante ans a sur toutes choses des idées qui sont aux antipodes de celles d'un fils de trente ans. La Révolution a formé le caractère de celui-ci, mais le père est toujours l'homme de 1785. (1826)¹⁸

In 1828 he made a fourfold division of generations:

On compte en France dans la politique et la littérature quatre classes d'hommes: 1o les esprits frivoles du règne de Louis XVI qui eurent vingt ans en 1788; 2o les révolutionnaires qui n'eurent vingt ans qu'en 1793; 3o les bonapartistes qui eurent quinze ans en 1800 et qui, de cette date à 1814, furent enivrés de gloire militaire par la lecture des bulletins de l'empereur et 4o les jeunes hommes qui, depuis 1815 et la seconde restauration des Bourbons, ont été éduqués par l'Eglise, sous l'influence des jésuites.¹⁹

If further proof were needed of the importance which Stendhal attached to education his drafts of a constitution for a College of Peers could be mentioned. It is significant that most of the articles are inspired by his own education and are intended to indoctrinate the pupils with revolutionary and republican ideology:

Art[icle] IX.

Les trente professeurs royaux enseigneront:

. . .

3. L'histoire d'Angleterre en général. . .

4. L'Examen de la Constitution anglaise par Delolme . . .

Les ouvrages de Jérémie Bentham.

5. Les ouvrages de Montesquieu . . .

6. L'histoire de France en général et particulièrement l'histoire de notre partie depuis 1715 jusqu'à l'an 1814 . . .

7. Ils donneront aux élèves une description étendue des constitutions des États-Unis d'Amérique. (1814)

On enseignera:

Tracy, Say, Montesquieu, Delolme, Helvétius.

Volney . . .

¹⁸ Courrier Anglais, II, p.177; III, p.173.

¹⁹ Ibid., III, p.441.

Hume, Robertson, Gibbon . . . Machiavel, Mably, Thouret, Voltaire. (1818)²⁰

A writer who so clearly understood the rift between the generations in nineteenth-century French society — 'Aussi étrange que cela puisse paraître, le caractère français s'est moins modifié de l'année 1500 et du règne de François 1er jusqu'à l'année 1780 et au règne de Louis XVI, que depuis 1789 jusqu'à 1824' (1825)²¹ — was hardly likely to identify himself with the Romantics, for instance, most of whom had different educational and political experiences from his own. On the one hand there was Chateaubriand, born in 1768, whose ancien régime education was completed before the Revolution began, and on the other the younger Romantic generation — Lamartine (born 1790), Vigny (1797), Hugo (1802), Nerval (1808), or Musset (1810) — who had all experienced the reactionary educational system of the Restoration or at best the military instruction introduced by Napoleon. One modern critic correctly notes that Stendhal stands alone amongst great nineteenth-century literary figures as far as his intellectual formation is concerned:

Stendhal est le seul de nos grands écrivains qui doive sa formation de base aux écoles de la Révolution. L'étude des philosophes du XVIIIe siècle, une morale essentiellement civique et libre de toute préoccupation religieuse, viennent donner un contenu intellectuel à son esprit d'opposition.²²

It is not surprising, therefore, that he refused to see himself as having affinities with the young writers affected by the mal du siècle. At the same time, his emotional praise for the Revolution found intellectual support when, as a mature adult thinker, faced with the realities of Restoration society, he

²⁰ Mélanges, I, pp.161-2, p.214. Victor Del Litto suggests 1818 as a probable date for the second (shorter) draft, whereas Henri Martineau, in his Divan edition of the Mélanges de politique et d'histoire, had stated May 1817.

²¹ Courrier Anglais, II, p.269.

²² Geneviève Mouillaud, 'De Henri Beyle à Stendhal', Europe, 599-21, juillet-août-septembre 1972, pp.16-26 (p.17).

reflected upon his own revolutionary education.

Stendhal also admired the revolutionary institutions in general:

Jusqu'ici je me réjouissais de la Révolution française qui a amené de si belles institutions quoiqu'un peu voilées encore par les nuages qui suivent l'irruption. (1811)²³

Certainly two political reforms which resulted from the Revolution earned his lasting admiration: the bicameral system of government and freedom of the press (both of which were effectively suspended during the Empire). In De l'Amour, for example, Stendhal wrote: 'J'appelle mal moral, en 1822, tout gouvernement qui n'a pas les deux chambres',²⁴ and his belief in the necessity of a double chamber is also emphasized by his educational propositions for a College of Peers, in which he clearly intended to educate in the most liberal way possible these future representatives in the upper house. In a later work, Mémoires d'un touriste, Stendhal commented on the significance of a free press in the guaranteeing of political liberty:

Le journal, excellent, nécessaire pour les intérêts politiques . . . Mais, politiquement parlant, notre liberté n'a pas d'autre garantie que le journal. (1837-8)²⁵

In other words, for Stendhal the events of the French Revolution inaugurated the reign of political liberty in France.

The social consequences of the period also gave rise to much reflection. For example, Stendhal favoured the abolition of the more serious social abuses of the ancien régime:

L'amélioration du sort du peuple malgré les guerres de Napoléon démontre que son bonheur vient des réformes faites par la Révolution, et surtout de la suppression de la dîme, taxe affreuse qui augmentait le prix du pain. (1826)²⁶

He also supported the new distribution of wealth which tended to make peasants satisfied landowners:

La Révolution, en divisant les terres de l'Eglise et en les vendant par parcelles a beaucoup augmenté le nombre

²³ Journal, II, p.205.

²⁴ II, ch.xlvi, p.10.

²⁵ I, p.35, p.36.

²⁶ Courrier Anglais, III, pp.239-40.

des propriétaires fonciers. (1827)

La Révolution, ou plus justement la vente des biens du clergé et des émigrés, en faisant naître un sentiment de respectabilité dans le petit peuple de France, l'a rendu le plus heureux du monde. (1828)

Aujourd'hui, en 1837, les paysans et le bas peuple de tous les pays civilisés de l'Europe ont à peu près compris que la Révolution française tend à les faire propriétaires. (1836-7)²⁷

Further, according to Stendhal, the Revolution, thanks to the freedom of expression it inaugurated and the spread of wealth and wellbeing resulting from its social reforms, created in France a new and healthy force, public opinion, which guaranteed the country against tyranny: 'Quels sont les meilleurs moyens de rétablir le despotisme en France? Le seul obstacle que j'y voie, c'est l'opinion publique' (1804).²⁸ At the same time, there was now a certain equality of opportunity in careers;

Le meilleur éloge qu'on puisse faire de la Révolution, c'est qu'elle a enlevé aux carrières frivoles, inutiles et pires encore, des centaines d'hommes d'un talent supérieur et leur a offert, dans le champ étendu des affaires publiques, des occasions sans nombre pour faire valoir une énergie qui serait autrement restée endormie ou aurait été employée à des bagatelles laborieuses. (1824)²⁹

But Stendhal also realized that the revolutionary work remained to be completed, and the theme of the continuing revolution runs like a leitmotiv through his various writings:

La lecture du dernier ouvrage est même une lecture de luxe et qui n'est nécessaire que pour la personne qui veut approfondir la curieuse lutte des monarchies de l'Europe contre les idées républicaines. Cette lutte à mort entre deux principes opposés est loin d'être encore terminée. (1822)

La révolution politique de la France, qui peut en fait être considérée comme celle de l'Europe et du monde entier, a commencé en 1787, a été interrompue par Bonaparte le 9 novembre 1799 et a recommencé en 1815 pour finir Dieu sait quand. (1828)³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., III, pp.297-8, p.448; Napoléon, II, ch.viii, p.173. See also Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.279.

²⁸ Théâtre, II, p.35.

²⁹ Courrier Anglais, II, p.221.

³⁰ Mélanges, II, p.63; Courrier Anglais, III, p.440. See also Mélanges, II, p.82, p.126.

Convinced that more social progress was both inevitable and desirable, Stendhal criticized successive governments during the Restoration and the July Monarchy. He disliked their nostalgia for the society of the ancien régime, their efforts to halt revolutionary progress, and their refusal to allow the lower classes to air their grievances. One capital comment in an English article in 1824 sums up the attitude of the frustrated progressive thinker:

La Révolution a tout changé en France. Cependant, nous persistons comme le reste de l'Europe à ne point voir ce changement.³¹

In the main, modern historical opinion tends to agree with his judgement and Albert Soboul, for example, might well have been quoting Stendhal in the following reflection:

Inachevée, l'oeuvre de la Révolution n'en apparaît pas moins immense et d'une portée incalculable dans les destinées de la France et du monde contemporain.³²

Clearly Stendhal was one of the first intellectuals in the nineteenth century to grasp the magnitude of the revolutionary work and to record its claims.

It follows that from an ideological point of view Stendhal stood closer to the men of 1793 than to those of 1789. E.J. Hobsbawm, in his study of the French Revolution, explains the political ideals of the members of the 1789 Constituent Assembly:

A constitutional monarchy based on a propertied oligarchy expressing itself through a representative assembly was more congenial to most bourgeois liberals than the democratic republic which might have seemed a more logical expression of their theoretical aspirations . . . On the whole the classical liberal bourgeois of 1789 (and the liberal of 1789-1848) was not a democrat but a believer in constitutionalism, a secular state with civil liberties and guarantees for private enterprise, and government by taxpayers and property-owners.³³

³¹ Courrier Anglais, IV, p.14.

³² Précis d'histoire de la Révolution française, Paris, 1962, p.469.

³³ The Age of Revolution, New York, 1962, ch.iii, p.81.

In other words, the bourgeois leaders of 1789 were more concerned with protecting or fostering their own commercial interests as a 'class' than with putting democratic ideals into practice; in addition, these were to a large extent the men who were to attempt to keep the July Monarchy a tight, constitutional regime. Stendhal's hatred of the bourgeois liberals of juste-milieu and their ideals will also be, by implication, a judgement on the men of 1789.

By his continuing belief that the work of the Revolution was not complete, that it would and should break through the barriers of a revolt which benefited only the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie, Stendhal was aligning himself (in so far as he can ever be said to align himself with any political position wholeheartedly) rather with the men of 1793; that is to say, he was revealing Jacobin tendencies. It is Hobsbawm again who best describes the position of this political group:

The peculiarity of the French Revolution is that one section of the liberal middle class was prepared to remain revolutionary up to and indeed beyond the brink of anti-bourgeois revolution: these were the Jacobins, whose name came to stand for 'radical revolution' everywhere.³⁴

Thus Stendhal admired the Convention:

La Convention a plus fait dans son règne de trois ans pour la propagation des lumières que Napoléon et les Bourbons au cours des leurs qui ont duré dix ans chacun. (1826)³⁵

He was particularly impressed by the work of the Montagne, the vociferous minority group in the Convention. He was pleased, as we have seen, with their laws of 5 brumaire and 17 nivôse an II (26 October 1793 and 6 January 1794) which divided inheritances equally among all the children of the deceased, thereby beginning the process of decentralization in wealth. He was, of course, delighted at the execution of Louis XVI, and he approved of the dechristianization of France and the revolutionary calendar, again the work of the Montagne. Finally,

³⁴ Ibid., ch.iii, p.85.

³⁵ Courrier Anglais, II, p.400.

as we have noted from his autobiography, he was a supporter of the Terror.

Yet Stendhal's Jacobinism needs to be approached with care, for his use of the term was not always purely political. In many ways his admiration for the great revolutionary figures of 1793 was simply an example of his reaction against the dullness of nineteenth-century society and of his constant tendency to surround the political events which took place during his childhood with an aura of glamour and glory. This explains why he could genuinely admire individuals with the most varied political beliefs, some of whom were certainly not Jacobins. For instance, he placed Sieyès, Mirabeau and Danton in the same class of human beings:

Petite ville assez insignifiante. [Montargis] Elle s'est fort embellie depuis 1814, qu'elle a pu jouir des réformes introduites par Sieyès, Mirabeau, Danton et autres grands hommes. (1837-8)³⁶

And he was almost as enthusiastic about Charlotte Corday, royalist assassin of Marat, as he was about the execution of Louis XVI:

Peut-être avais-je été conduit à faire ma liste d'assassins par l'action de Charlotte Corday — 11 ou 12 juillet 1793 — dont j'étais fou. (1835-6)³⁷

Certain critics have remained perplexed by the versatility of Stendhal's mind; for instance, Maxime Leroy seems to treat the ambiguity as a problem:

Il y a dans l'esprit de Stendhal des tendances diverses; il veut de l'autorité et de la liberté; il est monarchiste et républicain. . . . Ce curieux a eu de ses nerfs, admirateur en même temps de Bonaparte, d'Helvétius, de Mirabeau et de Sieyès.³⁸

Yet all that is needed is an acknowledgement of the fact that Stendhal, who was after all no self-confessed political theorist, did not always judge political events and personalities from the point of view of the political observer. It is imperative

³⁶ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.27.

³⁷ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.xx, p.296.

³⁸ Histoire des idées sociales en France, Paris, 1946, II, p.187.

to distinguish between the writer's various criteria for judgement. Here we are dealing with a Stendhal who, in assessing the position of great individual figures, tended to ignore the political affiliations of the man or woman concerned — 'Entre deux hommes d'esprit, l'un extrêmement républicain, l'autre extrêmement légitimiste, le penchant secret de l'auteur sera pour le plus aimable',³⁹ — and sought to judge him on personal qualities alone. He was especially impressed by the energetic figure of Mme Roland, for example, for there is hardly a single work in which he neglects to refer to his chosen heroine. In Mémoires d'un touriste, a work which was meant to give a realistic picture of society and politics in France in 1837, Stendhal loses little time in evoking enthusiastically the memory of Manon Roland:

C'est, je pense, dans les environs de ce pays-ci, qui probablement s'appelle Neuville, que la femme que je respecte le plus au monde avait un petit domaine.⁴⁰

In practically all of his non-fictional works he expresses the intention to write for someone of her calibre. For instance, La Vie de Henry Brulard is scarcely under way before the following comment appears:

De plus, s'il y a succès, je cours la chance d'être lu en 1900 par les âmes que j'aime, les Mme Roland, les Mélanie Guilbert, les ... (1835-6)⁴¹

According to a letter to his sister, Stendhal first read Mme Roland's Mémoires around 1804-5:

Lis-tu quelquefois la divine Madame Roland? Je bénis souvent le hasard qui me força ici à l'acheter.⁴²

Given his admiration for greatness, energy, self-sacrifice and love, it is not difficult to deduce his reasons for enthusing about this woman: her admiration for Rousseau, her

³⁹ Lucien Leuwen, I, p.3 (première préface). Stendhal's remark is disingenuous in context, since he is trying to defend himself in advance against criticisms of the political content of the novel. Nevertheless, the comment does have some truth in it.

⁴⁰ I, p.141.

⁴¹ I, ch.i, p.11.

⁴² Correspondance, I, p.175.

constant search for happiness, her political energy, her unfulfilled love for Buzot, and especially her generous gesture as she met her death, were all bound to provoke his enthusiasm. On this occasion his personal admiration for the extraordinary individual blinded his sense of political judgement to the extent that he saw in Mme Roland the epitome of self-sacrificial republicanism:

Voyez dans Mme Roland ce républicain qui, voyant qu'un assassinat odieux est nécessaire pour remonter l'opinion publique, va se promener tranquillement dans la rue. (1814)⁴³

He apparently missed the fact that Manon was a liberal bourgeois, afraid of the extremism of that other Stendhalian hero, Danton ('Le grand personnage du jour, l'immortel Danton, géant à la fois par son caractère et par sa stature' (1826))⁴⁴ and equally afraid of the Paris mob.

But if Stendhal's Jacobinism can be seen to some extent as a symptom of his tendency to react in favour of the political figures of his youth, and against those who dominated nineteenth-century French governments, nevertheless it can also be considered as politically realistic. It is interesting, for example, to examine his views on the Convention in terms of the Montagne/Gironde duality which has come to characterize it. Historically, the Convention has always been seen to embody a struggle for power between two major parties, the Girondins and the Montagnards. Alfred Cobban describes the differences which, traditionally, have been ascribed to the two groups, without, however, putting faith in the interpretation:

The argument, however, is that while one party, the Girondin, clung to its bourgeois principles at all costs, the Mountain, in the interests of national defence, willingly adopted (or alternatively, had forced on it, because both views are expressed) a policy which for a time protected the economic interests of the masses.⁴⁵

⁴³ Mélanges, V, p.107.

⁴⁴ Courrier Anglais, II, p.401.

⁴⁵ The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution, Cambridge, 1968, ch.vi, pp.65-6.

Another historian, M.J. Sydenham, reveals that the conception of the Girondins as a fairly well organized 'party' is based, not on historical fact, but on a propaganda campaign launched in 1792 and 1793 by the Montagne (who were a minority) as a political expedient in times of continual troubles in Paris.⁴⁶ The only feature which seems to have united the members of this so-called Girondin 'party' was their hatred of Robespierre, who was becoming more and more powerful. Indeed it was the very disunity of the opponents of the Montagne which caused their downfall (contrary to traditional belief, those of the 'Girondins' who seemed most closely associated with each other, and who might therefore appear to constitute a 'party', were most divided over the trial of Louis XVI). Ironically enough, had they been the organized party they were accused of being, they might well have defeated the Montagne in the struggle for supremacy in the Convention. It is revealing to note that Stendhal did not seem to be taken in by the propaganda, which made the 'Girondins' out to be a reactionary, federalist, or even royalist group; instead, he saw them for what they fundamentally were: a number of well-meaning deputies whose handling of affairs was clumsy and unrealistic:

M. de Metternich a raison (une raison de barbare si vous voulez); mais il ne ment pas en avançant que le gouvernement de l'opinion ou des deux Chambres n'est pas un véritable besoin pour l'Italie; ce n'est un besoin que pour quelques âmes généreuses qui ont vu les pays étrangers ou lu des voyages. Et encore ces âmes délicates, arrivées au fait et au prendre, s'amuse à exprimer de beaux sentiments, comme des Girondins, et ne savent pas agir. (1826)

Comme le marquis de Posa de Schiller, comme le jeune Brutus, Crescentius n'appartenait pas à son siècle; c'était un homme d'un autre âge. Notre révolution s'est chargée de fournir un nom à cette espèce d'hommes généreux et malhabiles à conduire les affaires, c'était un Girondin. (1829)⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The Girondins, London, 1961, especially chapters ii and vi.

⁴⁷ Rome, Naples et Florence, I, p.238; Promenades dans Rome, II, p.174.

His admiration for the politics of the Montagne (or Jacobins), therefore, was based on a realistic interpretation of events: the 'Girondins' might have been colourful orators and glamorous figures, but their political ideas were uncertain and unrealistic. The Montagne, on the other hand, realized the steps which were necessary if France, threatened by invasion from the Allies, was to retain the political benefits of the Revolution. Thus Stendhal insists that it was the Montagne who saved French liberty:

M. de La Fayette dit que Danton s'était vendu; si cela est prouvé, tant pis. Mais deux millions payent-ils trop cher la patrie sauvée par Danton? (1837)
En 1792, la France avait des hommes tels que Sieyès, Mirabeau et Danton. Ces deux derniers ont volé. Qu'importe? ils ont sauvé leur patrie; ils l'ont faite ce qu'elle est. (1837)⁴⁸

Stendhal may have been impressed by personalities, but he could also be a realistic judge of the political situation of 1793: although he disliked the person of Robespierre, for example, and preferred to praise Danton, Sieyès, or Mirabeau, he never subscribed to the general tendency to vilify Robespierre in which so many of his contemporaries (excluding Lamartine) indulged. In Rome, Naples et Florence, for example, Stendhal paid tribute to Robespierre's sense of justice:

Robespierre n'avait pas été l'ami de la plupart de ses victimes; il les immolait à un système faux sans doute, mais non pas à ses petites passions personnelles.⁴⁹

All in all, therefore, Stendhal's Jacobinism can be seen as the result of his lucid interpretation of the situation existing in France in 1793. The Jacobins were the only men who could face up to that situation and take the consequences. In short, they revealed that quality of energy which was so essential to all of Stendhal's thinking, and which he repeatedly sought, in vain, in nineteenth-century French society:

Les gens de la Révolution, les Danton, les Robespierre,

⁴⁸ Journal, V, p.192; Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.502.

⁴⁹ II, p.28.

les Tallien, etc., etc., avaient du pouvoir et peu de talent, si l'on veut, mais enfin, ils avaient pris ce pouvoir. Les Maison [Decazes] d'aujourd'hui n'ont eu que la peine of pleasing to a Gêronte. Cela est un peu différent: arracher à des rivaux et au risque de la vie le délicieux pouvoir, ce premier des biens, ou séduire an old man. (1818)⁵⁰

Like the policies of the Montagne, Stendhal's Jacobinism was therefore pragmatic rather than strictly ideological. An examination of his attitude to the men and the policies of 1793 shows that his judgements were not of a purely political nature; political and personal reasons combine to explain the extent and significance of his own particular form of Jacobinism.

But if Stendhal remained an admirer of the French Revolution itself all his life, if his enthusiasm for the great legendary figures and events of the revolutionary period never wavered, he was less optimistic about some of the effects of the Revolution on French society as a whole. In his view there was a price to pay for the relative political liberty and social equality instituted in France after 1789, and it was his concern for the arts in particular which led him to be less than overjoyed at some of the trends which he observed in nineteenth-century French life.

For instance, the decentralization of wealth brought with it, in Stendhal's opinion, an undesirable and vulgar emphasis on the acquisition of material possessions. Of course, money and the love of money were not new, and the eighteenth century had had its share of commercial dealings. But Stendhal rightly realized that with the Revolution had come a new stress on the importance of wealth to the exclusion of other criteria for success:

Ce siècle est commode; il n'y a qu'un mobile, l'argent; sous Louis XIV, par exemple, il y en avait trois ou quatre, il était impossible quelque argent qu'on eût, de réparer le manque de naissance et de vaincre certains préjugés que Voltaire et Rousseau ont détruits. (1805)⁵¹

⁵⁰ Correspondance, I, p.952.

⁵¹ Ibid., I, p.192.

In a period of such turmoil and change money was a constant for people to aim at: 'Nos révolutions ont appris aux gens que l'argent est la seule chose qui dure' (1826).⁵² At this point it must be noted that Stendhal's own attitude to wealth was not altogether unambiguous; at times he was himself far from deaf to its claims. During the Empire, for example, young Henri Beyle was continually demanding money from his father, and all his life he complained that he was not financially secure. Yet he was careful not to make of money the absolute criterion of contentment, as the following examples show:

Parmi nous, c'est l'argent, moyen qui aide beaucoup au bonheur, mais qui cependant ne le compose pas encore tout à fait . . . (1804)
 L'argent ne me paraît rien dans ce moment-ci, mais si j'en manquais, j'en sentirais le besoin. (1805)
 Je sais bien qu'il y a du ridicule à se plaindre toujours; mais peut-on se plaindre trop haut de n'être pas né avec quatre mille francs de rente? (1834)
 L'argent fut donc, et avec raison, la grande pensée de mon père, et moi je n'y ai jamais songé qu'avec dégoût. Cette idée me représente des peines cruelles, car en avoir ne me fait aucun plaisir, en manquer est un vilain malheur. (1835-6)
 Souvent je me dis, mais sans regret: "Que de belles occasions j'ai manquées! Je serais riche, du moins j'aurais de l'aisance!" Mais je vois en 1836 que mon plus grand plaisir est de rêver.⁵³

When he did want money, the desire often came from a personal feeling of timidity; knowing he was ugly, he felt that if he could be well-dressed and self-assured his physical failings would be less evident: 'Mon peu d'assurance vient de l'habitude où je suis de manquer d'argent. Quand j'en manque je suis timide partout' (1804).⁵⁴ Money, too, though it could entail servitude, also had liberating qualities: 'Les hommes qui ont du pain sont dispensés d'adorer les sots au pouvoir' (1841).⁵⁵ But personal considerations aside, it seemed that Stendhal

⁵² Courrier Anglais, III, p.240.

⁵³ Journal Littéraire, II, p.112; Correspondance, I, p.208; II, p.718; La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.vii, p.106; II, ch.xlv, p.355.

⁵⁴ Journal Littéraire, II, pp.16-17.

⁵⁵ Correspondance, III, p.465.

judged people by their aims in seeking to make money. Ostentation, as practised by Valenod in Le Rouge et le Noir for example, was obviously not acceptable, but wealth based in land or property seemed to find Stendhal's favour, for in La Vie de Henry Brulard he regretted having missed an opportunity to be propertied himself: 'A tout prendre, je ne regrette rien que de ne pas avoir acheté de la rente avec les gratifications de Napoléon vers 1808 et 1809' (1835-6).⁵⁶

In short, Stendhal thought it wrong to make the acquisition of wealth the ultimate desire in one's life; too many people, he felt, were chasing money to the exclusion of relaxation and enjoyment; this was one of the disadvantages brought about by the Revolution:

Depuis quelque temps seulement j'avais quelque idée vague qu'elle avait exilé l'allegria de l'Europe pour un siècle peut-être. (1811)

Une question se présente. Cet ensemble si attrayant de la vie de 1739 pourra-t-il renaître un jour au delà des Alpes ou parmi nous? Revient-on à la gaieté et au bon goût après une révolution telle que la nôtre? (1836)⁵⁷

But his capital criticism of this all-powerful incentive of wealth derives from his consciousness as an artist: with money becoming accessible to larger numbers of people, the demand for works of art was also greater, and Stendhal felt that a general lowering of standards was taking place to cater for the new rich:

La révolution de 1789 à 1835, en donnant l'idée d'aller au spectacle et l'argent pour payer à la porte à un grand nombre de Français incapables de sentir les choses fines, a créé le genre grossier et exagéré de MM. V. Hugo, Alex. Dumas, etc. (1835)⁵⁸

This Jacobin clearly had reservations about post-1789 French society, and the question of his republicanism is thus raised;

⁵⁶ II, ch.xlii, p.326.

⁵⁷ Journal, III, p.205; Mélanges, II, p.276. See also Correspondance, I, p.696, for a similar remark made in 1813.

⁵⁸ Journal Littéraire, III, p.187.

for he persisted in seeing nineteenth-century France as being republican in tendency despite the forms of government imposed upon it: 'La tendance du siècle est de tout mesurer par l'utilité; de là, la tendance est éminemment l'esprit r[épublicain]' (1819).⁵⁹ As we have seen, on his arrival in Paris in 1799 he certainly was an emotional republican, and his first few years in the capital were spent reading, among others, Alfieri, Montesquieu, and Bentham, thereby providing an intellectual framework for his views. In the early 1800s young Beyle was devoted to the figure of Brutus ('De tous les hommes c'est Brutus que j'aime le mieux' (1804))⁶⁰ and in July 1804 he set out to translate Alfieri's tragedy of that name. His early attempts at drama saw him trying to portray a character (whom he blandly claims to be a self-portrait) who combines all the qualities and virtues of the perfect republican.⁶¹ In short, he was not content to let his republicanism remain an entirely emotional attitude for long and embarked on an impressive programme of self-education (which he also tried to impose on his unwilling sister Pauline) in matters of government and political economy; unfortunately, along with knowledge came increasing difficulties and ambiguities.

Despite disparaging remarks about Montesquieu in his correspondence with Pauline in 1804⁶² (indeed this was common practice at the time, as Lucien Jansse points out⁶³) it is nevertheless from that same author that Beyle seems to have derived his definition of republican government, as his Réflexions sur Montesquieu, written in 1808, reveal:

59 Ibid., III, p.377.

60 Ibid., II, p.15.

61 This is Charles in Les Deux Hommes. Journal Littéraire, II, p.89: 'Dans les 2 men, je fais lutter le caractère républicain avec le caractère monarchique' (1804).

62 For example, Correspondance, I, p.144: 'Montesquieu flatte les tyrans; c'est pour cela que le vulgaire le loue' (1804).

63 'Stendhal et les grandes théories de l'Esprit des Lois', Stendhal Club, 15 octobre 1969, pp.25-48 (p.28).

Trois sortes de gouvernements: le républicain, le monarchique, le despotique. Le républicain est celui où le peuple en corps ou seulement une partie du peuple a la souveraine puissance. Il se distingue en démocratique ou aristocratique.⁶⁴

At this early stage he thought democracy less likely in nineteenth-century Europe, but in later appraisals, in the light of his observations of Restoration and July Monarchy France, he discarded any significant role for the aristocracy. He was also fairly optimistic, as a young man, in his association of republican ideals with virtue, renunciation and usefulness to the majority. He wrote to Pauline in 1803: 'On nomme vertu l'habitude des actions utiles à tous les hommes', and in 1804: 'Ne prononce jamais le mot de vertu sans te dire tout ce qui est utile au plus grand nombre'; in the same year he noted: 'La vertu est ce qui est utile au public. Plus une chose lui est utile, plus elle est vertueuse'.⁶⁵ In 1808 the matter still seemed clear-cut to him:

Ainsi dans le républicain, l'intérêt particulier étant lié à l'intérêt général, la forme de ce gouvernement rendra les hommes vertueux. Concourir à cet intérêt général, c'est ce qu'avec raison l'on a appelé vertu. La vertu est donc la base des républiques en même temps qu'elle naît d'elles.⁶⁶

But Beyle was equally concerned with individual happiness, and even at the height of his youthful republicanism he found difficulty in reconciling it with virtue:

Je sens que le temps est passé d'être républicain. Il ne faut pas déranger mes projets de gloire pour l'ambition, mais il ne faut rien faire qui lui soit contraire. (1804)
Cette année (XII) je suis beaucoup plus heureux et beaucoup moins vertueux que l'année dernière. (1804)⁶⁷

At the same time he was convinced that the best government was one which would promote the happiness of its subjects: 'Le but

⁶⁴ Journal Littéraire, II, pp.267-8.

⁶⁵ Correspondance, I, p.66, p.93; Journal Littéraire, II, p.17.

⁶⁶ Journal Littéraire, II, p.272.

⁶⁷ Journal, I, pp.93-4; Journal Littéraire, I, p.472.

de la législation est de produire la plus grande masse de bonheur possible' (1803),⁶⁸ and his criticisms of the political economists he read were based on that very argument:

Tous les écrivains d'économie politique ne tendent qu'à faire produire, économiser les produits et jamais consommer. Ils ne font pas entrer en considération le bonheur. (1810)⁶⁸

His reading of Destutt de Tracy's Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois in 1817, in which he discovered that his views were also those of Jefferson, only confirmed his conviction that legislation should promote happiness. But his experience of nineteenth-century regimes led him in fact to believe that utility/virtue and happiness were indeed incompatible:

Le monde alors n'était point gâté par le puritanisme genevois ou américain. Je plains les puritains, ils sont punis par l'ennui. (1829)

Le gouvernement ne vous fait point de mal. Cela ne suffit pas pour être heureux. (1834)⁶⁹

The problem remained unsolved for Stendhal throughout his life. Here was a self-avowed republican who was convinced to the last that generosity and renunciation were necessary republican virtues, but he also believed ultimately in self-fulfilment and happiness, and he found the two convictions virtually incompatible. Michel Crouzet, in two articles on the writer's political views, gives appropriate expression to Stendhal's dilemma:

Pas de liberté sans vertu, c'est-à-dire sans effort sur soi. Stendhal est convaincu que l'intérêt personnel accordé à l'intérêt général est le seul fondement d'une société vraie, et que le devoir n'a de sens que confondu avec le plaisir . . . l'image de la vie républicaine chez Stendhal demeure, malgré l'adhésion au principe de l'intérêt, inséparable du renoncement.

Vertu et bonheur s'excluent bien sans remèdes, et le sacrifice passionné de soi que l'amant stendhalien fait avec ravissement, le politique passionné évite de le faire; la conscience du devoir est la ruine du désir.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Victor Del Litto, En Marge des manuscrits de Stendhal, Paris, 1955, p.103; Mélanges, I, p.123.

⁶⁹ Promenades dans Rome, II, p.44; Journal, V, p.123.

⁷⁰ 'Misanthrope et vertu: Stendhal et le problème républicain', Revue des Sciences Humaines, 125, janvier-mars 1967, pp. 29-52 (pp. 39-40); 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.242.

At the same time, the question of ends and means, which all republicans have to resolve, was a problem for Stendhal.

By 1804 Henri Beyle had tentatively made up his mind:

Doit-on plus à celui [état] qui procure trois degrés de bonheur, ou à celui qui procure les dix degrés de bonheur, mais dont les vices produisent deux degrés de mal? Voilà la question, je suis pour le dernier.⁷¹

The mature Stendhal tended to adhere to his judgement:

En 1792, la France avait des hommes tels que Sieyès, Mirabeau et Danton. Ces deux derniers ont volé. Qu'importe? ils ont sauvé leur patrie; ils l'ont faite ce qu'elle est. (1837)⁷²

Yet if he preferred Danton to the strictly virtuous Robespierre, if he created in the treacherous Du Poirier a more interesting character than the republican Gauthier, if, finally, he was not enamoured of the type of the virtuous republican ('Et toutefois, quand je vois les bonnes têtes de nos républicains, j'aime encore mieux ce qui est: sept à huit personnages qui conduisent la charrette sont choisis parmi les moins bêtes, si ce n'est les plus honnêtes' (1835)⁷³), nevertheless he could never dissociate the notion of virtue from republicanism, and the self-questioning of his young heroes seems to indicate that the idealist in Stendhal was far from satisfied with the problem.

But there were further reasons why Stendhal's republicanism could not be called politically sound; for example, his reluctance to have contact with the common people obviously detracted from the sincerity of his republican leanings, and he himself was clearly aware of the contradiction. We have seen that as a child in Grenoble in 1794 he was dismayed by the vulgarity of the Jacobins, and he conveniently blames his family for the reaction:

Car il faut l'avouer, malgré mes opinions alors parfaitement et foncièrement républicaines, mes parents m'avaient parfaitement communiqué leurs goûts aristocratiques et réservés . . . J'abhorre la canaille (pour avoir des communications avec), en même temps que sous le nom de

71 Journal Littéraire, II, p.44.

72 Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.502.

73 Souvenirs d'égotisme, p.286.

peuple je désire passionnément son bonheur. (1835-6)
J'avais et j'ai encore les goûts les plus aristocrates.
Je ferais tout pour le bonheur du peuple, mais j'aimerais
mieux, je crois, passer quinze jours de chaque mois en
prison que de vivre avec les habitants des boutiques. (1835-6)⁷⁴

Plainly, there is a clash between Stendhal's ideological standpoint, from which he sincerely desired prosperity and liberty for the people, and his personal taste. Mérimée, in typically cynical fashion, records the ambiguity which results:

Beyle, original en toute chose, ce qui est un vrai mérite par ce temps de mœurs effacées, se piquait de libéralisme, et était, au fond de l'âme, un aristocrate achevé.⁷⁵

Yet Mérimée's judgement puts Stendhal in a false light, for it is equally possible to claim that the novelist was basically a liberal who just happened to be a snob about the company he kept. Stendhal did, on many occasions, criticize the aristocracy; for example, he wrote in 1825:

Il est important cependant d'observer que la haute noblesse de notre temps est tombée à un degré de stupidité sans exemple dans les annales de la cour de France.⁷⁶

And in 1826 he remarked: 'A force de se vendre publiquement, les hautes classes sont tombées dans la dernière bassesse!'⁷⁶ He was also capable of showing genuine concern for the welfare of the lower classes; in Mémoires d'un touriste, for instance, he took an interest in the plight of the silk workers of Lyon: 'Une chose m'attriste toujours dans les rues de Lyon, c'est la vue de ces malheureux ouvriers en soie' (1837).⁷⁷ Moreover, the question of Stendhal's personal taste can be related to much more important aesthetic considerations which will be discussed at greater length in due course.

Secondly, Stendhal was concerned with the fate of the great individual in a republican society which tended to standardize everyone in the name of utility and production:

Il faut convenir que cette idée est la grande machine de la

⁷⁴ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.xiv, pp.222-3; II, ch.xxvi, p.81.

⁷⁵ 'Henri Beyle (Stendhal)', p.159.

⁷⁶ Courrier Anglais, V, pp.70-1; III, p.21.

⁷⁷ I, p.221.

civilisation. Elle porte tous les hommes d'un siècle à peu près au même niveau, et supprime les hommes extraordinaires, parmi lesquels quelques-uns obtiennent le nom d'hommes de génie. L'effet de l'idée nivelante du dix-neuvième siècle va plus loin; elle défend d'oser et de travailler, à ce petit nombre d'hommes extraordinaires qu'elle ne peut empêcher de naître. (1829)⁷⁸

Michel Crouzet remarks about this attitude:

Telle est sans doute la critique majeure que Stendhal fait à la démocratie: elle confie l'appréciation des valeurs au nombre, aux hommes moyens.⁷⁹

It is interesting to note that Flaubert, another self-conscious artist, had similar views; he wrote in 1853:

Mais maintenant! L'individualité est un crime. Le XVIII^e siècle a nié l'âme,⁸⁰ et le travail du XIX^e sera peut-être de tuer l'homme.

Discussing Taine's Histoire de la littérature anglaise in 1864 he remarked:

Il y a autre chose dans l'Art que le milieu où il s'exerce et les antécédents physiologiques de l'ouvrier. Avec ce système-là on explique la série, le groupe, mais jamais l'individualité, le fait spécial qui fait qu'on est celui-là.⁸⁰

The exaltation of individuality in the face of utilitarian mediocrity was therefore connected, in Flaubert's case, with an artistic concern. Théophile Gautier had shown similar tendencies towards an 'aesthetic' aversion to usefulness in 1834:

Il n'y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien; tout ce qui est utile est laid, car c'est l'expression de quelque besoin . . . je suis de ceux pour qui le superflu est le nécessaire.⁸¹

In the same way, the major criticism which Stendhal levelled at republicanism was made from the specific viewpoint of the sensitive artist. His works are full of comments which bring to light the essential incompatibility he saw between culture and utilitarianism, between the arts and civilisation or progress. Stendhal was not alone in his concern for the future of the arts

⁷⁸ Promenades dans Rome, II, p.131.

⁷⁹ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.239.

⁸⁰ Oeuvres complètes, Paris, 1927, Correspondance, III, p.397; V, p.160.

⁸¹ Mademoiselle de Maupin, Paris, 1919, p.22.

in nineteenth-century France. In De la littérature (1800), Mme de Staël had set herself the task of predicting the kind of influence which the benefits of post-revolutionary institutions would have on literature and morals. Whereas her conclusions about the future of the arts in France were much more optimistic than those which Stendhal was to reach twenty years later, nevertheless she did foresee a period during which high standards in the arts, taste, and morals would necessarily suffer:

Dans le cours de cet ouvrage, j'ai montré comment le mélange des peuples du nord et ceux du midi avait causé pendant un temps la barbarie, quoiqu'il en fût résulté, par la suite, de très-grands progrès pour les lumières et la civilisation. L'introduction d'une nouvelle classe dans le gouvernement de France, devait produire un effet semblable. Cette révolution peut, à la longue, éclairer une plus grande masse d'hommes; mais, pendant plusieurs années, la vulgarité du langage, des manières, des opinions, doit faire rétrograder, à beaucoup d'égards, le goût et la raison.⁸²

In a letter to the editor of Le Conservateur in 1818, Chateaubriand also revealed a certain amount of scepticism regarding the quality of life and art in the midst of political progress:

Nous nous perfectionnons, soutient-on dans beaucoup de pamphlets. J'ai quelques doutes. J'observe, par exemple, que les lois deviennent meilleures à mesure que les mœurs se détériorent.⁸³

As time went on the problem seemed to become intensified, for several regimes later Flaubert, again, was most concerned about the difficulty of reconciling political liberty and progress with artistic excellence:

Dans le règne de l'égalité, et il approche, on écorchera vif tout ce qui ne sera pas couvert de verrues. Qu'est-ce que ça fout à la masse, l'Art, la poésie, le style? (1853)
Ce qui me navre, c'est: 1° la férocity des hommes; 2° la conviction que nous allons entrer dans une ère stupide. On sera utilitaire, militaire, américain et catholique . . . Quel effondrement! quelle chute! quel monstre! quelles

⁸² Geneva, 1959, vol.II, seconde partie, ch.i, pp.292-3.

⁸³ Correspondance générale de Chateaubriand, Paris, 1912, II, p.47.

abominations! Peut-on croire au progrès et à la civilisation devant tout ce qui se passe? (1870)⁸⁴

It was in 1817, it seems, that Stendhal first began to formulate the theory that despotism fosters the arts, while a republic extinguishes them, for the idea was first expressed in Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817:

Les choses qu'il faut aux arts pour prospérer sont souvent contraires à celles qu'il faut aux nations pour être heureuses.

Le nécessaire de la vie, c'est la sûreté individuelle, c'est la liberté: les arts, au XIXe siècle, ne sont qu'un pis-aller.⁸⁵

The same concern finds expression in another of Stendhal's 'Italian' works in 1829:

Une réflexion triste domine toutes les autres. Le gouvernement des deux chambres va parcourir le monde et porter le dernier coup aux beaux-arts.⁸⁶

It is interesting to ask oneself why the theme of the future of the arts in a republic should appear in Stendhal's writing only in 1817; after all, ever since his early days in Paris his aim had been to become the new nineteenth-century Molière of France. Once again his personal experience is crucial in an appraisal of the motives behind his political judgements, and there seem to be two main reasons for the development of such a notion around this date. Firstly, Henri Beyle had left Restoration France in disgust and made for backward, despotic Italy, where the Napoleonic work had not had the same lasting effects; yet it was precisely in the stifling political atmosphere of restored Italy that he found a thriving literary circle:⁸⁷ had he not met Lord Byron himself in Ludovico di Breme's box at La Scala in October 1816? Chance

⁸⁴ Correspondance, III, p.242; VI, pp.183-4.

⁸⁵ II, p.15, p.59. These quotations are from the 1826 edition, but the ideas date from 1817.

⁸⁶ Promenades dans Rome, I, p.173.

⁸⁷ See La Vie de Rossini, I, ch.i, p.54: 'Les défauts mêmes des gouvernements singuliers sous lesquels gémit l'Italie, servent aux beaux-arts et à l'amour'. (1822)

had transferred him from a country which had become a hotbed of bargaining and political manoeuvring to the literary salons of Milan; it is little wonder that his political views were accordingly modified. Secondly, and perhaps even more significantly, Beyle was now an artist himself, not just in his dreams (as he had been during the Empire), but in reality. In January 1815 he had published the Vie de Haydn, a biography, albeit largely plagiarizing, of the composer whose funeral requiem he had attended in Vienna in 1809; and in July 1817 appeared L'Histoire de la peinture en Italie, so that Stendhal now had personal cause to argue a case for the arts. Given these two important landmarks in Henri Beyle's life, it is hardly surprising to find him, in Rome, Naples et Florence, grappling with the problem of the standards of the arts in tyranny and republic.

The same theme, that of the incompatibility of artistic creation with progress in a republican or utilitarian state, thereafter preoccupied Stendhal for most of his life, and remained his chief objection to his early republican affiliations. For example, in 1825 he published a pamphlet entitled D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels aimed mainly at questioning the Saint-Simonian tendency to promote commerce and industry and to neglect happiness and the arts. In the midst of a series of exchanges with the editor of the industrial newspaper, Le Producteur, Stendhal wrote, it seems, an anonymous article in the Globe in December 1825, in which he defended his position:

Ce n'est point l'industrie qu'il met en cause. Il la respecte, il l'honore, mais il ne croit pas qu'à elle seule doive appartenir toute gloire et tout honneur; il compte encore pour quelque chose le génie dans les arts.⁸⁸

In an article for an English review in the same year he commented on the possible exclusion of literature by political progress:

⁸⁸ Mélanges, II, p.200. Fernand Rude, in Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps, pp.153-80, does not agree that Stendhal wrote the article, but we accept Victor Del Litto's judgement that Stendhal was in fact the author.

Si Voltaire revenait au monde, il n'écrirait pas de tragédies, il essaierait de se faire élire député: il n'y a pas, en effet, un village en France où le général Foy et Benjamin Constant n'aient des admirateurs. Je crains beaucoup qu'à l'avenir la politique ne devienne le vampire de la littérature.⁸⁹

Even if the arts did survive, Stendhal believed there would be a general lowering of their standards; indeed the process had already begun in his view and dated back to the decentralization of wealth during the Revolution; a new majority — for whom Stendhal as an artist had little sympathy — had emerged to judge literature:

Voici la grande difficulté des arts et de la littérature au dix-neuvième siècle. Le monde est rempli de personnages que leurs richesses appellent à acheter, mais à qui la grossièreté de leur goût défend d'apprécier. (1829)
Au dix-neuvième siècle, la démocratie amène nécessairement dans la littérature le règne des gens médiocres, raisonnables, bornés et plats, littérairement parlant. (1836)⁹⁰

The implication is that a sound sense of judgement in artistic matters is not as easily acquired as wealth:

Ces gens dont on parle trouvent dans la société, pour les juger, une classe d'hommes inconnue avant la Révolution. Ce sont les gens à petite portée, à inclinations bourgeoises et modérées, braves gens créés pour être bons époux, bons pères, excellents et solides associés dans une maison de commerce. (1829)⁹¹

In order to cater for this new clientele, an author had to renounce refinements and make each idea painfully obvious:

Quant au tiers état enrichi, qui a de belles voitures et un hôtel à la Chaussée d'Antin, il a encore l'habitude de ne voir le courage que sous les moustaches. Si on ne lui crie pas: Je vais avoir bien de l'esprit, il ne

⁸⁹ Courrier Anglais, V, p.14. See also Correspondance, II, p.59: 'Je crois même que Molière, naissant aujourd'hui, aimerait mieux être député que poète comique. Chaque siècle a des hommes de génie. . . De nos jours, hélas! la politique vole la littérature, qui n'est qu'un pis aller'. (1825)

⁹⁰ Promenades dans Rome, I, p.171; Lucien Leuwen, I, p.8.

⁹¹ Journal Littéraire, III, pp.176-7.

s'aperçoit de rien, et prendrait au besoin le style simple pour une injure qu'on fait à sa dignité. (1836)⁹²

Stendhal found himself regretting that it was no longer the nobility who set the tone in matters of artistic judgement:

La majorité qui juge les pièces a donc changé, et changé en mal par la Révolution qui a donné le bon sens à la France. C'est peut-être le seul mauvais effet produit par la Révolution. La société de Mme de Sévigné approuvait les sottises que La Bruyère dit sur la religion et le gouvernement, mais quel juge admirable pour une scène dans le genre de celle de Mme de Rênal avec son mari. (1835)⁹³

As it was, the aristocracy, in its fear of renewed revolution, turned to religion for an ally and could not give impartial criticism to literature:

Le faubourg Saint-Germain a peur et fait alliance avec l'autel. Il va dire d'un air ennuyé et dédaigneux: Ouvrage impie! et il jettera le livre. Et cependant cette société seule, si, pour un instant, elle pouvait oublier la peur d'un nouveau 93 et la diminution de respect qu'elle trouve dans ses relations avec les autres classes, pourrait goûter l'esprit si naturel et le laisser aller si simple de M. le président de Brosses. (1836)⁹⁴

Political liberty, it seems, brought with it its own kind of tyranny, and it is the sensitive artist who risks to suffer most.

The problem thus becomes a personal one for the artist: will he acquiesce in this commercialization of the arts, lower his standards and produce what the mediocre majority desires, like Stendhal's only artist/hero in his short story Féder ou le mari d'argent, or will he refuse to compromise? Stendhal, as we have noted,⁹⁵ accused several of his contemporaries, notably Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, of willingly creating the sort of literature acclaimed by the general public; personally,

92 Mélanges, II, p.270. Flaubert shows the same disdain for the general public in his Correspondance, III, p.262: 'Et voilà les gaillards qui nous jugent! Ce n'est rien d'être sifflé, mais je trouve être applaudi plus amer'. (1853)

93 Journal Littéraire, III, pp.187-8.

94 Mélanges, II, p.270.

95 See above, note 58.

despite his early coveting of fame and fortune, he decided to opt out and to remain in a class of his own. At the very beginning of his literary career, when he was hoping to become the Molière of the Empire, Beyle faced the problem of choosing his public: 'On peut travailler pour plusieurs publics. Choisir mon public' (1803).⁹⁶ He realized that the sensitive artist — already he counted himself as such — could understand certain nuances in a situation which escaped the notice of the average theatre-goer or art lover:

Il y a tel public si bête qu'il est incapable d'applaudir à tel caractère comique parce qu'il ne le sentira pas. Quels sont les sujets trop élevés pour être offerts à l'excellent public que je prends pour mon juge? (1804)
Dessiner aussi une pièce pour les personnages qui n'ont pas finesse et profondeur. Se mettre dans la tête que toutes les nuances d'un tableau de Raphael leur échappent et qu'elles ne sont sensibles qu'aux clairs et aux grandes ombres. Mettre ces grands traits largement, mais sans qu'ils offensent les yeux connaisseurs. (1813)⁹⁷

At first, as can be seen from the earlier of these two examples, Henri Beyle was at great pains to satisfy his audience, and he was, theoretically at least, prepared to write for a general public. Later, however, he drew a distinction between two kinds of 'clientele', and there is no doubt as to where his preference lay:

Une jeune femme ne peut être à la fois blonde et brune, il faut choisir. Ainsi deux obstacles:
1° impossibilité de la comédie;
2° tout personnel: fierté ou plutôt impatience de l'impertinence chez Stendhal. Jamais il ne pouvait faire la quatrième visite à un comédien. (1835)
Peut-on écrire pour deux classes, les gens comme il faut, et les épiciers millionnaires? Je ne le crois pas. Un roman, désormais, ne pourra donc plaire qu'à la moitié du public lisant. (1836)⁹⁸

Stendhal's efforts to define the public for whom he was writing can, of course, be related to the specific Sartrian

⁹⁶ Journal Littéraire, I, p.154.

⁹⁷ Ibid., II, p.148; III, p.28.

⁹⁸ Ibid., III, p.188; Correspondance, III, p.220.

political theory, put forward in Qu'est-ce que la littérature?, that the post-revolutionary writer in general found himself in a unique and impossible position. The thesis is that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the artist, who had almost always been bourgeois in origin, was lifted out of his class by the idle aristocracy for whom he wrote, while his own class was still struggling for political expression. After 1789, however, there was no longer for the artist any question of a déclassement: he was a bourgeois and must write for the politically powerful bourgeoisie. However, a certain 'aristocratic' nostalgia for the class which used to have the monopoly of literary censorship, such as Stendhal himself seems to display, created an unprecedented conflict between the writer and his public. Stendhal's solution to the predicament was to create for himself an intellectual elite, a certain 'aristocracy' who would judge his works. Hence the notion of the 'happy few', the elite whom he liked to address, and to whom he dedicated most of his books. The idea was expressed for the first time as early as 1803 while Beyle was attempting to finish his drama Les Deux Hommes:

Ce n'est point à la postérité que je veux plaire; c'est à mon siècle, et encore, ce n'est pas à tout mon siècle, c'est à la partie la plus aimable, etc.⁹⁹

But it seems that the phrase itself was first used by him in 1816 in a marginal note:

The happy few dans lesquels se rencontrent les seuls qui sentent les arts, se trouvent (en 1816) dans cette partie du public qui a moins de trente-cinq ans, plus de cent louis de rente et moins de vingt mille francs, et qui ne portent pas le ruban du Lys.¹⁰⁰

In 1825, during his attack on industrialism, he calls them a 'classe pensante'.¹⁰¹ Later this narrow group widened to include people like Mme Roland, Mlle de Lespinasse, Napoleon, and other legendary figures to whom Stendhal willingly dedicated his various works. But whatever their definition, the

⁹⁹ Théâtre, I, p.414.

¹⁰⁰ Journal Littéraire, III, p.242.

¹⁰¹ Mélanges, I, pp.271-85.

'happy few' were irreconcilable with the vast majority:

Il faudrait prendre son parti et travailler pour le gros public ou pour the happy few. On ne peut plaire à la fois à tous les deux. (1829)¹⁰²

It is interesting to note, therefore, how closely linked were politics and aesthetics in the writer's life, so that statements such as Mérimée's on Stendhal's 'aristocratic' taste need to be amplified and related to a much wider field of thought.

An interesting parallel to Stendhal's views on republicanism is to be found in his various comments on America, whose government became, in the eyes of nineteenth-century European thinkers, a test-case for the republican ideal. It was natural that most Frenchmen of 1815, and liberals in particular, should turn to the example of the United States for inspiration and admire the republic there; after all, the American War of Independence had succeeded where the French Revolution had, for the time being, failed. In fact, French interest in America had a double heritage, as René Rémond, in his extensive thesis Les États-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-52, adequately demonstrates. On the one hand, there was the notion, inherited from eighteenth-century travel literature and Cooper's novels, of the exotic, the primitive America, full of Arcadian shepherds and noble savages, in short a state of nature. The Declaration of Independence in 1776, with its explicit concern for the happiness of American citizens, only strengthened this view of a Golden Age across the Atlantic. On the other hand, after the French defeat of 1815 and the return to a Bourbon monarchy, certain thinkers began to turn to America for inspiration for the future and sought a more substantial and realistic picture of American society:

Deux rêves distincts habitent la notion d'Amérique: l'un perpétue le mirage millénaire de l'Age d'or, l'autre le projette dans l'avenir et interroge les chemins du futur.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Promenades dans Rome, I, p.171.

¹⁰³ Paris, 1962, 2 vols, II, troisième partie, ch.iii, p.514.

More prominent Frenchmen visited the New World: Chateaubriand (1791), Volney (1785-95), La Fayette (1824-5), Victor Jacquemont (1826-7), and Alexis de Tocqueville (1831) were the most notable visitors during Stendhal's lifetime. The main interest in America now lay in its quality as a political experiment:

Tant que l'image de l'Amérique était liée à une vision exotique, voire primitiviste, l'exemple américain ne tirait guère à conséquence; c'était simple affaire de goût et d'imagination . . . Tout a changé: du jour où l'expérience américaine s'inscrit dans une perspective historique de progrès: elle se charge d'une signification politique, elle prend valeur d'exemple, les principes dont elle se réclame ont une portée universelle.¹⁰⁴

It was in the face of this new vogue of close factual scrutiny that doubts began to be cast on the old view of the American Utopia. Nevertheless, according to M. Rémond, until about 1830 most French intellectuals continued to fall for the myth of American perfection:

Pendant quinze années presque tout a conspiré pour composer des États-Unis, du peuple américain, de ses moeurs et de ses institutions une vision plus belle que nature. C'est cet inconscient parti-pris d'embellissement qui distingue les années 1815-1830 de la période suivante.¹⁰⁴

Stendhal himself was extremely well versed in matters American, and M. Rémond points out that, unlike many French intellectuals of his day, he had a sound sense of the country's geography and avoided the common mistakes in the spelling of certain place names. His knowledge about the New World had several sources. Firstly, he was very well read, being acquainted, directly or indirectly, with the writings of Lewis and Clark, Morris Birkbeck, Frances Trollope, Washington Irving, Volney, and Tocqueville. His admiration for American government came from his discovery, on reading Destutt de Tracy's Commentaire in 1817, that his own political philosophy was also Jefferson's. Secondly, in the Paris salons he frequented in the 1820s the subject of the American constitution was most fashionable, especially after La Fayette's visit to the United

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., II, troisième partie, ch.iii, pp.528-9; ch.ii, p.481.

States in 1824-5. And thirdly, his friend Victor Jacquemont, the young Idéologue, spent six months in America in 1826-7.

At several points in his life Stendhal expressed the desire to visit the United States; for instance, in 1805-6 he thought of joining his cousins Allard du Plantier in their trading post in New Orleans; in 1817 he considered going to study in America; and in 1820 he again expressed the desire to visit the New World:

Je rêve beaucoup à aller passer six mois à Édimbourg ou à Philadelphie.

Ah! que je serais heureux si j'avais 8.000 fr. J'irais en Amérique six mois.¹⁰⁵

Yet it would be wrong to conclude from these examples either that Stendhal was a victim of the Utopian myth or that it was his republican curiosity which induced such remarks. Once again a close look at his personal position on these occasions reveals a complete lack of political motive. For example, his desire to visit New Orleans in 1805-6 was no more than a simple threat thrown at his family in Grenoble in the hope of scaring them into putting up the capital for his commercial schemes in Marseille. At the same time, it is probable that his 1820 remarks can be related to his unhappy and unfulfilled love for Matilde Dembowska, and were no more serious than his claims, just as frequent at this time, that he was on the verge of suicide. In other words, finding life in Milan intolerable, yet compelled to stay there by his ever-hopeful love, he announced vague and futile schemes for escape in his letters to Adolphe de Mareste. In short, often some comments of Stendhal's which seem to have political significance can be better placed in perspective if his personal situation at any given moment is considered. In the same way, for example, it is possible to claim that if his writing after 1830 contains more references to the United States than before that date, this is largely because American matters had become more fashionable in life and letters in France on the advent of the July Monarchy,

105 Correspondance, I, p.1009, p.1022.

whose two major figureheads -- Louis-Philippe and La Fayette -- had both made extensive visits to the New World.

In fact a feeling of disappointment with American society finds more frequent expression in Stendhal's work than any temptation to put faith in the Utopian myth, and he was casting doubts on the ideal long before this became a general trend in France. As early as 1819-20, while writing De l'Amour, he had diagnosed the causes of European intellectual enthusiasm for America and doubted its validity:

Nous confondons ces choses en Europe; accoutumés que nous sommes à des gouvernements qui nous font du mal, il nous semble qu'en être délivré serait le suprême bonheur; semblables en cela à des malades travaillés par des maux douloureux. L'exemple de l'Amérique montre bien le contraire.¹⁰⁶

He always admired the political institutions and the degree of liberty in the USA:

Je désire, comme honnête homme, surtout quand je suis en butte aux vexations des polices italiennes, que toute la terre obtienne le gouvernement légal de New-York. (1829)¹⁰⁷

But institutions were not all-important to the mature Stendhal; his views on French institutions in particular became very pragmatic after 1815 ('Do you know that the laws are nothing at all in France? The manière d'administrer is all in all' (1826)¹⁰⁸).

In short, Stendhal's opinions on the United States correspond closely to his attitude towards republicanism in general, and indeed the latter was largely influenced by his observations of American society. Like Jacquemont and Tocqueville, he admired the politics in theory, while in practice he had personal misgivings.

Thus Stendhal had little sympathy for American society: 'Ce qu'il faut admirer en Amérique, c'est le gouvernement et non la société' (1820).¹⁰⁹ Boredom and vulgar money-making excluded

¹⁰⁶ II, ch.1, p.37.

¹⁰⁷ Promenades dans Rome, I, p.50.

¹⁰⁸ Correspondance, II, p.93.

¹⁰⁹ De l'Amour, II, p.158.

the possibility of gaiety:

Si quelque révolution nous fait condamner à mort en France, faut-il nous réfugier sur les bords de l'Hudson? Non, en moins de deux ans, nous y mourrions d'ennui. Nous trouverions des voisins honnêtes, pieux, obligeants même; mais l'échange et le renouvellement des idées sont un besoin pour un Français du XIXe siècle et un seul mot exprime toute la civilisation de l'Amérique: ce mot est dollars. (1830) C'est toujours par l'ouvrage de ce grand philosophe [Volney] qu'il faut commencer l'étude de ce pays singulier, où l'homme n'est mû que par trois idées: l'argent, la liberté et Dieu. (1830)¹¹⁰

Moreover, the mediocrity and lack of individuality prevalent in America warned Stendhal about the future of French society:

Rien ne se rapproche plus de notre position que la morose Amérique; elle seule peut nous éclairer un peu sur notre avenir . . . Là-bas, c'est la médiocrité grossière qui est le despote, et à laquelle il faut faire la cour. (1836)¹¹¹

But it was, inevitably, from an artistic position that he made his strongest criticism of America, with the idea that political liberty was incompatible with a flourishing of the arts recurring throughout his writing on America after 1817. For example:

Dans l'Amérique du Nord, on songe à faire de l'argent et non pas à se procurer les douces jouissances des arts et de la littérature. Les premiers hommes du pays blasphèment les arts . . . Les grands génies en Amérique tournent directement à l'utile. (1819) Les États-Unis ne nous ont pas encore envoyé une scène de tragédie, un tableau ou une vie de Washington. (1819-20) Le siècle des budgets et de la liberté ne peut plus être celui des beaux-arts . . . Le citoyen de New-York n'a pas le temps de sentir le beau. (1829)¹¹²

And so there develops in Stendhal's writing a dualism between despotic Italy, homeland of the arts, and republican America, representative of civil liberty and progress:

Le pays du monde qui aurait le plus besoin d'envoyer des pensionnaires en Italie, ce sont les États-Unis, et

¹¹⁰ Mélanges, II, p.233, p.237.

¹¹¹ Ibid., II, pp.276-7. See also Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.21.

¹¹² Journal Littéraire, III, p.146; De l'Amour, II, ch.1, p.40; Promenades dans Rome, II, p.301.

rapporter les règlements ridicules des puritains, desquels sont découlées les mœurs actuelles (dans Volney). Ce gouv[ernemen]t devait placer dans chacune de ses villes une copie en bronze de l'Hercule Farnèse et une copie de l'Apollon. (1814)¹¹³

The theme is given its fullest treatment in Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817, and Dennis Porter describes the ambiguities involved;

His prescription for the regeneration of Italian life is, then, a liberal one. As he repeats on a number of occasions, only a representative form of government which guarantees fundamental human freedoms can release the latent energy of the Italian character along creative channels . . . Nevertheless . . . Stendhal cannot help harbouring certain doubts as to what such a liberal future will bring. He is troubled above all by certain tendencies he perceives in Anglo-American civilization, in the heartlands of political liberalism themselves. America, after all, with its high degree of political liberty and its happiness, is felt to be artistically barren.¹¹⁴

In Rome, Naples et Florence Stendhal tentatively concluded that liberty, for Italy, was more important than the arts:

On arrive au gouvernement de l'opinion; donc l'opinion n'aura pas le temps de se passionner pour les arts. Qu'importe? la liberté est le nécessaire, et les arts un superflu, duquel on peut fort bien se passer.¹¹⁵

But as he grew older, as he pushed behind him more and more unsuccessful and unappreciated works, Stendhal's concern naturally became greater for the future of the arts. At the same time his experience of 'liberal' Restoration and July Monarchy politics in France caused him disillusionment about the quality of political progress itself. An anguished remark, made in 1830 in a fragment about Lord Byron in Italy, shows that the problem of liberty remained unsolved for him:

Étrange fatalité des choses humaines! La liberté, ce premier besoin de l'homme, serait-elle donc impossible sur la terre? Dans les pays qui gémissent sous la police des petits despotismes de Turin, de Modène ou de

¹¹³ Journal, IV, p.136.

¹¹⁴ 'Politics, happiness and the arts: a commentary on Stendhal's Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817', pp.257-8.

¹¹⁵ II, p.15.

Cassel, on soupire après la liberté de New York, et à New York l'homme est moins libre de ses actions qu'à Venise ou à Rome.¹¹⁶

As Michel Crouzet, a fine critic of Stendhal's political views, puts it:

Il reste que le schéma libéral, tel pouvoir, tel homme, est rompu, et que Stendhal parvient à un problème indéfiniment ouvert, 'l'éternelle dispute entre les poètes et les philosophes', et l'opposition entre la culture et le nouveau despotisme de la liberté.¹¹⁷

Henri Beyle, as a child in Grenoble, undoubtedly identified his own struggle against his hostile family with the grander conflict of the Revolution and First Republic against the forces of reaction and despotism in Europe. His initial admiration for the period therefore represented a purely emotional attitude, completely devoid of political significance: it was simply a direct result of his instinctive tendency to oppose the will of his family in all matters. His obsession with his own problems, his persecution complex itself, reveal the selfish element in his early views and preclude any real political involvement on his part. However, the mature writer, reflecting on the revolutionary period, stressed the consistency of his opinions, and indeed he remained an admirer of Revolution and First Republic all his life. The opening chapters of La Chartreuse de Parme which describe the entry of French soldiers to Milan in 1796 reveal his tendency to idealize. There is little historical evidence to suggest that the revolutionary armies, which he portrays as being poor but selfless and happy in the knowledge that they are bringing enlightenment to darkest Europe, were in fact any different from the soldiers whom Beyle had known in 1800 and whose vulgarity forced him to shed his uniform for ever after only one year in their midst. In a first draft of a letter which Stendhal wrote to Balzac following the latter's spectacular praise of La Chartreuse de

¹¹⁶ Mélanges, II, p.241.

¹¹⁷ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.240.

Parme in La Revue de Paris, he defended his choice of 1796 as the opening date for his novel in the following terms:

J'avais le plaisir le plus vif à écrire ces 54 pages; je parlais des choses que j'adore, et je n'avais jamais songé à l'art de faire un roman. (1840)¹¹⁸

In many ways, therefore, nostalgia was also an important factor in Stendhal's retrospective praise of the Revolution, showing that his attitude was still an emotional one. Nevertheless, he did become a serious student of politics in the early 1800s and the knowledge gained from his self-imposed programme of education allowed him to judge, and admire, the political institutions of the First Republic from a sound ideological standpoint. He was thus one of the first nineteenth-century writers to stress that the Revolution had inaugurated a reign of liberty and even hopes of a democracy in France.

Despite the fact that the First Republic came to an end in 1799 and was replaced by Napoleon's authoritarian rule, Stendhal rightly saw that the changes in French society were so great that the work of 1789-1799 could not be reversed; the theme of continuing revolution is strong in his writing. In other words, he believed that society was already being republicanized and thus his views on the republic in general must be related to his retrospective judgement of the Revolution. It is here that the ambiguities begin to reveal themselves. Ideologically, if he stood anywhere, it was alongside the men of 1793, for his belief that a republic was both inevitable and necessary in nineteenth-century France and his realistic interpretation of the crucial political situation in 1793 induced him to praise the Jacobins. But often Stendhal's judgements were not based on political considerations at all, and various other criteria and concerns cut across purely political views and caused him to make apparent contradictions. Thus, for example, his natural admiration for the great individual led him to praise revolutionary figures of the most diverse political persuasions. In addition, he was a firm believer in the pursuit of pleasure and individual happiness, and these he found incompatible, on

¹¹⁸ Correspondance, III, p.393.

a personal and general level, with virtue, renunciation, and utilitarianism, all three of which could not be removed from his definition of republicanism. On becoming an artist himself around 1817, he naturally took a greater interest in the arts and was concerned that a high standard of literary creation seemed incompatible, too, with republican government and progress. It is significant that Stendhal, contrary to the judgement of many critics who tend to make of him a class of one, was supported in these views by other nineteenth-century French writers, particularly Gautier and Flaubert. Stendhal's personal knowledge of Italian life after 1815 served as a fine example of his ideas about the arts flourishing in a tyranny, while his reading about American society confirmed his doubts about the future of happiness and the arts in a republic. Basically, therefore, Stendhal's personal experience is crucial, and his biography must be a constant point of reference in any attempt to analyze his disparate and self-contradictory political views. The diversity of viewpoint from which he made his judgements must always be borne in mind and can often explain the ambiguities in his so-called 'political thought'.

Chapter 2: Napoleon

Victor Del Litto, in his biography of Stendhal, states the influence which the Man of Destiny exerted on the life and work of Henri Beyle:

En ce qui le concerne personnellement, on peut dire que toute l'oeuvre de Stendhal est placée sous le signe de Napoléon. Il n'est pas un seul de ses écrits qui ne renferme des allusions directes ou indirectes à l'empereur.¹

No matter how remote his subject was from politics and wars, Stendhal always included some allusion to the Emperor at the risk of appearing irrelevant and digressive. He also devoted two lengthy works (though they remained unfinished) to the life of Napoleon, one written in 1817-18 and the other in 1836-7. Yet one adjective covers all the numerous expressions of his views: his attitude towards the Emperor was constantly and consistently ambiguous. Not that his musings on the subject as Henri Beyle present much difficulty, for he admired the young Bonaparte as saviour and defender of the Revolution and hated the Emperor Napoleon, tyrant and traitor to the revolutionary cause. But after the event, once Napoleon had been removed from the political scene in Europe and abandoned on lonely St. Helena, Stendhal underwent a change of opinion, he 'crystallized' in favour of Napoleon, to use the expression of one critic.² For the rest of his life he remained torn between two contradictory attitudes. Albert Pingaud, in his preface to the Champion edition of Stendhal's works, describes the two poles of thought involved:

Il l'a tour à tour célébré ou critiqué comme le représentant couronné de la Révolution ou le restaurateur du principe dynastique, comme le champion de l'égalité civile ou l'oppresseur de la liberté politique, comme un tyran rebelle aux beautés du système des deux chambres ou un héros digne de glorification pour avoir exalté toutes les énergies latentes au fond de l'âme française.³

The novelist's contemporary and friend, Prosper Mérimée, also

¹ La Vie de Stendhal, ch.xviii, p.310.

² Ferdinand Boyer, 'Stendhal et les historiens de Napoléon', Extrait de la revue Napoléon, 2, Éditions du Stendhal Club, 1926, p.3.

³ Napoléon, Geneva, Éditions du Cercle du Bibliophile, 1970, I, p.xviii.

records the ambiguity:

Quelquefois il en parlait comme d'un parvenu ébloui par les oripeaux, manquant sans cesse aux règles de la lo-gique; d'autres fois, c'était une admiration presque idolâtre.⁴

And Stendhal himself was undoubtedly acutely aware of the dialogue taking place within him; the doubts and anxieties of Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen in their thoughts on Napoleon and the conversation between Saint-Giraud and Falcoz which opens Part II of Le Rouge et le Noir bear witness to the fact.

Stendhal was not alone in his change of opinion: the whole Romantic generation underwent a spectacular transformation in its judgement of the Little Corporal in 1825, after Chateaubriand's theatrical defection to the ranks of the 'liberals'. Paul Albert describes the process:

On laissait le Bonaparte, incarnation de Satan, croque-mitaine sanglant; on regardait en face Napoléon, on saluait la colonne; on cessait de maudire, d'anathématiser à la de Maistre la Révolution française; Lamartine conviait les peuples à l'émancipation, et Victor Hugo chantait l'Arc-de-Triomphe et l'hymne à la colonne. C'est l'âge héroïque, l'âge d'or du romantisme.⁵

But where Stendhal differed from most of the French Romantics was in his inability to come to terms with his contradictory feelings about Napoleon; after 1815 there is a kind of consistent inconsistency to be noted in his writings on the subject; there is no real political girouettisme involved.

Henri Beyle was, as we have seen, a convinced emotional republican when General Bonaparte's exploits first began to be acclaimed ('J'étais républicain forcené; rien de plus simple'⁶). He was also at one point so enamoured of the future First Consul that he wanted him to become King:

Je m'accuse d'avoir eu ce désir sincère: ce jeune Bonaparte, que je me figurais un beau jeune homme comme un colonel d'opéra-comique, devrait se faire roi de France. (1835-6)⁷

⁴ 'Henri Beyle (Stendhal)', p.191.

⁵ La Littérature française au XIXe siècle, Paris, 1887, I, pp.47-8.

⁶ Souvenirs d'égotisme, p.164.

⁷ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xxxiv, p.219.

But the events on and following 18 Brumaire were bound to change his opinions. In his Journal in 1840 he noted: 'Napoléon a commis un crime (le 18 brumaire) qui, par bonheur, ne s'est pas trouvé un crime au moment des comptes',⁸ and in La Vie de Henry Brulard he placed the beginnings of strong-arm government in 1800: 'Le gouvernement fort et violent de Napoléon (dont j'aimai tant la personne) n'a duré que quinze ans, 1800-1815'.⁹ Retrospectively too he saw that Bonaparte had betrayed the Republic: 'Il ne faut point oublier qu'il a fini par renverser le Directoire et la République elle-même' (1836-7).¹⁰ Yet his diary remains strangely silent about politics from 1801 to 1804, and it is mainly his fragments and plans for dramas which tell us that he was at the time a bitter opponent of the regime. For despite the momentary joy on hearing of Bonaparte's coup in 1799, by 1803 Beyle was already indulging in anti-Bonapartist propaganda. His fragmentary play, Les Deux Hommes, was intended to defend the Republic and hold up to ridicule the monarchical principles which the First Consul, preparing for his coronation as Emperor, was trying to restore:

Dans les 2 men, je fais lutter le caractère républicain avec le caractère monarchique.

Si ma pièce est bonne, B[onaparte] ne m'aimera pas.¹¹

In the margins of another play, begun in August 1804 under the title Le Bon Parti, which was to become Letellier and to which Stendhal was to return frequently before abandoning it in 1830, the criticisms of Bonaparte are explicit:

B[onaparte] à l'aide de Geoffroy et compagnie défait le bien qu'a fait la Révolution.

Mon protagoniste est l'ami du despotisme, car je ne puis mettre en scène le despote lui-même, qui d'ailleurs serait un mauvais sujet de comédie, étant de sa nature très odieux et très peu ridicule.¹²

⁸ V, p.268.

⁹ II, ch.xxxix, p.287.

¹⁰ Napoléon, II, ch.xiv, p.229.

¹¹ Journal Littéraire, II, p.89; Théâtre, I, p.403.

¹² Théâtre, II, p.33, p.34.

Continuing in his opposition, he seems to have taken part in some anti-Bonapartist propaganda during the trial of General Moreau. He himself, never the most reliable source for his own biography, makes contradictory statements about the matter; in an autobiographical note, written in 1837 amongst much untruthful information, he claims to have been involved in a plot in favour of Moreau: 'M. Mante . . . l'engagea dans une sorte de conspiration en faveur de Moreau'; while in La Vie de Henry Brulard itself he refutes the statement: 'Mante plus tard, à Paris en 1804, faillit m'entraîner dans la conspiration Moreau'; and in a diary jotting in 1836 he used a diminutive to suggest that no serious action and no real danger were implied: 'Je conspirais pour Moreau avec Mante'.¹³ The main point to be retained is that, whether he was actively engaged or not, the Moreau episode gave him the opportunity, privately at least, to display his opposition to Bonaparte.

From 1804 onwards, he began to call his former idol by the unflattering pseudonym of Milan, and in September 1804 he considered composing a drama on the theme of Bonaparte's ambitions: 'Milan protège le luxe. Faire une comédie sous le titre du Magnifique où je livrerais cette manie à tout le ridicule possible'.¹⁴ When the First Consul crowned himself Emperor of the French, Stendhal's disgust knew no bounds:

Dimanche, 11 frimaire, jour du couronnement . . . Je réfléchissais beaucoup toute cette journée sur cette alliance si évidente de tous les charlatans. La religion venant sacrer la tyrannie, et tout cela au nom du bonheur des hommes. Je me rinçai la bouche en lisant un peu la prose d'Alfieri.¹⁵

But thereafter one can search in vain through the volumes of notes made by Beyle during the period 1804-1814, through his assiduous correspondence with his friends and particularly with

¹³ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, p.448; II, ch.xxxii, p.181; Journal, V, p.186.

¹⁴ Théâtre, II, p.22.

¹⁵ Journal, I, p.201.

his sister Pauline; hardly another critical comment about Napoleon comes to light; from now on, Henri Beyle was completely occupied with the adventures of Henri Beyle, and perhaps the only quotation about Napoleon worthy of note is one in which he first formulated an idea which was to be of capital importance to him in his later apologies of the Emperor:

Un des malheurs du peuple français, c'est que Napoléon ait été élevé dans un collège royal, c'est-à-dire dans un lieu où l'éducation est communément donnée par des prêtres et toujours à cinquante ans en arrière du siècle. Élevé dans un établissement étranger au gouvernement, il eût peut-être étudié Hume ou Montesquieu. Il eût peut-être compris la force que l'opinion donne au gouvernement. (1810)¹⁶

In short, a study of the early writings of Henri Beyle, during Consulate and Empire, reveals no evidence to support Stendhal's later claims that he had always admired Napoleon, that his love and esteem for the man had been constant:

Mon but est de faire connaître cet homme extraordinaire, que j'aimais de son vivant. (1836-7)
L'amour pour Napoléon est la seule passion qui me soit restée. (1836-7)¹⁷

The life of Henri Beyle from 1799 to 1814 followed a very different course, and in fact if his youthful feelings towards Bonaparte changed from admiration to misgiving, his career seems to outline an evolution in the opposite direction, for he became increasingly involved personally in the Napoleonic adventure. This indeed is probably one reason for his silence on political matters from 1804 onwards.

He first came into contact with the First Consul's administration in Paris in 1800, when his cousin Pierre Daru, charged with the task of looking after his young cousin from Grenoble, took him along to the War Ministry to work beside him. When Bonaparte led troops into Lombardy, Pierre Daru and his brother Martial, at a loss to know what to do with their inexperienced young cousin, invited him to accompany them in the First Consul's train. So it was that Beyle first entered the country

¹⁶ Journal Littéraire, III, p.297.

¹⁷ Napoléon, II, pp.6-7, p.10.

to which he was to return so often; his feeling, on joining the army, seems from his diary to have been one of youthful enthusiasm and curiosity, as Fabrice's carefree pilgrimage to Waterloo also suggests. At first he was only a very minor pen pusher, living more on the fringe of Milan society than in the midst of gunfire, appreciating for the first time the joys of music and the beauty of Italian women, and inevitably deriving experience for his future compositions. Chance, however, in the form of Daru's influence, transformed him in November 1800 into a real soldier, when he became sub-lieutenant in the 6th Dragoons. But the excitement of donning a uniform was quickly eclipsed by his disgust with the vulgarity of his fellow soldiers. He used the sympathy offered him by Louis Joinville to become aide de camp to General Michaud, against regulations, thereby antagonizing his protector, Pierre Daru. His disappointment, his boredom with life in the regiment made him ill, and late in 1801 he obtained sick leave to return to Grenoble. His first experience of army circles had been a sad one; in addition, he again showed his unreliability by taking advantage of his leave in order to follow Victorine Mounier, with whom he was suddenly in love, to Paris, and all thoughts of serving Bonaparte disappeared. Stendhal related the circumstances himself in an autobiographical note in 1837:

Il fut malade d'ennui, puis, blessé, obtint un congé, vint à Grenoble, fut amoureux et, sans rien dire au ministre, suivit à Paris Mlle V., qu'il aimait. Le ministère se fâcha, B[eyle] donna sa démission, ce qui le brouilla avec M. Daru.¹⁸

From 1802 to 1804 Beyle was preoccupied with literary ambitions. Ever since his adolescence he had dreamed of becoming a nineteenth-century Molière; comedy was to be his passport to success in Paris; he would have fame, fortune, and beautiful women. And so he spent his time reading, scribbling, learning Italian and English, and flirting with Adèle Rebuffel and her mother; he even met a real actress,

¹⁸ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, p.448.

Mélanie Guilbert, and determined to make her his mistress. Only one consideration spoiled his plans: he never had enough money. His letters to Pauline in 1804 are full of complaints that his father is not supporting him substantially enough, and of exhortations that more money should be sent. Realizing that his demands were in vain, Henri Beyle, in typically versatile fashion, decided to make money for himself by taking up banking along with his friend Mante in Marseille. With characteristic selfishness, he allowed Mélanie, who was probably going south to appear in a production anyway, to believe that he was following her in self-sacrifice: 'Je ne lui ai pas dit que mon projet fût d'y aller, mais bien que, si elle y allait, je l'y suivrais et lui sacrifierais Paris' (1805).¹⁹ However, the family refusing to put up the capital for his banking schemes, he was forced to accept a rather humbler form of commerce, and joined the firm of Charles Meunier and Co., export grocers, in 1805. By this time his republican virtue had undergone a major transformation; the young Beyle could no longer reconcile it with his burning ambitions:

Je sens que le temps est passé d'être républicain. Il ne faut pas déranger mes projets de gloire pour l'ambition, mais il ne faut rien faire qui lui soit contraire. (1804)²⁰

But his commercial venture was doomed to failure; as he had been disappointed in turn by his fellow scholars at the École Centrale, by his initiation into Parisian life, by his contact with Bonaparte's soldiers, so he was soon to tire of the monotony of business life and also of the woman he had 'followed' to Marseille. In financial need again, he tried to regain favour with the Daru family, and succeeded in obtaining permission to follow Martial into Germany in October 1806. The second phase of his 'Napoleonic' career had now begun. Having reached Berlin, he became a temporary official in the War Commission (a title which became permanent in 1807) and his post gave him ample opportunity for reading (Shakespeare

¹⁹ Journal, I, p.364.

²⁰ Ibid., I, pp.93-4.

and Goldoni), listening to music, hunting, and courting Mina von Griesheim. The years 1808 to 1811 mark the apogee of Beyle's career, the time during which his ambition for position and wealth reached its peak. He proudly wrote to Pauline that he was considered something of a personality in Brunswick in 1808; his stay in Vienna with Martial Daru in 1809 was filled with pleasure and entertainment; in 1810, back in Paris, he lived the life of a dandy, sporting fine clothes and carriage, making frequent visits to the theatre, and of course courting as many women as he could; in 1811, if he was disappointed at the refusal of Countess Daru to return his amorous advances, he at least found compensation in the arms of a well known actress, Angéla Béreyter, and a flying visit to Milan sufficed to make of Angela PietrAGRUA, the woman he had so timidly admired ten years before, his mistress too.

Yet already in 1811 Beyle was beginning to tire of living in administrative circles, in contact with the elite of Imperial society, for his freedom to do as he chose was restricted. A note in his diary in 1811, when he was preparing a visit to Italy with his friend Louis Crozet, displays no real enthusiasm for the Emperor's cause: 'Rien de nouveau que de maudits bruits de guerre avec la Russie qui me font trembler pour notre voyage'.²¹ He returned to Paris to an icy reception, as he explained in a letter to Pauline: 'La férocité à mon égard augmente et peut-être m'éloignera d'ici'.²² Victor Del Litto relates that the reasons for his disgrace lay in a diplomatic blunder committed during his visit to Rome:

Lors de son passage dans la Ville éternelle, il s'était rendu chez l'intendant, qui n'était autre que Martial Daru, mais il avait négligé de se présenter chez le directeur de la police, M. de Norvins. La négligence avait été délibérée.²³

In the face of bureaucratic enmity, he left for Russia in 1812

²¹ Ibid., III, p.116.

²² Correspondance, I, p.626.

²³ La Vie de Stendhal, ch.ix, p.151.

as a member of the War administration. He seems to have shown considerable bravery, or perhaps stoicism is a word which better suits the behaviour of a non-soldier, but one can search in vain through his diary for any philosophical soul searching about the cruel loss of life, the rightness or wrongness of the disastrous campaign; Beyle was impressed mainly by the spectacle of the great Moscow fire; he noted in his diary in March 1819: 'L'incendie de Moscou ne fut pour moi qu'un spectacle'.²⁴ Only on one occasion did he note the state of the French troops, affirming that he would like to be given a post in his beloved Italy: 'It is dominant idea depuis Wilna où j'ai commencé à sentir la misère de l'armée' (1812).²⁵

His return to Paris in April 1813 brought fresh disillusionment; his hopes for an appointment as prefect came to nothing, and his conviction that his father was in a position to pay for a title for him proved completely unfounded. A letter to Pauline on 13 April 1813 shows Beyle's philosophical acceptance of his fate:

Grâce au ciel, je m'accoutume tous les jours davantage à être heureux, quelques niches que me fassent mes compagnons de voyage. Par exemple, je me suis beaucoup distingué en Russie; tout le monde me prédisait un grand avancement . . . Quelques amis me disaient en secret: vous avez été nommé maître des requêtes; d'autres préfet. Rien de tout cela. Je n'ai pas même eu de ces petites choses agréables. Je suis Gros-Jean comme devant. Cela ne diminue en rien mon zèle pour le service de S. M. et ma gaîté. Mon père arrête la baronnie, faute d'un chiffon de huit lignes à faire signer par huit amis que Faure me procure à bon compte.²⁶

He received the order to join the army in Germany, acquiesced reluctantly,²⁷ watched the spectacle of the battle of Bautzen, was sent as Intendant to Sagan, where he soon fell ill, having

²⁴ Journal, IV, p.232.

²⁵ Ibid., IV, p.15.

²⁶ Correspondance, I, pp.693-4.

²⁷ He noted in his Journal, IV, p.68: 'Commençant la campagne, plein d'ennui et de dégoût de tout'. (1813)

broken under the stress of work and boredom, went to Dresden to convalesce, and finally obtained leave for Paris, from where he immediately set off to renew his acquaintance with Angela and La Scala in Milan. On returning to France, he was sent, on his last mission during the Empire, to Grenoble to help the Senator Saint-Vallier to organize resistance in the Dauphiné. However, his 'patriotic zeal' could not withstand the insults of which he claims to have been the victim in Grenoble, and in March 1814 he was back in Paris on sick leave. Henri Martineau, in his indispensable Calendrier de Stendhal, outlines the details of Beyle's final mission:

Il seconde activement le comte de Saint-Vallier. Mais diverses blessures d'amour-propre qu'il reçoit — tant de la vanité du préfet Fourier que de l'esprit sarcastique de ses concitoyens égayés de la particule inattendue qui sur les proclamations précédait son nom, — lui font vite désirer son départ. Il obtient pour raison de santé de rentrer à Paris.²⁸

M. Martineau also quotes from letters written by Saint-Vallier which show that Beyle, if only he had displayed constancy and reliability, might have received on this occasion the cross he coveted so much:

30 janvier. Le comte de Saint-Vallier . . . écrit au ministre: 'Je suis content de M. de Beyle; il travaille beaucoup, mais sa santé n'y peut suffire . . . J'ai demandé la croix pour M. de Beyle'.

25 février. Saint-Vallier au ministre: 'M. de Belle . . . est toujours malade et je ne le vois presque jamais.'

12 mars. Saint-Vallier au préfet Fourier: 'Je crains de ne vous pas ramener M. de Belle, il a une si grande envie de retourner à Paris que je serai obligé de lui en laisser la faculté. Ce sera une grande perte pour moi'.²⁹

Poor Henri Beyle, whose imagination so often led him wrongly to believe that advancement or fortune would come his way, was unable to seize the right opportunity when it presented itself to him, and the best chance he ever had to fulfil his ambitions was irrevocably lost because of his extreme sensitivity.

²⁸ Paris, 1950, p.140.

²⁹ Ibid., pp.142-4.

Beyle was therefore back in Paris when the Empire crumbled, and on 7 April 1814 he signed the Acts of the Senate reinstating the Bourbon monarchy in France. His hopes of gaining a post through the influence of Countess Beugnot were finally dashed. In any case, these hopes may well have been a figment of his imagination, as later claims that he was in fact offered a brilliant position, which he refused, are difficult to accept. Finally, fearing for his meagre pension if he did not leave Paris, he made philosophically for Italy and Angela. The news of the Hundred Days failed to inspire him to rally to the Emperor's cause, and the Napoleonic adventure, in its real form, had come to an end for Henri Beyle.

To sum up, it is difficult to make out a case for the argument which Stendhal often liked to affirm himself, namely that he was a devoted official of the Empire all his life, that he and Napoleon fell from power together:

Ai-je su tirer un bon parti des hasards au milieu desquels m'a jeté et la toute-puissance de Napoléon (que toujours j'adorai) en 1810, et la chute que nous fîmes dans la boue en 1814?³⁰ (1832)

In fact his predilection for linking his own destiny with that of Napoleon surely cannot find factual support if one considers that during the period 1800 to 1814 Henri Beyle listened to the dictates of Henri Beyle only, and that whenever he did work for Napoleon, this was merely because that work happened to coincide with his own pursuit of happiness. Certain critics deny that he was ambitious; for example, Victor Del Litto, in a preface to Napoléon, argues for Stendhal's integrity:

Et puis, voilà qu'à un moment donné ce farouche républicain est entraîné lui aussi dans le sillage impérial. Résipiscence? brusque revirement? Non, Henri Beyle n'est pas un opportuniste, mais recherchant un état, il n'avait pas le choix.³¹

Stendhal himself in his autobiography made a similar claim: 'Réellement, je n'ai jamais été ambitieux mais, en 1811, je

³⁰ Souvenirs d'égotisme, ch.i, p.5.

³¹ Lausanne, 1961, p.11.

me croyais ambitieux'.³² Yet in a letter to Pauline in July 1809 he admitted a burning desire for advancement: 'Je suis depuis quelques jours dans un accès d'ambition qui ne me laisse de repos ni jour ni nuit',³³ and throughout the Empire he was continually seeking fortune or material recognition for his work. We could agree with Jean Davray's critical appraisal of Stendhal's nature:

Beyle n'a pas seulement une âme folle qui, à travers les aventures de ses héros, vit une épopée hélas imaginaire, il est aussi un calculateur, un arriviste, un bourgeois.³⁴

But in that case how did it come about that Beyle managed to emerge from the ruins of the Empire, that regime of opportunity for all-comers, without fame, fortune, or even a position? How was it that he personally threw away on several occasions the chances which came his way? For example, we have seen how in 1802 he antagonized his protectors by using sick leave in order to follow Victorine Mounier to Paris; his trip to Italy in 1811, from which his more worldly wise friend Crozet prudently withdrew, hardly seems to have taught him a lesson since in 1814 he again absented himself just as the time was ripe for promotion. The fact is that a qualification must be made to Davray's judgement: Beyle could wholeheartedly seek advancement only when his own personal happiness coincided with it; as soon as the two considerations came into conflict, which they frequently did, his ambition was forgotten, or rather it was transformed into the desire to choose freely his destiny and pursue his happiness wherever it lay. Sometimes there was no real conflict involved, for Beyle acted impulsively, instinctively, and unerringly in favour of his personal dream of the moment.

For example, a curious incident in 1810 reveals that he was willing to jeopardize his chances of promotion for the sake

³² La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.ii, p.21.

³³ Correspondance, I, p.533.

³⁴ Notre Stendhal, Paris, 1949, p.123.

of a whim. He had heard that Victorine Mounier, a childhood friend whom he still claimed to adore, was about to be married to a man from Lyon, and he imagined himself still to be in love with her. As a result, when he was asked where he would like to be posted he chose Lyon, despite the fact that he was probably due to sit an examination for the post as Auditeur in Paris at the time. He explained his impulse in a letter to Pauline:

Je ne suis encore A[uditeur] qu'en herbe et pas du tout officiellement. Je paraissais donc aux yeux de mon sévère ministre sous la livrée de C[ommissaire]. Il s'est indigné, je crois, de l'oisiveté où languissait mon talent et a ordonné que je fusse employé. J'ai été consulté sur ce qui me convenait et ai choisi Lyon à vrai dire, pour voir quel était le mortel qui prétendait m'enlever... [Victorine] Tout exige que je fasse tout pour ne pas partir. Je serai peut-être appelé dans quinze jours à subir un examen pour la place d'A[uditeur] et, dans ce cas, il faudra revenir le lendemain de mon arrivée. (5 May)³⁵

A few hours later he wrote her another letter and this time, on reflection, he decided that he was not in a position to do anything about the marriage anyway. For the following few weeks, therefore, he was faced with the problem of extricating himself from a situation of his own making which now suited neither his plans for advancement nor his immediate happiness:

Il paraît que je ne pourrai pas me dispenser d'aller faire un tour à Lyon. C'est un contre-temps très marqué pour les intérêts d'ambition. (13 May)³⁶

By about 1813, however, Beyle had begun to formulate the conflict which so often arose between his ambition to do well for himself in the service of the Emperor and the fulfilment of his personal desires. Already in 1811, as we have noted, the rumours of war with Russia had threatened to spoil his plans for an Italian trip, and from that time onwards the lure of Italy seems to have been greater even than that of a cross or prefecture: 'Quel plaisir de revenir en Italie au mois de

³⁵ Correspondance, I, p.564.

³⁶ Ibid., I, p.568.

mars! Il vaut mieux être pr[éfet] deux ans plus tard' (1811).³⁷
In a letter to Pauline in 1812 he was beginning to realize where his real happiness lay: 'Je travaille tant que je puis pour arriver un jour à mon heureuse Italie. Plus j'avance plus je me dégoûte de l'ambition';³⁸ while in a diary jotting in 1813 the conflict is made explicit:

Réellement, la préfecture et même la maîtrise des requêtes peuvent ruiner mon véritable bonheur. Il vaudrait mieux pour moi rester exactement tel que je suis.³⁹

In conclusion, Beyle's experience was limited in most cases to that of the onlooker; only once did he don a uniform and within a year or so he shed it for ever. His experience of battles was restricted: in fact, despite various claims to the contrary, he missed Marengo and Mincio, as he did Wagram and Waterloo; he saw the battle of Bautzen in 1813 but honesty compelled him to affirm that the spectacle was not very impressive: 'Nous voyons fort bien, de midi à trois heures, tout ce qu'on peut voir d'une bataille, c'est-à-dire rien',⁴⁰ and years later he overcame the Romantic temptation to idealize by faithfully transferring this impression to Fabrice at a fictitious Waterloo. His work was chiefly bureaucratic and his Journal bears witness to the fact that he enjoyed the sidelines to his job — the operas, the dancing, the fencing, the hunting, the courting — more than he did the work itself. Although he also made affirmations to the contrary, integrity on one occasion forced him to admit that his contact with the Emperor himself had never been very close: 'Je fus en faveur, non auprès du maître, Nap[oléon] ne parlait pas à des fous de mon espèce' (1835-6).⁴¹ His reasons for joining the army cannot be attributed to devotion to the Emperor's cause: in 1800 chance and curiosity combined to take him into Italy; in 1806 financial need was

³⁷ Journal, III, p.280.

³⁸ Correspondance, I, p.672.

³⁹ Journal, IV, p.45.

⁴⁰ Ibid., IV, p.72.

⁴¹ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.i, p.15.

behind his decision to take part in the German campaign; and in 1812 the hostility of his superiors in Paris caused him to leave for Russia. His references to Napoleon are very few, firstly because he was no longer so strongly opposed to his rule, and secondly because he was interested, not in Napoleon, but in Henri Beyle himself. The clue to his seemingly peculiar conduct during the Empire is here; if critics find it difficult to reconcile his self-avowed republicanism with his equally self-avowed devotion to the Emperor's cause, if they are at a loss to explain the ambition and the opportunism of a man who all his life expressed a strong hatred for the aspiring and the greedy, it is because they have failed to realize, or are reluctant to admit, that Beyle's behaviour during the Empire, as well as in childhood under the First Republic, was consistently and totally selfish. Consequently, a search for any coherent attitude on his part towards the politics or the person of Napoleon during the years 1800 to 1814 is fruitless.

R.M. Adams could be quoted in this respect:

In politics, there seems to be no category which corresponds to Stendhal's vagaries more accurately than that of the 'spoilt radical'. It is an irresponsible, inconsistent, eclectic position . . . His one unswerving principle is devotion to himself.⁴²

This judgement, if perhaps too sweeping to be applied to the whole of Stendhal's life, nevertheless sums up accurately the position of Henri Beyle during the Empire.

Once Napoleon had fallen, the dilettante life which Beyle began to lead in Milan left him ample opportunity for giving thought to the years he had spent in Imperial service. Almost immediately there was a change of heart. Already in December 1814 he was beginning to excuse the Emperor:

Le meilleur secret pour ne jamais tomber, c'est de ne jamais marcher (ou c'est de rester toujours assis).
Comp[araison] of Nap[oléon] and his successor.⁴³

⁴² Stendhal: Notes on a Novelist, ch.9, p.223.

⁴³ Journal Littéraire, III, p.256.

In 1815, only months after the debacle of Waterloo, he began to justify him: 'Voilà qui justifie Napoléon. Il créait; sa constitution, sans noblesse, était plus libérale que celle des Bourbons'.⁴⁴ In 1817 he undertook to write a biography of the Emperor, and by this time his admiration had increased: 'La vie de cet homme est un hymne en faveur de la grandeur d'âme'.⁴⁵ From then on every work he wrote contained its share of references to the great man. In 1818-19 he drafted a proposed dedication to Napoleon for a second edition of Histoire de la peinture en Italie; in his articles for English reviews he often justified the Emperor's actions; every novel includes at least an allusion to him (in Armance, Stendhal could not resist the temptation to introduce, in the very last chapter, a veiled reference to him as Octave de Malivert's boat passes the island of Corsica); Napoleon also figures largely in his works of autobiography written during the 1830s; and in 1836 he began another biography of the Emperor. In virtually each of these works, Stendhal reveals his ambiguous attitude; he is constantly torn between hatred and admiration, between criticism and praise. His views have shifted from a youthful clear-cut interpretation of Bonaparte the hero and Napoleon the tyrant to a much less clearly defined position. The criteria for judging have changed, or rather multiplied; time and recollection add a new dimension; considerations of post-Napoleonic politics cut across memories and the picture is distorted. Once again it is in a study of Stendhal's personal experiences that the reasons for his ambivalent views are to be found.

Firstly, there was a practical reason for reviewing the situation. For Beyle began to realize that Europe had just witnessed a remarkable era dominated by a remarkable man, and that he had been personally involved in the experience. The intellectual circles in which he moved in Milan manifested excitement about the figure of Napoleon, and Beyle suddenly

⁴⁴ Journal, IV, p.169.

⁴⁵ Napoléon, I, ch.xiv, p.48.

grasped the fact that his capacity as former bureaucrat of the Empire had become a social asset. In 1816 he discovered the Edinburgh Review and found that English intellectuals were also taking an interest in the Napoleonic exploits. Finally, in October 1816 he met Byron in Milan, and the English Romantic was eager to talk to the man who claimed to have been Napoleon's secretary! In short, Beyle realized that despite his lack of fame and fortune, despite the fact that he was a foreigner and a nobody in Milan, he could be considered something of a personality if he played up his part in the great adventure. He noted in his diary in January 1817: 'La meilleure recommandation pour un étranger en Italie, c'est d'être un Français attaché au g[ouvernemen]t de Nap[oléon]'.⁴⁶ He might profit financially too, he thought; and so he signed his Histoire de la peinture en Italie M.B.A.A. (M. Beyle Ancien Auditeur). His sister Pauline had become a widow in December 1816 and Beyle intended to help support her; so his Rome, Naples et Florence, in which he first used the pseudonym Stendhal, was signed 'ancien officier de cavalerie au service de Prusse'. A biography of Napoleon might have a large market, too, and so the Vie de Napoléon was conceived and begun in 1817. To be fair to Stendhal, the interest which the ex-Emperor was arousing in artistic and intellectual circles everywhere did make him reappraise his former views, and he did begin to be conscious of the fact that he had been to some extent at least employed in a grand enterprise. Maurice Descotes makes this point:

Et c'est le dégoût éprouvé devant la bassesse du gouvernement monarchique restauré qui le convainc définitivement qu'il a été le témoin et, dans une certaine mesure, l'acteur d'une grande époque.⁴⁷

This explains in part why Stendhal tended to create a myth around his personal experience, why he claimed to have been

⁴⁶ Journal, IV, p.193.

⁴⁷ La Légende de Napoléon et les écrivains français du XIXe siècle, Paris, 1967, deuxième partie, i, p.160.

present at Wagram, for example (1835-6),⁴⁸ why he affirmed that he had spoken to the Emperor in person (1837),⁴⁹ why he said that it was his mistress who had prevented him from leaving Milan in March 1815 on the news of Napoleon's return to France (1821).⁵⁰

Secondly, there is an element of reaction in Stendhal's reflections on the Empire. It was only when faced with the gloomy reality of the Bourbon Restoration that the former regime fell into perspective. Dennis Porter expresses this view:

To the mature Stendhal's retrospective eye the period of Napoleonic rule glows more brightly both for having coincided with his own youth and for the dullness and venality that succeeded it.⁵¹

A historian, Jacques Bainville, confirms that this attitude by reaction was characteristic not only of Stendhal but of Frenchmen in general: 'Peu de temps après Waterloo, on commença à ressentir l'humiliation de la défaite. Elle rehaussa l'éclat des victoires passées'.⁵² In his second biography of Napoleon Stendhal himself admitted that he had reacted in favour of Napoleon:

Mon but est de faire connaître cet homme extraordinaire, que j'aimais de son vivant, que j'estime maintenant de tout le mépris que m'inspire ce qui est venu après lui.⁵³

The notion of reaching a particular position by reacting against the opposite one was, as we have seen, not restricted to Napoleon in Stendhal's case; but Michel Crouzet makes the sensible point that in matters of political choice in particular Stendhal discerned the necessary element of reaction involved:

Stendhal a su montrer comment en politique les actions ne sont que des réactions, et les choix des contrechoix . . .

48 La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.i, p.2.

49 Ibid., II, p.450.

50 Ibid., II, p.444.

51 'Stendhal and the lesson of Napoleon', PMLA, May 1970, pp.456-462 (p.457).

52 Napoléon, Paris, 1931, ch.xxvii, p.575.

53 Napoléon, II, pp.6-7.

l'adhésion à un camp est née du refus de l'autre . . .
Combien de fois a-t-il voulu se montrer aristocrate chez
les libéraux, et libéral parmi les aristocrates? C'est
l'adversaire qui le conditionne, et chaque parti est à
son tour le parti adverse.⁵⁴

Thus we can imagine Stendhal, as Mérimée depicts him, amusing
himself by confounding his adversaries when discussing Napoleon:

Il était difficile de savoir quels étaient ses sentiments
à l'égard de Napoléon. Presque toujours il était de
l'opinion contraire à celle qu'on mettait en avant.⁵⁵

Stendhal's views on Napoleon were thus substantially modified
by his tendency to play with contraries. Firstly, the un-
pleasant reality of Restoration society and politics threw
the favourable qualities of the Empire into relief. Secondly,
Stendhal reacted in favour of Napoleon against the Restoration
legitimists who delighted in defiling the name and memory of
the Emperor. And thirdly, he opposed the Considérations sur
les principaux événements de la Révolution Française, the post-
humous work of his literary bête noire, Mme de Staël, which he
read in June 1817. The result was that he now began to rewrite
his biography of Napoleon as a defence of and apology for the
Emperor: 'J'écris l'histoire de Napoléon pour répondre à un
libelle'.⁵⁶

A third reason for the modification of Stendhal's attitude
towards the Napoleonic rule stems directly from the previous
one. For it was after the fall of the Empire that Stendhal,
faced with the blunderings of successive Restoration govern-
ments, began to take the view that efficiency was all-important
in the judgement of a political regime. Maurice Descotes,
discussing the difference between Mme de Stael's standards
for criticizing Napoleon and Stendhal's, makes a valid point:

Stendhal, au contraire, garde le souci d'un jugement
relatif au temps, au lieu, et son véritable critère est,

⁵⁴ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.221.

⁵⁵ 'Henri Beyle (Stendhal)', p.191.

⁵⁶ Napoléon, I, ch.i, p.3.

en fin de compte, ici encore, celui de l'efficacité.⁵⁷ Stendhal's views on political institutions had become fairly pragmatic after the Empire, and he was prepared to accept a constitutional monarchy in 1815 and again in 1830 as long as France was efficiently governed. H.-F. Imbert points out: 'Sceptique sur la valeur des différences qui séparent les divers régimes politiques, Stendhal les attend à l'oeuvre'.⁵⁸ Liberty thus ceases to be all-important when, as Armand Caraccio rightly suggests,⁵⁹ Stendhal prefers an injustice to a disorder. It is perhaps worth noting that this suggestion does not hold for Stendhal's fiction, in which injustices are strongly condemned by the protagonists. Some minor characters, however, speak for Stendhal in more realistic tones; for instance, Lucien Leuwen's republican colleague, Coffe, despite his cynicism as to the value of any government, prefers a bad one to none at all.⁶⁰ Crouzet again neatly sums up Stendhal's position regarding political judgements: 'Le libéralisme pour Stendhal se résumerait dans le simple fait de penser clairement en politique'.⁶¹ Stendhal could therefore excuse the despotism of Napoleonic rule on the grounds that at least it worked well:

La faiblesse et le gribouillage dans les affaires nous déplaisent si fort que nous en venons à admirer la force et le gouvernement de fer, même employé contre nos libertés. (1818)⁶²

What is more, the French people were largely to blame for allowing Napoleon to encroach upon their liberty, which they evidently did not value enough:

On n'a jamais que le degré de liberté auquel on pense. Donc, pour être libre, il faut le vouloir. Napoléon

⁵⁷ La Légende de Napoléon et les écrivains français du XIXe siècle, deuxième partie, i, p.182.

⁵⁸ 'Stendhal et Napoléon', p.157.

⁵⁹ 'Stendhal et la guerre', Première journée du Stendhal Club, Lausanne, 1965, pp. 19-33 (p.28).

⁶⁰ Lucien Leuwen, IV, ch.liii, p.156.

⁶¹ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.231.

⁶² Journal, IV, p.197.

n'était donc pas le véritable obstacle à la liberté en France. Cet obstacle est encore la vieille éducation de la monarchie. Napoléon tombé, les Français ont eu affaire au plus faible des hommes, à de la boue. Voyez avec quelle lenteur ils savent être libres. Donc Napoléon qui les a rendus heureux et contents douze ans n'est pas si exécrable. (1817)⁶³

It was in 1816, it seems, that Stendhal, influenced no doubt by his reading of Bentham, first formulated the idea that liberty was a commodity which a government would grant only in the proportions demanded by its 'clientele':

Une nation n'ayant jamais que le degré de liberté qu'elle force de lui donner par son éducation politique, je me réjouis de ce qui se passe actuellement en France.⁶⁴

The same notion finds continual expression in his works from that date on:

Au reste, aucune des idées qui auraient occupé Washington n'arrêta l'attention du César moderne . . . il ne considèrait pas combien de pouvoir on pouvait confier au peuple sans imprudence, mais cherchait à deviner de combien peu de pouvoir il se contenterait. (1817)
La France n'est pas encore digne de la liberté. (1818)
Bentham seul a pu dire: On ne méritel'indépendance que lorsqu'on sait la conquérir. (1837)⁶⁵

Seen in this light, with liberty a prize which must be won by the majority and effective government consisting of doing just enough to satisfy its clientele, Napoleon's regime becomes practical and efficient.

A fourth, and in our view most significant, reason for the revaluation of Napoleon's politics and personality will be tentatively put forward; it is, not surprisingly, rooted in the nature of Henri Beyle/Stendhal himself. As the years wore on after 1815, Stendhal in his constant search for happiness became increasingly aware that the reign of Napoleon constituted the happiest and most brilliant period of his life. A study of Napoleon and his times became an especially

⁶³ Napoléon, I, p.357.

⁶⁴ Journal, IV, p.186.

⁶⁵ Rome, Naples et Florence, II, p.265; Journal Littéraire, III, p.136; Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.515.

personal experience for him, for he was trying to recapture the essence of his youth. Ferdinand Boyer pinpoints the fact that all men tend to idealize their youth:

La médiocrité des temps de la Restauration, l'instinct qui pousse les hommes, dès leur maturité, à juger beaux les gens et les choses de leur jeunesse . . . tout cela provoqua chez lui [Stendhal] une cristallisation dont l'Empereur fut l'objet.⁶⁶

Carlo Pellegrini, in a much more recent article, endows Stendhal's judgements of Napoleon in 1817 anachronistically with a Proustian quality:

Ses écrits sur Bonaparte seront surtout l'effusion d'un artiste 'à la recherche du temps perdu', tandis que Mme de Staël par ses Considérations porte sur son temps un jugement.⁶⁷

Both statements are right in as far as they go, since the reasons for Stendhal's cristallization in favour of Napoleon certainly reside largely in an emotional attitude. But they do not go far enough; for Stendhal was not merely concerned with resuscitating memories of his youth; he was also intent on avenging himself on his inglorious present. The theory has often been put forward that Stendhal, in creating young, handsome heroes like Julien, Lucien, and Fabrice, was in some way taking revenge on his own middle age and ugliness, and on the mediocrity of the society in which he was living; they are wish fulfilments. In the same way, his retrospective tendency to combine Napoleon's destiny with his own ('Je tombai avec Nap[oléon] en avril 1814'),⁶⁸ his equally retrospective admiration for the man and his times, and his attempt to highlight the excitement and glory of the Napoleonic era, could be interpreted as forming part of an intricate and therapeutic pattern of revenge on the mediocrity of French society as a whole, and on that of his personal position in particular,

⁶⁶ 'Stendhal et les historiens de Napoléon', p.3.

⁶⁷ 'Stendhal contre Madame de Staël à propos de Napoléon', Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France, janvier-mars 1966, pp.25-37 (p.37).

⁶⁸ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.ii, p.17.

from 1815 onwards. Stendhal must have been acutely aware of his undistinguished dilettante existence during the Restoration and the mediocrity of his post as minor government official under Louis-Philippe. But if he could claim a noble, generous, and glorious past, his revenge on an ungrateful society, blind to his talents and personal qualities, it seems, would be effected. In order to bring about this revenge, of course, he had to be on Napoleon's side, that is on the losing side, and thus he could gloriously justify his position of splendid isolation and his lack of fame or fortune following the Emperor's defeat. And so it was that Stendhal became a willing victim of a Napoleonic myth of his own making. In order to clear his name and establish the integrity of his youth, he had to do the same for Napoleon. 'History experienced and history remembered are two very different things',⁶⁹ said one historian; this is especially true when one is, as Stendhal was, deliberately reconstructing and distorting past events in order to take revenge on the present. So Stendhal creates the myth of a Napoleon full of human kindness:

Il est étrange qu'un homme, qui avait naturellement ces vifs sentiments d'humanité, ait pu se faire, dans la suite, le coeur d'un conquérant

and endowed with greatness and generosity: 'La vie de cet homme est un hymne en faveur de la grandeur d'âme',⁷⁰ This being so, to have admired and supported Napoleon to the very end becomes an important factor in proving one's nobility of soul and integrity. Suddenly it is imperative to have been wounded and to have seen as many battles as possible, to have been in the Emperor's entourage, to have spoken to him, to have remained loyal to his cause throughout, to have given up the opportunity of a grand position in disgust for his successors.⁷¹ The

69 J.C. Herold, The Age of Napoleon, London, 1963, p.392.

70 Napoléon, I, ch.iii, p.13; ch.xiv, p.48.

71 The truth of this last claim seems to be represented in a proposed dedication to Mme Beugnot in 1814, intended for the Vie de Haydn, p.406.

consideration of these facts gives rise to a whole framework of fiction which Stendhal wove around his youth.

On at least three occasions while he was preparing his various attempts at autobiography, Stendhal fell victim to the temptation to make himself look a hero and a martyr to the cause of Napoleon, though it must be noted that honesty prevented him from including these extreme statements in the final drafts:

Comme j'avais fait la campagne de Moscou avec une petite place à la cour de Napoléon, que j'adorais, j'étais en quelque sorte à la tête du parti bonapartiste. (1833)
Il refusa une place superbe que M. Beugnot avait la bonté de lui offrir. Il se retira en Italie. (1821)
Mme Beugnot lui offrit la place de directeur de l'approvisionnement de Paris, il refusa par dégoût des B[ourbons], alla s'établir à Milan; l'horreur qu'il avait pour le B[ourbon] l'emporta sur l'amour. (1837)⁷²

By this method of conscious myth-making Stendhal was reversing all the normal and accepted standards of judgement; thus what were in fact practical blunders on his part are transformed, in glorious retrospect, into manifestations of his devotion to Napoleon. For instance, we have seen how by leaving Grenoble in 1814 in a fit of pique Beyle had forfeited a real chance of recognition and promotion; but now in the new judgement on his youth the real hero of the piece, Saint-Vallier, becomes the villain: 'En 1813, B[eyle] fut envoyé dans la 7e division militaire avec un sénateur imbécile',⁷³ and by implication presumably the bungling fool becomes the hero — no doubt he could not bear to stand by and watch the Empire crumble! In fact, a letter to Pauline of 12 March 1814 reveals the truth about Beyle's opinion of Saint-Vallier, before it was necessary for him to fabricate:

J'ai obtenu de partir avec une peine infinie. Cet excellent patron voulant absolument me garder; c'est réellement un brave homme.⁷⁴

⁷² La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, p.436, pp.442-3, p.450.

⁷³ Ibid., II, p.450.

⁷⁴ Correspondance, I, p.760.

It is supremely ironic that Stendhal, whose early life as Henri Beyle was, as has been noted, conducted according to purely selfish dictates, should retrospectively turn himself into a martyr and victim of his own kindness; to be poor, lacking in position, title, or wealth after 1815 no longer denotes the bungling and lack of aptitude for holding down a position which we have described; now it becomes clear proof of self-sacrificial devotion to Napoleon. One is forced yet again in dealing with Stendhal's political opinions to conclude that, in the last resort, his criteria often have nothing to do with politics at all. His reasons for retrospectively praising the Empire were based largely on a purely personal desire for revenge and self-justification.

Historians and literary critics alike talk of the Napoleonic myth which had so great an influence on the generations following the Empire. Napoleon himself contributed largely to this legend, and he did so by ensuring that reports of his 'martyrdom' on St. Helena filtered out into Europe and by encouraging the members of his small entourage to write exaggerated memoirs -- a task they were only too pleased to undertake. European liberals were destined to forget that Napoleon had refused to head a popular revolt, preferring to yield his throne to the Allies. One early twentieth-century critic suggested a reason for their blindness:

Had it been remembered, it would have been held to be expiated by the martyrdom of St. Helena. Napoleon was quite aware of the advantage that his memory and cause would derive from his imprisonment. His death in lonely captivity cancelled all his errors and all his shortcomings.⁷⁵

The unfortunate choice of Hudson Lowe as governor of the island, and the frequent squabbles which resulted between him and the Emperor's entourage, therefore, served Napoleon's purpose and helped to support the legend. Future generations of writers, especially the Romantics, were to fall for the myth, wittingly

⁷⁵ Lord Rosebery, Napoleon: the last phase, London, 1900, ch.xv, p.214.

or unwittingly, and so the legend was perpetuated through literature. Clearly it is tempting to fit Stendhal into this category too, and Dennis Porter for one has done so:

Stendhal's romantic imagination thrills to the man's stature, to the spectacle of an individual from relatively humble origins who rose to become the ruler of kings and princes.⁷⁶

This statement in itself is true, but it is important to stress that Stendhal, far from being influenced along with the Romantics by the legend which was generally circulating about Napoleon after his death in 1821, had created his own myth as early as 1817. And it was precisely in his tendency to idealize and make myths that his romantic qualities lay. We have seen that his imagination had led him into several disappointments during the Empire, and all his life he was subject to such flights of fancy. In La Vie de Henry Brulard he describes the anti-climax he felt on entering the École Centrale in Grenoble after so many years of yearning for comradeship: 'Je trouvai la réalité bien au-dessous des folles images de mon imagination'.⁷⁷ It could be said that his reaction was the same throughout his life: his schoolfriends, Paris, his fellow soldiers, the sight of a battle, his mistresses -- all failed to come up to the expectations his idealistic imagination had set for them. Stendhal himself was very aware of his own myth-making tendency: 'Mais toute ma vie j'ai vu mon idée et non la réalité (comme un cheval ombrageux, me dit . . . M. le comte de Tracy)'.⁷⁸ In short, it is clearly through his lifelong inclination towards idealization that Stendhal aligned himself with the Romantic movement. Yet there is little doubt that he became victim of his own myth-making. Having set out half-consciously to exaggerate the glory of the Napoleonic era, and that of his own experiences of it, Stendhal came to believe in the legend he was creating. It is difficult to claim that

⁷⁶ 'Stendhal and the lesson of Napoleon', p.457.

⁷⁷ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xxii, p.29.

⁷⁸ Ibid., II, ch.xliii, p.334.

his retrospective admiration for Napoleon was insincere, for, as Dennis Porter has said, the spectacle of such an individual was bound to impress the artist and the idealist in him.

Thus Stendhal praises, admires, justifies, or excuses Napoleon in his writing on the subject. Napoleon was generous, noble, and above all great: 'Il s'agit du plus grand homme qui ait paru dans le monde depuis César' (1837),⁷⁹ and he performed great deeds: 'De plus, l'exemple de Napoléon, qui, lorsqu'il était au pouvoir, a fait de si grandes choses pour la France, demeure devant nos yeux' (1828).⁸⁰ He could inspire emotions in his people: 'Étrange tyran que celui pour lequel il faut des lois cruelles après sa chute pour empêcher ses sujets de le pleurer' (1818),⁸¹ and he was the saviour of France: 'De 1800 à 1805, Bonaparte fut très utile à la France . . . Celui-ci fut, jusqu'en 1805, le sauveur de la France' (1827).⁸² He had prevented France from suffering a terrible fate:

Le gouvernement d'une douzaine de voleurs lâches et traîtres, fut remplacé par le despotisme militaire; mais, sans le despotisme militaire, la France avait, en 1800, les événements de 1814 ou la Terreur. (1817)⁸³

He was to be praised most for retaining some of the benefits of the Revolution:

Napoléon a refait le moral du peuple français, c'est là sa gloire la plus vraie. Ses moyens ont été l'égalité division, entre les enfants, des biens du père de famille (bienfait de la Révolution), et la Légion d'honneur, que l'on rencontre dans les ateliers, sur l'habit du plus simple ouvrier. (1837)⁸⁴

He also brought the Revolution's liberal institutions to Italy:

Quant à l'Italie, des pillages cent fois plus révoltants encore n'auraient pas été un prix excessif pour l'immense bienfait de la renaissance de toutes les vertus. (1817)⁸⁵

79 Napoléon, II, ch.i, p.19.

80 Courrier Anglais, V, p.319.

81 Napoléon, I, p.362.

82 Courrier Anglais, III, pp.303-4.

83 Napoléon, I, ch.xix, p.61.

84 Ibid., II, p.15.

85 Ibid., I, ch.vi, p.23.

Where he did make mistakes — for example, his sense of politics was limited — he could be excused. His excellent gifts as a soldier and leader made up for his political blunders, and in any case his inadequacy as a politician could be explained by his lack of enlightened education:

En un mot, Napoléon sut se faire obéir comme général, mais il ne sut pas commander en roi, et j'attribue l'imperfection de son génie en ce point uniquement à l'absence totale d'éducation première. (1837)

C'est l'éducation des basses classes au commencement du règne de Louis XVI qui a produit les Marat et les Collet d'Herbois; c'est l'éducation des collèges royaux qui, proscrivant Helvétius et Montesquieu, a gâté la plus belle âme et le plus grand génie des temps modernes au point d'en faire l'empereur des Français. (1817)⁸⁶

But above all it was the person of the Emperor which caught the imagination; he epitomized for Stendhal the energy and bravery which in his view no longer had a place in the nineteenth century: 'Suivant moi, on ne trouve d'analogue au caractère de Napoléon que parmi les condottieri et les petits princes de l'an 1400 en Italie' (1817).⁸⁷ It is probably true to say that Napoleon was the only subject who could move Stendhal to write in a style which treacherously approached the eloquence and rhetoric he so detested:

J'éprouve une sorte de sentiment religieux en osant écrire la première phrase de l'histoire de Napoléon. (1837)
J'avouerai mon enfantillage, mon cœur battait avec violence, j'étais fort ému. (1837)⁸⁸

Stendhal undoubtedly looked at Napoleon with the nostalgic eye of the romantic; his near-idolatry in this respect links him to the generation of Romantics who shared his emotions. Alfred de Musset, for example, was one who certainly fell victim to the Napoleonic legend:

Et pourtant jamais il n'y eut tant de joie, tant de vie,
tant de fanfares guerrières, dans tous les cœurs . . .
La mort elle-même était si belle alors, si grande, si

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II, ch.ii, p.50; I, p.356.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, I, préface, p.xix.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II, ch.i, p.19; *Mémoires d'un touriste*, II, p.201.

magnifique dans sa pourpre fumante!⁸⁹

But if Stendhal, like the Romantics, looked back admiringly and longingly to the era of Napoleon, if he made of the Emperor a great romantic hero, if he remembered his own youth in glowing terms, this does not mean that the Empire was for him a golden age, for the statement made at the beginning of this chapter remains true: Stendhal's attitude towards Napoleon was ambiguous. One critic claims that Stendhal was so susceptible to the myth because he had first-hand experience of the period:

Si la légende napoléonienne a trouvé en lui un adepte, c'est que cette légende était devenue pour lui une conviction viscérale; c'est que le contraste entre le présent et le passé, thème littéraire pour d'autres, était pour lui une réalité vécue.⁹⁰

Yet the opposite view can also be taken; it was precisely because of his experience of Consulate and Empire that Stendhal could not ignore the claims of reality in considering Napoleon. The most important point at which he diverged from Romantic opinion was in his very ambivalence towards the Man of Destiny:

J'abhorre Nap[oléon] comme tyran, mais je l'abhorre tout juste les pièces à la main. Nap[oléon] condamné, j'adore poétiquement et raisonnablement une chose si extraordinaire.⁹¹ (1818)

He was haunted by the feeling that, although Napoleon's rule seemed all the greater compared with the regimes which succeeded it, it was also in some way responsible for what followed:

Toutes les fois qu'on le loue, on s'attire cette réponse: Sans lui, nous n'aurions pas aujourd'hui les jésuites et les Bourbons. (1826)⁹²

Honesty forced him to admit that the Empire had not really been a golden age at all; while most of the Romantics — a Musset, a Nerval, a Victor Hugo — were too young to remember much about

⁸⁹ La Confession d'un enfant du siècle, Oeuvres complètes, VII, Paris, 1907-20, pp.2-3.

⁹⁰ Jules Deschamps, 'Le Napoléonisme de Stendhal sous l'Empire', The French Mind: Studies in Honour of Gustave Rudler, Oxford, 1952, pp.238-55 (p.254).

⁹¹ Journal Littéraire, III, p.136.

⁹² Courrier Anglais, II, p.471.

the period, the older Stendhal had experienced the entire Napoleonic adventure as an adult, and it was his personal experience which obliged him to consider the realities of the situation. It is revealing to note that Béranger, who was three years older than Stendhal and who had similar experience of the Empire, also saw two sides to the question:

Mon admiration enthousiaste et constante pour le génie de l'empereur, ce qu'il inspirait d'idolâtrie à son peuple qui ne cessa de voir en lui le représentant de l'égalité victorieuse, cette admiration, cette idolâtrie qui devaient faire un jour de Napoléon le plus noble objet de mes chants, ne m'aveuglèrent jamais sur le despotisme toujours croissant de l'empereur.⁹³

It seems that those men who had first-hand experience of Emperor and Empire were most likely to fall for the mythical, the superhuman qualities displayed, but paradoxically they were also the men who could most clearly see the baseness and the cruelty as well.

The realist in Stendhal forced him to return to his original division of Bonaparte versus Napoleon:

Je ne sais pas trop si la postérité appellera ce grand homme Bonaparte ou Napoléon; dans le doute, j'emploie souvent ce dernier nom. La gloire qu'il a acquise sous celui de Bonaparte me semble bien plus pure; mais je l'entends appeler M. Buonaparté, par des gens qui le haïssent, et dont lui seul au monde pouvait protéger les privilèges. (1837)⁹⁴

He had to admit that Napoleon was a bad politician: 'Quant à moi, je pense que Buonaparte n'avait nul talent politique' (1817),⁹⁵ and that he had betrayed his revolutionary origins:

La vaine pompe et le cérémonial d'une cour semblaient lui faire autant de plaisir que s'il fût né prince. Il en vint à ce point de folie d'oublier sa première qualité, celle de fils de la Révolution. (1817)⁹⁶

⁹³ Quoted by Pierre Paraf in 'Napoléon et le romantisme', Europe, 480-1, avril-mai 1969, pp.105-13 (p.108).

⁹⁴ Napoléon, II, p.17.

⁹⁵ Rome, Naples et Florence, II, p.266.

⁹⁶ Napoléon, I, ch.lii, p.212.

He used the glory surrounding his deeds abroad to mask the real despotism of his rule:

Et Buonaparte chercha là, comme en France, à masquer le despotisme par le culte de la gloire. (1817)
Il ne vit pas que, depuis la Révolution de 1789, un prince qui ne s'appuie pas sur une chambre, ne garde le pouvoir que par la peur qu'inspire son armée, ou par l'admiration qu'on a pour son génie. (1837)⁹⁷

He had deprived the French nation of its chief revolutionary achievement, liberty:

La constitution qu'il donna à la France était calculée, si tant est qu'elle fût calculée, pour ramener insensiblement ce beau pays à la monarchie absolue, et non pour achever de le façonner à la liberté. (1817)⁹⁸

In so doing he had delayed the liberty which Stendhal believed was inevitable in France: 'Si par bonheur Napoléon avait été tué après la bataille d'Austerlitz nous aurions pu être réellement libres dès l'année 1830' (1825).⁹⁹ What is more, Stendhal had to confess reluctantly that Napoleon was one of his dreaded parvenus: 'D'ailleurs à quoi bon le dissimuler? Il y avait du parvenu dans Napoléon' (1838); consequently he displayed too much esteem for his entourage: 'Napoléon eut le défaut de tous les parvenus: celui de trop estimer la classe à laquelle ils sont arrivés' (1817).¹⁰⁰ Hypocrisy too was one of the main characteristics of his rule; Coffe, in Lucien Leuwen, sees very little difference between Napoleon's regime and the July Monarchy in this respect:

Le seul avantage de l'hypocrisie d'alors sur celle d'aujourd'hui, de 1809 sur celle de 1834, c'est que celle en usage sous Napoléon ne pouvait se passer de la bravoure, qualité qui, en temps de guerre, n'admet guère l'hypocrisie.¹⁰¹

Stendhal himself exposes the falseness of the army bulletins:

Et comme je riais en recevant le Moniteur à Vienne, Dresde,

97 Rome, Naples et Florence, II, p.263; Napoléon, II, ch.ii, p.53.

98 Napoléon, I, ch.xx, p.65.

99 Courrier Anglais, IV, p.341.

100 Napoléon, II, p.328; I, ch.lx, p.252.

101 Lucien Leuwen, IV, ch.1, p.73.

Berlin, Moscou, que personne presque ne recevait à l'armée afin qu'on ne pût pas se moquer des mensonges! Les bulletins étaient des machines de guerre, des travaux de campagne et non des pièces historiques. (1835-6)¹⁰²

In short, Stendhal was too much of a realist, he was too experienced and worldly wise to devote himself entirely to the Napoleonic myth. Despite his personal inclination to idealize both his own past and Napoleon's rule, honesty and the undeniable realities of the period, as well as his republican convictions, constantly brought him back to the truth. So it is that he admitted the baseness of the Imperial soldiers, for example: 'Non, la postérité ne saura jamais quels plats j[ean]-sucres ont été ces héros des bulletins de Napoléon', and he confessed that he had in fact missed the battle of Wagram.¹⁰³ The more outrageous distortions of the truth, such as his assertion that Napoleon had personally given him orders,¹⁰⁴ are contained in personal notes which he never submitted for publication.

Le monde, lui disait Sansfin, n'est point divisé, comme le croit le nigaud, en riches et en pauvres, en hommes vertueux et en scélérats, mais tout simplement en dupes et en fripons. Voilà la clef qui explique le XIXe siècle depuis la chute de Napoléon, car, ajoutait Sansfin, la bravoure personnelle, la fermeté de caractère n'offrent point prise à l'hypocrisie.¹⁰⁵

These words, spoken by Dr. Sansfin to his patient Lamiel as he tries to prepare her for life's experiences, certainly convey the attitude of a Stendhal in cynical mood. Written so near the end of his life, they contain a judgement on post-1815 France to which he had steadily tended for many years. Stendhal almost certainly preferred, privately, to be a 'dupe' than a 'fripon', but he opted to give an outward appearance to the contrary:

Qu'ai-je été? que suis-je? En vérité, je serais bien

¹⁰² La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xxii, p.30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., II, ch.xxii, p.30; Correspondance, I, p.534.

¹⁰⁴ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, p.450.

¹⁰⁵ Lamiel, ch.vi, p.278.

embarrassé de le dire. Je passe pour un homme de beaucoup d'es[prit] et fort insensible, roué même, et je vois que j'ai été constamment occupé par des amours malheureuses. (1835-6)¹⁰⁶

In practical terms, living in the nineteenth century, one had to be cynical and crafty; but Stendhal showed where his real sympathies lay when he created his heroes and allowed them to act unerringly according to the dictates of their hearts. He would dearly like to believe that he and Napoleon were like Lucien or Fabrice too, and he tried to prove that the Emperor was a victim of his own generosity:

Cet homme, que les féodaux, les Anglais et Mme de Stael représentent comme le machiavélisme incarné, comme une des incarnations de l'esprit malin, fut deux fois la dupe de son coeur: d'abord lorsqu'il crut que l'amitié, qu'il avait inspirée à Alexandre, ferait faire l'impossible à ce prince, et ensuite, lorsqu'il pensa que parce qu'il avait épargné quatre fois la Maison d'Autriche au lieu de l'anéantir, elle ne l'abandonnerait pas dans le malheur. (1817)¹⁰⁷

Alas, as we have seen, he was forced by the sheer weight of evidence to the contrary to conclude that this was not so, that Napoleon was in fact a thief, a parvenu, and a hypocrite. In a more honest moment indeed he even admitted that the division of the world into 'dupes' and 'fripons' dated precisely from the Empire and not, as Sansfin claims, from its fall:

L'hypocrisie est le grand trait des moeurs actuelles en France. Cette hypocrisie est enseignée par les jésuites et pratiquée à leur profit . . . L'hypocrisie et les jésuites ont commencé sous Napoléon, dès l'année 1804. (1825)¹⁰⁸

But he still cherished the idea that something differentiated the Empire from the regimes which followed it, and that something was, as Coffe and Sansfin both imply, a measure of personal bravery which counteracted, and to some extent even excluded, the practice of hypocrisy.

As for Henri Beyle himself, he was, as we have noted, a

¹⁰⁶ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.i, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Napoléon, I, ch.lx, p.251.

¹⁰⁸ Mélanges, II, p.130.

continual victim of his own imagination; on numerous occasions he misconstrued the motives of his friends, his superiors, and his mistresses; but most often he was misled by his own sensibility. There was, however, a hard core of realism in the man; he was at times ambitious; there was certainly something of the opportunist, the schemer in him. Hobhouse, who met him in Milan, noted:

J'ai toutes sortes de raisons de croire que Beyle est digne de foi; Brême le considère comme tel. Mais je lui trouve une manière cruelle de dire les choses. Il a tout l'air d'un matérialiste et il l'est certainement. 109

Soult, with whom he had come into contact in his capacity as consul at Civita-Vecchia, is reputed to have said, on hearing of Stendhal's death: 'C'était un fripon'. At any rate, he had enough experience and worldly wisdom to enable him to counteract his romantic tendency to idealize Napoleon with a more realistic conviction that the truth must be told: the Napoleonic adventure, enticing and exciting as it may have been in fact, and certainly was in retrospect, could not withstand some capital criticisms.

Stendhal's views on Consulate and Empire therefore remained continually ambiguous. And while it is nonsense to claim, as Claude Roy has done, that the fault lay with Bonaparte and not with Henri Beyle:

Mais le régicide de dix ans, le jacobin de vingt ans, l'anti-bonapartiste de quarante ans, ne vous y trompez pas: c'est toujours le même républicain. Ce n'est pas lui qui change, c'est Bonaparte, ou l'image qu'il donne de lui¹¹⁰

nevertheless there is a certain amount of consistent inconsistency to be detected in Stendhal's opinions. The Romantics, as Jules Bertaut points out, seemed quite capable of effecting a complete volte-face in their attitude towards Napoleon: 'Les romantiques furent, au fond, les plus habiles

109 Napoléon, I, quoted by Louis Royer in the preface, p.xxxi.

110 Stendhal par lui-même, Paris, 1951, ch.iii, p.15.

des hommes de lettres'.¹¹¹ They were therefore able to switch allegiances and suddenly believe wholeheartedly in the embroidered reports of Napoleon's life which began to appear after 1821. Stendhal, on the other hand, was not guilty of girouettisme, for he remained constantly torn between admiration for, and criticism of, the Man of Destiny.

In the years 1800 to 1814 his youthful republicanism and opposition to Napoleon soon gave way to personal ambition and an increasingly large participation in the Napoleonic exploits themselves, so that no real political commitment can be attributed to him during this period. The ambiguities in his later writing about the Emperor can often be explained in the light of the different criteria with which the mature Stendhal made his judgements. For if his republicanism, tempered as it was by later experience, still caused him to criticize the Emperor, nevertheless a change had taken place in his political beliefs; efficiency in government became almost as important as liberty itself for Stendhal under the Restoration, and judged in this way the Empire was thus praiseworthy. But the principal reasons for Stendhal's retrospective admiration for Napoleon were not always political at all, and seem to lie in his personal experience after 1815. In view of the interest shown in Napoleon by European intellectuals he began to rethink his ideas on the subject. He reacted, too, against the venality of the Restoration, the taunts of its legitimists, and the criticisms of Mme de Staël. Most of all, however, Stendhal realized that he could create for himself a Napoleonic legend, a myth concerning the Emperor's generous qualities, which could also clear the name of Henri Beyle, magnify the glory and self-sacrifice of his own past, and effect revenge on a Restoration society which allowed him to remain relatively poor and unknown. This explains how Stendhal often made contradictory and sometimes untruthful

¹¹¹ L'Époque romantique, Paris, 1947, ch.i, p.14.

claims about the facts of his own past and Napoleon's rule. The ambiguities in Stendhal's views on Napoleon can yet again be illuminated in terms which often have nothing to do with politics at all; the contradictions in his attitude towards Empire and Emperor can best be understood in the light of the different viewpoints from which his judgements are made.

Chapter 3: The Restoration

Henri Beyle signed the Acts of the Senate reinstating the Bourbons on the throne of France on 7 April 1814 and waited for his fate to be decided; a letter to Pauline on 28 April reveals the predicament he found himself in:

Probablement plus d'au[diteurs]. Plus de crédit pour monter ailleurs. Ainsi, il faut se brûler la cervelle tout de suite, ou chercher à vivre comme je pourrai . . . Je chercherai bien à avoir une petite place; mais j'y compte peu. Me voilà culbuté de fond en comble, au moment où on demandait tout pour moi.¹

In debt, less popular than he would have liked to believe, he was reduced over the next few months to making vain pleas for money to his family. His attempts to find employment were equally unsuccessful; even his letters to the comte de Blacas and General Dupont in which he begged for an honorary rank went unheeded.² It seems that his only hope was that Mme Beugnot or her husband might find him a job, and there is some mystery about the facts of this episode. We have seen in the previous chapter that it suited Stendhal in his re-appraisal of Napoleon to claim that he had refused a post offered to him from this source. But the despondency and pessimism displayed by Beyle in his letters of May and June 1814 show that his chances of a post were in fact very slender:

J'ai pour unique appui M. et surtout Mme Doligny. Ils demandent pour moi une petite place en Italie. Or son mari demande pour M. de Belli[sle], mon ami, et ne peut demander pour deux; ce serait le moyen sûr de ne rien obtenir.³

A note in his diary on 30 June seems quite categorical on one point at least: his efforts at soliciting a post in Italy have not succeeded:

Je travaille depuis le 10 mai à H[aydn], Métastase et Mozart. La fin de ce travail me donne beaucoup de plaisir, m'ôte toute sensibilité pour le chagrin de

¹ Correspondance, I, p.768.

² Ibid., I, p.777, p.780.

³ Ibid., I, p.769, p.778. Doligny is Beyle's pseudonym for Beugnot.

voir M. Doligny ne me pas appoint secretary to amb[assade]
of Firenze.⁴

Henri Martineau suggests that it was Beyle's impatience which presented the main difficulty:

Il ne paraît pas douteux que si Beyle n'obtint à l'avènement de Louis XVIII aucun emploi, il ne le dut qu'à son impatience. Le ménage Beugnot l'aurait certainement placé à la longue. A la vérité l'ancien et brillant auditeur redoutait une situation médiocre et avait trop cristallisé sur l'Italie. Il avait hâte de partir.⁵

Finally, realizing that his demands for money from his family were in vain, seeing Louis de Bellisle gaining daily in the favours of Countess Beugnot, and fearing for his pension if he did not go, he left Paris on 20 July and arrived in Milan on 10 August 1814 in order to pursue his amorous adventures with Angela Pietragrua.

For some months more he seemed to entertain vague hopes of being appointed to some minor administrative post in Italy. Here, for example, is a jotting made in September 1814 while he visited Pisa at his embarrassed mistress's request:

On voit combien tout est en Italie à meilleur marché qu'en France, et la raison qui, indépendamment des agréments du pays, m'y ferait élire mon domicile . . . Il me faut absolument tout mon temps et la liberté, quatrième secrétaire d'ambassade à Rome tout au plus.⁶

As the years wore on, however, it became increasingly clear that Beyle would not secure employment in Italy, and he resolved to live by his pen. But despite a growing hatred of Restoration politics, near-poverty forced him on several occasions to seek employment in administrative circles in France. For example, having at last secured his pension as former Imperial official, he nevertheless suggested to Adolphe de Mareste in April 1819 that the latter's influential cousin, the comte d'Argout, might try to find him a job.⁷ In mid-February 1828, news of Pope Léon's death reached Paris, and

⁴ Journal, IV, p.121.

⁵ Le Coeur de Stendhal, Paris, 1952, vol.I, ch.xii, p.321.

⁶ Journal, IV, p.125, p.131.

⁷ Correspondance, I, p.962.

Stendhal, it seems, was almost entrusted with a secret mission by the Restoration government. Armand Caraccio, in his introduction to the Champion edition of Promenades dans Rome in 1927, describes this mysterious affair:

Quand survient la mort de Léon XII, Amédée de Pastoret qui avait été le collègue d'Henri Beyle au Conseil d'État et avait fait avec lui la retraite de Russie . . . aurait demandé à Stendhal un mémoire sur les cardinaux papables et il aurait été question de lui confier une mission secrète à Rome . . . Mais bien que Charles X se soit montré ravi, dit-on, des renseignements fournis, le projet n'a pas de suite, et Pie VIII est élu sans l'intervention d'Henri Beyle.⁸

In July of the same year, Stendhal, whose pension had been dropped for the time being, had vain hopes of a post in the Archives.⁹ Heartened perhaps by such a display of favour from Charles X, he began to harbour real hopes of employment in Paris. Pastoret, Édouard Mounier, Adolphe de Mareste, and even Pierre Daru all tried to secure a post for their impecunious friend at the Sceau or in the Cour des Comptes, but with no success. One last attempt was made to find employment for him in the Bibliothèque royale, but this scheme also failed to materialize.

Despite these attempts to gain employment, Stendhal really preferred to live by his wits and by his pen if this was possible, thereby preserving the freedom to live, love, and travel as he chose. Nothing short of a sinecure would really have satisfied him. He was beginning to realize that an administrative position would prevent him from pursuing his own private pleasures, chief amongst which he now placed writing. For during the long, anxious months of waiting in Paris for his fate to be

⁸ M. Caraccio's introduction has been reproduced in the new edition of Stendhal's complete works, Geneva, 1967, Avant-propos bibliographique et critique, vol.I, pp.xciii-xciv. See also Correspondance, II, p.217: 'Il y a bien peu d'esprit à Ap[ollinaire] d'avoir mal pris la note sur les Kar [cardinaux]: . . . C'est l'abrégé d'une note en 6 pages que je remis à Pastor[et], il y a 20 mois' (17 December 1831).

⁹ See Correspondance, II, p.146.

decided, Henri Beyle had written the Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase and left his work to be published in January 1815. When he reached Milan, the leisure afforded him between visits to Angela led him to reread his notes from the 1811 trip to Italy and to travel fairly extensively within the country. The result was his second published work, Histoire de la peinture en Italie. In other words, the misery and poverty in which Beyle found himself on the fall of the Empire had a most fruitful effect on his future life, as Victor Del Litto points out: 'La chute de Napoléon a coïncidé avec l'avènement de Stendhal'.¹⁰ Beyle's third published work, Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817 first used the pseudonym Stendhal. At the same time he took an increasing interest in the debate between classics and romantics which was raging in Milan. In La Vie intellectuelle de Stendhal Victor Del Litto gives a detailed account of the genesis and contents of four pamphlets which Stendhal wrote in 1818-19 in defence of modernism in the arts, especially the theatre. He judged it best in the end not to publish any of these essays. The popularity of the writers he was criticizing (in one case the famous poet Monti), his own delicate position as an alien in Milan, and the dangerous nature of some of the ideas he was proposing (for he saw the battle of the romantics in Italy as being political as well as literary) made them virtually unpublishable.

The period 1820 to 1830 was a very productive one for Stendhal, and it is true to say that his main aim was to secure a comfortable future for himself through his writing. De l'Amour was published in the summer of 1822, and in the same year he began to submit articles to the English press. His liberal friends in Paris were interested in his knowledge of Italian romanticism, and Stendhal played his own part in the launching of the 'movement' in France. His pamphlet Racine et Shakspeare, published in March 1823, showed his

¹⁰ La Vie de Stendhal, ch.x, p.173.

conviction that nineteenth-century literature must be modern in outlook:

Le romanticisme est l'art de présenter aux peuples les oeuvres littéraires qui, dans l'état actuel de leurs habitudes et de leurs croyances, sont susceptibles de leur donner le plus de plaisir possible.¹¹

The Académie Française joined in the debate on behalf of classicism early in 1824, and this gave Stendhal the opportunity to write a second Racine et Shakspeare, published in March 1825. Characteristically, however, Stendhal's interest in romanticism waned perceptibly after this date. Clearly he could see that he had little in common with the French Romantic generation which began to predominate in Paris literary salons in the late 1820s. In the same way, the pamphlet on political economy published in December 1825, D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels, in which Stendhal exposed the Saint-Simonian doctrines behind the industrial publication, Le Producteur, was intended to put him fairly and squarely in the public eye. He wrote to Mareste on 10 November 1825: 'Rapportez-moi, en passant, la diatribe contre l'Industrialisme, je veux la publier chaud, après l'emprunt d'Haiti'.¹² When his article failed to receive the attention he expected, he considered ways of promoting it in the press, as another letter to Mareste (4 January 1826) indicates:

Il y a huit jours que j'oublie de vous demander votre avis sur cette question: Est-il convenable que le nom de Stendhal paraisse sur la couverture bleue du Mercure? Cela me fera-t-il mieux vendre mes manuscrits?¹³

Meanwhile his Vie de Rossini, unlike the ill-fated De l'Amour, had been received with acclaim, and a new edition of Rome, Naples et Florence, his best-selling work to date, had been begun. A couple of trips to England and Italy had furnished Stendhal with material for his continued journalistic efforts, and also for his Promenades dans Rome, published in 1829.

¹¹ Racine et Shakspeare, ch.iii, p.39.

¹² Correspondance, II, p.71.

¹³ Ibid., II, pp.79-80.

If, however, Stendhal concentrated on creating literary compositions during the Restoration rather than seriously looking for a governmental post, nevertheless the political interest in his life and writing of the time is strong. One need only mention his second published work, Histoire de la peinture en Italie, which Victor Del Litto has described as a 'pamphlet politique'.¹⁴ Indeed, one of the main reasons for the suspicion cast on Stendhal by the Austrian police was the political content they discovered in this work. Stendhal was, it seems, doomed by his own personality to spoil his chances of success. After all, Louis Crozet, who was given the task of correcting the manuscript, had been constantly afraid of incurring a trial; but every time he persuaded Beyle to revise a passage, the correction turned out to be as dangerous as the text it was meant to replace. The Habsburg monarchy was hardly likely to enjoy the following comment, for example:

Je dirais aux princes modernes, si glorieux de leurs vertus, et qui regardent avec un si superbe mépris les petits tyrans du moyen âge: 'Ces vertus, dont vous êtes si fiers, ne sont que des vertus privées. Comme roi, vous êtes nul. Les tyrans d'Italie, au contraire, eurent des vices privés et des vertus publiques.'¹⁵

The veiled allusions to Napoleon, so soon after the fall of the Empire, were also daring on the part of an ex-officer living in restored Italy. Thus Stendhal wrote to Mareste on 12 July 1820:

Je suis inquiet because the cons[ul] of Mi[lan] has said that I am a periculou[s] libéral et l'on a su que D[omini]que avait made the Peint[u]re. Le p[rinc]e has spoken of S[tendh]al.¹⁶

Even as late as 1828 the authorities in Italy still remembered this dangerous liberal, author of so many bold works about contemporary Italy, since they refused him entry to

¹⁴ La Vie intellectuelle de Stendhal, troisième partie, ch.i, p.491.

¹⁵ Histoire de la peinture en Italie, I, p.13.

¹⁶ Correspondance, I, pp.1029-30.

Milan. He related his expulsion in a letter to Alphonse Gonssolin on 17 January:

En arrivant à Mil[an], la police du pays m'a dit qu'il était connu de tous les doctes que Stendhal et B[eyle] étaient synonymes, en vertu de quoi elle me priait de vider les États de S.M. Apostolique dans douze heures.¹⁷

Henri Beyle also came into contact with various political events and groups, at first and second hand, in Restoration France and Italy. In May 1816, for example, he was in Grenoble negotiating the sale of his father's house when the futile Didier conspiracy took place. Despite his subsequent claim to have taken part in the event (encouraged in this myth by the interest shown in him on his return to Milan), it is fairly certain that he was not involved in the affair. In September 1819, during another visit to Grenoble, this time on his father's death, Stendhal voted for the controversial abbé Grégoire who had implicitly voted Louis XVI's execution in 1793, and this action caused him further trouble with the Austrian authorities in Milan.¹⁸

He was also involved — it is difficult to know to what extent — with the carbonari in Milan. Indeed, Matilde Dembowski, the woman who was to have most effect on his life and work, was an agent of this liberal Italian group, though it is not sure whether Stendhal realized this. It is certain, however, that he was not actively engaged in their political struggle. A remark made in Souvenirs d'égotisme in 1832 indicates that he had no faith in the political future of the Italian liberals:

Au reste, je n'ai jamais rien connu de plus poétique et de plus absurde que le libéral italien ou carbonaro qui, de 1821 à 1830, remplissait les salons libéraux de Paris.¹⁹

Moreover, the Austrian authorities had little trouble in convincing Stendhal's liberal friends in Milan that he was

¹⁷ Ibid., II, p.133.

¹⁸ See Souvenirs d'égotisme, p.156.

¹⁹ Ibid., ch.vii, p.98.

a French government spy. He wrote disconsolately to Mareste on 23 July 1820:

Il m'arrive le plus grand malheur qui pût me tomber sur la tête. Des jaloux, car qui est celui qui n'en a pas, ont fait circuler le bruit que j'étais ici agent du gouvernement français.²⁰

On 13 June 1821 he finally decided to leave Milan for Paris; Matilde had made her indifference abundantly clear, and Stendhal could no longer stand the coolness and suspicion of his acquaintances in Italy. From the summer of 1821, therefore, till the end of the Restoration Stendhal was based in France, though he made several trips to England and Italy.

If he had spent his years in Milan pressing his French friends for political news from France, he now had first-hand knowledge of what was going on. Mareste, Lingay, and Mérimée were all able, by virtue of their positions, to give Stendhal inside information, so to speak, about the workings of French administration during the Restoration; in addition, he read the liberal newspapers of Europe and was in constant touch with people in governmental circles in the Paris salons which he frequented. In spite of his literary preoccupations, therefore, Stendhal was as interested as ever in political developments, and indeed he was not as cut off from the French political scene as one might imagine.

It has been felt necessary to give a fairly detailed account of Stendhal's varied experiences during the period 1814 to 1830, since once again his personal involvements can help to shed light on his political judgements. It is difficult in fact to disentangle the mixture of dilettante²¹

²⁰ Correspondance, I, pp.1030-1.

²¹ The term 'dilettante' has three meanings in the Concise Oxford Dictionary: lover of the fine arts; amateur; smatterer, one who toys with subject or concentrates on nothing. We use the word throughout in its first sense; it is Stendhal's interest in Italy and the arts which makes the term applicable to him. He has often been described as a dilettante in the other senses too; it is hoped that this study will show the injustice of such allegations.

and concerned political observer in Stendhal during the Restoration. His writing of the period seems equally torn between a tendency to pose as a sceptic in matters of political importance, to claim that as an artist he was no longer concerned about them, and a recurring and underlying compulsion to discover what in fact was going on and why.

Stendhal's tendency to take what Michel Crouzet calls a Que m'importe? attitude²² manifested itself first, not surprisingly in view of his personal position, in December 1814: 'Je méprise autant les gouvernés que les gouvernants et c'est toujours le dernier observé qui me semble le plus haïssable'.²³ By July 1815 he had already adopted the pose of dilettante, as a note in his diary suggests:

Je m'estime heureux de vivre sous le gouvernement profondément sage de la maison d'Autriche. D'ailleurs rien de ce qu'on fait ici ne peut me toucher; je suis passager sur le vaisseau. L'essentiel est qu'on ait la tranquillité et de bons spectacles.²⁴

Throughout the Restoration one can find any number of remarks which reveal that Stendhal was frustrated at the prominence given to politics in conversation to the exclusion of other topics:

En France, on ne parle que de constitution et de lois organiques, d'ultras et d'indépendants. (1819)
Tout cela m'étouffe de mépris. Je puis avoir tort, mais ma sensation, pour moi, est vraie. J'aime mieux passer ma vie avec Monti et Rossini. (1820)
Je suis devenu very cool sur la politique. (1820)
Rien ne peut être plus différent que le Français de 1788, léger, gai, insouciant, et le Français de 1828 qui raisonne et qui s'occupe de politique. (1828)
Il ne faut jamais demander de l'héroïsme à un gouvernement. (1829)²⁵

The reasons for this professed lack of interest in politics vary; ideologically, Stendhal believed firmly in a liberal

22 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.224.

23 Journal Littéraire, III, p.254.

24 Journal, IV, p.165.

25 Journal Littéraire, III, p.144; Correspondance, I, pp.1002-3; I, p.1035; Courrier Anglais, V, p.322; Promenades dans Rome, I, p.11.

future for France, and indeed Europe, and was thus annoyed by the continual political debates on what he saw as an assured fact:

All Europe shall have the liberty in 1850, mais pas avant. Voilà mon calmant. (1820)

Depuis dix ans, la France, qui avait vu sa presse enchaînée sous le despotisme de la gloire, jouit d'une demi-liberté. (1824)

Depuis les élections de 1823, tout homme éclairé voit avec assez de netteté que la France finira par obtenir une constitution raisonnable et un véritable gouvernement avec les deux Chambres, et que l'époque de l'établissement d'un système juste et constitutionnel sous la direction d'un ministère de centre-gauche n'est reculé que de quelques années. (1824)

Je sais que notre liberté s'augmentera d'un centième tous les ans et aura doublé en 1929. Cela cru, rien d'ennuyeux comme des discussions politiques et les trois quarts ne sont pas de bonne foi. (1829)²⁶

Predictably enough, however, he had more personal reasons for decrying politics from a dilettante's point of view. In the first place, the strong accent on political discussion, which Stendhal saw as an unfortunate but necessary social consequence of the French Revolution, ruined his taste for pleasure and gaiety in life: 'Mais, au nom du ciel, ne bannissons pas l'amour volage de notre aimable France, et en faisant le bien général, conservons un peu de plaisir'.²⁷ This is a strange plea to find in conclusion to a really serious piece of political thinking in 1814, in which Beyle discussed the relative advantages and disadvantages of the constitution about to be imposed on Restoration France. Michel Crouzet deduces the personal reasons behind what he describes as Stendhal's 'apolitisme':

Le moi seul est réel, et son plaisir, et l'idéologue a tendance à mesurer chichement l'utilité de la politique pour le moi . . . L'inquiétude politique n'est pas

²⁶ Correspondance, I, p.1035; Mélanges, II, p.102; Courrier Anglais, IV, p.341; Correspondance, II, p.158.

²⁷ Mélanges, II, p.12. It seems that this was written in Louis Crozet's handwriting, but the ideas are certainly Beyle's.

naturelle, elle est seconde, et doit se justifier; si noble qu'elle soit, elle est ressentie comme un sacrifice . . . Et encore faut-il ajouter que cet apolitisme . . . est justement tendanciel, velléitaire, plus fort quand la politique menace l'équilibre personnel, par exemple en 1804, 1814, et 1817, moins fort quand Stendhal se²⁸ contente d'observer et de comprendre les événements.

After 1815, of course, Stendhal's personal pleasure turned from youthful ambition to a deep concern for the arts, and it is hardly surprising to find him arguing a case for literature against politics, since it was precisely during the Restoration that he began to write for a living. Thus in 1817, in Histoire de la peinture en Italie — the book which has rightly been described as being partly a political pamphlet — Stendhal could not resist defending the arts: 'Il faut donc prendre les lettres, et la France occupée de ses ultra et de ses libéraux, n'a pas d'attention pour les lettres'.²⁹ Hence the attraction of despotic Italy, of course, where the discussion of politics had not yet ousted the importance given to the arts, and Stendhal spoke on behalf of the Italians in a pamphlet on romanticism in 1819:

L'attention est partout pour les discussions d'utilité et de politique et l'habitude de ces discussions rend impropre aux arts. Nous seuls, nous avons encore l'âme accessible aux douces sensations des arts et de la littérature.³⁰

We have already noted that Rome, Naples et Florence represented a veritable battleground for Stendhal's contradictory desires to see political liberty in Italy and yet to preserve happiness and the arts there. Two more examples from Stendhal's writing of the period can show the consistency of his views:

Deux grandes causes de stérilité: notre littérature est sous le despotisme de Laharpe et de ses successeurs; ²⁰ tout ce qui se sent du génie écrit sur la politique. (1822) Quelques accès de colère que nous nous donnions le

28 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.225.

29 II, ch.clxxxiv, p.327.

30 Journal Littéraire, III, p.146.

gouvernement sera à peu près dans vingt ans ce qu'il est aujourd'hui . . . Il n'est donc pas sage de remettre les jouissances que peuvent nous donner les beaux-arts et la contemplation de la nature au temps qui suivra l'établissement d'un gouvernement parfait. Il y aura toujours de ce côté des sujets de colère et c'est, selon moi, une triste occupation que la colère impuissante. (1828)³¹

In short, Stendhal's adoption of a sceptical standpoint with regard to political liberty and democracy during the Restoration was the result, partly of his conviction that these would come sooner or later without all the fuss, and partly of his concern for the future of the arts in a republican society. It is interesting to add that Stendhal's hopes of political liberty by 1850 were unrealistic, as Flaubert, in that very year, was to complain of exactly the same preoccupation with politics which Stendhal had abhorred thirty years earlier:

Si, en 1852, il n'y a pas une débâcle immense à l'occasion de l'élection du président, si les bourgeois triomphent enfin, il est possible que nous soyons encore bâtis pour un siècle. Alors, lassé de politique, l'esprit public voudra peut-être des distractions littéraires. Il y aurait réaction de l'action au rêve; ce serait notre jour!³²

And yet, almost despite himself, Stendhal was passionately interested in politics. This dilettante living in Italy, who claimed that he had had enough of politics and meant to devote himself to pleasures and artistic enjoyment, nevertheless pressed his Paris friends for regular information about events in France:

Des détails, morbleu! des détails sur les élections!! (1818)
Écrivez, écrivez; je ne sais rien que par vous. (1820)³³

In addition, Stendhal's works from 1815 to 1830 contain such a measure of political and social comment and criticism that it is impossible to accept his political shoulder-shrugging without reservations. Political curiosity and apolitisme (or political scepticism) coexist, therefore, in Stendhal's

³¹ Correspondance, II, p.11; Promenades dans Rome, III, pp.160-1.

³² Correspondance (Oeuvres complètes), II, p.238.

³³ Correspondance, I, p.946, p.1039.

views on Restoration France and Italy, and it is almost impossible to decide which tendency prevails, so closely are the two attitudes linked. Dennis Porter, summing up on the first work signed Stendhal, indicates the paradox: 'Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817 is a 'pamphlet politique' that is ironically at pains to underline the limits of politics'.³⁴ Nevertheless, Stendhal's preoccupation with politics almost despite himself merits close examination.

Praise for the French Restoration is extremely rare in his works, and normally refers to the relative economic stability which successive governments somehow achieved after so disastrous a period of war:

La France . . . garde toujours . . . son rang en Europe. Ses finances sont des plus florissantes et elle est à même de mettre en campagne 800.000 jeunes gens. (1825)³⁵

Other comments in favour of the regime tend to be ironic in the extreme and are meant to outwit the vigilant Austrian police; for the most part, Stendhal had nothing but contempt for the personalities and policies of the period. Yet he was prepared at the outset to accept, with reservations, the restored King and his entourage, as a projected letter on the Constitution in May 1814 reveals:

La monarchie nous convient donc par-dessus tout, mais il faut que le pouvoir de cette monarchie soit limité de manière à ce que nous ne sortions pas de notre sphère d'activité: elle doit laisser la liberté du bonheur de ce temps.³⁶

Another note, entitled Projet de loi électorale and probably written in the same year, indicates the kind of liberty Stendhal envisaged:

Des lois prescriront la mise en activité:
de la liberté de la presse;
de la liberté individuelle,

³⁴ 'Politics, happiness and the arts', p.261.

³⁵ Courrier Anglais, II, p.415.

³⁶ Mélanges, I, pp.145-6.

des jurés,
de l'inviolabilité des membres du Parlement,
de la liberté des cultes,
de la responsabilité des ministres.
Les prisons organisés comme à Philadelphie;
La gendarmerie et la répression de la mendicité;
L'abolition de la confiscation des biens.³⁷

It may seem strange to find such dedicated interest in political institutions coming from the pen of a writer who in the same year wrote: 'Quelle folie de s'indigner, de blâmer, de se rendre haissant, de s'occuper de ces grands intérêts de politique qui ne nous intéressent point'.³⁸ But whatever the pose Beyle adopted, his hopes for a liberal regime were very soon dashed, and for the whole of the period 1815 to 1830 his disgust with Restoration France receives constant expression.

It has already been noted that for Stendhal constitutionalism and common sense in politics were synonymous,³⁹ and therefore he put great faith in a proper interpretation of the Charter. Despite a certain amount of scepticism regarding the length of time required between the institution of a charter and the advent of liberty — 'Nous allons avoir notre première charte. Quand viendra la liberté? La grande charte des Anglais fut signée par Jean sans Terre en 1215. La liberté n'a établi son séjour en Angleterre qu'en 1688' (1814)⁴⁰ — nevertheless he did rely on the constitution for a liberal regime:

La France ne sera jamais heureuse que gouvernée par un souverain illégitime, c'est-à-dire qui tienne sa place de la constitution. (1815)
B. Constant dit: Toute Charte exécutée est toujours bonne. (1817)
Nous ne désirons d'autre liberté que celle donnée par la littéraire et consciencieuse exécution de la Charte. (1825)⁴⁰

³⁷ Mélanges, I, p.156.

³⁸ Haydn, Mozart et Métastase, p.355.

³⁹ See Chapter 2, note 61. Also Journal, IV, p.170: 'Bonheur de la France si Nap[oléon] n'eût été renversé qu'en 1824. On eût tenu cinq à six ans en 1815, Napoléon II n'eût pas pu n'être pas constitutionnel, c'est-à-dire sensé' (1815).

⁴⁰ Mélanges, I, p.151; Journal, IV, pp.162-3; En marge des manuscrits de Stendhal, p.348; Mélanges, I, p.282.

But he was lucid enough to see that it was the implementation of the terms of the Charter which was all-important: 'Qu'importe la lettre d'une charte? C'est la manière de la mettre en pratique qui fait tout' (1828).⁴¹ And it was precisely for their continuous violations of the constitution (the policy which was to bring about their downfall in 1830) that he most criticized the Bourbons. For example, he believed that the decision to dismiss Grégoire from parliament in 1819 was a foolish and unconstitutional step on the part of Louis XVIII: 'Même dans le sens of your King, je l'aurais admis, ce trait de respect pour la charte, que coûtait-il?'⁴² and in De l'Amour, published in 1822, he implicitly denied France the right to be called a constitutional monarchy.⁴² Certainly the number of modifications to the electoral laws, particularly after 1822, proves the justice of Stendhal's criticisms. Originally the Chambre des Députés was to have increased by one fifth each year, but the Bourbons soon found that strict application of these terms tended to bring more opposition members into the Assembly, and so the laws were frequently altered. Stendhal's hopes of having better prospects of a post after a few years of the cinquième — 'Dans tous les cas, un chien de libéral comme moi aura plus d'avantages après l'arrivée de deux ou de trois nouveaux cinquièmes' (1818)⁴³ — were to become increasingly chimerical as the regime became more reactionary. H.-F. Imbert notes that Stendhal's interest in elections decreased after 1819:

De tous les événements politiques de cette période, le plus intéressant pour Stendhal, ce fut la bataille électorale . . . Ces élections de 1819 sont les dernières auxquelles s'est intéressé Stendhal. Et ce fait traduit bien son scepticisme sur l'avenir politique de la Restauration.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Promenades dans Rome, II, p.236.

⁴² Correspondance, I, p.999; De l'Amour, I, ch.xl, p.218.

⁴³ Correspondance, I, p.910.

⁴⁴ Les Métamorphoses de la liberté, livre III, ch.iii, p.221.

The Restoration's constitution had also provided for a free press, and it has already been remarked that for Stendhal liberty of expression was of great political importance. Yet here again he had cause to complain, for by 1828 no fewer than five laws restricting press activities had been put into practice, and at least as many reactionary plans had been rejected. On 1 November 1822 Stendhal drafted an amusing letter to the editor of the Courrier Français in which he posed as a bookseller:

J'avais cru jusqu'ici que mon industrie était un droit. M. le Préfet Delavau m'apprend que c'est un bienfait de l'autorité, cela m'étonne et me déconcerte un peu, moi qui ai lu et vendu maintes fois un petit livre dont vous avez peut-être entendu parler, intitulé: Charte constitutionnelle.⁴⁵

A remark made in an article for an English magazine in 1827 is even more bitter:

Notre police a, depuis trois mois, prouvé son extrême vigilance non point en arrêtant des voleurs, mais en persécutant les imprimeurs et les éditeurs

while in 1825 he had diagnosed the principal reason behind censorship:

Comme le gouvernement tombe chaque jour dans les plus incroyables absurdités et est l'objet du mépris et de la risée publique, les sévérités de la censure sont devenues indispensables.⁴⁶

Even the inauguration of a bicameral system in 1815, a step which Stendhal had genuinely welcomed and which he never ceased to prescribe for Italy if she was ever to achieve political liberty, had its disadvantages in practice. This he discovered in 1825: 'Les deux Chambres ne sont établies en France que depuis dix ans, cependant la Chambre des députés a été déjà achetée et vendue'.⁴⁷ What is more, the restrictions made on the electoral laws ensured that electors and elected alike were too old and too rich to be regarded as

⁴⁵ Correspondance, II, pp.9-10.

⁴⁶ Courrier Anglais, III, p.318; V, p.230.

⁴⁷ Ibid., IV, p.75.

representative of the majority:

La présente Chambre est composée d'hommes de soixante ans. Libertins dans leur jeunesse, ce sont maintenant de stupides et égoïstes bigots, bien incapables d'avoir une seule idée nouvelle. (1825)⁴⁸

In short, the constitution of Restoration France, had it been properly executed, would have satisfied Stendhal's moderate demands; but successive reactionary moves to restrict the freedom of the press, to exclude a liberal influx into the Assembly, and thus to modify the terms of the Charter, completely antagonized him. After 1817 his political opinions, as he said himself, were those put forward in Destutt de Tracy's Commentaire,⁴⁹ and H.-F. Imbert declares that these were quite contrary to the thought behind the Restoration's reactionary policies.⁵⁰ Ideologically, Stendhal's criticism of Restoration politics was therefore sound enough, since it was consistent with his views on liberty and constitutionalism.

Stendhal's analysis of French society during the period 1815 to 1830 is also important, and can be illuminated particularly well by the various criticisms of Restoration nobles, probably the most influential class of the regime, found in his works. In his view their political intransigence led them to destroy their one real chance to take a significant part in the governing of the country. In 1814 Beyle had been optimistic about the possibility of the nobles' becoming a force again in France, though he felt that politically they would have less relevance than the Deputies:

La liberté telle que je la conçois est inséparable d'une noblesse et d'un roi.
La noblesse est le sanctuaire de l'honneur; pour le conserver, il faudrait donc une noblesse en France lors même qu'elle ne serait pas un des ingrédients inévitables de la liberté des modernes et qu'une chambre des pairs

⁴⁸ Courrier Anglais, V, p.8.

⁴⁹ Correspondance, I, p.943. See also p.990: 'Au total, vous savez que ma profession de foi est le Commentaire sur Montesquieu' (1819).

⁵⁰ Les Métamorphoses de la liberté, livre III, ch.iv, p.240.

ne serait pas aussi nécessaire à la conservation de tous les droits et à l'équilibre du pouvoir qu'une Chambre des communes.⁵¹

His drafts for the constitution of a Peers' College, with their provision for a liberal education and freedom of expression, show that he was concerned with proper political instruction for those who would eventually join the upper house in the Assembly. However, the actual behaviour of the aristocracy throughout the Restoration proved Stendhal's early hopes to be vain in the extreme. A note and a drawing in his diary as early as July 1815 show that he already foresaw what the uncompromising attitude of the nobility would be:

Le parti de l'éteignoir triomphe . . . Tout ce qui se fera désormais en France devrait porter cette épigraphe:
Armes de France . . . à l'éteignoir

and the same idea was also expressed in 1818: 'Les nobles s'efforcent de placer un éteignoir sur les lumières et quelques souverains semblent favoriser le parti des nobles'.⁵² In other words, the aristocracy, far from taking up the challenge to adapt itself to post-revolutionary French society, was trying to bring about a reaction in favour of ancien régime values. Hence the use of the term ultra which became popular in Restoration France: the nobles, by their flagrant attempts to return to a pre-revolutionary situation, were proving themselves to be more reactionary and more royalist than the King himself, who, whether he liked it or not, was the beneficiary of a Charter drawn up with the agreement of the new majority created by the Revolution. From now on, Stendhal denied the nobility any real political relevance in his hopes for France's future.

In October 1815, at the beginning of the first White Terror, Stendhal realized from his base in Milan that the nobles were discrediting the monarchy by their excesses:

On dit que la noblesse est le soutien de la monarchie (oui, une noblesse militaire). Dans ce moment, c'est la noblesse qui entraîne à terre Claude XVIII [Louis]. Sans sa

⁵¹ Mélanges, I, p.142, p.143.

⁵² Journal, IV, pp.161-2; the second remark is quoted by Victor Del Litto in La Vie intellectuelle de Stendhal, troisième partie, ch.iii, p.620.

noblesse, il serait bienvenu de la nation.⁵³

A visit to Grenoble in May 1818 to settle his widowed sister's affairs confirmed him in his suspicions: 'Je me sors de ce pays haïssant et respirant l'assassinat', and in the same year he called the aristocracy 'le plus grand mal de la société actuelle'.⁵⁴ The assassination of the Duc de Berry in February 1820, which gave the royalists a chance to remove the more moderate Decazes from government, dismayed Stendhal and induced him to repeat an idea he had already expressed to Mareste: 'Une collection de baionnettes ou de guillotines ne peut pas plus arrêter une opinion qu'une collection de louis ne peut arrêter la goutte'.⁵⁵ In Stendhal's view, therefore, the course of liberty could not be changed by violence no matter what the ultra-royalists might believe. In 1825 to 1826 the discussions over a possible indemnity for the nobles who had lost their land gave Stendhal further occasion to criticize them as a class, since this question tended to reveal their weakness: 'Le parti ultra ne souffre pas seulement d'un manque de capacité mais aussi d'un manque d'union'.⁵⁶ Stendhal told his English readers in 1825:

Il est important cependant d'observer que la haute noblesse de notre temps est tombée à un degré de stupidité sans exemple dans les annales de la cour de France

and in 1826: 'A force de se vendre publiquement, les hautes classes sont tombées dans la dernière bassesse'.⁵⁷

A comparison with Balzac's attitude towards the nobility is revealing, for he too believed that during the Restoration the aristocracy had missed its chance to play a significant part in French society:

Il [le faubourg Saint-Germain] péchait par un défaut d'instruction et par un manque total de vue sur l'ensemble de ses intérêts. Il tuait un avenir certain, au profit

⁵³ Journal, IV, pp.171-2.

⁵⁴ Correspondance, I, p.921, p.941.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, p.998.

⁵⁶ Courrier Anglais, IV, p.99.

⁵⁷ Ibid., V, pp.70-1; III, p.21.

d'un présent douteux . . . Chaque famille ruinée par la révolution, ruinée par le partage égal des biens, ne pensa qu'à elle, au lieu de penser à la grande famille aristocratique, et il leur semblait que si toutes s'enrichissaient, le parti serait fort. Erreur.⁵⁸

But his reasons for deploring such a wasted opportunity are very different from Stendhal's; Balzac saw the nobility as a possible effective force to balance against the masses whom he feared:

Une aristocratie, qui personnellement fait à peine le millième d'une société, doit aujourd'hui, comme jadis, y multiplier ses moyens d'actions pour y opposer, dans les grandes crises, un poids égal à celui des masses populaires. (1834)⁵⁸

Stendhal, on the contrary, did not foresee popular uprisings and did not fear the masses; he believed that the Revolution had destroyed the worst of the social abuses existing in ancien régime France, and that the peasants were satisfied with their lot. His disappointment with the nobles' intransigence is based largely on an idea that the aristocracy should be, not a buffer to the masses, but the 'sanctuaire de l'honneur'.⁵⁹ Once again Stendhal's viewpoint has changed a little, and it is important to distinguish between his criteria for judgement. Ultras and nobles were not necessarily synonymous in his view; he detested the ultra-royalists in their attempts to secure political reaction; but the term 'noble', for Stendhal, often has no political connotations at all.

For despite the continual criticisms he levelled at the Restoration nobles for their political blunders, Stendhal still felt a certain nostalgia for them as a class, and he admired their manners:

Cependant, quelle que soit mon estime pour l'empire de la bobine et des machines à vapeur, à mon avis, le bon ton restera à la classe où chaque individu, dès l'âge de

⁵⁸ La Duchesse de Langeais, La Comédie Humaine, Paris, 1958, V, p.149, p.148.

⁵⁹ See above, note 51.

dix-huit ans, n'a d'autre affaire que de s'amuser. (1825)⁶⁰
As late as 1828 he was still regretting the aristocracy's lack of energy; for only someone born rich and noble in this time of industrial fervour, he believed, could become in future an artist. Yet energy was as necessary to the artist as leisure:

Tandis que les hautes classes de la société parisienne semblent perdre la faculté de sentir avec force et constance, les passions déploient une énergie effrayante dans la petite bourgeoisie . . . pour exceller dans la statuaire ou la peinture il faudra désormais naître riche et noble . . . Mais, si l'on naît riche et noble, comment se soustraire à l'élégance, à la délicatesse, etc., et garder cette surabondance d'énergie qui fait les artistes?⁶¹

In other words, Stendhal would be happy, it seems, if the nobility could give up its base scheming for political power and its ineffectual devotion to the past, and resume its traditional tasks of setting the tone in literature and ensuring honourable standards of behaviour; then, he felt, it might have its place in nineteenth-century society.

It is worth pointing out, however, that he was not really optimistic about the nobles' ability to effect the changes he desired. It is interesting to note, for example, that the ideal readers he invoked for his own compositions were not a group of aristocrats, past or present, but rather individuals of disparate social backgrounds. He wrote in 1829:

Il est sans doute parmi nous quelques âmes nobles et tendres comme Mme Roland, Mlle de Lespinasse, Napoléon, le condamné Laffargue, etc. Que ne puis-je écrire dans un langage sacré compris d'elles seules!⁶²

Such characters, the 'happy few', embodied for Stendhal the qualities of energy and sensibility which were, in his view, necessary to the artist, and which were now rare in France:

Les beaux-arts doivent leur existence et leur progrès à la perfection de la sensibilité et à l'excitation forte des passions. Mais c'est en vain que le peintre ou le

60 Mélanges, I, p.289.

61 Promenades dans Rome, III, pp.148-9.

62 Ibid., II, p.218.

musicien cherchera ces qualités en France. Il ne trouvera à leurs places que la vanité et l'égoïsme. (1822)⁶³

The nobles of the nineteenth century certainly lacked the energy to create or judge works of art; yet Stendhal felt that they were the only class who still had the leisure and wealth necessary to resist the effects of civilization (and charlatanism) on literature. His admiration for the aristocracy's innate power to appreciate literature seems, on examination, to have been limited to only one aspect of art, that of understanding subtle comic nuances in a situation; rereading Le Rouge et le Noir in 1835 he noted:

La société de Mme de Sévigné approuvait les sottises que La Bruyère dit sur la religion et le gouvernement, mais quel juge admirable pour une scène dans le genre de celle de Mme de Rênal avec son mari.⁶⁴

This hardly qualified them as superior literary critics in general; nor do the nobles in Stendhal's novels reveal any real interest in literature. Although M. de La Mole, for example, has all the eighteenth-century philosophers in his library, there is no evidence that he has read them, and his political ideas have certainly not been influenced by Rousseau or Voltaire.

Stendhal's views on the future of the arts therefore have to be treated carefully. It is not enough to state simply that he admired the taste of eighteenth-century aristocrats in literature or music and that he hoped for a similar revival of appreciation in the nineteenth-century nobility. It is possible that we are dealing once again with a kind of reaction on Stendhal's part. The problem of the future of the arts in an increasingly commercialized, industrial society had led Stendhal to an impasse as it was to do for other nineteenth-century writers such as Gautier and Flaubert. Stendhal's solution to the problem was, on occasion, to conjure up for himself a theoretical elite, the 'happy few', whose main characteristics were not

⁶³ Courrier Anglais, I, pp.271-2.

⁶⁴ Le Rouge et le Noir, I, p.419.

sociological similarities but superior psychological qualities. But it is also typical of Stendhal's thinking that he should sometimes choose to express his doubts in more concrete sociological terms; that is, he elected to state the insoluble problem opposing artistic standards and political progress in terms of an antagonism between the aristocracy and the vulgar bourgeoisie. Stendhal consistently blamed the new economic situation in post-1789 France for the crisis in the arts, as we have seen in Chapter 1: he had no sympathy for the new and vulgar bourgeois majority which was now wealthy enough to patronize the arts. Stendhal's theoretical choice of the aristocracy as potential literary mentors (theoretical because he did not often include them in his lists of readers for his own works) can best be explained in terms of his reaction to what was happening in French society. His appeals to the nobility to judge the arts without bias must be seen largely as an idea forced upon him, in his love of opposites, by his disgust with the vulgarity and lack of literary appreciation displayed by the bourgeoisie.

Stendhal did believe, however, that the aristocracy had the ability to revive honourable standards of behaviour in society. René Girard, in his discussion of Stendhal and the aristocracy, was one of the first critics to realize that Stendhal did not necessarily equate nobility with privilege in a political or social sense, but with a certain code of behaviour:

Est noble, aux yeux de Stendhal, l'être qui tient ses désirs de lui-même et s'efforce de les satisfaire avec la dernière énergie. Noblesse, au sens spirituel du terme, est donc très exactement synonyme de passion.⁶⁵

This is to say that he was concerned with the classless notion of nobility of soul (or honour) as much as with the origins of nobility of birth:

Il faut, à l'origine, qu'il y ait noblesse au sens spirituel pour qu'il y ait noblesse au sens social. A un certain moment de l'histoire les deux sens du mot noble ont donc coïncidé, au moins en théorie.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, ch.v, p.122.

This theoretical fusion had been spoiled in Stendhal's view by vanity ('Vanité, unique passion des Français des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles' (1829));⁶⁶ in the eighteenth century at least there was still room for amusement, but the Revolution, by removing the protective figure of the monarch, had exposed the schism between the aristocracy's traditional code of behaviour and its actual state of decadence. In short, the Revolution had served to expose the contradictions inherent in the attitude of the nobility; instead of seeking to reestablish its spiritual superiority, the aristocracy was merely making matters worse during the Restoration by its hatred of the other classes and by its jealousy of political power. Again a comparison with Balzac is revealing, for he too had a nostalgic wish to see nobility of behaviour returning to the aristocracy:

Tout devrait élever l'âme de l'homme qui, dès le jeune âge, possède de tels privilèges, lui imprimer ce haut respect de lui-même dont la moindre conséquence est une noblesse de coeur en harmonie avec la noblesse du nom.⁶⁷

But Balzac also reserved for the nobles, as we have remarked, a political relevance in nineteenth-century France which Stendhal ultimately denied them.

Stendhal was only too aware of the difficulties facing the intelligent young aristocrats of the 1820s, especially those of the younger generation who could not genuinely long with their fathers for a return to ancien régime society. It is again René Girard who best explains Stendhal's perceptive ideas:

Il apparaît vite, d'ailleurs, que le rationalisme est la mort du privilège . . . Il n'est plus permis, depuis la Révolution, d'être privilégié sans le savoir.⁶⁸

Conditioned by his aristocratic birth and heritage, yet influenced by the liberal ideas of his own day, the young aristocrat was in an intolerable position; Stendhal showed his understanding of this predicament on several occasions; for

⁶⁶ Journal, V, p.48.

⁶⁷ La Duchesse de Langeais, p.147.

⁶⁸ Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, ch.v, p.132.

example:

Nos jeunes aristocrates, à la fois marquis et libéraux, ne sont au fond ni l'un ni l'autre . . . Ils ne reconnaissent point comme MM. de Lamennais et de Maistre, la toute-puissance de l'autorité despotique, non plus qu'ils n'admettent, comme MM. Royer-Collard, B. Constant et Jérémie Bentham, le droit d'examiner et la nécessité de juger la légalité de toute loi selon son seul degré d'utilité pour la majorité du public. (1826)⁶⁹

Critics who invoke Stendhal's tendency to contradict himself on political matters have missed a subtle point here when they claim that his supposed republicanism is incompatible with his nostalgia towards the aristocracy. Stendhal's criteria for judgement have changed imperceptibly. If he began with the idea in 1814 that the nobles could well play a valuable, albeit minor, political part in the running of a constitutional monarchy, their excesses and inefficiency in the years to follow soon changed his mind. Indeed, unlike Balzac, he denied his nobles any political significance and instead began to view their situation from an aesthetic and moral point of view. In the 1820s he came up with a theory that the aristocracy was missing its chance, not to gain political power (for his éteignoir symbol shows that he knew their efforts in this respect were doomed to failure), but to fulfil the pursuits traditionally expected of it in the fields of morals and literature. In other words, his use of the word ultra was pejorative, since he abhorred the political pretensions of this group; his attitude towards the nobility as a class, however, was generally sympathetic. Yet the two attitudes converge; for when Stendhal criticized the ultra-royalists' futile reactionary policies, he was speaking as much from the point of view of the abused (if pessimistic) artist as from an outraged sense of liberalism. Basically it was the nobles' preoccupation with politics which prevented them from giving the arts unbiased judgement; their fear of further rebellion made them turn to the Church for

⁶⁹ Courrier Anglais, III, p.58. The same notion is expressed in Armance, and in the short story Le Rose et le Vert, whose hero asks himself: 'Est-il convenable pour le bonheur de la France qu'il y ait des ducs?' (Romans et Nouvelles, p.284).

support, and this was anathema to the liberal artist who needed enlightened criticism for his works.

Thus Stendhal's attitude towards the clergy during the Restoration was closely linked to his judgement that the nobles were committing a most ignoble kind of political suicide by their intransigence. It is a historical fact that the Church began to play a more significant part in political life during this period than ever before. Traditionally, clergy and aristocracy had vied with each other for power in the absolute monarchy of the ancien régime; since the Revolution, with the advent of constitutional monarchy and charter between King and people, the two factions were tending to form an alliance in order to fight the common enemy: middle-class supremacy. Jacques Madaule describes the kind of argument which encouraged the royalists to rely on the clergy for support:

Ils [the nobles] s'étaient détournés de Dieu et de l'Eglise. Ils en avaient été punis par la Révolution. Tel est le fondement de la doctrine contre-révolutionnaire que prêchaient aussi bien l'Anglais Burke, le Savoyard Joseph de Maistre que le Rouergat Bonald. Il fallait donc avant tout restaurer la religion et le reste se rétablirait par surcroît. Le parti ultra est d'abord un parti dévot.⁷⁰

Stendhal's anti-clericalism has been the subject of much debate in this century, with Marxist critics using it to insinuate that he was a pre-socialist, and religiously committed critics hotly denying that Stendhal was an atheist at all. Francine-Marill Albérès claims that the novelist's lifelong temptation to seek worldly success places him alongside the Jesuits:

Chez les jésuites, Stendhal blâme ce qu'il a voulu refuser, mais ce qu'il a été contraint d'accepter, et même parfois d'admirer, la réussite temporelle.⁷¹

H.-F. Imbert, on the other hand, suggests that Stendhal, who admired Pascal, Grégoire, and Tamburini, and who deplored the political activities of the Restoration clergy — Jesuits in

70 'La France de Stendhal', Europe, 519-21, juillet-août-septembre 1972, pp.3-16 (p.9).

71 Stendhal et le sentiment religieux, Paris, 1956, ch.ii, p.45.

particular — had more affinities with the Jansenists.⁷² It is not our intention here to enter into this complicated, and at times spurious, debate, but it is important to make clear our position regarding Stendhal's anti-clericalism since his writing during the Restoration is full of criticisms of the clergy. It has been noted that the origin of Stendhal's strong anti-clerical attitude was his hatred of the pious Beyle family, and Francine-Marill Albérès extends the idea to suggest that it developed into an expression of his non-conformist tendency;⁷³ her general conclusion is that, in view of Stendhal's admiration for Italian piety and his enthusiasm for colourful religious ceremonies, he was in fact a Catholic atheist. Our view is that Stendhal was an atheist tout court, and that his bitter criticism of clerical activities during the Restoration was based on a sound notion that the Church was meddling in reactionary politics and was therefore synonymous with despotism. This explains his vitriolic attitude towards the alliance of aristocracy and clergy. The following examples, chosen from dozens of possible remarks made by Stendhal during or after the Restoration, show that it was the political pretensions of the Church which annoyed him most:

Depuis 1815 le clergé et la noblesse, dirigés en commun par le cardinal de la Luzerne, l'abbé duc de Montesquiou, MM. de Chateaubriand, de Villèle, de Vitrolles, etc... ont juré d'anéantir le système constitutionnel, encore dans son enfance, et de s'emparer du pouvoir au moyen et au profit d'un gouvernement occulte, pour rétablir ensuite l'ancien régime. (1825)

Attaquer les jésuites en France en 1826, ce n'est pas autre chose que réclamer un remaniement complet de l'administration intérieure du pays. (1826)⁷⁴

According to Stendhal, government and clergy were not only attempting to destroy the constitution; they were also, in some measure, responsible for the dullness of Restoration society:

72 Stendhal et le tentation janséniste, Geneva, 1970, passim.

73 Stendhal et le sentiment religieux, ch.ii, p.36.

74 Courrier Anglais, IV, pp.80-1; III, p.195.

Rien ne ressemble moins à la France gaie, amusante, un peu libertine, qui de 1715 à 1789 fait le modèle de l'Europe, que la France grave, morale, morose que nous ont léguée les jésuites, les congrégations et le gouvernement des Bourbons de 1814 à 1830. (1831)⁷⁵

His criticisms of the Church during the Restoration were therefore based, less on the ferocious anti-clericalism which some critics invoke, than on his sound and consistent belief in political liberty and on his desire to see the return of free, relaxed, and amusing conversation in French life.

The field of political economy also interested Stendhal throughout his life, and in 1825, as we have seen, he wrote a pamphlet attacking industrialism. As early as 1810, influenced by his reading of Condillac, Smith, and Say, Beyle had drafted plans for a pamphlet entitled Influence de la richesse sur la population et le bonheur, and in 1818 he recommended Tracy's Traité de la volonté et de ses effets (fourth volume of the Idéologie) to his friend Mareste.⁷⁶ Already in 1810 Stendhal had complained that economists did not take account of the happiness of the majority. D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels was written in 1825 when the Haiti scandal was causing a furore in banking and industrial circles in Paris. The old French colony of San Domingo, now called the republic of Haiti, decided to raise a public loan in order to pay off its debt to France and to realize its own natural resources. But a clash between ambitious French bankers and the insistent Haitian government led eventually to a slump at the Bourse, with the speculators being the main losers. Stendhal's pamphlet, taking advantage of the financial scandal this caused, was directed against the Saint-Simonian doctrines of hard work and utility from the standpoint of the sensitive writer concerned about the future of the arts in a republican, industrial, or utilitarian society. Throughout his writing during the period there is a parallel theme: on the one hand he denigrates the English

⁷⁵ Mélanges, V, p.32.

⁷⁶ Correspondance, I, p.921.

industrial society, and its morose effect on the people there, and suggests that Restoration France is becoming more and more anglicized;⁷⁷ and on the other he puts forward despotic Italy as an example of the patrie des arts:

Je n'hésite pas à le dire: dans l'état où en sont les choses en 1819, le véritable siège de la littérature, ⁷⁸ c'est le pays qui trois fois déjà a civilisé le monde.

Italy, then, is anti-France and even more anti-England; Italian energy and naturalness are opposed to the vanity of these two more 'civilized' nations:

Les beaux-arts doivent leur existence et leur progrès à la perfection de la sensibilité et à l'excitation forte des passions. Mais c'est en vain que le peintre ou le musicien cherchera ces qualités en France. (1822)
La vanité ayant accaparé la place de toutes les autres passions en France et dans la haute société de toute l'Europe, j'ai dû prendre mes exemples en Italie. (1824)
Si vous avez la noble intention de vous rendre utiles, combattez la vanité, l'ennemie fatale aujourd'hui de la vertu. (1825)⁷⁹

The vast amount of reading done by Stendhal in the field of economics and the serious attempts he made at writing pamphlets give the lie, as Victor Del Litto and Fernand Rude have pointed out, to those critics who claim that Stendhal was an amateur or a dabbler in matters of politics, sociology, or political economy. It is evident that he was both interested and knowledgeable in these fields. Yet one has to agree that his conclusions are often made from a dilettante's point of view, since he aims at deflating the self-importance of industrialists and economists by stressing the greater significance of amusing conversation and a high standard in the arts. Here, clearly, is another example of the constant coexistence of apolitisme and political curiosity.

It was during the Restoration too that Stendhal began to

⁷⁷ See De l'Amour, I, p.9.

⁷⁸ Journal Littéraire, III, p.146. Already in 1811 Beyle had written: 'Je sens par tous les pores que ce pays [Italy] est la patrie des arts' (Journal, III, p.227).

⁷⁹ Courrier Anglais, I, pp.271-2; Correspondance, II, p.943; Mélanges, I, p.271, translated from Silvio Pellico.

be interested in the social classes existing in France following the Revolution. By 1825 he had evolved a fairly comprehensive theory about the division of the classes, and his analysis is to be found in an article written for an English review. He distinguished five classes: an aristocracy of birth; an aristocracy of wealth, composed mainly of bankers; an industrial and commercial middle class; a propertied class, consisting chiefly of intellectuals and sometimes called a 'classe pensante'; and lastly a propertied working class, peasants, and shopkeepers. Lucien Jansse, in his article on Stendhal's class theory, has pointed out that this division makes no allowance for the non-propertied working class,⁸⁰ but for the most part Stendhal's analysis does not fall so very far short of the interpretations of modern historians.⁸¹ Wealth and property seem to be constantly at the bottom of his political and social theories. With the new property laws of the First Republic had come, in Stendhal's view, a general decentralization of wealth, since in the event of a landowner's death the estate was no longer left only to the eldest son, but was divided among all the children of the deceased. He seemed to think that if this process continued, accompanied by a gradual widening of the franchise, the distinctions between his classes would tend to disappear. Certainly he considered a fusion of his two aristocracies more than probable:

Il est probable que dans dix ans tout homme ayant cinq millions . . . sera aussi noble qu'un duc. (1824)

La noblesse décline rapidement devant les progrès croissants des affaires et du commerce; et, comme nous n'avons heureusement pas de lois de substitution, tous nos jeunes gens nobles et riches deviennent industriels. (1825)

Elles [noble ladies] se rencontrent souvent avec les femmes des banquiers, qui sont déjà leurs égales par la fortune; et sous le rapport des mœurs, il sera, dans

⁸⁰ 'Stendhal et les classes sociales', Stendhal Club, 15 octobre 1963, pp.35-45.

⁸¹ See for example Félix Ponteil, Les Classes bourgeoises et l'avènement de la démocratie, Paris, 1968, livre premier, ch.i, p.68.

trente ans, absolument impossible de distinguer entre ces deux classes. (1825)⁸²

The only obstacles to this probable fusion were the aristocracy's disinclination to mingle with the haute bourgeoisie, its fear of their political strength, and its subsequent alliance with the clergy, and Stendhal was equally aware of this difficulty:

L'aristocratie nobiliaire fait cependant tous ses efforts pour empêcher cette assimilation -- et elle s'efforce de corrompre l'éducation au moyen des jésuites, pour la ramener, autant que possible, à ce qu'elle fut sous l'ancien régime. (1824)⁸³

All might yet be well, Stendhal thought, if the efforts of Villèle, who managed to combine his ultra-royalism with a fine talent for financial affairs, had succeeded:

Tout le monde en veut à M. de Vil[lèle]. Pour moi, je l'aime comme bon financier et anti-russe. (1824)
M. de Villèle passera à la postérité comme le Walpole de la France . . . C'est un personnage très adroit . . . La meilleure preuve de ces talents, c'est l'état florissant des finances françaises d'aujourd'hui. (1825)⁸⁴

As it was, Villèle fell from office in 1828, Polignac later took over, and the July Revolution followed in 1830. Stendhal was finally forced to abandon his hopes for a fusion of his two top classes by the attitude of the nobles under the Orleanist monarchy. Once again, it is necessary to conclude that Stendhal's interest in politics and society was constantly reinstating itself despite his tendency towards scepticism regarding political matters.

It is not easy to assimilate the mass of political and social ideas expressed by Stendhal, often in the most disparate manner, throughout the Restoration; and yet one has to pay tribute to the attention this artist and epicurean paid to a wide field of political or social concerns. We have attempted to analyze his views on politics, social classes (especially the aristocracy), economics, religion, and industrialism in turn.

⁸² Courrier Anglais, IV, p.47; V, p.256, p.257.

⁸³ Ibid., IV, p.47.

⁸⁴ Correspondance, II, p.51; Courrier Anglais, IV, pp.75-6.

Some of these (for example his concern for liberty, his observations on the nobility) were given repeated or continuous attention in his writing; others (industrialism, class division) can be traced to a definite date in his thinking. The diversity of viewpoint adopted by Stendhal has also been discussed: often his opinions on what appear to be, broadly speaking, political issues have little or no source at all in political standpoints. To return to a political framework, however, it is possible to discern three major criticisms which Stendhal levelled at Restoration politics in general.

Firstly, influenced by his admiration for Revolution and First Republic and convinced by his reading and experience that the political and social scene in France had changed irrevocably, he criticized the Restoration for its backward-looking, reactionary attitudes. H.-F. Imbert puts forward this view: 'Il condamne en elle [the Restoration] le régime qui prétend plier à ses principes les citoyens sans prendre conseil du temps'.⁸⁵ Hence the insistence throughout the period that society is in a state of revolution, no matter what restrictions the Restoration governments might impose:

Ni Walter Scott, ni Machiavel lui-même ne m'ôteraient de l'idée que la Fr[ance] arrivera au degré de lib[erté] qu'avait l'Angleterre de 1715 à 1750. (1820)
Comme les moeurs anglaises sont nées de 1688 à 1730, celles de France vont naître de 1815 à 1880. (1822)
Actuellement, nous sommes en pleine révolution quant aux principes. (1822)⁸⁶

It was natural that Stendhal should deplore the vain and frustrating efforts of the Bourbons and their supporters to turn the clock back to the ancien régime:

Avec les Bourbons reparurent les jésuites, les confesseurs et les maîtresses de cour. (1825)
Il a fallu l'expérience de tout ce qui est arrivé de 1815 à 1827, tous les empiétements sur les libertés, tels que la loi du sacrilège, la loi du droit d'aînesse, la loi pour la diminution des rentes, la loi Peyronnet sur la

⁸⁵ Les Métamorphoses de la liberté, livre premier, ch.ii, p.121.

⁸⁶ Correspondance, I, pp.1001-2; De l'Amour, II, p.219; Journal, V, p.11.

presse, etc., pour nous dégoûter des Bourbons. (1827)
En France, nous marchons à la liberté; mais, en vérité,
par un chemin bien ennuyeux. Nos salons sont plus collet-
monté et plus sérieux que ceux d'Allemagne ou d'Italie. (1827)⁸⁷

Clearly Stendhal's faith in liberty and progress was outraged by these futile attempts to reverse what he considered, rightly, to be an irreversible revolution in French political and social life: 'La Révolution a tout changé en France. Cependant, nous persistons comme le reste de l'Europe à ne point voir ce changement' (1824).⁸⁸

Secondly, Stendhal's criticisms of the Restoration are often directed against the inefficiency of the regime. In 1818 he wrote to Mareste: 'Ah! pauvre France! Quels chefs!', and in 1825, as we have noted, he criticized the stupidity and senility of the deputies; in 1828 he wrote from Paris to Félix Faure:

Pour vous donner quelque idée du cahos [sic] politique au milieu duquel nous vivons, je vous donnerai tout simplement les nouvelles de hier [sic] et de ce matin.⁸⁹

Despite his liberal hopes for Europe Stendhal still preferred an efficient despotism to inefficiency and anarchy: hence his admiration, on occasion, for the Austrian monarchy. It is interesting to note that his observations on the Papal States reveal his hatred of political incompetence and do not stem from any fanatical anti-clericalism. He wrote in 1820: 'La plupart des chefs sont honnêtes, mais si bêtes, si bêtes!', and around 1824-6:

Dans un siècle où tout est favorable à la diffusion des lumières, quelle considération voulez-vous que l'on ait pour un gouvernement dont le chef toujours vieux, de courte existence, souvent incapable de rien faire par lui-même, est environné de parents ou d'autres ambitieux très pressés de faire leur fortune?⁹⁰

The chief political blunder made by Restoration governments was, in Stendhal's opinion, their inability, or refusal, to take account of the views of their majority or 'clientele'; it was

⁸⁷ Courrier Anglais, II, p.258; III, p.332; Promenades dans Rome, I, p.46.

⁸⁸ Courrier Anglais, IV, p.14.

⁸⁹ Correspondance, I, p.921; II, p.135.

⁹⁰ Ibid., I, p.1016; Rome, Naples et Florence, II, p.338.

time, he thought, for the post-war generation's fears to be allayed; yet still the Restoration turned to the past and relied on the older generation to carry out its policies. Stendhal's concern for the 'generation gap' seemed to reach its peak around 1825, and it was in his articles for English reviews that he most frequently expressed his views:

Aussi étrange que cela puisse paraître, le caractère français s'est moins modifié de l'année 1500 et du règne de François 1^{er} jusqu'à l'année 1780 et au règne de Louis XVI, que depuis 1789 jusqu'à 1824 . . . Il n'y avait jamais eu d'exemple de fils si grandement différents de leurs pères qu'on en voit en France dans la nouvelle génération comparée aux vieilles souches.⁹¹

For Stendhal, the thinking majority (or was it a minority?) in France, who tended to be younger men, was most important:

Tout ce qui a le temps de penser en France, tout ce qui a quatre mille francs de rente en province et six mille francs à Paris, est centre gauche. On veut l'exécution de la Charte sans secousse, une marche lente et prudente vers le bien. (1824)⁹²

These were the moderate men of the future, and they were being irrevocably antagonized by the reactionary and exclusive methods of Restoration governments. In Stendhal's view the regime was committing suicide by its persistent refusal to cater for its most important clients.

Hence the third critical theme running through Stendhal's writing during the 1820s, that of instability. From about 1825 onwards, in the face of continuing blunders by successive governments, Stendhal stressed the lack of political stability in France:

Cette rapide énumération des divers changements que la société française connut en si peu de temps peut servir à prouver que, dans ce pays, rien n'est établi d'une façon sûre. (1825)

Aujourd'hui tout est incertain en France. (1826)

Tout ce qui existe en France aujourd'hui, sauf la Charte, sera renversé avant vingt ans. Personne ne doute de cette vérité — pas même M. de Villèle. (1826)

⁹¹ Courrier Anglais, II, p.269.

⁹² Mélanges, I, p.255.

For the govt. it is more unset[t]led que jamais. (1827)⁹³
Stendhal was therefore continually predicting the end of the regime; this is not to say that he in any way foresaw the July Revolution -- his surprise and delight at the events of July 1830 show that he had not anticipated them. Stendhal's conviction that the Restoration could not last was based rather on his complete faith in the changes brought about by the Revolution: public opinion, not bayonets, was his weapon.⁹⁴ In addition, he believed that the poorer classes no longer suffered the social deprivation of their ancien régime counterparts, and therefore they would not have cause to revolt.⁹⁵

One major contributory factor to the atmosphere of uncertainty and instability which Stendhal sensed in Restoration France was the widespread practice of hypocrisy or girouettisme. It must always be remembered that Stendhal lived through the most troubled period of French history, a time in which Emperors and governments fell, and with them the dupes, while the small men (and in some cases the great) went marching on. Personal survival and success became increasingly difficult in a country which had known so many terrors, purges, betrayals, and executions in such a short space of time. But necessity is the mother of invention, and the Restoration produced countless public figures who were past-masters at the art of survival. Beau de Loménie, in his study of the powerful Restoration bourgeoisie, discovers that the influential bankers and industrialists who were already wielding political power in the 1820s, before the so-called 'bourgeois monarchy' was installed, were to a large extent the same men (or at least members of the same families) who had helped Bonaparte with his coup of 18 Brumaire.⁹⁶ Where their leader had carried his imperial

⁹³ Courrier Anglais, IV, p.50; III, p.39; III, p.285; Correspondance, II, p.105.

⁹⁴ See above, note 55.

⁹⁵ Stendhal was to remain convinced of this even after 1830; in this respect, of course, he was utterly wrong in his convictions.

⁹⁶ Les Responsabilités des dynasties bourgeoises, Paris, 1943.

policies to the bitter end and had been exiled for so doing, the bourgeois families who put him in power were steering a more prudent course, and they survived to influence Restoration politics and dominate the Orleanist regime.⁹⁷ Then there was Talleyrand, a fine example of an aristocrat who managed to find favour with each successive regime: a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1788, he gained Bonaparte's favour and was Foreign Minister from 1797 to 1807; in 1814 he welcomed the Allies and played a large part in persuading them to reinstate Louis XVIII on the throne of France; and he finished his days as French ambassador to Britain under the July Monarchy. Stendhal's attitude towards nineteenth-century hypocrisy was scathing:

L'expression non vendu, pour laquelle la France paie actuellement un million aux enfants du général Foy, sera bientôt l'épithète la plus rare qu'on puisse inscrire sur le tombeau d'un Français. (1826)

La crainte de se compromettre fait que le Français de trente ans passe ses soirées à lire auprès de sa femme. (1828)

En France, le charlatanisme est si profitable que tout le monde s'y essaye. (1829)

Je dirai la vérité. Par le temps qui court, ce n'est pas un petit engagement, même à propos de colonnes et de statues. (1829)⁹⁸

From a personal point of view, of course, Stendhal, who refused to compromise and write for the vulgar majority, decried the hypocrisy currently practised in literature:

Tout se fait par coterie dans notre littérature; malheur à l'homme de talent qui n'a pas fait dix visites, en bas de soie noirs, tous les soirs; jamais il ne verra ses ouvrages annoncés. (1823)⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Jean Lhomme, La Grande Bourgeoisie au pouvoir (Paris, 1960) and Alfred Cobban, France since the Revolution (London, 1970) both refute Beau de Loménie's thesis to some extent. Lhomme agrees with him basically, but claims that the thesis is exaggerated -- the dynasties were not so very powerful during the Restoration; hence the animosity between haute bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Cobban points out that property-owners were more influential in this period than the Parisian bankers whom M. de Loménie describes.

⁹⁸ Courrier Anglais, II, p.470; Promenades dans Rome, III, p.191; Courrier Anglais, III, p.461; Promenades dans Rome, I, p.3.

⁹⁹ Courrier Anglais, I, p.66.

On the same page he compares the practice with the same need for hypocrisy in politics:

C'est comme nos ministres: pour chaque département il en faudrait deux: l'un, chargé de travailler, et l'autre d'intriguer: sans cela pas de succès. (1823)

From a political point of view, therefore, he criticized hypocrisy because of the effect that it had on the running of the country: if each commis in each ministry was bent on purely personal success and spent his energies in intrigues to this end, inefficiency and instability were bound to result. Balzac, in his unfinished novel Les Employés, which describes administrative life during the Restoration, reveals the results of the overloaded, unwieldy, and unreliable system of bureaucracy during the period:

Au lieu de relever directement d'un premier magistrat politique, les commis sont devenus, malgré nos belles idées sur la patrie, des employés du gouvernement, et leurs chefs flottent à tous les vents d'un pouvoir appelé Ministère qui ne sait pas la veille s'il existera le lendemain . . . Seulement occupé de se maintenir, de toucher ses appointements et d'arriver à sa pension, l'employé se croyait tout permis pour obtenir ce grand résultat.¹⁰⁰

Stendhal, with his experience of Napoleonic administration behind him and with second-hand information from his friends about Restoration bureaucracy, also realized that the versatility of the times was producing a generation of men whose loyalty belonged to themselves and not to any political philosophy, government, or country. Professor Douglas Johnson explains that it was the constant fear of renewed revolution which gave the Restoration its peculiar anti-philosophical quality:

Albert de Broglie claimed that even when France was most prosperous the recollection of the year '1793' had the effect of the ghost in 'Macbeth'. Thus the confrontation of political ideas was the conflict of possible systems of government, it was a period of policies rather than philosophies, theories of government rather than theories of politics, considerations of power rather than

¹⁰⁰ La Comédie Humaine, VI, pp.872-4.

considerations of humanity.¹⁰¹

Stendhal often used the phrase 'manger au budget' which became popular in the 1820s to denote the parasitical practice of working at public expense for personal gain:

Un jeune Français, dès qu'il arrive à sa majorité, songe moins à faire fortune par quelque entreprise profitable qu'à faire sa cour aux préfets et aux ministres, dans l'intention d'être entretenu aux frais du public ou, comme on dit couramment, de manger au budget. (1828)¹⁰²

The Restoration, then, was doomed to failure because of the intransigence of its royalist supporters, its antagonization of the moderates, intellectuals, and younger generation, and the general practice of hypocrisy which meant that its administration was disloyal and unreliable in the extreme.

A conclusion as to where exactly Stendhal stood politically under the Restoration will be difficult to achieve, and this for two reasons. Firstly, the shifting nature of Stendhal's views, the almost imperceptible movement from political criteria for judgement to a standpoint of an ethical or aesthetic kind and the variety of poses he adopted make categorization impossible; the most one can hope to do is to seize him in a certain attitude at a certain time. Yet despite this volatility, despite his strong tendency during the Restoration to pose as a dilettante, a lover of pleasure and the arts, and to deny interest in politics, Stendhal was destined to have a lifelong curiosity about political affairs. Moreover, the knowledge he gained from reading political economists and the information gleaned from his newspapers and his friends refute those critics who accuse him of being a mere amateur on the subject. The fact that he adhered to no system or party in politics implies scepticism on Stendhal's part, but not a lack of interest or knowledge. Basically he was still the liberal of his young days, prepared to accept a moderate monarchy as long as France was efficiently governed, but convinced to the

¹⁰¹ Guizot, London, 1963, ch.ii, p.28.

¹⁰² Courrier Anglais, III, pp.440-1.

last that the revolutionary changes could never be reversed. At first Stendhal described himself as a liberal: 'Moi, je suis ouvertement un chien de libéral, pour tout potage' (1818).¹⁰³ But as the regime continued his use of the word became more cautious.

Indeed, the second difficulty encountered when attempting to sum up on Stendhal's political position vis-à-vis the Restoration lies precisely in the nature of the regime itself. In a time of widespread hypocrisy, political labels tended to shift in meaning until they ended up void of any true political sense. H.-F. Imbert describes the difficulty involved in nomenclature:

Il ne fut jamais aussi difficile que sous la Restauration d'imposer aux choses et aux êtres les appellations qui leur convenaient. Charte, ultra, républicain, bonapartiste, libéral, athée, protestant, gallican, ultramontain, jésuite, autant de mots que déformaient la propagande et l'intérêt du moment.¹⁰⁴

Predictably enough, it was the deformation of the word liberal which annoyed Stendhal most, and it is significant that after 1820 he more or less ceased to describe himself as such. Margaret Tillet, in her study of Stendhal's non-fictional works, says:

In fact, what Stendhal is perturbed about, by the end of the Restoration period, is the debasing of the term 'liberal'. No one, in this complex, fascinating, and dramatic period, the period of so many beginnings -- large-scale banking, large industrial enterprises, party politics -- was more aware of the conflicting meanings given to the word 'liberalism', and of how it could become a political label for those whose struggle for power was based on hatred of the privileged by birth and fear of those with no privilege at all.¹⁰⁵

Thus Stendhal's comments on liberals tended to be scathing around or after 1820:

Je trouve les libéraux plats. (December 1819)
Depuis vos crimes, je suis ultra, ou, au moins, bien las du jacobinisme. (1820)

¹⁰³ Correspondance, I, p.893.

¹⁰⁴ Stendhal et la tentation janséniste, livre premier, ch.ii, p.35.

¹⁰⁵ Stendhal: The Background to the Novels, Oxford, 1971, ch.iv, p.95.

La plupart des députés libéraux nommés cette année sont sots, c'est-à-dire bêtes en mourant d'envie de faire effet. (1828)¹⁰⁶

It is interesting to note Stendhal's derogatory attitude towards Decazes (he often called him Maison) whose government, from 1818 to 1820, was the most liberal of any throughout the regime:

Les gens de la Révolution, les Danton, les Robespierre, les Tallien, etc., etc., avaient du pouvoir et peu de talent, si l'on veut, mais enfin, ils avaient pris ce pouvoir. Les Maison d'aujourd'hui n'ont eu que la peine of pleasing to a Géronte. (1818)

Je compte sur 4.800 fr. encore pour quatre ans; je vous avoue que mon mépris et mon horreur pour le maître M[ais]on sont tels que j'aime mieux cela que chercher secours. (1819)¹⁰⁷

In fact Decazes was just such a 'liberal' as Beau de Loménie describes:

Amorçant une tactique qui allait être la source des plus dangereuses confusions intellectuelles de notre histoire contemporaine, ils se mettaient à jouer du mot de liberté, à se déclarer les seuls représentants qualifiés des idées libérales puisque, selon eux, libertés et traditions révolutionnaires devaient se confondre . . . Bref dans beaucoup de milieux de ce que l'on commençait à appeler 'la société nouvelle', ou même assez volontiers la bourgeoisie libérale, on se souciait en réalité beaucoup moins de libertés politiques que de la défense des situations acquises. Decazes et ses amis avaient donc pu, sans grand effort, pendant plusieurs années, trouver là des appuis, tout en multipliant les mesures d'arbitraire les moins libérales.¹⁰⁸

Stendhal's attack on industrialism in 1825 necessarily implied criticism of the 'liberal' bankers and industrialists of the day; and his feeling of not really belonging in the 'liberal' salons of the 1820s shows that he had little in common with this group. It was therefore as a very perceptive thinker that he refused to count himself as one of the Restoration 'liberals', and his treatment of political labels in La Chartreuse de Parme reflects the frustration of a progressive

¹⁰⁶ Correspondance, I, p.999, p.1007. Stendhal is talking here about the liberal assassination of the duc de Berry which brought down the Restoration's only attempt at a centre-left government; II, p.136.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., I, p.952, p.961.

¹⁰⁸ Les Responsabilités des dynasties bourgeoises, vol.I, ch.ii, p.73, p.91.

thinker who, during the Restoration, could not bear to call himself a 'liberal'.

It is therefore through an analysis of the different viewpoints used by Stendhal to judge political events in Restoration France that a possible explanation of his so-called 'contradictions' can be reached. The criteria for observing political realities in France tended to become more blurred as Stendhal grew older, and his writing of the period 1815 to 1830 is most difficult to analyze. Not only did the Restoration bring about a fundamental change in the fortunes of Henri Beyle — from ambitious Imperial bureaucrat he had become an artist — but the regime also represented a time of extremely complex and shifting values. It is difficult to distinguish in Stendhal's literary output of the period between two standpoints: on the one hand, he was often tempted to take a 'couldn't care less' attitude with regard to politics, and on the other hand he was unable to suppress a deep-rooted, self-assertive interest in political matters. Stendhal's initial hopes for constitutional government soon gave way, in view of increasingly reactionary measures, to a position of disgust and contempt for the regime. His criticisms of the intransigence of the ultra-royalists, of the political influence of the Church, and of the regime's refusal to take account of the majority view, were therefore consistent with his liberal opinions. Where ambiguities do occur — for example, in his attitude towards the aristocracy — these can often be explained in terms which have little or nothing to do with politics at all. Contradictions abound, for the very nature of the man demanded them, but the inconsistencies in Stendhal's political thought can at least be explained in part by a close examination of the different viewpoints which he adopted.

Chapter 4: The July Monarchy

The elections of July 1830 sent to the Assembly a greater number of opposition deputies than ever before in the history of the Restoration, and on 25 July Polignac drew up four ordonnances for the King to sign, including further repressive measures against the press and the dissolution of the newly elected parliament. The next day appeared in the left-wing journal, Le National, a passionate protest, written by Thiers on behalf of forty-four liberal journalists, against the illegality of such a procedure. Students and printing workers held manifestations, and barricades went up the following evening in the streets of Paris. The result was three days of popular rioting (27,28,29 July). Charles X and Polignac were ill prepared, large numbers of the royal troops defected, and by 30 July the Bourbon monarchy was finally overthrown. In the absence of a united front of republicans, the crown was offered by Casimir Périer and Jacques Laffitte, heading the liberal deputies, to the Duke of Orleans. The old revolutionary La Fayette, newly appointed head of the National Guard, embraced the new 'King of the French', Louis-Philippe, on the balcony of the Town Hall before crowds of delirious people; and France, complete with tricolore and revised Charter, was once again a constitutional monarchy.

Stendhal was surprised and delighted by the revolutionary events, and he wrote to a friend on 13 August: 'Vous ne sauriez croire dans quel état d'agitation sympathique les événements de Paris nous ont tenus tous pendant plusieurs jours'.¹ He was especially enthusiastic about the role of the common people in the uprising; he noted in his diary on 28 July: 'Sang-froid complet du peuple',² and wrote to Sutton Sharpe on 15 August:

Tout ce que les journaux vous ont dit à la louange du peuple est vrai . . . La dernière canaille a été héroïque et pleine de la plus noble générosité après la bataille.²

Two years later he admitted to having been completely surprised by the people's courage:

Je n'ai commencé à estimer Paris que le 28 juillet 1830.

¹ Correspondance, II, p.186.

² Journal, V, p.66; Correspondance, II, p.187.

Encore le jour des ordonnances, à onze heures du soir, je me moquais du courage des Parisiens.³

Undoubtedly Stendhal had not foreseen the revolution. He experienced the riots at first hand; on 28 July he noted on a copy of Napoleon's memoirs that he could hear the fighting: 'Fusillade feux de peloton pendant que je lis cette page',⁴ and in an autobiographical note, written in 1837, he affirmed that he had spent the night of 29 July with Giulia Rinieri, his frightened mistress.⁴

He lost no time in soliciting a post now that the 'liberals' were in power and the legitimists had withdrawn to their country seats. On 3 August he asked Guizot for a prefecture, and three days later he drafted an imaginary dialogue with the latter, rehearsing his part if he should only be offered a small town. However, on 11 August Mareste was given the task of telling Stendhal that his demand had been refused, and instead he wrote to the Foreign Minister, Molé, asking for a consulate in Italy — again he had his exigences, for he would consider only Naples, Genoa, or Leghorn, and failing these the post of First Secretary in the embassy in Rome. His letters to Mareste in September show that he was optimistic about his chances, and he admitted owing everything to Mme Victor Tracy who was attempting to find him a post. Finally on 25 September he was officially appointed consul in Trieste, and if relief at first caused him to write enthusiastically to friends inviting them to visit him there, by 2 November his attitude was much less favourable:

Hélas oui, je vais à Trieste et je n'irais pas si j'avais 300 louis de rente. Comment passer les soirées? Voilà le grand problème. Ce n'est pas l'Italie, ce n'en est que l'antichambre.⁵

Pressed by his minister, however, he left Paris on 6 November and arrived in Trieste on 25, not before experiencing an anxious

3 Souvenirs d'égotisme, ch.iv, p.39.

4 Journal, V, p.66; Souvenirs d'égotisme, p.173.

5 Correspondance, II, p.192.

delay in Milan, where Beyle/Stendhal was only too well known to the authorities. On the day of his departure he had officially asked Giulia's hand in marriage (an eloquent indication of his reluctance in the matter) and while he was travelling to Italy the Journal de la Librairie announced the publication of Le Rouge et le Noir.

But his troubles were not yet over, since Metternich objected to the nomination of such a 'liberal' to a diplomatic post. The next few months were spent in anxious waiting, and finally on 16 March 1831 he received a letter from Count Sebastiani, Foreign Minister, informing him that he had now been appointed consul in Civita-Vecchia. His salary was cut by a third, and already in January Stendhal had shown little enthusiasm for the projected change of post; in a letter to Mareste he had written: 'L'envoi à Civ[ita-Vecchia] n'est pas si beau que vous pensez. C'est un trou abominable'.⁶ His future experiences were to confirm him in this judgement. Yet he was fortunate to get even this post: the Papal authorities were no keener to have this dangerous liberal employed in their territories than Metternich had been, and it was only the fear of upsetting the new French government which induced them to accept his nomination. From April 1831, when he arrived in the port of Rome, till his death in March 1842, Stendhal somehow held on to his post as consul.

Indeed the job itself had pleased him at first, and he had thrown himself into his work with vigour and enthusiasm. He sent off to his ministry presumptuous and probably unwanted reports on the state of Italy, and declared to Mareste that he was not going to endanger his post by continuing to publish works.⁷ No doubt Stendhal had been stung into such a drastic reaction by his failure to get a prefecture from Guizot, for in January he had written: 'Mais M. Zotgui ne veut pas des gens

⁶ Correspondance, II, p.219.

⁷ See Correspondance, II, pp.238-9.

d'esprit, comme je l'ai noté au 20 vol. du Rouge'.⁸ He contented himself with demands for the Légion d'Honneur as compensation, and declared that he was ready to undertake his duties: 'Je veux faire le métier en conscience. Malheureusement il me semble qu'il faut faire autrement'.⁹ In fact his doubts were justified; increasingly during the last eleven years of his life his enthusiasm was to wane in the face of hostility from his superiors, illness caused by the climate, boredom with the lack of stimulating conversation, and a constant undermining of his authority by his inferiors. On several occasions he thought half-heartedly of changing jobs and escaping; in September 1834, for example, following a particularly stormy period with his difficult subordinate, Lysimaque Tavernier, he begged Mareste to try to sell his post for him. In November of the same year he declared in a letter to Fiore:

Je crève d'ennui; je ne puis faire la conversation avec personne; je voudrais une place de quatre mille francs à Paris . . . M. Guizot devrait me nommer professeur de l'histoire des beaux-arts (peinture, sculpture, architecture et musique) avec cinq mille francs.¹⁰

Basically, however, his experience during the Restoration had taught him that he could not live comfortably by his pen alone, and his hopes of a teaching post were never to be fulfilled.

Having realized that he must somehow hold on to his post, Stendhal nevertheless proceeded to absent himself from his consulate as much as, and indeed more than, was decently possible.

⁸ Correspondance, II, p.218. M. Martineau writes in his Calendrier de Stendhal, p.251: '11 août. H.B. dîne chez Mareste qui lui notifie le refus de Guizot. Aussi H.B. qui corrige la 11^e feuille du Rouge (t.II) écrit-il ce jour-là, sa note sibylline sur la dernière page du feuillet: "Esprit perd préfecture. Guizot, 11 août 1830". In a letter to Mareste in March 1831 Stendhal repeated his bitter complaint: 'Les gens au pouvoir haïssent les gens qui impriment' (Correspondance, II, p.247).

⁹ Correspondance, II, p.278.

¹⁰ Ibid., II, pp.718-19. He seems to have suggested this idea to Ampère to whom he acted as guide in Rome in 1834, for the latter wrote in 1835: 'M. Beyle . . . qui serait plus à sa place, professant à Paris l'histoire de la peinture' (Calendrier de Stendhal, p.298).

Aided and abetted by the French ambassador to Rome, Sainte-Aulaire, and safe from pressure while his old colleagues Molé and Broglie served their turns as Foreign Minister, Stendhal managed to pass less than half his time actually in Civita-Vecchia: a great deal of his life was spent in Rome, and he had two lengthy sick leaves in Paris (one of them lasting all of three years). In January 1835, after persistent applications on Stendhal's part, Guizot finally awarded him the Légion d'Honneur; ironically, it was as a writer, and not for his services in administration as he would have wished, that he received the honour; moreover, some time later the poor consul was faced with the humiliating task of presenting his hated Chancellor, Lysimaque, with the same cross he had so long awaited for himself. The years 1834-5 were perhaps the most miserable for him, since he spent most of this time in Civita-Vecchia; the hostility of the new Foreign Minister, Rigny, obliged him to remain at his official post. Mérimée noted in April 1835:

Beyle m'écrit aujourd'hui d'une manière bien dolente. On le hait aux Affaires Étrangères, et il a un chancelier qui le dénonce lorsqu'il s'absente de Civita-Vecchia. Il voit la tempête qui se grossit au-dessus de sa tête et il croit impossible de l'éviter.¹¹

Frequent changes of cabinet, however, kept Stendhal safe from excessive ministerial wrath, and he was able to remain on leave in Paris from May 1836 till June 1839 because of Molé's indulgence towards him. But each break was bitterly fought for, each period of leave left Stendhal open to criticism from his superiors and trickery on the part of his Chancellor. The job might well have seemed a sinecure, but basically Stendhal was never fully secure in it. His complaints of illness were now very real — he suffered his first attack of apoplexy in March 1841 — and in September of that year even his enemy Guizot was forced to grant him leave to consult his doctor in Geneva; from there Stendhal went to Paris, where he succumbed to a second attack in March 1842 and died.

¹¹ Mérimée's remark is reproduced in Stendhal's Correspondance, III, p.31.

Emotionally, too, Stendhal's term of office in Civita-Vecchia was not a happy one. Several trips to Siena in the early thirties were curtailed when Giulia married Giulio Martini in June 1833. An unknown woman refused his hand on 15 May 1833, and in March 1835 his attempts to secure a marriage with a certain Mlle Vidau also broke down. Continued dreams of Giulia, an abortive attack on the virtue of the Countess Cini in Rome, and a mysterious 'last romance' centred round 'Earline' (perhaps this was simply another name for the Countess) were all that was left to fire the imagination of this writer of whom Mérimée said: 'Je ne l'ai jamais vu qu'amoureux ou croyant l'être'.¹² Such unhappy experiences, and the lack of any true sentimental attachment, may well have contributed to Stendhal's increasing misanthropy during this period.

Only his writing, it seems, kept him alive; for despite his decision not to publish anything as long as he was in office, he was convinced that his real talent lay in literary creation: 'Le vrai métier de l'animal est d'écrire un roman dans un grenier' (1832).¹³ Two unfinished autobiographies were thus secretly scribbled by 1836; a long novel, Lucien Leuwen, was brought almost to completion by 1835, but there was no question of publishing it in view of its bitter criticisms of the very regime which employed its author: 'Le Chasseur vert [early title of the novel], que je ne puis imp[rimer] tant que je mange au budget'.¹⁴ In 1833 he had discovered in Rome some sixteenth-century Italian manuscripts, and he set about translating and adapting them. The three years spent in France brought a commission from the editor, Dupont, to write about regional France, with the Mémoires d'un touriste being published in 1838. During the same period La Chartreuse de Parme was written in fifty-two days, and it was published in April 1839. Meanwhile

¹² 'Henri Beyle (Stendhal)', p.161.

¹³ Correspondance, II, p.487. See also Journal, V, p.99: 'Expérience de Dominique: il n'y a de bonheur constant que par le travail, the wants of publishing' (1833).

¹⁴ Correspondance, III, p.129.

Stendhal had drafted several short stories which remained mostly unfinished, and in October 1839 he began his last novel, Lamiel, but dried up completely and was unable to finish it. The period 1830 to 1842 therefore represents the high point of Stendhal's literary output, despite his initial determination not to publish anything.

The political, or rather diplomatic, content of Stendhal's career as consul is something of a mixture. On the one hand, he seems to have applied himself to his task, and his official correspondence during the period reveals that his duties were numerous and complicated enough. In March 1832 he was sent on a fairly delicate mission to Ancona where, a year before, the French government had sent troops to ensure the withdrawal of Austrian regiments, dispatched by Metternich to put down an Italian uprising. Sainte-Aulaire, who was indulgent towards Stendhal during the whole of his career in Civita-Vecchia, wrote him an excellent report to the Foreign Office:

Je dois des éloges au zèle qui l'a porté à se charger de cette commission désagréable et difficile. Il l'a remplie avec beaucoup de talent et de sagesse.¹⁵

On the other hand, Stendhal showed little talent for diplomacy in his dealings with the Ministry and with his subordinate, Lysimaque Tavernier.

In the first case, Stendhal seemed to reveal a strange combination of timidity and presumption in his contact with his superiors. For example, on 11 August 1830 he drafted his imaginary speech as prefect for Finisterre, not without noting some rather naive questions of protocol he would need to ask Guizot:

Dois-je aller à la messe? . . .
Dois-je encourager les paysans à se fabriquer des piques? . . .
Dois-je consulter les hommes de l'extrême gauche ou du centre gauche?¹⁶

In 1839, after nine years (nominally at least) of experience in the job, he was still unsure of the procedure to be observed

¹⁵ Le Calendrier de Stendhal, p.273.

¹⁶ Journal, V, pp.68-9.

should the Duke of Bordeaux, who was in Rome, decide to visit his port.¹⁷ He was continually begging his friends to dispose ministers and ambassadors to be indulgent towards him; for instance, in March 1831 he wrote to Mareste about Sainte-Aulaire, whom he feared at this early stage.¹⁸ Yet for all this timidity, he took the risk of absenting himself as often as possible from his post, thereby antagonizing almost every Foreign Minister in turn. Rigny's annoyance at his repeated flights to Rome obliged him, as we have noted, to remain in Civita-Vecchia in 1834 and 1835. In 1836 it seems that Stendhal had also upset Thiers.¹⁹ It took him some time, too, to realize that the Ministry did not appreciate the uninvited reports he sent them; in April 1831 he told Sophie Duvaucel:

J'ai passé cinq jours à Florence sans trouver le temps de monter à la Galerie ou d'aller au Palais Pitti. J'ai cherché la vérité, j'ai écrit quatre dépêches à mon ministre . . . Ma dépêche étant sincère aura déplu.²⁰

His friend evidently counselled prudence, for a few months later Stendhal wrote to Domenico Fiore:

Les chefs sont niais et ne veulent pas d'avis. Dominique ferait des rapports superbes. Mlle Sophie lui a fait conseiller de s'abstenir.²¹

Yet he did not take the advice, for in January 1834 he sent a long political report on Tuscany to the Duc de Broglie. Mérimée, who was in a good position to know how Stendhal's missives were received in Parisian ministerial circles, wrote to Sutton Sharpe in May 1834:

Beyle a dernièrement irrité notablement son ministre en présentant un chancelier et ajoutant à la fin de la lettre à son ministère: 'C'est d'ailleurs un homme tout à fait incapable'. Il a de plus envoyé, signé de lui, un mémoire très bien fait sur le commerce des sucres, seulement le dit mémoire, sous le nom d'un négociant sucrier, était

¹⁷ See Correspondance, III, p.309.

¹⁸ Ibid., II, p.253.

¹⁹ Henri Martineau affirms this in his Calendrier de Stendhal, p.322.

²⁰ Correspondance, II, p.282.

²¹ Ibid., II, p.312.

depuis huit jours au ministère.²²

Stendhal no doubt remembered the favourable attention given by Charles X to his report on the probable candidates for the Papal throne in 1829, but this had at least been commissioned. Successive Orleanist ministries were frustrated and outraged that this 'amateur' bureaucrat, who was fortunate to have a post at all, should affect the tone of an ambassador and send uninvited and at times embarrassing reports on the state of Italy. Guizot's reaction on Stendhal's death, as recounted by Viennet, reveals the general ministerial view of France's consul at Civita-Vecchia: 'C'est un polisson, me répondit-il, et je m'en suis tenu là. Une attaque d'apoplexie nous en a délivrés!'²³

Stendhal's inaptitude for a diplomatic career can also be illustrated by his handling of his secretary, Lysimaque Tavernier. This episode has all the characteristics of a roman noir. On arriving in Civita-Vecchia, Stendhal was warned by his predecessor, Baron de Vaux, against putting any faith in the treacherous Greek. Not only did Stendhal ignore this good advice from a man he gratuitously supposed to be stupid — 'J'espère, avec le temps, être aussi bête que mon prédécesseur' (1833)²⁴ — but he personally sought promotion for his subordinate.²⁵ Thereafter Stendhal was faced with an impossible situation of his own making; Lysimaque was now in a powerful enough position to make life extremely difficult for his absentee consul, and Stendhal's correspondence with him was often very bitter:

C'est encore à vous, M[onsieur], que je dois cette nouvelle réprimande du Ministre . . . Je ne puis avoir confiance en vous pour la plus petite chose.

En 1831, à mon arrivée à Civita-Vecchia, je vous ai trouvé sans place. M. le baron de Vaux, mon prédécesseur, vous

²² Le Calendrier de Stendhal, p.294. François Michel, in Études stendhaliennes, (Paris, 1958), ch.12, pp.128-75, discusses the novelist's relations with Molé and Broglie. He suggests that the latter may well have commissioned Stendhal's report on Tuscany; there is, however, no concrete evidence to support the claim.

²³ Quoted by André Le Breton in Le Rouge et le Noir de Stendhal: Étude et analyse (Paris, 1950), p.309.

²⁴ Correspondance, II, p.497.

²⁵ Ibid., II, p.474.

avait retiré sa confiance et avait nommé chancelier un M. Baldrini, je crois. (1834)²⁶

In short, for all his craftiness, Stendhal was taken in again and again; he was fairly lucid about his faults, but was unable to correct them; in a letter to Fiore in December 1830, for instance, he admitted to having antagonized an influential minister who might otherwise have helped him:

M. le c[om]te d'Arg[out], ministre de la Mar[ine], a été dix ans mon ami. Mais un jour j'ai dit que l'hérédité de la pairie rendait bêtes les fils aînés. Que dites-vous d'une telle gaucherie?²⁷

In March 1835 he wrote:

M. Delécluze des Débats me disait: Vous auriez fait fortune si vous n'aviez pas manqué d'industrie. Le coin de la bouche ironique me nuira toujours.²⁸

And while the novelist was claiming in letters to his friends that he was taking care not to upset people in Rome, Mareste received a report from Horace Vernet which hardly corroborated Stendhal's affirmations:

Il m'a dit que le grand homme [Stendhal] s'ennuyait outrageusement dans la Ville Éternelle. Il veut parler librement comme dans nos salons de Paris, il discute, il tranche, il disserte, à sa manière. Les pauvres Romains qui ont une peur horrible de se compromettre avec leur aimable gouvernement se bouchent les oreilles et s'enfuient. (1831)²⁹

Stendhal was, it seems, quite incorrigible. Tempting though it is to portray him as a clever, gifted insider in July Monarchy foreign politics and administration, his real lack of talent for holding down a post, especially a diplomatic one, must be borne in mind.

The last twelve years of Stendhal's life were thus in many ways unhappy ones. There appears in his work a greater tendency than ever before towards scepticism and disillusionment. The increasing attention he devoted to the search for the comic

²⁶ Correspondance, II, p.647, p.649.

²⁷ Ibid., II, p.201.

²⁸ Ibid., III, p.21.

²⁹ Le Calendrier de Stendhal, p.266.

character -- Leuwen père, Du Poirier, Mosca, Sansfin -- is just one example of this trend. Thus Stendhal claimed in 1831 that he did not really care about receiving the Légion d'Honneur,³⁰ and in 1834 he noted in his diary: 'Ce qui s'appelle se foutre carrément de tout. O happy state! J'en suis bien près'.³¹ From then on the initials SFCDT can be found frequently scribbled in the margins of books he was reading or manuscripts he was writing.³² Instead of taking advantage of the opportunities for advancement offered by his career, opportunities for which, after all, he had longed during the Restoration, Stendhal turned to writing for his salvation, even though he believed that he would not be able to publish anything. Indeed more than half the books written between 1830 and 1842 were destined to appear only after his death.

Yet once again there is a parallel theme of political curiosity in all that Stendhal wrote during the period. From his trou in Civita-Vecchia he was most anxious to keep informed about the situation in France. For this purpose he had his correspondence with his friends in Paris administration, especially Mérimée and Mareste. He had access to French newspapers; and some of his friends visited him in Civita-Vecchia and informed him of the latest political affairs in France -- Maurice Rubichon in February 1835 and Mérimée in October 1839 were two examples; he also had two lengthy stays in France himself. Finally, he was informed about French politics by the intellectuals whom he met at the embassy in Rome. Stendhal's political curiosity was a constant, it seems, despite his increasing dilettante attitude. Thus his letters to friends in Paris are full of demands for information:

Je crève de curiosité. Écrivez-moi toutes les nuances des faits. (1831)

Écrivez-moi ce qu'on dit, pense et fait à Paris. (1832)

La société change depuis 1830, et je ne suis pas là pour voir ce changement. J'ai envie de me pendre et de tout

³⁰ See Correspondance, II, p.255, p.257.

³¹ Journal, V, p.135.

³² For example Journal, V, p.143; Journal Littéraire, III, p.271.

quitter pour une chambre au cinquième étage, rue Richempane. (1836)³³

His diary and letters also bear witness to the fact that Stendhal followed closely every change in government:

Dissolution complète et sans remède chez vos amis. (June 1831)
J'apprends le ministère Bassano-Bernard-Bresson . . . Thiers et Guizot vont-ils prendre l'opposition? (November 1834)
Retour des doctrinaires. (November 1834)
Ministère hier. (September 1836)
Les élections se feront le 15 novembre et donneront un quart de nouveaux membres. (September 1837)³⁴

In short, Stendhal's views on, and criticisms of, the July regime were just as numerous as those of the Restoration, and deserve detailed attention.

Stendhal remained eternally enthusiastic about the July Revolution itself: in La Vie de Henry Brulard he wrote: 'Je fus ravi par les journées de Juillet'.³⁵ But the same cannot be said for the regime which followed it. The revised constitution, with its provision for a slightly larger and younger electorate, its free press, and its abolition of hereditary peerage, certainly pleased him. On 11 August 1830, anticipating a prefecture, he wrote a speech to his 'constituents' which revealed the faith that he put in the Charter:

Le respect de tous les droits, le soin de tous les intérêts; la bonne foi dans le gouvernement, ce sont mes moyens . . .
Dévoué à la loi fondamentale, au Prince, à la garde nationale, je secondrai de toutes mes forces le grand mouvement qui s'opère en France. Jamais nous n'aurons excité à meilleur droit, l'envie et l'admiration de l'étranger.³⁶

But ever since 1815 he had learned to await the practices of

³³ Correspondance, II, p.214, p.444; III, p.196.

³⁴ Ibid., II, p.310; Journal, V, p.128, p.130, p.187; Correspondance, III, p.243.

³⁵ I, ch.ii, p.17. In October 1830 Stendhal also suggested to the Globe that the figure 29, commemorating the third and last day of the July Revolution, should be France's new coat of arms. (Correspondance, II, p.191)

³⁶ Journal, V, p.67.

so-called constitutional governments before rejoicing in their theories; the practical interpretation of the Charter was what really mattered. He was to be disappointed by the attempts of successive Orleanist governments to interpret the terms of the constitution as narrowly as possible.

The July Monarchy began as a liberal enough regime, with Laffitte heading the left-wing Mouvement government; but economic crises, the feeble ministerial attitude towards the trial of Charles X's ministers, and the policy of non-intervention adopted with regard to the Belgian, Polish, and Italian popular uprisings at the end of 1830 antagonized public opinion. Stendhal lost little time in criticizing the pusillanimity of the first July Monarchy government:

La Chambre actuelle, tout en se donnant le plaisir nouveau en France de mâcher le mépris, nous conduit à cet état abominable, publicré [républicain], horrible partout ailleurs qu'en Amérique. (1831)

Peut-on être plus bête que votre Chambre qui vous mène tambour battant à la République par peur de la République? (1831)³⁷

When Périer took over as Prime Minister in March 1831, liberalism had already given way to conservatism, and for the rest of the period France was governed by successive Résistance ministries. Symbolic of this change of direction in the political fortunes of France was the dismissal of La Fayette from his post as Commander of the National Guard. Stendhal, who had declared the old revolutionary hero to be 'l'ancre de notre liberté',³⁸ as early as August 1830, was quick to react to this move: 'Rien n'est égal à la bêtise d'avoir renvoyé le great citiz [en]' (February 1831).³⁹ If he was delighted at the dissolution of the July Monarchy's first and only liberal Chamber -- 'Enfin, cher ami, nous avons la dissolution!!! Je suis parfaitement content, rien ne me manque',⁴⁰ -- he was to be even more disgusted with subsequent Résistance cabinets. For the members

³⁷ Correspondance, II, pp.216-17, p.221.

³⁸ Ibid., II, p.187.

³⁹ Ibid., II, p.239.

⁴⁰ Ibid., II, p.248.

of this latter party held an extremely narrow interpretation of the Charter, whereas Stendhal had suggested a progressive electoral system of his own by March 1831:

Ma loi électorale qui empêcherait d'avoir la ~~sa~~, si Apolli-
[naire] la connaissait, dit: Tout Français payant cent
cinquante fr. et âgé de vingt-cinq ans élit sept cent
cinquante députés, pris parmi les Fr[ançais] âgés de vingt-
cinq ans et payant cinquante francs.⁴¹

By the time that the Périer ministry began Stendhal had already realized that the July Revolution had been betrayed: 'Comment ne pas voir que l'on fait banqueroute aux journées de Juillet? On ne peut les faire oublier qu'en les usant' (1831).⁴²

There followed a series of working-class revolts in the provinces and in Paris, and government intervention was merciless. With the return of tight measures against the freedom of the press, by 1834 the regime was already irrevocably associated with conservatism. It is not by chance that Lucien Leuwen, a novel of intense political disillusionment, was written in the years 1834-5, nor that the criticisms it embodies prevented Stendhal from attempting to publish it. Philippe Vigier, a modern historian, seems to agree with Stendhal's judgements on the regime:

A la fin de 1835, le régime est enfin solidement établi, avec tous les caractères qu'il conservera jusqu'à sa chute. Mais nous sommes bien loin de la monarchie républicaine souhaitée par ceux qui ont porté Louis-Philippe au pouvoir, par La Fayette en particulier dont la mort en mai 1834 coïncide avec la fin de bien des illusions.⁴³

Basically, then, Stendhal was yet again disillusioned with the tendency of those in power to interpret and manipulate potentially liberal institutions in the most narrowly exclusive way possible; he wrote in 1837:

Que de fois n'avons-nous pas vu des institutions, longtemps désirées par nous, et enfin obtenues à grand'peine,

⁴¹ Correspondance, II, p.247.

⁴² Ibid., II, p.258.

⁴³ La Monarchie de Juillet, Paris, 1969, ch.i, p.30.

manquer tout à fait à leur but?⁴⁴

Stendhal's interest in the class structure of French society, which first manifested itself in the mid-20s, remained with him in the succeeding regime, and under the July Monarchy it was a fairly simple matter to equate each class, broadly speaking, with a particular political position. The nobility, for instance, in political terms, represented the right-wing opposition to the regime, and now called themselves legitimists. Stendhal sometimes called them ultras, but this was an anachronism, for, as René Rémond puts it: 'Comment se dire ultra-royaliste, alors que le roi est en fuite ou en exil, et les Bourbons détrônés?'.⁴⁵ They regarded Louis-Philippe as a usurper, and for the most part refused to have any dealings with the government; instead they withdrew to their country seats and sulked in silence. By 1834, it seems, Stendhal had finally given up faith in the possibility that the aristocracy might become a political force again, for he noted: 'Il n'y a pas un an que mon idée sur la noblesse est enfin arrivée à être complète' (1835).⁴⁶ In his view they had forsaken all chance of reaching a reasonable, constitutional approach by their devotion to the past. He teased Virginie Ancelot about the legitimists' attempts to cling to the memory of the Duc de Berry; the memorial service held on the tenth anniversary of his assassination in February 1831 had antagonized the Paris populace, and the result was a near-riot and the ransacking of the church in which the service took place: 'J'espère que S[ain]t-Germain-l'Auxerrois vous aura fait une telle peur que vous serez revenue aux sentiments naturels'.⁴⁷ By their refusal to compromise with the Orleanist regime, they were denying themselves any real political role:

Ouvrez l'Almanach royal de 1829, vous verrez la noblesse occuper toutes les places; maintenant elle vit à la campagne, ne mange que les deux tiers de son revenu et

⁴⁴ Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.514.

⁴⁵ La Droite en France de 1815 à nos jours, Paris, 1968, vol.I, ch.ii, p.60.

⁴⁶ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.ii, p.30.

⁴⁷ Correspondance, II, p.244.

améliore ses terres . . . Par la position qu'ils se sont faite depuis 1830, les hommes les plus aimables de France voient passer la vie, mais ils ne vivent pas. Les jeunes gens ne donnent pas un coup de sabre à Constantine, les hommes de cinquante ans n'administrent pas une préfecture, et la France y perd, car beaucoup connaissaient fort bien les lois et règlements, et tous avaient des salons agréables. (1837)⁴⁸

They were completely lacking in energy and direction:

L'aristocratie est sans énergie, sans fidélité à sa parole, pleine de faussetés qu'elle appelle finesses comme en 1791. (1831)

La politesse des hautes classes de France, et probablement d'Angleterre, proscrit toute énergie, et l'use si elle existait par hasard. (1832)

La bonne compagnie de l'époque actuelle . . . a une âme de soixante-dix ans; elle hait l'énergie sous toutes ses formes. (1837)⁴⁹

With regard to their way of life and their behaviour, of course, Stendhal was less critical: 'Vous connaissez mon goût pour l'aristocratie; je l'aime quand elle n'est pas étiolée par une éducation de trop bon ton' (1832).⁵⁰ But as an artist who, faced with the choice between them or the bourgeoisie as his public, relied on them to appreciate literature, he continued to be disappointed by their fear of revolution and their subsequent alliance with the clergy:

La bonne compagnie réunit dans ce moment un sentiment et une fonction, qui se font entre eux une cruelle guerre: elle a peur du retour des horreurs de 1793, et, en même temps, elle est juge souveraine de la littérature. (1836-7)

Mais la bonne compagnie, que nos mœurs ont constituée juge de toutes choses et surtout des livres, est devenue juge et partie. Elle a peur du retour de 93: elle applaudit à tous les livres ennuyeux s'ils sont dévots, et de plus a des armoiries dont elle est fière. (1837-8)

Avant 1793, la bonne compagnie était la vraie juge des livres, maintenant elle rêve le retour de 93, elle a peur, elle n'est plus juge. (1840)⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, pp.48-9.

⁴⁹ Correspondance, II, p.254; Souvenirs d'égotisme, ch.vi, p.85; Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.71.

⁵⁰ Correspondance, II, p.446.

⁵¹ Napoléon, II, p.14; Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.272; Correspondance, III, p.403.

In other words, Stendhal's criticisms of the nobility had only been strengthened with the passage from Restoration to July Monarchy. Attracted to their manners and to their potential talent for appreciating works of art, he was nevertheless appalled at their political intransigence, their feeble-mindedness, and their refusal, because they feared further revolution, to judge art and literature properly. Again his main criticism of them was their tendency to turn to the clergy for an ally:

Voilà qui est adroit! Ces Messieurs veulent charger le clér[gé] de maintenir les peuples dans la soumission et l'abjection morales. (1835)⁵²

The anti-clericalism of the French nation after 1830, which manifested itself, for example, in the pillaging of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, was destined to last no longer than the liberal hopes. In the face of continuing threats to law and order (revolts by Lyon silk workers in 1831 and 1834 and the rue Transnonain massacre in Paris in 1834) more and more 'liberals', as well as legitimists, placed their faith in the influence of the Church over the behaviour of the poor. Stendhal remarked in 1837: 'Il me semble que la révolution de 1830, en permettant à la religion de se parer des couleurs du martyre, lui a été fort utile';⁵³ and throughout this last period of his life he expressed constant disgust with the religious revival. His criticisms were still levelled mainly from a political point of view: all his life he believed religious influence to be synonymous with despotism; a strong clerical party would always be the sworn enemy of constitutionalism:

Comment ces deux grandes forces, la religion et la passion des peuples pour les Chambres discutantes, vont-elles s'arranger ensemble? Laquelle des deux l'emportera dans le coeur des hommes? Là est toute la destinée du vingtième siècle.

On ne peut acheter les masses . . . On ne peut plus les séduire avec un moine éloquent. Depuis qu'il y a le Charivari, les masses, mues par des intérêts, continuent avec constance à faire entendre leurs voix. (1837-8)⁵⁴

⁵² Journal Littéraire, III, p.191.

⁵³ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.190.

⁵⁴ Ibid., II, p.284, pp.513-14.

It is interesting to note, however, that Stendhal's anti-clericalism went beyond the bounds of criticism of the Church's political influence. It was stated in Chapter 3 that in our view Stendhal was an atheist, and not a 'Catholic atheist' at all. This judgement can be borne out by the fact that he took little interest in the wave of liberal catholicism which came to the fore in the 1830s. Religious writers like La Mennais, Montalembert, and Lacordaire, who tried to reconcile the Church with the July Revolution and took a deep interest in social deprivation, failed to inspire admiration in Stendhal, who was content to ironize at La Mennais's expense in Mémoires d'un touriste, for example:

Je vérifie que la France recevrait avec reconnaissance une réforme raisonnable du culte catholique. Si M. de Lamennais [sic] avait trente ans et une bonne poitrine, il pourrait se créer un rôle flatteur pour l'amour-propre.⁵⁵

The notion of class is a complicated one, of course, with shifting social values and conditions and any number of criteria for dividing people into groups (birth, wealth, intelligence, property, geographical location, economic or legal position) making definition extremely difficult. But how much more involved the question becomes when the term 'bourgeois' is to be discussed. Recent historians have tended to agree, however, on a certain division of this class at least as it existed in the 1830s. Félix Ponteil, for example, lists five types of bourgeoisie: first, there was what Stendhal called a 'financial aristocracy', composed of bankers, capitalists, industrialists; then came what Ponteil calls a 'haute bourgeoisie', again a wealthy group, but with less political and economic power (this

⁵⁵ I, pp.130-1. See also Lucien Leuwen, IV, p.196: 'A la fin, il [Du Poirier] trouva un drapeau facilement compris du public: les Paroles d'un croyant venaient d'avoir un très grand succès l'année précédente, il en fit son évangile, se fit présenter à M. de Lamennais, et joua l'enthousiasme le plus vif. Je ne sais si ce disciple de mauvais ton ne fit pas déplorer sa célébrité à l'illustre Breton, mais enfin lui aussi d'adorateur du pape s'était fait amant de la liberté. Elle a une grande âme, et un peu étourdie, et oublie souvent de dire aux gens: "D'où venez-vous?"'

group includes businessmen, high-ranking civil servants, judges, some doctors and professors); thirdly there was the 'bonne bourgeoisie', comprising civil servants, magistrates, doctors, and army officers; there followed the 'moyenne bourgeoisie', or the lower civil servants, engineers, and shopkeepers; and finally came the 'petite bourgeoisie', or small shopkeepers, artisans, and office workers. Stendhal's understanding of so complicated a class obviously fell short of such precision, and what he called 'bourgeois' tended to belong to the first three of these five sections; nevertheless, his class theory of 1825, discussed in Chapter 3, showed that his grasp of French nineteenth-century society was sound. Basically, too, he diagnosed correctly the principal characteristic of his 'middle class': the Revolution, in his view, had created the new criterion of wealth for social division. Modern historical thinking agrees with him on this; Félix Ponteil writes: 'Chez tous les bourgeois, le critère du succès, c'est l'enrichissement'.⁵⁶

The bourgeoisie, at least the upper echelons of this 'class', was the predominant group in the Orleanist regime: Louis-Philippe (henceforth known as the Citizen-King) had, after all, received the crown from the hands of two wealthy bankers, Laffitte and Périer. It is thus a fairly simple matter to equate them with a political group as well: since the King and his Orleanist supporters had to steer a course between opposition from republicans and legitimists alike -- both groups viewed Louis-Philippe as usurper -- their policy came to be described as one of juste-milieu. As we have seen, the Orleanist (or Résistance) measures were in fact increasingly conservative in nature, and René Rémond points out that it was during the July Monarchy that two 'rights' effectively came to coexist in France, with only the question of legitimacy keeping them apart:

Cette divergence d'appréciation sur le sens des quarante

⁵⁶ Les Classes bourgeoises et l'avènement de la démocratie, ch.i, p.69.

dernières années empêche à tout jamais de confondre la droite orléaniste avec le traditionalisme d'extrême droite. C'est la grande nouveauté de la situation politique créée par 1830, qu'elle comporte désormais deux droites qui vont suivre des destins parallèles sans les confondre.⁵⁷

Stendhal revealed his lucidity in political matters when he described the coalition government of 1839, for he fully understood the right-wing nature of the Orleanist party, headed by Guizot:

Il y a coalition dans la Chambre des députés, c'est-à-dire qu'on voit réunis M. Guizot, chef de ce qu'on pourrait appeler les ultras tels qu'ils sont possibles après 1830, M. Thiers, l'éloquent représentant des modérés, enfin M. Odilon Barrot, chef de la gauche.⁵⁸

Politically therefore Stendhal's criticisms of the bourgeois must correspond to his disappointment with the conservative nature of successive July Monarchy governments, repression, press restrictions, and so on. They had twice betrayed their own revolutionary origins — in 1789 and again in 1830 — by adopting a reactionary policy to exclude the lower classes with whose help they had come to power.

In general, however, Stendhal's hatred of the bourgeois of juste-milieu persuasions was not purely political. Basically it was their tone to which he was objecting. He was, of course, a member of this group himself, and seems to have been the first in a long line of bourgeois artists who utterly rejected the values of their class.⁵⁹ Indeed, his reaction against everything his family valued was the source of this denial of his bourgeois origins, but in his autobiography he stressed that the mature adult's observations, in Paris in 1811 for example, had only confirmed his earlier emotional attitude:

Par un grand hasard il me semble que je ne suis pas resté méchant, mais seulement dégoûté pour le reste de ma vie des bourgeois, des jésuites et des hypocrites de toutes les espèces... J'ai toujours et comme par instinct (si bien vérifié depuis par les Chambres), profondément méprisé

57 La Droite en France de 1815 à nos jours, vol.I, ch.iii, p.77.

58 Correspondance, III, pp.269-70.

59 The Sartrian theory, mentioned in Chapter 1, is appropriate again here.

les bourgeois. (1835-6)⁶⁰

He had no sympathy for what he called 'bassesse bourgeoise':

Je crois que cette tache dans mon télescope a été utile pour mes personnages de roman, il y a une sorte de bassesse bourgeoise qu'ils ne peuvent avoir: et pour l'auteur ce serait parler le chinois qu'il ne sait pas. (1835-6)
J'étais étouffé par le sentiment de la petitesse bourgeoise. (1837-8)⁶¹

A comparison with the tone of Flaubert's Dictionnaire des idées reçues with its maxims for the bourgeois reader is interesting; both authors were ridiculing the self-importance and affectation of the bourgeoisie, its apparent belief that wealth was in itself a sign of dignity. It is amusing to find Stendhal, on several occasions in Mémoires d'un touriste, which he published during his lifetime, dropping the mask of wealthy commercial traveller adopted as a precaution, and criticizing the rich bourgeoisie:

Chacun veut faire fortune, et une fortune énorme, et bien vite, et sans travailler.
Pour me distraire des coups de couteaux que me donnait à chaque instant la conversation de ces manants enrichis, je me suis mis à regarder hors du cabriolet.
De Saint-Omer à Lille, Valenciennes et Mulhouse règne la traction à vapeur et le gros négociant enrichi. Je le respecte fort comme utile, mais il me mépriserait comme futile, et je demande la permission de ne pas le décrire. (Voilà l'excuse pour ne pas parler de cette partie de la France dont réellement l'étude me dégoûte).⁶²

In short, praise of the July Monarchy bourgeoisie was extremely rare in Stendhal's works; he admired them only for a certain energy which the aristocracy did not display.⁶³ Manifestly, however, he would have preferred to spend his time with the nobles, whose savoir-faire in society he admired. One might say that it was Stendhal's sensibility which caused him to judge the bourgeois harshly for their tone and manners.

⁶⁰ La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.ix, p.147; ch.ii, p.28.

⁶¹ Ibid., I, ch.ix, p.148; Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.345.

⁶² I, p.105; II, p.70, p.560 (note).

⁶³ See for example La Vie de Henry Brulard, I, ch.ii, pp.28-9: 'Toutefois j'entrevois aussi que parmi les bourgeois seulement se trouvaient les hommes énergiques tels que mon cousin Rebuffel . . . l'incomparable Gros'.

Yet there is more to Stendhal's criticisms than this. For, to return to a political context, his observations of day-to-day bourgeois politics, in administration for example, seemed to lead him to the conclusion that two closely linked tendencies lay behind the policies of juste-milieu governments: corruption (or hypocrisy on a public scale as well as private) and manipulation.

The corruption rife in nineteenth-century society derived principally from the new spread of wealth which followed the Revolution. Stendhal's definition of juste-milieu, in his second biography of Napoleon, is revealing:

Expression qui sera peut-être obscure vers 1850; genre de gouvernement qui entreprend de mener une nation par la partie médiocre et sans passion des citoyens ou plutôt à l'aide des passions basses et de l'envie de gagner de l'argent, de cette partie médiocre. (1836-7)⁶⁴

In order to secure advancement in a time of such perpetual change and insecurity, one had to be hypocritical; Stendhal's criticism of the hypocrisy of prominent people is merciless. As early as 1831 he was affirming that the new regime was already showing the same deceitful characteristics as its predecessor:

Rien de plus bête que ce goujon offert à un peuple souverainement méfiant, et méfiant à bon titre, car depuis 1814, libéraux comme ultra, tout le monde a impudemment menti à la tribune.⁶⁵

In 1835 he wrote:

Dans toutes les carrières, sans charlatanisme nul succès. Le régime actuel est admirable pour les intrigants sans talent, comme M. de Salvandy, Pariset, Raoul Rochette, et pour les gens de mérite doués du génie du charlatanisme, tels que MM. de Chateaubriand, Casimir Delavigne, Victor Hugo, le sculpteur David.⁶⁶

In Mémoires d'un touriste the narrator's disgust with the corruption practised by provincial magistrates is more in keeping with

⁶⁴ Napoléon, II, ch.xix, p.264.

⁶⁵ Correspondance, II, p.246.

⁶⁶ Journal, V, p.150.

Stendhal's views than with those expected of the rich businessman he is supposed to be: 'Le monde a-t-il toujours été aussi vénal, aussi bas, aussi effrontément hypocrite?'.⁶⁷ The same narrator, recounting that in his youth he had been dismissed as a liberal by his superiors in a customs office, concludes: 'Mais je ne leur en veux point: ces messieurs avaient tout l'esprit de leur gouvernement'.⁶⁷ Stendhal's favourite words for the daily practices of the government's agents were 'friponneries', 'filouteries', or 'nigauderies':

Nos idées de liberté [in 1797] n'étaient pas éclairées par une expérience de filouteries récentes, comme aujourd'hui. (1836-7) On croit ou on ne croit pas aux voleries, suivant qu'on est ami ou ennemi du gouvernement. Quant à moi, je me tiens pour ami très sincère du gouvernement du roi, et je crois très sincèrement aussi aux voleries sans nombre. Ce n'est pas l'argent que je regrette, c'est l'habitude de la friponnerie. (1837-8)⁶⁸

It must be noted, however, that Stendhal did not object on principle to governmental hypocrisy. After all, his report on the state of Tuscany in 1834 contained the suggestion that the French government should use subtle measures of corruption in order to get the French legal system adopted there:

Je ne sais à quelle somme le Gouvernement du Roi évalue le triomphe de l'influence française en Toscane. Je suppose qu'en offrant con buona maniera, ainsi qu'on le dit dans ce pays-ci, un présent de mille napoléons à M. Cempini, et la moitié de cette somme à MM. Paver et Paoli, ces Messieurs, qui ont été jacobins, se rapprocheraient de leurs premières opinions et seraient très favorables à l'admission des codes napolitains.⁶⁹

The more sinister side of public corruption, in Stendhal's view, could be seen in the inefficiency which inevitably resulted. For if everyone was seeking personal advancement, it was foolish to be loyal to any person or policy:

A l'exception des gens de la dernière classe, on cherche à tirer parti du gouvernement quel qu'il soit; mais s'exposer pour le défendre ou le changer, passe pour souveraine duperie. (1837-8)⁷⁰

67 Mémoires d'un touriste, III, p.243; I, p.4.

68 Napoléon, II, ch.xxii, p.300; Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.382.

69 Correspondance, II, p.567.

70 Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.101.

In other words, the Restoration practice of 'manger au budget' had simply carried on into this new 'liberal' regime. What was worse, this exclusive devotion to the self created inefficiency amongst the higher orders of government as well as at local office level:

Mais depuis 1830, comment des ministres qui tremblent de compromettre leur place en parlant mal à la Chambre, pourraient-ils avoir le temps de méditer sur les partis à prendre? Ils acceptent leurs idées administratives de leurs commis, et Dieu sait quelles idées! (1837-8)
Un ministre à Paris, tout occupé de ne pas tomber par la Chambre, n'a pas le temps de songer aux améliorations, ni même aux changements de lois rendus nécessaires par le changement des usages . . . Un ministre fuit comme la peste l'idée d'une réforme quelconque. (1837-8)⁷¹

What chance would France have in combat, with a generation of self-seekers to fight for her: 'J'ai horreur de l'habitude de la friponnerie qui fera des traîtres à la prochaine guerre' (1837-8).⁷²

Stendhal's conviction that common sense and efficiency matter in politics as much as, if not more than, republican notions of liberty or virtue, led him therefore to criticize the hypocrisy of July Monarchy government, at local and ministerial level. In Mémoires d'un touriste he even drafted a new system of administration which might alleviate the inefficiency; his suggestion is worth examining. In the first place he proposed the appointment of 'chefs de division' for each ministry in order to take the burden of ultimate responsibility for everything from the minister himself:

Il faudrait surtout avoir assez de sens pour comprendre qu'un homme ne peut pas donner plus de quarante signatures par jour; à la quarante et unième son cerveau fatigué ne peut plus trouver d'objection à toutes les belles choses que lui débite son commis, et il signe de la meilleure foi du monde toutes les nigauderies que lui présente celui-ci.⁷³

Secondly, he wished to discharge the overloaded bureaucracy of

⁷¹ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.155; II, p.531.

⁷² Ibid., III, p.286.

⁷³ Ibid., I, pp.156-7. For other examples of Stendhal's real frustration at the inefficiency of French government and bureaucracy, see Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.107, pp.488-9.

some of its weight by cutting down the number of minor clerks employed:

Il faut savoir que dans le régime actuel, qui, je pense, demande trois ou quatre cents commis pour le seul ministère de l'Intérieur, un bureau est occupé par quatre ou cinq employés, la conversation ne cesse jamais, et le bureau s'abonne à un journal.

(The similarity of theme with Balzac's Les Employés is striking here.) Thirdly, a better type of employee might ensure that those who eventually climbed the scale would make more efficient administrators:

On ne recrute pas pour les bureaux des jeunes gens suffisamment instruits: peu importe, sans doute, pour la besogne qu'ils font; mais c'est quand ils ont de l'avancement que leur ignorance coûte cher à l'État.

Not unnaturally in view of his career during the period, Stendhal's interest in administration increased under the July Monarchy, and his writing from 1830 to 1842 was full of anti-administrative propaganda. (Indeed one critic has called Lucien Leuwen 'de la dynamite anti-gouvernementale'.)⁷⁴ Once again a consideration of his personal experiences can help to shed light on the bitterness of his criticisms and also the standpoints from which they were made.

Stendhal evidently suffered at the hands of bureaucrats, from cabinet ministers down to their most humble subordinates, for two long periods of his life: under Napoleon (from 1800 to 1801 and again from 1806 to 1814), and during the July Monarchy itself. His dislike of, and sometimes even contempt for, his influential cousin, Pierre Daru, for example, seemed to have two main sources. In the first place, the Beylist love of gaiety, witty conversation, and relaxation was scarcely compatible with the insistent attitude of this Imperial bureaucrat who worked himself silly and expected his subordinates to do likewise. Stendhal recounts the kind of working day he spent as a young man with Daru in 1800:

J'ai passé bien des jours de pluie, avec mal à la tête . . . à écrire de dix heures du matin à une heure après minuit, et cela sous les yeux d'un homme furieux et constamment en

⁷⁴ Fernand Rude, Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps, p.263.

Moreover, this proud young Grenoblois, who had taken prizes at the École Centrale and come to Paris to study at the École Polytechnique, proved to be less than gifted for office life; for one thing, he could not spell properly, and the letters he drafted were more often than not rejected. In the second place, Henri Beyle was entirely in Pierre Daru's debt, as he admitted on several occasions himself; without the help of Daru père and the patience of his two sons, Pierre and Martial, Beyle would probably have perished in Paris, where he had no intention of becoming a Polytechnicien. Clearly the over-sensitive youth felt his humble position too keenly not to retaliate in his later writing. It is perhaps worth noting, too, that Daru's humility, and his refusal to accept the honours which Napoleon wanted to heap on him, were bound to antagonize the ambitious Beyle, who struggled all his life for advancement, and who engaged any number of friends to secure for him the Légion d'Honneur.

Beyle's relationship with the minor clerks with whom he worked throughout his life was hardly more cordial. His colleagues in 1800 disgusted him with their vulgarity: 'Ce qui me désolait, c'était la conversation incessante et plate des commis mes compagnons qui m'empêchait de travailler et de penser'.⁷⁶ Even in Civita-Vecchia, where Stendhal was nominally in the superior position, his chancellor managed to cause him a great deal of unpleasantness; indeed, during the latter half of his career as consul Stendhal was continually complaining to friends about the treatment he received from his 'Kommis'; for example, in April 1836 he wrote to his cousin Romain Colomb:

Le patron est malade; ainsi je ne pourrai lui demander la lettre que vers le 15 avril. Satisfiera-t-elle M. 1/3 [Thiers], la regardera-t-il comme bastante [suffisante], pour paralyser les effets de l'idée qu'ont les misco [commis] que je me suis moqué d'eux?⁷⁷

⁷⁵ La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xli, p.309.

⁷⁶ Ibid., II, ch.xli, p.310.

⁷⁷ Correspondance, III, p.203.

With his authority being undermined from above and below, the poor consul turned to writing for consolation, and noted bitterly in his diary in 1835:

Ils m'ont assez pesé dans la vie réelle pour souffrir
qu'ils viennent encore gâter mon plaisir quand je me donne
le passe-temps d'écrire.⁷⁸

Stendhal's criticisms of July Monarchy bureaucracy derive, therefore, to some extent at least, from a personal bitterness resulting from unpleasant experience, as well as from the objectively political point of view that Louis-Philippe's administration was overloaded and inefficient.

To return to the second general tendency which Stendhal perceived in Orleanist politics, however, there is the notion of manipulation, closely linked to that of corruption, involved in his criticisms. For Stendhal became increasingly interested in the ulterior motives, so to speak, of governmental policies and practices; his writing in the 1830s (particularly in the novels) is full of investigations into what might be termed the power behind the throne. For example, the report sent to his ministry in 1834 about the state of affairs in Tuscany reveals that Stendhal delved beneath the surface of politics and parties to discover which figures were influential and why. His aim was to give the French government an inside view of the powerful factions in Tuscany in case it should want to invest in a reform of the Italian state's legal system along French (or Neapolitan) lines, thereby extending French influence in Italy. Thus he carefully explained the balance of power between those dignitaries who derived their influence from the camerilla and those who had powerful relations with the Church, and so on.⁷⁹ In the same way, but on a smaller scale, Stendhal exposed the motives behind advancement in French administrative circles:

On vole autour du préfet et le préfet pâlit devant le
député . . . Le député tous les quinze jours inspire des
doutes au ministère sur la sûreté de son vote.

⁷⁸ Journal, V, p.151.

⁷⁹ Correspondance, II, pp.563-71.

Pour calmer ce doute, place de 600 francs à un petit cousin de l'heureux député. (1837-8)⁸⁰

Elections in particular were subject to ministerial and party manipulation, with discreet (and often indiscreet) pressure being brought to bear in all sorts of ingenious ways on electors suspected of voting badly from the government's point of view. Stendhal was far from blind to the dishonest election practices used frequently in July Monarchy France:

Si jamais les élections sont plus sincères, ces peuplades du midi commenceront à prendre quelque intérêt au gouvernement . . . Les peuples furent électrisés par Napoléon. Depuis sa chute et les friponneries électorales et autres qui suivirent son règne, les passions égoïstes et vilaines ont repris tout leur empire. (1837-8)⁸¹

Corruption, manipulation, the debasing of political labels, inefficiency, and the creation of a dull and venal society, therefore, are the charges which Stendhal made against the July Monarchy regime and its supporters.

At the lower end of the social scale, Stendhal began to take an interest in the working class during the July Monarchy and revealed himself to be genuinely sorry for their plight. No doubt the uprisings of silk workers in Lyon in 1831 and 1834, so brutally repressed by the government in each case, were instrumental in drawing his attention to this class, for he wrote in 1837:

Je ne parlerai pas des deux émeutes de 1831 et 1834. Il y eut des erreurs dans l'esprit des Lyonnais, mais ils firent preuve d'une bravoure surhumaine.⁸²

Having toured France in search of material for his Mémoires d'un touriste, he had come into personal contact with the poverty and misery of the workers, and he criticized the government for its handling of the Lyonnais in particular:

A présent qu'ils meurent de faim depuis six mois, de novembre 1836 à juillet 1837, et sans voir de terme à leur misère, le gouvernement n'a aucune crainte. Ceci est une

⁸⁰ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, pp.509-10.

⁸¹ Ibid., I, p.105.

⁸² Ibid., I, pp.225-6.

grande louange pour la sagesse du King et la marche actuelle du gouvernement.⁸³

In spite of his 'aristocratic' reluctance to mingle with the ordinary people, Stendhal proved himself to be moved by the distress of the workers who were suffering unemployment and cuts in wages because of the growing use of machinery in industry:

'Une chose m'attriste toujours dans les rues de Lyon, c'est la vue de ces malheureux ouvriers en soie'.⁸⁴ He even proposed a humanitarian solution to their problems:

Un gouvernement courageux pourrait exiger du clergé de Lyon de ne pas pousser les ouvriers pauvres au mariage. On agit dans le sens contraire, on ne prêche autre chose au tribunal de la pénitence. (1837-8)⁸⁴

Politically, if the working class had any representation at all, it was the republicans who spoke for them, as they did, indeed, for the 'petite bourgeoisie', the peasants, and all those whose interests were ignored by the Orleanist regime and who did not vote legitimist (including many journalists and intellectuals). But Stendhal had no sympathy left for the republicans he observed, and had little faith in their ability to govern even if they did change things: 'Ils y arriveraient, je le crois, avec des intentions raisonnables; mais bientôt ils se mettraient en colère, et voudraient régénérer' (1837-8).⁸⁵ The sarcasm of this remark can best be understood in the light of Stendhal's fundamental mistrust of idealism. In his view a regeneration of French politics was neither possible nor necessary; all that was needed was a liberal interpretation of the Charter. Had they not been weak and divided in 1830, when they allowed the Orleanists to step in and take over the government, the republicans might well have been able to govern liberally as Stendhal had hoped. Now the republican movement was at its lowest ebb, however: the various laws restricting press activities after 1830 had deprived them of their chief weapon of opposition; the trial of 164

83 Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.490.

84 Ibid., I, p.221, p.222.

85 Ibid., I, pp.400-1.

republicans following the 1834 workers' revolts in Lyon and Paris had sent the rest underground; and it was not until after Stendhal's death that they reemerged, calling themselves 'radicals' now, to present effective opposition to the Right.

If Stendhal poured scorn on the politics of the July Monarchy, if he criticized the feeble opposition offered by legitimists and republicans alike, nevertheless he did pay tribute to the economic prosperity of the period, especially in Mémoires d'un touriste:

Je suis dans l'enchantement des rives du Rhône. Le plaisir me donne du courage; je ne sais où trouver des termes prudents pour peindre la prospérité croissante dont la France jouit sous le règne de Louis-Philippe. Je pourrais remplir quatre pages de détails sur la prospérité de la France.⁸⁶

On balance, however, the venality of the regime was in his view too high a price to pay for such economic stability as there was; after the first of these two quotations praising the country's economic wellbeing, Stendhal characteristically added: 'J'ai peur de passer pour un écrivain payé'.

Stendhal was continually predicting the end of the July Monarchy. Lucien Leuwen, for example, was probably undertaken as a piece of red-hot political propaganda ready to be published as soon as the regime fell, for around 1834-6 Stendhal's writing was full of doubts as to how long the July Monarchy could last:

Mais ceci n'est qu'une nouvelle good for the Revue de Paris quand D[omini]que sera libéré des ... [read functions, or Louis-Philippe's ministers]. (1834)

Je fais donc ceci trop long de 200 pages, afin qu'à Lutèce [Paris], après the fall of me or of the j. [read July Monarchy], je n'ai que deux choses à faire. (1834)

Je crois que l'affectation qu'on appelle bien écrire en 1825-[18]36 sera bien ridicule vers 1860, dès que la France, délivrée de révolutions politiques tous les quinze ans, aura le temps de penser aux jouissances de l'esprit. Le gouvernement fort et violent de Napoléon . . . n'a duré que quinze ans, 1800-1815. Le gouvernement à faire vomir

⁸⁶ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.277, p.278.

de ces Bourbons imbéciles . . . a duré quinze ans aussi, de 1815 à 1830. Combien durera un troisième? aura-t-il plus? (1836)⁸⁷

Not that Stendhal believed in a popular revolution to overthrow the regime; despite the events of 1830 and the subsequent refusal of governments to satisfy the lower classes who had put them in power, he still believed that the proletariat was more or less content. Firstly, in his view the Revolution of 1789 had removed the worst of the social abuses of the ancien régime:

Si la Révolution de 89 a réussi, c'est que tous les plébéiens qui avaient un peu de coeur étaient animés d'une haine profonde pour des abus atroces. Où sont aujourd'hui les abus atroces? (1837-8)

Il n'y aura plus de cruautés, parce qu'il n'y a plus d'abus atroces à réformer. (1837-8)

Les grands accidents sont passés, il n'y a plus de 93 possible car il n'y a plus d'abus atroces . . . On peut craindre des folies, mais non plus des atrocités. (1836)⁸⁸

Secondly, the relative economic prosperity since 1830 had tended, according to Stendhal, to content the lower classes:

La prospérité publique n'a pris tout son élan que depuis 1830, et plus particulièrement depuis qu'il est bien clair que le peuple de Paris, le représentant naturel de la France, ne veut plus se mettre en colère. Où sont les abus criants qui pourraient l'irriter? (1837-8)⁸⁹

Evidently he envisaged a peaceful evolution towards a more liberal interpretation of the Charter, for he added: 'Qu'y a-t-il à changer à notre constitution?'.

His reason for predicting a change of regime seems to lie in his observation that the youth of France was being strangely disaffected under the July Monarchy, especially the young intellectuals, professional men, and aristocrats:

Mais, à moins d'un miracle, qu'est-ce que peut être un jeune homme né avec quatre-vingt mille livres de rentes, et, si vous voulez, un titre? Sous Napoléon il eût du moins été forcé d'être sous-lieutenant ou garde d'honneur. Il y a maintenant plus de marchands que d'acheteurs. (C'est là le grand inconvénient de la civilisation actuelle: plus

⁸⁷ Journal, V, p.113, p.116; La Vie de Henry Brulard, II, ch.xxxix, pp.286-7.

⁸⁸ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.401; II, p.320; Mélanges, II, p.277.

⁸⁹ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.278.

de médecins que de malades, plus d'avocats que de procès, etc.).

Toute cette malheureuse jeunesse française est donc trompée par la gloire de Napoléon et tourmentée par des désirs absurdes. (1837-8)⁹⁰

Stendhal's views on French politics had reached a more consistent and stable point in the 1830s; his experience of frequent changes of government since 1815 had strengthened his scepticism in political matters. Yet Alain was wrong when he said that Stendhal only described the politics of nineteenth-century France: 'C'est une méthode rare et neuve en politique de décrire ce qui est, au lieu de corriger, d'inventer, de proposer'.⁹¹ For it was precisely at the end of his life, sceptical and disillusioned about politics as he was, that Stendhal began to foresee France's political and social future. His theory of class fusion, formulated in 1825, has already been discussed, and it was seen that at that point Stendhal had envisaged a combination of his two aristocracies. The feeble-minded reaction of the nobility of birth after 1830, however, forced him to abandon hope of any such fusion, and a marginal note in Lucien Leuwen reveals that by the mid-1830s he had begun to foresee instead a gradual joining of his intellectual middle class with the industrial and commercial 'aristocracy':

Plan — Nota 18 mai — Oubli d'une indication — J'ai oublié, et il faut indiquer:

1° la haute bourgeoisie toute-puissante dans les campagnes, mais battue dans les villes; à la campagne la terre, le rang dominant;

2° dans les villes domine l'intelligence, la petite bourgeoisie, la classe des petits électeurs.

C'est à la bourgeoisie moyenne que s'unira la classe éclairée, marquante par les seules lumières, quand la loi l'aura admise à faire partie des collèges électoraux.

La classe éclairée se fortifie, grandit.⁹²

This projected merging of his two bourgeois groups, together with the increasing number of property-owners — 'Par

90 Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.133, pp.365-6; II, p.491.

91 Stendhal, Paris, 1959, ch.iii, p.32.

92 Lucien Leuwen, III, p.346.

la loi démocratique qui partage les successions, le nombre des propriétaires tend à s'augmenter à l'infini' (1837-8)⁹³ — and a continued widening of the franchise (provided for in the 1830 Charter if liberally interpreted) would ensure for France, in Stendhal's view, a prosperous and liberal enough future. Hence the rather surprising note of optimism running through the Mémoires d'un touriste:

Sachons donc goûter notre bonheur présent et attendre. L'avenir ne peut que nous être favorable si nous ne le violentons pas. Offrons à tous les tiers états de l'Europe le spectacle de notre bonheur, et, pour faire éclater cette félicité dans toute sa splendeur, n'ayons pas d'émeutes et doublons nos richesses. Les riches devront bientôt chercher leur sécurité dans l'absence du désespoir chez le pauvre. (1837-8)⁹⁴

Lucien Jansse, in his discussion of Stendhal's class theory, sums up the kind of regime which the writer envisaged:

L'avènement du gouvernement représentatif de Destutt de Tracy lui semblait donc assuré et cet avènement entraînerait nécessairement une rénovation de la société. Celle-ci ne comporterait plus d'inégalités politiques de droit ou de fait et les inégalités économiques y seraient limitées par le partage égal des successions. Ce serait donc, sinon sans classes, du moins une société où les classes . . . ne seraient que peu différenciées.⁹⁵

Stendhal's future regime would be essentially middle-class; there is no provision in his theory for a working-class revolution, no hint of the events which were to shake France and all Europe in 1848, only six years after his death. There is therefore no real evidence to support the claim of certain committed critics that Stendhal belonged to a tradition of pre-Marxist thinkers. In any case, Stendhal was not enamoured of his future republic (or constitutional monarchy), since his aesthetic and artistic values would have an increasingly insignificant place in such a society. For there is another message running through Mémoires d'un touriste, that of a warning about

93 Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.279.

94 Ibid., I, pp.401-2, p.416.

95 'Stendhal et les classes sociales', p.43.

the dull, money-conscious society which would come in France as it already had in Geneva and Philadelphia:

Je ne verrai point cet abrutissement de l'aimable France; il ne triomphera guère que vers 1860. Mais quel dommage que la patrie de Marot, de Montaigne et de Rabelais perde cet esprit naturel piquant, libertin, frondeur, imprévu, ami de la bravoure et de l'imprudence.⁹⁶

Stendhal's criticisms of the July Monarchy were extremely bitter. Not only was he disappointed as a liberal thinker with the conservatism of successive governments, but if anything his sensitivity and concern for the arts were more outraged by this regime than during the Restoration, for now it was the rich bourgeoisie, whose social manners and literary pretensions he detested, which was in power. It has been said that Stendhal aligned himself with the Mouvement party,⁹⁷ and indeed he did agree with their nominal belief in an extended suffrage, economic prosperity, and liberal help from France for the nations of Europe which were still struggling for political freedom. By the 1830s, however, he had come to mistrust theories and so-called policies, and it is clear that he had no sympathy for those who called themselves 'liberals': 'M. de Béranger . . . a dédaigné de flatter le gouvernement de Louis-Philippe auquel tant de libéraux se sont vendus' (1832).⁹⁸ At heart he was still the republican of his young years:

La vertu, c'est augmenter le bonheur; le vice augmente le malheur. Tout le reste n'est qu'hypocrisie ou ânerie bourgeoise. (1834)

Ah! Montesquieu est toujours mon homme plus que jamais. (1835)
Bentham seul a pu dire: 'On ne mérite l'indépendance que lorsqu'on sait la conquérir!'. (1837-8)⁹⁹

But again he could not identify with the republican element in

⁹⁶ Mémoires d'un touriste, I, p.22.

⁹⁷ Fernand Rude, Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps, ch.iii, p.191.

⁹⁸ Souvenirs d'égotisme, ch.viii, p.121.

⁹⁹ Correspondance, II; p.717; Journal Littéraire, III, p.351; Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.515.

the country, disunited as it was; in addition, his prediction for France's future revealed a tone of moderation which was quite foreign to the more voluble and aggressive republicans in France who were to overthrow Louis-Philippe in 1848.

Despite his continued belief in republican virtue, despite his fairly optimistic view of France's political future, there was a strong current of political scepticism in Stendhal's writing in the 1830s. Maturity, bitter experience, concern for the future of the arts induced him frequently to treat politics as a game. Philippe L., narrator of Mémoires d'un touriste, is a sceptic too:

Avec le projet presque arrêté de retourner aux colonies, je ris des folies des légitimistes, comme de celles des républicains ou des furibonds du juste-milieu.¹⁰⁰

The theory, first apparent in his works during the Restoration, that despotic Italy was more attractive to the epicurean and artist than 'liberal' France or England, found further expression during the July Monarchy. It is revealing to consider Mémoires d'un touriste in this light. After all, this book was commissioned by a Paris publisher as a description of contemporary provincial France; yet Stendhal lost little time in evoking with enthusiasm memories of the 1789 Revolution, and nostalgia for Italy also finds frequent expression. In short, all the apolitical themes first evolved during the Restoration reappear here. Happiness is important to the narrator:

Je n'eus jamais le temps de m'enquérir, ou pour mieux dire, de chercher à deviner comment les gens chez lesquels je passais avaient coutume de s'y prendre pour courir après le bonheur. C'est pourtant là la principale affaire de la vie. C'est du moins le premier objet de ma curiosité.
(I, 100)

This commercial traveller would prefer, it seems, to talk about Italy than industry:

Combien ne serait-il pas plus agréable et plus facile d'écrire un voyage en Italie . . . En Italie, mon âme admirerait sans cesse. Là, rien de sec. (I, 376)
Les Milanais ont été si heureux, d'abord de 1796 à 1799, et ensuite de 1800 à 1814, que, quoi que puisse faire

¹⁰⁰ Mémoires d'un touriste, II, p.484.

l'Autriche, ils sont encore le peuple le meilleur et le plus aimable de l'Europe. (II, 303)

He complains about the lack of gaiety in French society:

Depuis 1815, et surtout depuis 1830, il n'y a plus de société; chaque famille vit isolée dans sa maison, comme Robinson dans son île. (I, 47)

Le grand malheur de l'époque actuelle, c'est la colère et la haine impuissante. Ces tristes sentiments éclipsent la gaieté naturelle au tempérament français. (II, 26)

Rich bourgeois are incapable of judging good literature:

Pour un homme occupé toute la journée à spéculer sur le poivre ou sur les soies, un livre écrit en style simple est obscur; il a réellement besoin d'en trouver le commentaire et l'explication dans son journal. (I, 122)

In short, French society is becoming a copy of England:

Véritable épigraphe du livre:

Sur le titre:

Nous nous anglisons,

Et nous volons,

Et nous bêtifions. (I, 509)

En France, nous nous anglisons, et nos fils s'ennuieront encore plus que nous. (II, 313)

This unusual tourist would even have preferred to live in ancien régime France:

Ce n'est pas que, par goût, je n'aimasse mieux vivre sous la monarchie, telle qu'elle existait sous la régence du duc d'Orléans, vers 1720; mais comment faire reculer le temps? (II, 284)

Despite these disclaimers, however, Stendhal's political curiosity was as active as ever. He was still capable, on occasion, of judging politics from a strictly political standpoint; he was still in many ways the Jacobin of his youth. His personal lack of aptitude for diplomacy did not blunt his political common sense at all, and his tendency to take a dilettante pose did not prevent him from manifesting a real interest in the political scene in France. His bitter criticisms of July Monarchy politics can be related to some extent to his own unpleasant experiences as consul, his frustration as an artist, and his personal preference for outmoded values and manners. But his vision of the future society in France and his consistent faith in the changes brought about in 1789 reveal his political lucidity. Once again many of the apparent inconsistencies in his political attitudes can be explained by an examination of the different viewpoints from which he judged political affairs.

Conclusion to Part I

The study of Stendhal's experiences and non-fictional writing during the different regimes and governments through which he lived must inevitably result in a realization that politics, in the widest sense, played a most significant part in his life and letters. The particular method applied to Stendhal's politics — the investigation of the precise background to his views and the interpretation of the different standpoints from which he approached political life and thought — seems to have two possible advantages.

In the first place, the contradictions which critics so often invoke in their analyses of Stendhal's political opinions can often be cleared up by a simple reference to the particular criterion which the writer has employed. It is imperative to realize that on countless occasions statements which seem to be political in nature simply because they have a political subject, American government for example or admiration for Napoleon, were not in fact made from any ideological standpoint at all. Any number of factors can lie behind the expression of a judgement, and Stendhal had a host of different criteria for coming to a decision in political affairs.

Secondly, by reducing the area of contradiction in Stendhal's views it is possible to bring into focus the more positive side of his politics: his knowledge of political affairs, his suggested improvements, the relative consistency of his liberal views, and his ideas about the probable future evolution of French society. His personal experience of administration under Napoleon and Louis-Philippe, his contact at all times with friends in French government circles, and his regular perusal of the liberal newspapers of Europe ensured that Stendhal had a firm grasp of the political realities of the troubled times in which he lived. His continuing political curiosity in the face of disillusionment and disappointment with each successive change of government, and the serious consideration he often gave to matters of political, social, or economic importance must surely prove that he was no mere 'amateur' in politics. The very fact that he was capable of giving sustained attention to a number of political themes, that he took the trouble to suggest solutions on occasion — for administration during the July Monarchy, for instance — and above

all that he had, by 1825, worked out a fairly comprehensive class analysis of French society, which contained an optimistic prediction for the future of France, can reveal the place which politics held for him. It has been felt necessary, in view of the doubts sometimes expressed about Stendhal's powers of political thinking, to provide several quotations to illustrate each theme discussed, in order to prove the relative consistency of his views and to show their development as the writer became more knowledgeable about political matters. Stendhal's political views are indeed surprisingly consistent. His admiration for the Revolution of 1789 and his progressive insistence that society had been irrevocably changed from that date, and that nineteenth-century governments should take notice of the fact or be doomed, remained a constant throughout his work. His difficulty was that in times of continual change and hypocrisy he could find no political party to which he could adhere had he so wished.

It is perhaps necessary to justify the application of the 'variety of standpoints' method to Stendhal's writing in particular. His very nature, of course, his inborn tendency to shift from one point of view to another before he could become committed, make him a suitable subject for the method. But it is also important to see Stendhal in the light of the times in which he lived. After all, it was his observations of the instability of post-revolutionary politics which caused him to be so evasive, and to go beyond the confines of ideology and extend his view of politics to include concern for French society as a whole. In other words, Stendhal might not have been able to approach politics from so many standpoints had he not been living in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Politics did not seem to present such a problem to the eighteenth-century writers, for example. The Enlightenment thinkers on the whole believed in the perfectibility of human nature and in an ultimately harmonious social order. Even the intellectuals of the later part of the century, who were beginning to doubt the infallibility of human reason, still retained a certain confidence in moderation and progress together. This explains how many enlightened men of the day could place their

faith in the possibilities of education, could believe theoretically in certain inalienable rights for every citizen, such as freedom of expression or access to information, without concerning themselves with the way in which such an education was to be effected on a populace whose immediate grievances meant more to it than its illiteracy. Politics were a philosophical, or theoretical, matter for most of them, not a way of life, and at any rate they found protection from censorship or persecution in the salons of the educated and 'liberal' aristocracy. It could be argued, however, that the excesses of the French Revolution and its effects on French society destroyed peace of mind for the nineteenth-century intellectual. While Mme de Staël, unable to break away from the ideological climate in which she had been brought up, still clung optimistically to the Enlightenment's belief in perfectibility,¹ the atrocities of the 1790s and the ultra-royalist excesses during the White Terror in 1816 were not likely to inspire a general confidence in human nature in nineteenth-century thinkers. Many of the political benefits hoped for by the philosophes may have been achieved in France, but they had brought with them unforeseen disadvantages.

As Stendhal was well aware, society in the early nineteenth century was in a state of flux, and the eighteenth-century ideals of order and stability had given way, largely due to the incomplete nature of the revolutionary changes, but also because of new economic factors, to fear, uncertainty, instability, hypocrisy and vulgarity. Benjamin Constant, writing from London to his cousin Rosalie in 1816, alluded to the unstable situation in France:

Je m'accoutume aussi à la conversation dont j'avais assez perdu l'usage, à cause de la discrétion qu'il faut y mettre en France. Je voudrais pouvoir attendre le moment passablement éloigné où cette France sera tranquille, et libre, car je ne conçois pas de tranquillité sans liberté.²

¹ The whole message of De la littérature, published in 1800, is an appeal to nineteenth-century intellectuals to continue to foster the realization of Enlightenment ideals.

² Correspondance de Benjamin et Rosalie de Constant, Paris, 1955, p.210.

By 1820 he seemed to have got used to the frequent changes of government: 'Je suis si accoutumé au roulis du vaisseau que je n'en dors pas moins, quand la mer est houleuse' (p.231). Chateaubriand, in De la monarchie selon la Charte (1816), tried to reconcile the new liberty gained from the constitution with some outdated ancien régime principles, and it becomes clear that his chief desire, in the midst of recriminations and revolts, was for a stable order to be re-established in France:

Ainsi je veux toute la Charte, toutes les libertés, toutes les institutions amenées par le temps, le changement des mœurs et le progrès des lumières, mais avec tout ce qui n'a pas péri de l'ancienne monarchie, avec la religion, avec les principes éternels de la justice et de la morale.³

Politics, particularly during the Restoration, lost their philosophical quality and became largely a matter of expediency; the instability of successive governments and the fear of further revolution more or less precluded commitment to any definite political programme. After the Revolution, more people had become directly involved in the government of the country, and politics had become an urgent matter of day-to-day existence which rendered virtually impossible the relaxed exchange of ideas and the artistic freedom which eighteenth-century writers had enjoyed.

In short, political liberty had been more or less achieved in France, but it had brought with it some unforeseen and undesirable consequences for the quality of life as a whole. It was therefore possible for Stendhal, who welcomed the political progress from a purely ideological point of view, to take a less favourable standpoint when he considered society in general. The nature of the writer himself, together with the particular historical features which characterized his lifetime, combine to make Stendhal's writing a suitable subject for the method we have attempted to apply. Or, to put it another way, the investigation of Stendhal's different criteria regarding political judgements not only tends to clear up the apparent contradictions

³ Oeuvres complètes, Paris, sans date, VII, ch.xlix, p.249.

in his political thought, but it can also help to reveal the degree of lucidity which he had reached in his interpretation of the society in which he was living. Such an investigation can also justify the choice of Stendhal and the Nineteenth Century as the main title of this study, since it tends to place his politics in the wider context of an analysis of French society as a whole.

The political dimension of Stendhal's novels has incurred similar charges of ambiguity and contradiction, and the controversy surrounding the 'political' interpretation of Le Rouge et le Noir in particular makes that novel a suitable choice for the application of the above method. In other words, by treating the novel in the light of the author's shifting viewpoint it is possible to illuminate at least some of the ambiguities which characterize the political content of the book.

Part II: Politics in the Novel
Chapter 5: Le Rouge et le Noir

Stendhal's second novel and first masterpiece, Le Rouge et le Noir, has attracted more criticism, perhaps, than any of his works. There is certainly more debate about the political interpretation of this novel; critics of all creeds and nationalities have put forward diverse theories about the character of the hero, Julien Sorel, about the political or moral significance of his revolt, and about the meaning of his provocative speech to the jury at his trial.

The controversy began in Stendhal's day on the publication of the novel. In 1830-1 most reviewers of the book declared the hero to be an unrealistic, exaggerated, even monstrous creation. In La Gazette Littéraire of 2 December 1830, for example, an anonymous critic wrote: 'Voilà un caractère énergique tel que M. de Stendhal n'en a sûrement pas rencontré dans le département du Doubs'. A few weeks later, the literary giant of the time, Jules Janin, employed his own form of rhetoric to denounce Stendhal's hero:

Si c'est de la vérité, c'est une vérité bien triste; si c'est de la nature, c'est une horrible nature . . . Non, ce jeune homme si atroce n'est pas dans la nature.¹

Another critic described Julien as 'une espèce de grand homme avorté, abâtardi'.² In general the hero was taken to be an atrocious monster, a raving madman, or a depraved peasant, and at any rate an impossible figment of Stendhal's imagination. Yet one critic, writing in the Revue Encyclopédique of January-March 1831 and signing himself A.P., refuted the generally held view of Julien:

On a beaucoup reproché à M. de Stendhal ce caractère qu'on a trouvé invraisemblable et impossible. Je le regarde, moi, comme une conception profonde, originale et vraie . . . Quiconque connaît le monde, et voudra être sincère, avouera qu'il était difficile de peindre plus nettement le trait caractéristique de la jeunesse de ce tems. (p.357)

The same disparity can be found in the contemporary views on Stendhal's purposes in the novel. One critic, for example,

1 'Le Rouge et le Noir, chronique de 1829 par M. de Stendhal', Journal des Débats, 26 décembre 1830.

2 'Le Rouge et le Noir; chronique du XIXe siècle', Le Correspondant, 14 janvier 1831, pp.302-4 (p.303). This article was signed N..

states categorically that 'sa chronique est tout simplement une dénonciation en forme contre l'âme humaine'.³ Janin takes the side of Restoration society against Stendhal's presumed attack: 'Je n'ai jamais vu nulle part plus de rage anti-jésuite et anti-bourgeoise, que dans le livre de M. de Stendhal'. The reviewer for Le Correspondant defends not only the Restoration but all times of peace against Stendhal:

Son roman [est] une satire, en deux volumes et en prose, contre les quinze dernières années et contre toutes les époques de paix et de tranquillité qui n'offrent pas de débouchés à ces quelques hommes fortement trempés, mais obscurs. (p.303)

Most of the commentators felt obliged to justify aristocratic society in the face of the novelist's 'distortions' (the character of Mathilde was especially deplored), and most of them also refused to acknowledge any truth in the chapters set in the seminary in Besançon. But once again A.P., in the only article to show sympathy with Stendhal, differs from the majority of his contemporaries; he affirms that Stendhal's powers of social observation are accurate enough:

Du reste, il excelle à peindre le monde . . . C'est une peinture gracieuse, et quelquefois profonde, de la société, telle que l'avaient faite les jésuites et les émigrés de la Restauration. (p.359)

The famous critics of the later part of the nineteenth century — Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Zola, Émile Faguet — also had differing views on Le Rouge et le Noir and its hero. Sainte-Beuve, for instance, persisted in seeing Julien Sorel as a monster:

Julien, avec les deux ou trois idées fixes que lui a données l'auteur, ne paraît plus bientôt qu'un petit monstre odieux, impossible, un scélérat qui ressemble à un Robespierre jeté dans la vie civile et dans l'intrigue domestique.⁴

He also criticized Stendhal's representation of Restoration society. Faguet was equally dissatisfied with Julien's character — 'Julien n'a l'âme ni méchante, ni vulgaire; il a l'âme dépravée'.⁵ — and his judgement of Stendhal's political

³ Unsigned article in the Revue de Paris, 1830, XX, pp.258-60 (p.258).

⁴ Causeries du lundi, Paris, sans date, IX, p.330.

⁵ Politiques et moralistes du XIXe siècle, p.48.

ideas was scathing. Taine and Zola, on the other hand, paid tribute to Stendhal's powers of historical and social observation and saw in Julien Sorel the representative of a certain class at a certain time. Zola wrote:

Il faut regarder son Julien Sorel comme la personnification des rêves ambitieux et des regrets de toute une époque . . . Il est donc bien l'enfant de cette heure historique, un garçon d'une intelligence supérieure obligé par tempérament de faire une grande fortune, qui est venu trop tard pour être un des maréchaux de Napoléon, et qui se résout à passer par les sacristies et à opérer en valet hypocrite.⁶

Such, then, was the diversity of opinion in the nineteenth century on Stendhal's second novel. On one point only did all the critics agree: Le Rouge et le Noir is an extremely complex piece of fiction. Words like 'paradoxical', 'inexplicable', 'unnatural', 'impossible' abound in criticism of the novel. Most commentators could not understand Julien's nature; many also failed to accept Mathilde as a feasible character; some professed to be nonplussed about the political intrigues in Part II of the book; Faguet saw the denouement as instrumental in triggering off a kind of general madness in all the characters; and even Zola was at a loss to explain the 'singularité' of the affair between Julien and Mathilde.

Time, it seems, has not erased the difficulties encountered by students of the novel, for twentieth-century criticism of Le Rouge et le Noir shows the same variety in interpretation. On the one hand, critics like F.W.J. Hemmings, John Atherton, and Grahame Jones have tended to minimize the political content of the book and view Julien Sorel from a moral rather than a social standpoint. Grahame Jones writes:

Ce qui nous intéresse surtout, et ce qui intéressait, d'ailleurs, Stendhal lui-même, c'est l'aspect moral de la révolte de Julien.⁷

On the other hand, Claude Liprandi and Pierre-Georges Castex in particular have stressed the political and historical significance of novel and hero. Castex is equally certain that Stendhal's chief intention was to create a historically accurate picture:

⁶ Les Romanciers naturalistes, Paris, 1881, pp.94-5.

⁷ L'Ironie dans les romans de Stendhal, Lausanne, 1966, ch.ii, p.52.

Dans les romans de Stendhal, les critiques de jadis ont mis plus volontiers l'accent sur les aspects psychologiques et moraux que sur les aspects politiques et sociaux . . . Stendhal a cependant proclamé sa volonté de réalisme, ou plutôt, de vérisme.⁸

He goes on to suggest certain real-life sources or models for episodes in the novel, thereby indulging in a practice which many Stendhalians have adopted with regard to Le Rouge et le Noir in particular, and he concludes:

On voit donc à quel point il est nécessaire, pour bien comprendre Le Rouge et le Noir, de replacer l'oeuvre dans un contexte historique . . . Stendhal nous a montré la bonne voie en nous invitant à le lire, d'abord, comme une chronique.⁸

We now have two totally conflicting pictures of the novelist: in the view of some people, he apparently meant Julien's personal problems to interest his readers most; according to others, however, he was inviting us to regard his work as an accurate piece of historical writing. And the diversity of opinion does not rest there. Maurice Bardèche, for instance, sees the novel's message reaching out to the downtrodden idealists and radicals in any society where revolution has given way to disappointing and mediocre government,⁹ and H.-F. Imbert interprets Julien's revolt as representing the rebellion of Restoration youth in general against outmoded aristocratic power:

Restait maintenant à décrire le combat en cours, l'esprit de liberté contre le dogmatisme politique, la jeunesse ambitieuse contre l'égoïsme inerte des vieilles chevaleries dépossédées.¹⁰

Louis Aragon, for his part, judges the novel in terms of its historical moment and the impending revolution: 'Le Rouge et le Noir est bien une machine de guerre qui prépare Juillet 1830'.¹¹ As well as differing widely in general interpretation of the novel and its hero, critics cannot agree in their analyses of

8 'Réalités d'époque dans Le Rouge et le Noir', Europe, 519-21, juillet-août-septembre 1972, pp.55-63 (p.55, p.63).

9 Stendhal romancier, deuxième partie, ch.vi, pp.192-3.

10 Les Métamorphoses de la liberté, deuxième partie, livre II, ch.ii, p.473.

11 La Lumière de Stendhal, Paris, 1954, p.98.

particular episodes. Views on Julien's crime, for example, divide broadly into three categories. There are those who, like Faguet, believe that Stendhal resorted without motivation to copying Antoine Berthet's crime because he could not bear to see his chosen hero on the path to comfortable, bourgeois success or because he had no imagination left for a denouement of his own. Henri Martineau, Claude Liprandi and many others regard Julien's attempted murder of Mme de Rênal as a 'crime passionnel' quite in keeping with his emotional make-up. More recently, however, critics like Castex, Jones and Imbert have emphasized the deliberate, premeditated nature of the crime, claiming that it is only by destroying his accuser that Julien can wipe out the false image he has given of himself.

It is our intention to try to explain this persistent tendency in critics towards such diverse and contradictory views of Stendhal's second novel. In some cases, of course, a certain interpretation of the book can be attributed to a particular bias on the part of the critic. This explanation is especially relevant to the purely political analyses of Le Rouge et le Noir. Thus, for instance, the critic for the Revue Encyclopédique, A.P., who seemed so favourable to Stendhal when the novel appeared, was obviously a liberal with an axe to grind. The fact that he spends five of his nine pages attacking the Jesuits' hold over education during the Restoration before coming to discuss the novel at all indicates his prejudice. His judgement of the novel is based, in other words, on his own preoccupations of the moment. The description of the seminary in particular suits his purpose:

Sous le dernier gouvernement, les jésuites avaient adroitement exploité notre monstrueux système d'enseignement; ils avaient fondé des milliers de séminaires où la vanité des paysans . . . leur faisait jeter leurs enfans en foule. Sortant de là, sans moyen d'existence, avec des goûts de vie douce et luxueuse, ces enfans étaient à leur discrétion: devenir hypocrites, ou mourir de faim, voilà l'alternative qu'ils leur offraient.¹²

Thus he turns Julien into a victim of the Jesuitical system of education under the Restoration. In the same way, the interpretations of more recent critics can be explained in the light of

¹² Revue Encyclopédique, janvier-mars 1831, p.356.

their ideological commitments: Aragon, Claude Roy, and other Marxist writers naturally consider Le Rouge et le Noir from a specialized point of view. Aragon, for instance, transforms Stendhal into a precursor of socialist writers, complete with political motive:

Et ses romans sont voulus, pas innocents pour deux sous, en rien miroir désintéressé, ils sont des armes contre un milieu social qu'il s'agit de miner, de changer, de transformer de fond en comble.¹³

He also makes Julien out to be Stendhal's chosen representative of the plebeian underdog who will soon triumph over aristocracy and bourgeois alike.¹³

Yet personal bias does not by any means account satisfactorily for the vast divergences in the opinions which have been formulated about this novel. Only in a handful of cases can the political commitments of a critic explain his analysis of Le Rouge et le Noir. The controversy continues to rage, and the reasons for such clashes of opinion evidently lie principally in the nature of the novel itself. It is our thesis that the contradictions inherent in Le Rouge et le Noir, reflected by the variety of arguments and interpretations which critics have imposed on the novel, can be better explained by adopting the approach already described in Part I of this study. There, after all, it was found that an investigation into the precise background to Stendhal's so-called 'political' views revealed a whole variety of standpoints from which the writer made his judgements. Politics, we saw, have to be interpreted in the widest possible sense where Stendhal is concerned, since other considerations of a more ethical, aesthetic, or personal nature often contribute to the formation of his ideas. The boundaries between politics, sociology, artistic conscience, ethics, ideology, and personal idiosyncrasies became more blurred as Stendhal grew older, and the contradictions in his political beliefs could often be explained with reference to biographical details or to a shift of emphasis from a political to, say, a moral point of view. In the same way, it is hoped to show how the controversy surrounding the

¹³ La Lumière de Stendhal, p.64, p.79.

various interpretations of Le Rouge et le Noir (which are usually of a 'political' order, of course) can be explained, to some extent at least, in the light of the diversity of Stendhal's own viewpoints as creator of the novel and the shifts of accent which, wittingly or unwittingly, he employs both in the book itself and in his subsequent comments on it.

To begin with, it is perhaps instructive to discover what Stendhal thought about the place of politics in the modern novel. He was, after all, the man who objected to politics largely from an artistic point of view, fearing that society's preoccupation with them would prove detrimental to the arts:

De nos jours, hélas! la politique vole la littérature, qui n'est qu'un pis aller. (1825)
Je crains beaucoup qu'à l'avenir la politique ne devienne le vampire de la littérature. (1825)¹⁴

There resulted a general tendency on his part to treat politics as a game and to argue more frequently on behalf of art and literature. To bring up the question of politics in the Stendhalian novel would therefore seem at first sight to be a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, Part I also revealed the extent to which this novelist was devoted to politics despite himself: during the Restoration and July Monarchy, that is the years into which Stendhal fitted all his artistic creation, we detected a second tendency besides the dilettante attitude just described — that of a continual interest in, and almost a passion for, contemporary political affairs. It follows that his ideas about politics in the novel will reflect these ambiguities.

On the one hand, therefore, Stendhal was to state that politics had a definite place in the nineteenth-century novel:

Quelques phrases de politique ne font pas longueur et distraktion, mais au contraire introduction (passage des idées habituelles du lecteur aux idées du roman) au commencement of a novel. (1835)¹⁵

He came to this conclusion, it seems, by way of his conviction that literature should reflect the mood of its times; this idea

¹⁴ Correspondance, II, p.59; Courrier Anglais, V, p.14.

¹⁵ Lucien Leuwen, II, p.325,

was first expressed in 1823:

Le romanticisme est l'art de présenter aux peuples les oeuvres littéraires qui, dans l'état actuel de leurs habitudes et de leurs croyances, sont susceptibles de leur donner le plus de plaisir possible.¹⁶

In 1830, transforming a Scarron work into a short story called Le Philtre, Stendhal revealed his intentions to adapt the tale to its new historical context: 'La sauce de chaque siècle est différente. Je remplace la sauce de 1660 par un peu de celle de 1830'.¹⁷ In short, he was always concerned with modernity in what he wrote; examples of his desire for fame in his own times, of his pandering to public taste and convention, are easy enough to find: one need only consider his pamphlets on romanticism and industrialism or his myth-making around his own Napoleonic experiences. If a work of art was to be broadly speaking representative of its times, then it follows that in Stendhal's view it must also contain a large measure of political and social comment, since politics were the main public preoccupation in post-1789 France. Indeed, in an imaginary dialogue between author and editor in Part II of Le Rouge et le Noir itself Stendhal puts this very argument into the mouth of his 'editor':

Si vos personnages ne parlent pas politique, reprend l'éditeur, ce ne sont plus des Français de 1830, et votre livre n'est plus un miroir, comme vous en avez la prétention.¹⁸

More often than not, however, he complained that politics spoiled the novel, and his favourite metaphor was the pistol-shot in the concert. The image was first used in Racine et Shakspeare:

Tel est l'effet produit par toute idée politique dans un ouvrage de littérature; c'est un coup de pistolet au milieu d'un concert. (pp.107-8)

It was repeated in Chapter XIV of Armance, and in Le Rouge et le Noir, during the amusing dialogue just mentioned, the 'author'

16 Racine et Shakspeare, ch.iii, p.39.

17 Journal, V, p.60.

18 II, ch.xxii, p.258. All quotations from the novel refer to the new edition of the Oeuvres complètes presented by Victor Del Litto and Ernest Abravanel (Geneva, 1967-73).

uses it to refute his 'editor': 'La politique au milieu des intérêts d'imagination, c'est un coup de pistolet au milieu d'un concert' (II, xxii, 258). But the 'editor' wins the argument, it seems, for the highly political intrigue involving the 'note secrète' is fairly fully documented in spite of the 'author's' presumed reluctance in the matter. The metaphor reappeared in Part II, Chapter XXIII of La Chartreuse de Parme. To resume, then, there is evidently a conflict within Stendhal's views on the place of politics in the novel. On the one hand, his natural interest in politics and his rational belief that they had a definite right to be represented in the modern novel led him to include, whether reluctantly or not is not altogether clear, political and social details in his own fiction. On the other hand, a personal and artistic frustration with the predominance of political discussion in public and private life to the detriment of art, coupled with an aesthetic conviction that politics were too ignoble to be the stuff of his novels, induced him to question his own motives. It follows that the dialogue between supposed author and editor in Le Rouge et le Noir, for example, though presented in detached, ironic tones, records the tensions and ambiguity within Stendhal himself. Michel Crouzet, as usual, sums up Stendhal's dilemma very well: 'Jamais l'intérêt politique ne disparaît, mais toujours il est en même temps qu'affirmé . . . contesté, questionné'.¹⁹

In view of Stendhal's conflicting ideas about politics in the novel, any attempt to take a purely ideological approach when analyzing Le Rouge et le Noir is bound to lead to contradictions. For if Stendhal was uncertain himself as to the part which politics should play in his novel, if he registered political details now reluctantly, now defensively, now deliberately, it is probable that he did not set out to write his novel with any definite pattern of political purpose or symbolism in mind. Interpretations which fail to take account of his diversity of opinion must therefore be found wanting. Maurice Bardèche, for instance, makes a valiant attempt to fit

¹⁹ 'L'Apolitisme stendhalien', p.225.

Julien's behaviour into a certain logical political pattern:

Dans la ligne générale du roman, Julien Sorel est donc avant tout un personnage ayant une signification politique. Il faut à Stendhal un héros pour accuser son temps. Selon la genèse du roman, Julien Sorel est un garçon du peuple auquel on a donné une éducation qui en fait un isolé et par une suite un ennemi dans la société bourgeoise. Selon la ligne politique du roman, on va d'emblée à l'extrême: Julien Sorel, posé comme ennemi, comme exclu, comme domestique perpétuel dans cette société, s'érige en juge; il se place hors de ses lois, et hors de sa morale, au nom du droit sans appel de l'opprimé sans droit.²⁰

Neat and tidy as this interpretation may seem, it can in fact be contested on almost every point. In the first place, it could be argued that it is not Julien's education but rather his character which alienates him in bourgeois society; after all, Valenod and his guests are awestruck and delighted at Julien's display of 'learning', and in any case his education has been extremely fragmentary. Julien realizes that it is his character which differentiates him from the rest; having sat through a dinner with Valenod and his 'liberal' friends, during which the occupants of the adjacent poorhouse have probably been starved, he expresses his disgust with the bourgeois company:

Voilà donc, se disait la conscience de Julien, la sale fortune à laquelle tu parviendras, et tu n'en jouiras qu'à cette condition et en pareille compagnie! (I, xxii, 242)

Later he explains to Mme de Rênal that he could never have become tutor to Valenod's children:

Mais, disait toujours Julien, jamais je n'ai eu, même pour un instant, le projet d'accepter ces offres. Vous m'avez trop accoutumé à la vie élégante, la grossièreté de ces gens-là me tuerait. (I, xxiii, 273)

Clearly Julien and the bourgeoisie of Verrières are worlds apart in matters of expression and behaviour; education hardly comes into it.

Secondly, it is doubtful whether Julien can really be said to be an enemy of the bourgeoisie. He certainly sees himself as such, but it is in his nature to treat all unknown quantities as enemies or rivals, and he is usually mistaken: he regards Mme de Rênal, abbé Pirard, and M. de La Mole in turn as enemies to

20 Stendhal romancier, deuxième partie, ch.vi, p.194.

begin with, yet all three of them give him their respect and friendship. In fact Julien's only enemy in the book is Valenod, and this for personal, not political, reasons. Valenod does not feel threatened in his social position by Julien; he is simply enraged that the hero should have succeeded in gaining Mme de Rênal's favour whereas he, in full view of the town, had received only a rebuff:

Il apprit les choses les plus mortifiantes pour son amour-propre. Cette femme la plus distinguée du pays, que pendant six ans il avait environnée de tant de soins, et malheureusement au vu et au su de tout le monde; cette femme si fière, dont les dédains l'avaient tant de fois fait rougir, elle venait de prendre pour amant un petit ouvrier déguisé en précepteur. (I, xix, 202-3)

In other words, it is Valenod's vanity, and not fear for his position in society, which makes him regard Julien as his enemy.

Thirdly, Bardèche's conclusion that Julien finally judges society in the name of the underdog with no privileges is also highly contestable. It is instructive to study the circumstances of Julien's speech to the jury: the trial is going well from his point of view, audience and jurors are emotionally in his favour; Julien himself feels on the verge of tears; at this point he notices a supercilious glance from Valenod, and this determines him to speak. He does not want to win his case by appealing to the emotions of others, for Valenod will be able to mock him:

Les yeux de ce cuistre sont flamboyants, se dit-il; quel triomphe pour cette âme basse! . . . Dieu sait ce qu'il dira de moi, dans les soirées d'hiver, à madame de Rênal! (II, xli, 439)

He thus deliberately speaks out in such a way as to change the emotions of the jury into a less favourable attitude of self-defence against his accusations:

L'horreur du mépris, que je croyais pouvoir braver au moment de la mort, me fait prendre la parole. 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. (440)

Frilair later describes Julien's speech as a kind of suicide:

Pourquoi parler de caste? Il leur a indiqué ce qu'ils devaient faire dans leur intérêt politique: ces nigauds n'y songeaient pas et étaient prêts à pleurer . . . sa mort sera une sorte de suicide. (II, xliv, 463-4)

However political Julien's speech may seem, therefore, it is

delivered in a deliberate attempt to wipe out a possible personal affront; it certainly cannot be attributed to any ideological motives on Julien's part. His action was purely spontaneous and personal, as he later explains to Mathilde:

N'étais-je pas beau hier, quand j'ai pris la parole? répondit Julien. J'improvisais, et pour la première fois de ma vie! . . . aucun être humain ne verra Julien faible, d'abord parce qu'il ne l'est pas. Mais j'ai le coeur facile à toucher; la parole la plus commune, si elle est dite avec un accent vrai, peut attendrir ma voix et même faire couler mes larmes. Que de fois les coeurs secs ne m'ont-ils pas méprisé pour ce défaut! Ils croyaient que je demandais grâce: voilà ce qu'il ne faut pas souffrir. (II, xlii, 448)

In short, events which seem at first sight to be political in nature turn out to have totally unpolitical motives behind them. In Part I, it was shown that often Stendhal's views on American government or Napoleonic rule had little or nothing to do with politics at all; in the same way, episodes in Le Rouge et le Noir which appear, because of their language and context, to be political in nature, often represent personal rather than ideological values.

A study of the different political opinions represented in the novel, and of the attitudes of hero and author towards them, can be revealing. Julien comes into contact with a variety of political ideals, practices, and persuasions, and it is interesting to note that he is never more than fleetingly attracted to any of them for their purely ideological content.

At the end of the novel, when Mathilde encourages Julien to appeal against his sentence, he resists on the grounds that he no longer wants to live in a world where he will be subjected to the humiliation imposed on him by the patrician element in power; and Stendhal, fearing the reactions of right-wing readers no doubt, remarks in a footnote: 'C'est un jacobin qui parle' (II, xlii, 451). But an examination of Julien's attitude towards the Jacobin figures he meets reveals no commitment whatsoever on his part. For example, in Part I Stendhal briefly mentions a radical whom Julien meets in Verrières and likes:

Dans le flot de ce monde nouveau pour Julien, il crut découvrir un honnête homme; il était géomètre, s'appelait

Gros, et passait pour jacobin. (xxii, 246)

In the second part of the novel Julien discovers that he has carelessly given a ministerial post to a nonentity called Cholin in preference to Gros, who is helping to support a poor family. At first he is appalled at what he has done, but he is quickly unrepentant:

Julien fut étonné de ce qu'il avait fait. Cette famille du mort, comment vit-elle aujourd'hui? Cette idée lui serra le coeur. Ce n'est rien, se dit-il; il faudra en venir à bien d'autres injustices, si je veux parvenir. (vii, 91)

Clearly he feels no commitment towards the man on the grounds of political affinities.

The exiled Italian count, Altamira, a character based on Stendhal's great friend Domenico di Fiore, is also a Jacobin. Julien first meets this man, who has been condemned to death in his own country for inciting rebellion, in the company of Pirard's friends; he later has a long political conversation with him at the ball held by the Duc de Retz. Julien is evidently attracted to this character, for he is incensed when Mathilde tries to interrupt them, and he emerges from his talk with Altamira deep in dreams of glory and liberty. For the next few hours his head is full of arguments about ends and means:

Que serait Danton aujourd'hui? . . . il se serait vendu à la congrégation; il serait ministre, car enfin ce grand Danton a volé . . . Faut-il voler, faut-il se vendre? . . . l'homme qui veut chasser l'ignorance et le crime de la terre, doit-il passer comme la tempête et faire le mal comme au hasard? (II, ix, 119-23)

Altamira certainly believes Julien to be a political idealist like himself:

Altamira: légèreté française, et comprenez le principe de l'utilité. (118)
Julien: échappe à une profonde conviction: vous n'avez pas la légèreté française, et comprenez le principe de l'utilité. (118)

But the republican question of ends and means is dropped thereafter, when Julien turns his attention to his stormy love affair with Mathilde. In fact he is no more than emotionally drawn to Altamira. Politics have little influence over him; it becomes evident, as Mathilde takes precedence in Julien's life over everything else, that he does not really belong to

Altamira's cause. When despairing over his love, for example, the hero remarks:

Grand Dieu! que vais-je devenir? et pas un ami que je puisse consulter: l'abbé Pirard ne me laisserait pas finir la première phrase, le comte Altamira me proposerait, pour me distraire, de m'affilier à quelque conspiration. (II, xvii, 208)

In addition, Stendhal's attitude towards Altamira is interesting. We have discussed his views on republicanism and seen that, though drawn to the cause ideologically, on a personal level he was less than enamoured of the type of the virtuous republican. In the same way, it is suggested in Le Rouge et le Noir that political idealism has a stultifying effect. While sympathizing with 'le pauvre Altamira', Stendhal reveals that his excessive idealism has led this minor character to sacrifice moderate political success for the sake of saving three lives:

Notez que la révolution à la tête de laquelle je me suis trouvé, continua le comte Altamira, n'a pas réussi uniquement parce que je n'ai pas voulu faire tomber trois têtes et distribuer à nos partisans sept à huit millions . . . Mon roi qui, aujourd'hui, brûle de me faire pendre, et qui, avant la révolte, me tutoyait, m'eût donné le grand cordon de son ordre si j'avais fait tomber ces trois têtes et distribuer l'argent de ces caisses, car j'aurais obtenu au moins un demi-succès, et mon pays eût eu une charte telle quelle. (II, ix, 115-16)

In other words, Stendhal is very close to saying that true republicanism is ineffectual, since it refuses to compromise and to practise pragmatism. An ironic statement made by the novelist in Part I, at the expense of Julien and his disgust with Valenod's treatment of the poor, could be interpreted as being Stendhal's anticipatory judgement of political idealists like Altamira:

J'avoue que la faiblesse, dont Julien fait preuve dans ce monologue, me donne une pauvre opinion de lui. Il serait digne d'être le collègue de ces conspirateurs en gants jaunes, qui prétendent changer toute la manière d'être d'un grand pays, et ne veulent pas avoir à se reprocher la plus petite égratignure. (xxii, 242)

The third political idealist in the novel is Julien's friend Fouqué, again a minor figure. Julien is obviously attached to his timber-merchant friend, and on several occasions he escapes from the Rênal household to visit Fouqué in his mountain home. Yet even with his only childhood friend Julien is not sincere:

Je suis libre! Au son de ce grand mot son âme s'exalta; son hypocrisie faisait qu'il n'était pas libre même chez Fouqué. (I, xii, 126)

He refuses Fouqué's offers of a partnership in his business; clearly he feels that he is not suited to the dull, limited life which satisfies his friend:

Comme Hercule, il se trouvait non entre le vice et la vertu, mais entre la médiocrité suivie d'un bien-être assuré et tous les rêves héroïque de sa jeunesse. (130-1)

Similarly, when he announces to Fouqué his forthcoming move to the Hôtel de La Mole in Paris, he remains deaf to his friend's idealism:

Cela finira pour toi, dit cet électeur libéral, par une place du gouvernement, qui t'obligera à quelque démarche qui sera vilipendée dans les journaux . . . Rappelle-toi que, même financièrement parlant, il vaut mieux gagner cent louis dans un bon commerce de bois, dont on est le maître, que de recevoir quatre mille francs d'un gouvernement. (I, xxx, 366)

Evidently Julien cannot be said to be a republican, a Jacobin, or any kind of political idealist at all; other pursuits matter more to him than political commitment or activity. Stendhal clearly intended to preserve his hero from the moral paralysis which, for physical as well as ideological reasons, characterizes Octave de Malivert, hero of his first novel, Armance, and so the opportunities offered to Julien by the political idealists of the book are not grasped. Altamira's friend, Don Diego, called in to assist Julien in his courtship of Mme de Fervagues, throws out a challenge which is never taken up:

Comme Julien sortait, -- Altamira m'apprend que vous êtes des nôtres, lui dit don Diego, toujours plus grave. Un jour vous nous aiderez à reconquérir notre liberté, ainsi veux-je vous aider dans ce petit amusement. (II, xxv, 297)

Never at any time is there any real suggestion that Julien would or should take part in political activity of this kind.

A second 'political' value represented in Le Rouge et le Noir is that of liberalism, but there is nothing idealistic about the characters of this persuasion. Indeed if we refer back to Stendhal's attitude towards the debasement of the term 'liberal' precisely during the Restoration, then there will be nothing surprising about the representation of such a group in the novel. Characters who call themselves liberals have no political commitment at all, only a strong instinct for self-preservation and success. Stendhal shows them in Verrières, for example, as being principally concerned with selfish pursuits, despite a veneer of progressive ideology. It is they

who make most fuss about Julien's place in the guard of honour during the royal visit, and Stendhal exposes the distance between their supposed beliefs and their real preoccupations:

Il fallait entendre, à ce sujet, les riches fabricants de toiles peintes, qui, soir et matin, s'enrouaient au café, à prêcher l'égalité. (I, xix, 193)

They are also willing to convert to religious 'beliefs' (usually associated under the regime with ultra-monarchism) in order to feather their own nests:

Il y avait là plusieurs libéraux riches, mais heureux pères d'enfants susceptibles d'obtenir des bourses, et en cette qualité subitement convertis depuis la dernière mission. (I, xxii, 243)

Here, in other words, were the representatives of girouettisme whom Stendhal detested. The prime example of this kind of hypocrisy is to be found in Valenod, whom M. de Rênal describes as 'cette âme sans repos' (I, iv, 27). While nominally supporting the ultra-monarchist mayor, he secretly works for his dismissal; to this end he secures the support of the clergy, and he even tries to gain favour with the liberals. He reappears in Paris in Part II, having been made a baron, and tells Julien he is about to become mayor of Verrières on the vote of the ultra-monarchists! So well does he cover himself for all eventualities that he can disdain Frilair's support and vote for Julien's execution:

Elle [Mathilde] lui raconta que, le jour du jugement, M. de Valenod ayant en poche sa nomination de préfet, il avait osé se moquer de M. de Frilair et se donner le plaisir de le condamner à mort. (II, xlv, 463)

There is never any question of Julien's being attracted to such behaviour; during his dinner with Valenod, as we have seen, the hero's sensibility is shocked again and again; as with Stendhal himself, the vulgar tone and base pursuits of the 'liberal' bourgeoisie disgust him:

Ah! canaille! canaille! . . . Il se trouvait tout aristocrate en ce moment, lui qui, pendant longtemps, avait été tellement choqué du sourire dédaigneux et de la supériorité hautaine qu'il découvrait au fond de toutes les politesses qu'on lui adressait chez M. de Rênal . . . Quel ensemble! se disait Julien; ils me donneraient la moitié de tout ce qu'ils veulent, que je ne voudrais pas vivre avec eux. (I, xxii, 245-6)

Stendhal is deliberately and ironically revealing the tension

here between Julien's disgust with the manners of a class to which he should by birth and education belong, and his admiration for those of the aristocracy, whose political beliefs he disdains and detests.

Julien also comes into contact with characters of ultra-monarchist persuasions in Verrières and Paris. His first benefactor, M. de Rênal, is a pronounced reactionary. In the very first chapter Stendhal recounts that if the mayor of Verrières has been able to change the course of a stream which by rights is public property in order to build a wall round his house, it is thanks to the support he has in Paris ministerial circles:

Quant au ruisseau public qui faisait aller la scie, M. de Rênal, au moyen du crédit dont il jouit à Paris, a obtenu qu'il fût détourné. Cette grâce lui vint après les élections de 182... (I, i, 9)

It is almost certain that Stendhal means to implicate the Chamber of 1825 which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, consisted of the most intransigent, reactionary deputies, since he points out the gap between public rights and the decisions of those in power. In true ultra-monarchist manner, M. de Rênal pays lip-service to the Church and resists contact with Verrières's liberal voters; even when the latter turn to 'religion', unlike Valenod he will have nothing to do with them. Mme de Rênal also betrays ultra-monarchist leanings; her Jesuit education and naive faith in the beliefs of her husband's faction lead her to fear Jacobin revolution:

Madame de Rênal avait été étonnée du mot de Julien, parce que les hommes de sa société répétaient que le retour de Robespierre était surtout possible à cause de ces jeunes gens des basses classes, trop bien élevés. (I, xvii, 165)

She even sees for Julien a brilliant future in the service of the King:

Elle le voyait pape, elle le voyait premier ministre comme Richelieu. Vivrai-je assez pour te voir dans ta gloire? disait-elle à Julien; la place est faite pour un grand homme; la monarchie, la religion en ont besoin; ces messieurs le disent tous les jours. (170)

On his arrival in Paris, however, Julien begins to be more directly involved in the party politics of the Restoration ultra-monarchists. His second benefactor, M. de La Mole,

for example, has atrociously reactionary political views, as Julien discovers during the discussion of the 'note secrète':

Sachons qui il faut écraser. D'un côté les journalistes, les électeurs, l'opinion en un mot; la jeunesse et tout ce qui l'admire . . . Entre la liberté de la presse et notre existence comme gentilshommes, il y a guerre à mort. (II, xxii, 264-6)

The marquis has high hopes of a ministry, and his political aims are extremely dangerous to France's freedom:

Julien apprend que le marquis allait être ministre: il offrait à la Camarilla un plan fort ingénieux pour anéantir la Charte, sans commotion, en trois ans. (II, xxv, 302)

Yet this, it seems, is a highly original ultra-monarchist, for he is also an enemy of the Jesuits (in particular Frilair) and his library is full of 'dangerous' works by Voltaire and other eighteenth-century philosophers. He is thus in many ways a man of the ancien régime; not only does he want to revert to the reactionary politics of pre-revolutionary days, but he also retains the aristocracy's mistrust of its former rival, the clergy. Sending Julien off with a summary of the secret discussions, he remarks:

Que leur importe que l'état soit renversé? ils seront cardinaux, et se réfugieront à Rome. Nous, dans nos châteaux, nous serons massacrés par les paysans. (II, xxiii, 275)

Julien never has the slightest temptation to believe in ultra-monarchist principles, of course, and he detests M. de La Mole's political involvements:

Comment le marquis augmente-t-il son immense fortune? En vendant de la rehte, quand il apprend au château qu'il y aura le lendemain apparence de coup d'état. (II, xiii, 165-6)

Yet once again there is tension between Julien's attitude to the marquis as a man and his views on his benefactor's reactionary politics. For Julien quickly takes to the character of M. de La Mole: 'Bientôt, malgré lui, il éprouva une sorte d'attachement pour ce vieillard aimable' (II, vii, 84). Later he is genuinely sorry for him: 'Je puis avoir pitié de mon bienfaiteur, être navré de lui nuire' (II, xxxii, 351). Like Stendhal, but more reluctantly than his creator, Julien warms to the polite tone and manners of this Parisian noble, while finding his reactionary, ultra-monarchist politics intolerable.

A fourth position represented in Le Rouge et le Noir is

that of the political sceptic, the man who, like Stendhal in distrustful mood, rejects all political persuasions in turn, and records the claim of non-political values for serious attention. The first example of such an attitude is to be found in a comment by Stendhal himself in the first part of the novel; adopting the pose of Parisian dilettante, he remarks:

Depuis la chute de Napoléon, toute apparence de galanterie est sévèrement bannie des mœurs de province. On a peur d'être destitué. Les fripons cherchent un appui dans la congrégation; et l'hypocrisie a fait les plus beaux progrès même dans les classes libérales. L'ennui redouble. Il ne reste d'autre plaisir que la lecture et l'agriculture. (I, vii, 76)

To some extent M. de La Mole, despite his political meddling, is an epicurean too: 'Car il faut s'amuser, continua le marquis; il n'y a que cela de réel dans la vie' (II, vii, 81). But the fullest treatment of this a-political theme is at the very beginning of Part II; here Stendhal introduces a completely new figure, Saint-Giraud, who has no political beliefs at all:

Voici toute ma politique: J'aime la musique, la peinture; un bon livre est un événement pour moi . . . Sur le vaisseau de l'état, tout le monde veut s'occuper de la manoeuvre, car elle est bien payée. N'y aura-t-il donc jamais une pauvre petite place pour le simple passager?
(II, i, 4-5)

This character obviously represents Stendhal's own familiar argument in favour of gaiety and the arts against the all-pervasive influence of political discussion. By introducing this theme into his novel, he is establishing a claim for aesthetic values to be given fair treatment in a society which seems to accord all its prizes, even such simple benefits as contentment and the right to privacy, to those who indulge in politics of one sort or another.

One last political group remains to be discussed, the Bonapartists, and it is to this 'party' that Julien is most attracted. Since he was befriended as a child by a veteran of the revolutionary wars, Julien's early education conditions his outlook on life:

Ce chirurgien payait quelquefois au père Sorel la journée de son fils, et lui enseignait le latin et l'histoire, c'est-à-dire ce qu'il savait d'histoire, la campagne de 1796 en Italie. (I, iv, 32)

The surgeon-major bequeathes to Julien Napoleon's memoirs, and

this book, along with Rousseau's Confessions, has a profound effect on him. Throughout his apprenticeship to life Julien continually refers to his chosen hero, Napoleon, before deciding on action. Realizing, however, that success in Restoration society depends on displaying different qualities from those expected of Napoleonic soldiers, Julien turns to the Church for his career and hides his devotion to his idol:

Tout à coup Julien cessa de parler de Napoléon; il annonça le projet de se faire prêtre . . . une idée qui lui vint le rendit comme fou pendant quelques semaines . . . Quand Bonaparte fit parler de lui, la France avait peur d'être envahie; le mérite militaire était nécessaire et à la mode. Aujourd'hui, on voit des prêtres, de quarante ans, avoir cent mille francs d'appointements, c'est-à-dire trois fois autant que les fameux généraux de division de Napoléon . . . Il faut être prêtre. (I, v, 42-4)

Yet Stendhal is careful to suggest that Julien's admiration for Napoleon is the result of an emotional process and not a political judgement. For example, he exposes the root cause of the hero's devotion to the surgeon-major: 'Méprisé de tout le monde, comme un être faible, Julien avait adoré ce vieux chirurgien-major' (I, iv, 32). Clearly Julien's Bonapartism, like Henri Beyle's early republicanism, represents in the first instance a purely personal and emotional response to the hostility of his own family. What is more, in Part II, when a new passion takes over in Julien's heart, his Bonapartism suffers:

Il ouvrit d'un mouvement passionné les Mémoires dictés à Sainte-Hélène par Napoléon, et pendant deux longues heures se força à les lire; ses yeux seuls lisaient, n'importe, il s'y forçait. (II, xxxi, 341)

At the end of the novel, meditating in his prison cell, Julien comes to realize that from a rational point of view his admiration for Napoleon has been mistaken: 'Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène!... Pur charlatanisme, proclamation en faveur du roi de Rome' (II, xliv, 470)

Stendhal's attitude towards Julien's Bonapartism is also revealing: he constantly ironizes at his hero's expense, debunking Julien's military tactics on his way to seduce Mme de Rênal and Mathilde, having him duped at Marshall Ney's tomb by a 'liberal' thief, ridiculing his tears on seeing the Malmaison, and describing his great devotion as 'sa folle passion

pour Bonaparte' (II, vii, 86). Stendhal had, after all, experienced Napoleonic rule at first hand, and he knew that Julien's simple admiration for his idol was highly questionable. In the dialogue which opens Part II Falcoz expresses Julien's emotional point of view:

Ah! ne dis pas de mal de lui, s'écria Falcoz, jamais la France n'a été si haut dans l'estime des peuples que pendant les treize ans qu'il a régné.

But Saint-Giraud's argument is there to counteract the passionate reaction with a more rational political judgement:

Ton empereur, que le diable emporte . . . n'a été grand que sur ses champs de bataille, et lorsqu'il a rétabli les finances vers 1802. Que veut dire toute sa conduite depuis? Avec ses chambellans, sa pompe et ses réceptions aux Tuileries, il a donné une nouvelle édition de toutes les niaiseries monarchiques. (II, i, 8)

To sum up, at least five different political reactions are represented in this novel: Stendhal presents characters of Jacobin, liberal, ultra-monarchist persuasions; his hero subscribes for most of the book to an emotional kind of Bonapartism; and the argument of the political sceptic is also put forward. Yet the presentation of such varied political opinions is in no way conclusive as far as creator or hero is concerned, and there is no positive political symbolism to be detected. Instead Stendhal is at pains to bring the political values into conflict with qualities of a more personal, ethical kind. The political personnel of this novel forms a very different hierarchy from that which might be expected, in view of Stendhal's progressive political opinions. There exists alongside the political scale of values a moral hierarchy which is largely at odds with it. In other words, certain characters deserve another kind of credit when viewed as human beings than they do when considered from a purely political point of view.

Mme de Rênal, for example, despite her atrociously reactionary political notions, earns our total sympathy for her human qualities, for she is a fair judge of individual merit. Our first glimpse of this heroine shows her timidly opposing her husband's narrowly political bias against the liberal prison visitor with a more admirable moral argument: 'Quel mal ce monsieur de Paris peut-il faire aux prisonniers?' (I, iii, 21).

She has the magnanimity to overlook outward political or social differences and judge people on the basis of their real qualities:

Cette femme, que les bourgeois du pays disaient si hautaine, songeait rarement au rang . . . Un charretier qui eût montré de la bravoure eût été plus brave dans son esprit qu'un terrible capitaine de hussards garni de sa moustache et de sa pipe. Elle croyait l'âme de Julien plus noble que celle de tous ses cousins, tous gentilshommes de race et plusieurs d'entre eux titrés. (I, xiii, 139)

At first Julien does not realize that in matters of human relationships this woman has no political prejudices, and he imagines her to be his class-enemy: 'Elle est bonne et douce, son goût pour moi est vif, mais elle a été élevée dans le camp ennemi' (I, xvii, 164-5). Stendhal exposes the false nature of Julien's idea by describing it as 'la sotte idée d'être regardé comme un amant subalterne, à cause de sa naissance obscure' (I, xvi, 158). The hero himself eventually comes to realize his mistake: 'Elle a beau être noble, et moi le fils d'un ouvrier, elle m'aime' (I, xix, 200). Love, in other words, inspired by the moral superiority which Mme de Rênal detects in Julien's character, naturally takes precedence for her over matters of a political, social, or ideological nature. Stendhal evidently means us to admire Julien's first mistress for her human qualities: the pride of place given to her in the final lines of the novel indicates his views. Mme de Rênal's political ideas may be extremely reactionary, but in the last analysis they do not matter at all; they are completely eclipsed by her generosity; she is willing to sacrifice family, fortune, and reputation for Julien's sake, and such is the mark of a superior individual.

The marquis de La Mole too, as we have suggested, is to be admired for his intelligence, his love of gaiety, and his polite and respectful treatment of Julien. Mathilde, summing up Julien's qualities, is swayed by the attitude of her father, whose opinion she respects: 'Eh bien, mon père, homme supérieur, et qui portera loin la fortune de notre maison, respecte Julien' (II, xii, 151). The marquis's political ideas may be incredibly conservative; nevertheless Stendhal portrays him in more concrete form than he does Fouqué or Altamira, and he has a much greater influence upon Julien Sorel.

In short, it seems that Stendhal deliberately demands of his reader, and of his hero, an ability to adopt contradictory attitudes towards his characters. As John Mitchell comments:

Stendhal's narrative style appeals to the intelligence and imagination, and depends on an actively cooperative reader, prepared to crystallize around the author's clues, but to cooperate freely, to shift his areas of association, to respond now with his head, now with his heart, as and when the author shifts the nature of his appeal.²¹

By leaving in shadowy form those figures who would earn our sympathy from an ideological point of view, and forcing us instead to admire characters of the most unreasonable political persuasions, he is indicating that for him personal values are often in conflict with political ones, and that in the last analysis they are more important. By making his so-called 'plébèien révolté' susceptible at the same time to the vanity and the manners of the young évêque d'Agde, to the political idealism of Altamira, to the polite tone of M. de La Mole, and to the flamboyant precocity of the dandy Korasoff, Stendhal was deliberately discouraging his reader from taking too narrowly political a view of his characters.

An ironic intervention from Stendhal in the very first pages of the book could be interpreted as a warning against any attempt to analyze it on one simple level. The narrator is describing the plane trees on M. de Rênal's terrace:

Leur croissance rapide et leur belle verdure tirant sur le bleu, ils la doivent à la terre rapportée, que M. le maire a fait placer derrière son immense mur de soutènement, car, malgré l'opposition du conseil municipal, il a élargi la promenade de plus de six pieds (quoiqu'il soit ultra et moi libéral, je l'en loue). (I, ii, 12)

In other words, Stendhal is ironically posing as a liberal whose powers of aesthetic appreciation force him reluctantly to praise a man of opposite political leanings. Throughout the novel, the same kind of fluidity is to be detected: characters claim more or less sympathy from us, depending on the angle from which the reader, or the hero, is viewing them.

²¹ Stendhal: Le Rouge et le Noir, Studies in French Literature 22, London, 1973, Part I, p.22.

Our judgements also rely on the guidance of the narrator, whose point of view is constantly shifting. P.M. Wetherill has pointed out that there is a certain mobility, a tendency towards psychological ambiguity, which surrounds the characters of Le Rouge et le Noir:

Nous avons donc affaire à un livre où les antithèses nettes entre personnages, scènes, décors, actions sont inconcevables car ils présentent tous des contradictions internes qui assurent à l'oeuvre sa complexité et sa richesse humaines. Les contrastes sont toujours partiels, jamais schématiques.²²

The characters thus divide into different 'camps' depending on whether one judges them from an ethical or a political point of view. Clearly a purely political approach towards them fails to take account of such diversity. René Girard makes a valid point:

Pour comprendre ce romancier qui parle sans cesse politique il faut d'abord échapper aux modes de pensée politiques.²³

Musing in the condemned cell, Julien gives expression to the notion of mobility just described:

Moi seul, je sais ce que j'aurais pu faire ... Pour les autres, je ne suis tout au plus qu'un PEUT-ÊTRE. (II, xlii, 449)

He also comes to the broad conclusion that external considerations such as supposed political opinions matter little in the last resort; it is human nature which is important, and differences in class, fortune, or ideology reduce to a simple question of degree. Julien is close to making the same division of mankind into rogues and fools as Sansfin in Lamuel:²⁴

Non, les gens qu'on honore ne sont que des fripons qui ont eu le bonheur de n'être pas pris en flagrant délit. L'accusateur que la société lance après moi, a été enrichi par une infamie ... J'ai commis un assassinat et je suis justement condamné, mais, à cette seule action près, le Valenod qui m'a condamné est cent fois plus nuisible à la société. (II, xliv, 469)

22 'Note sur la thématique de "Rouge et Noir"', Stendhal Club, 15 juillet 1970, pp.297-300 (p.298).

23 Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, ch.v, p.134.

24 See our conclusion to Chapter 2.

Not the least fluid among the characters is Julien himself, and the controversy surrounding this figure has already been suggested. Pierre-Georges Castex explains the contradictions involved in the various interpretations of the hero:

On se méprend souvent sur Julien Sorel. On en fait un coeur sec, un calculateur cynique et froid. Nul pourtant n'est plus passionné que lui.²⁵

This critic's conclusion certainly seems to be corroborated by a close reading of the text; for Stendhal constantly reveals the difficulty which Julien experiences in keeping up his self-imposed role of Tartuffe. For example, the novelist makes it clear that Julien does not enjoy deceiving his friend Fouqué:

Tromperai-je mon ami, s'écria Julien avec humeur? Cet être, dont l'hypocrisie et l'absence de toute sympathie étaient les moyens ordinaires de salut, ne put cette fois supporter l'idée du plus petit manque de délicatesse envers un homme qui l'aimait. (I, xii, 129)

In the seminary Julien finds his role almost intolerable:

Quelle immense difficulté, ajoutait-il, que cette hypocrisie de chaque minute! c'est à faire pâlir les travaux d'Hercule. (I, xxvi, 309)

In fact the real Julien is full of emotions which he tries to hide; faced with the genuine friendship of Chélan, for instance, he is moved to tears:

Julien avait honte de son émotion; pour la première fois de sa vie, il se voyait aimé; il pleurait avec délices et alla cacher ses larmes dans les grands bois au-dessus de Verrières. (I, viii, 80-1)

He is never happier than when he can forget his role, with Mme de Rênal:

Après tant de contrainte et de politique habile, seul, loin des regards des hommes, et, par instinct, ne craignant point madame de Rênal, il se livrait au plaisir d'exister, si vif à cet âge, et au milieu des plus belles montagnes du monde. (I, viii, 89)

Julien's excessive ambition might be more difficult to defend, and certainly in Stendhal's day the hero was received with intense criticism. Yet again Stendhal is careful in the

²⁵ "Le Rouge et le Noir" de Stendhal, Paris, 1967, p.118.

novel to justify the intentions of his protagonist. Julien becomes a hypocrite because he feels there is no alternative for him in Restoration society:

Je sais choisir l'uniforme de mon siècle . . . Que de cardinaux nés plus bas que moi et qui ont gouverné! (II, xiii, 167)

Convinced by his Bonapartist 'education' that he would have made an excellent career for himself as a soldier, he regrets the fact that only the Church can now offer him the future he dreams of:

Moi, pauvre paysan du Jura . . . condamné à porter toujours ce triste habit noir! Hélas! vingt ans plus tôt, j'aurais porté l'uniforme comme eux! Alors un homme comme moi était tué, ou général à trente-six ans. (II, xiii, 167)

He believes his hypocrisy to be necessary, but is by no means satisfied with the course he has to take:

Hélas! c'est ma seule arme! à une autre époque, se disait-il, c'est par des actions parlantes, en face de l'ennemi, que j'aurais gagné mon pain. (I, xxvi, 302-3)

Julien's ambition, therefore, can be explained by his personal view of history. Stendhal also suggests that his hero's determination to have fame and fortune can be justified. For instance, he exposes Julien's initial reasons for wanting to make his fortune: 'Pour Julien, faire fortune, c'était d'abord sortir de Verrières; il abhorrait sa patrie' (I, v, 43). He also points out that Julien desires not mere material recognition, but the proper fulfilment of his talents, in which he has a justifiable faith. He has an 'aristocratic' disdain for money, and this, in view of his humble means, ennobles him in his creator's eyes. For example, Stendhal reveals the extreme difference between Julien and M. de Rênal when the hero leaves Verrières:

M. de Rênal fut bien heureux; au moment fatal d'accepter de l'argent de lui, ce sacrifice se trouva trop fort pour Julien. Il refusa net. (I, xxiii, 274)

In the draft of an article on the novel which Stendhal intended his friend Vincenzo Salvagnoli to translate and publish in Italy, he is quite explicit about Julien's noble attitude towards wealth:

Julien, pauvre précepteur à 400 francs de gages, tient moins à gagner de l'argent que M. de Rênal qui a 30.000 livres de rente. (1832)²⁶

The hero's ambition is based rather on an instinctive need to reach self-fulfilment; driven to despair in the seminary, Julien almost decides to give up his schemes to do well in a religious career:

Ce moment fut le plus éprouvant de sa vie. Il lui était si facile de s'engager dans un des beaux régiments en garnison à Besançon! Il pouvait se faire maître de latin; il lui fallait si peu pour sa subsistance! Mais alors plus de carrière, plus d'avenir pour son imagination: c'était mourir. (I, xxvii, 320)

Mme de Rênal, as we have seen, has such faith in Julien's talents that she can imagine him as Pope or politician, and she finds his ambition natural: 'Loin de moi, Julien va retomber dans ses projets d'ambition si naturels quand on n'a rien' (I, xxiii, 269). Stendhal himself suggests that Julien's desire for self-fulfilment is the mark of a man of superior talents:

Sous nos cieux plus sombres, un jeune homme pauvre, et qui n'est qu'ambitieux parce que la délicatesse de son coeur lui fait un besoin de quelques-unes des jouissances que donne l'argent, voit tous les jours une femme de trente ans ... (I, vii, 68)

Mais le voyageur qui vient de gravir une montagne rapide s'assied au sommet, et trouve un plaisir parfait à se reposer. Serait-il heureux, si on le forçait à se reposer toujours? (I, xxiii, 266)

Not only is Julien's ambition to be regarded as natural in view of his character and circumstances, but it is also to be seen as partial. In other words, despite his constant references to Napoleon's career and his attempts to follow his idol's rise to fame and fortune, there are times when Julien's ambition becomes almost non-existent for him. If the hero's love for Mme de Rênal is at first tainted by his pride at having triumphed over class barriers — 'Son amour était encore de l'ambition: c'était de la joie de posséder, lui pauvre être si malheureux et si méprisé, une femme aussi noble et aussi belle' (I, xvi, 159-60) — he soon forgets his acute sense of his own lowly position and gives himself over to the pleasure of loving:

Souvent la sincère admiration et les transports de sa maîtresse lui faisaient oublier la vaine théorie qui l'avait rendu si compassé et presque si ridicule dans les premiers moments de cette liaison. (I, xvi, 160-1)

In the same way he views his second mistress at first as a conquest:

Je l'emporte sur le marquis de Croisenois . . . Oui, se disait-il avec une volupté infinie . . . nos mérites, au marquis et à moi, ont été pesés, et le pauvre charpentier du Jura l'emporte. (II, xiii, 165-6)

But in due course the love-affair which ought to have served and encouraged his ambition ends up by paralysing Julien completely:

Toute pensée étrangère à mademoiselle de La Mole lui était devenue odieuse; il était incapable d'écrire les lettres les plus simples. (II, xviii, 216)

Penser à ce qui n'avait pas quelque rapport à mademoiselle de La Mole était hors de sa puissance. L'ambition, les simples succès de vanité le distraient autrefois des sentiments que madame de Rênal lui avait inspirés. Mathilde avait tout absorbé; il la trouvait partout dans l'avenir. (II, xxiv, 284)

Even the prospect of becoming a bishop through the influence of the marquis or Mme de Fervaques no longer attracts Julien in his new emotional state:

Julien pouvait espérer un évêché, si M. de La Mole arrivait au ministère; mais, à ses yeux, tous ces grands intérêts s'étaient comme recouverts d'un voile. (II, xxv, 302) Ainsi l'idée d'évêché était pour la première fois mêlée avec celle de Julien dans la tête d'une femme qui, tôt ou tard, devait distribuer les plus belles places de l'Église de France. Cet avantage n'eût guère touché Julien; en cet instant, sa pensée ne s'élevait à rien d'étranger à son malheur actuel. (II, xxvii, 311)

Julien's sensibility, his capacity for experiencing the strongest emotions, naturally supersedes his ambitions in society when he falls in love.

Despite his ambition, therefore, and despite his hypocrisy, Julien Sorel is intended to appear as a superior human being: his courage, energy, honesty and sensibility are continually being stressed. Stendhal suggests Julien's moral superiority in several ways. Firstly, Julien's sense of his own superior character — 'Si je veux être estimé et 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 lieus de leur insolence et placé dans une sphère trop haute pour être atteint par leurs petites marques de dédain ou de faveur' (I, xii, 123) — is reinforced by the attitude of most of the other figures

in the novel. Mme de Rênal, for example, realizes that Julien is an exception in her salon: 'La générosité, la noblesse d'âme, l'humanité lui semblèrent peu à peu n'exister que chez ce jeune abbé' (I, vii, 67). The two likeable clerics in the novel, Chélan and Pirard, both protect and befriend Julien, and M. de La Mole chooses him, in preference to his own son, to take the summary of the political discussion to the unnamed foreign statesman. Mathilde singles Julien out as being superior to the effete, bored, listless young aristocrats who frequent her mother's salon. On discovering that she is pregnant, she reminds her father of his own respect for Julien, and she never regrets her choice of lover:

Elle passait sa vie à s'exagérer la haute prudence qu'elle avait montrée en liant son sort à celui d'un homme supérieur. Le mérite personnel était à la mode dans sa tête. (II, xxxiv, 369)

Symbolic of their feeling that Julien has superior talents is the ease with which the other characters in the novel can believe that he must be the illegitimate son of some great nobleman. The chevalier de Beauvoisis, for instance, disappointed to learn that he has just fought a duel with a mere secretary, has no difficulty in passing his opponent off as the son of a Paris nobleman. The marquis himself indulges in a similar game:

Permettez, mon cher Sorel, que je vous fasse cadeau d'un habit bleu: quand il vous conviendra de le prendre et de venir chez moi, vous serez, à mes yeux, le frère cadet du comte de Retz. (II, vii, 80)

Even the severe Pirard suggests that Julien's pride and nobility of soul may be due to an unknown noble birth, for he tells the marquis:

On le dit fils d'un charpentier de nos montagnes, mais je le croirais plutôt fils naturel de quelque homme riche . . . ce jeune homme quoique né bien bas a le coeur haut, il ne sera d'aucune utilité dans vos affaires si l'on effarouche son orgueil. (I, xxx, 364-5)

On becoming chevalier de La Vernaye Julien himself is tempted to put faith in the myth:

Serait-il bien possible, se disait-il, que je fusse le fils naturel de quelque grand seigneur exilé dans nos montagnes par le terrible Napoléon? A chaque instant, cette idée lui semblait moins improbable. (II, xxxv, 379)

Finally, Stendhal also states explicitly his own view of Julien's superiority. Having shown some sympathy towards M. de Rênal's plight on receiving an anonymous letter, Stendhal nevertheless makes it clear that there can be no comparison with Julien:

Mais laissons ce petit homme à ses petites craintes; pourquoi a-t-il pris dans sa maison un homme de coeur, tandis qu'il lui fallait l'âme d'un valet? (I, xxiii, 255)

In mock humility he suggests that Julien's emotion on hearing the cathedral bells at Besançon denotes at best the mark of the artist's soul (I, xxviii, 332). Significantly too, Stendhal's very last intervention in the novel is made in praise of Julien:

Il était encore bien jeune; mais, suivant moi, ce fut une belle plante. Au lieu de marcher du tendre au rusé, comme la plupart des hommes, l'âge lui eût donné la bonté facile à s'attendrir. (II, xxxvii, 403)

Indeed it can be argued that it is Julien's moral superiority and human qualities which in fact alienate him in the society he faces, and not the combination of humble birth, ambition, and education. Critics like Louis Aragon who turn Julien into the representative of the lower classes and regard his revolt as reflecting Stendhal's own attack on Restoration society can therefore be refuted. Julien himself certainly looks upon society as his enemy, and he identifies with the downtrodden poor of Verrières at whose expense he believes Valenod to be living in luxury:

Quel respect bas pour un homme qui évidemment a doublé et triplé sa fortune, depuis qu'il administre le bien des pauvres! je parierais qu'il gagne même sur les fonds destinés aux enfants trouvés . . . Ah! monstres! monstres! Et moi aussi, je suis une sorte d'enfant trouvé, hai de mon père, de mes frères, de toute ma famille. (I, vii, 62)

He is continually regarding the other characters as enemies, but Stendhal shows that his hero is waging a false class war. Julien persists in seeing Mme de Rênal in terms of the class barrier; yet Stendhal makes it clear to the reader from the beginning that his heroine rarely considers her noble birth:

L'éloignement qu'elle avait pour ce qu'à Verrières on appelle de la joie, lui avait valu la réputation d'être très fière de sa naissance. Elle n'y songeait pas. (I, iii, 23-4)

The hero makes a similar mistake with Mathilde, believing that

he has triumphed over her despite the immense obstacle of his humble social position; in fact the reader knows that Mathilde's greatest attraction to Julien lies precisely in the difference of class between them:

Il y a déjà de la grandeur et de l'audace à oser aimer un homme placé si loin de moi par la position sociale. (II, xi, 144)

Si, avec sa pauvreté, Julien était noble, mon amour ne serait qu'une sottise vulgaire. . . il n'aurait point ce qui caractérise les grandes passions: l'immensité de la difficulté à vaincre et la noire incertitude de l'événement. (II, xii, 148)

Julien's class-consciousness is shown by Stendhal to be based on a false view of himself and others. The hero's description of himself at the trial does not give a true picture of his position. Never at any time does he consciously represent a social class; it is simply not true to say that he is persecuted because he is a poor provincial who has found fortune and nobility in Paris, or that he is hated for his ascent in society. On the contrary, M. de La Vernaye would have commanded the respect of his jurors, for he had only achieved what everyone else was attempting to do. Again, Julien is wrong when he claims:

Voilà mon crime, messieurs, et il sera puni avec d'autant plus de sévérité, que, dans le fait, je ne suis point jugé par mes pairs. Je ne vois point sur les bancs des jurés quelque paysan enrichi, mais uniquement des bourgeois indignés. (II, xli, 441)

After all, his rise to fortune is outwardly little different from that of Valenod, and the origins of this newly made 'baron' are in fact as obscure as those of Julien himself:

Le père de M. Valenod ne lui avait pas laissé six cents livres de rente. Il avait fallu passer pour lui de la pitié pour le mauvais habit vert-pomme que tout le monde lui avait connu dans sa jeunesse, à l'envie pour ses chevaux normands, pour ses chaînes d'or, pour ses habits venus de Paris, pour toute sa prospérité actuelle. (I, xxii, 246)

M. de Rênal, indicating the letter he presumes to have come from Valenod, also reveals the impecunious beginnings of the latter's career:

Je veux la porter au Casino, montrer à tous qu'elle est de cet infâme Valenod, que j'ai pris à la besace, pour en faire un des plus riches bourgeois de Verrières. (I, xxiii, 271)

Frilair, who is the head of the congregation network for the

region when we first meet him and almost a bishop at the end, has similar origins to those of Valenod or Julien:

M. l'abbé de Frilair était arrivé à Besançon avec un portemanteau des plus exigus, lequel, suivant la chronique, contenait toute sa fortune. Il se trouvait maintenant l'un des plus riches propriétaires du département. (I, xxix, 345)

There is thus ample evidence in the novel that Julien's humble birth and poverty need not present barriers to the fulfilment of his ambitions; indeed, Stendhal suggests that such a rise to fortune as that of Valenod is quite normal in Restoration France, for he entitles the chapter in which this character's origins are described: 'Façons d'agir en 1830'.

It is not Julien's social or political position, therefore, which alienates him in this society of Rênals and Valenods, but his character. In Stendhal's view Julien displays characteristics which are regrettably no longer an advantage in France. While writing Lucien Leuwen, for example, he revealed his opinion of Julien: 'Quel caractère a Lucien? Non pas certes l'énergie et l'originalité de Julien' (1835).²⁷ In a letter to Sophie Duvaucel in January 1831 he described his novel as 'ce plaidoyer contre la politesse qui use la force du vouloir'.²⁸ Clearly these were qualities which he could rarely discover in nineteenth-century French society, for in 1829 he wrote: 'De nos jours, on a trouvé le secret d'être fort brave sans énergie ni caractère. Personne ne sait vouloir'.²⁹ In Le Rouge et le Noir itself Stendhal hints that it is Julien's superior talents which present society is rejecting:

C'est, selon moi, l'un des plus beaux traits de son caractère; un être capable d'un tel effort sur lui-même peut aller loin, si fata sinant. (II, xxxi, 340)

The times, however, are more favourable to the vile, hypocritical behaviour of Valenod or Frilair than to Julien's sensibility and energy. In short, disparities of social class or

²⁷ Lucien Leuwen, IV, p.447.

²⁸ Correspondance, II, p.221.

²⁹ Promenades dans Rome, II, p.24.

political leanings are less significant in this novel than those involving personal values.

Julien is too different from the nineteenth-century norm to be accepted or to succeed in society without losing the superiority which differentiates him. The first person to stand in his way is, after all, his own father, who is relatively rich;³⁰ and Stendhal suggests at the outset that père Sorel hates his son because he is different from the rest of the family not just in physical stature but also in passions:

Il eût peut-être pardonné à Julien sa taille mince, peu propre aux travaux de force, et si différente de celle de ses aînés; mais cette manie de lecture lui était odieuse, il ne savait pas lire lui-même. (I, iv, 30)

Julien's character also isolates him in M. de Rênal's society:

La position morale où il avait été toute sa vie se renouvelait chez M. le maire de Verrières. Là, comme à la scierie de son père, il méprisait profondément les gens avec qui il vivait, et en était hai. Il voyait chaque jour dans les récits faits par le sous-préfet, par M. Valenod, par les autres de la maison . . . combien leurs idées ressemblaient peu à la réalité. Une action lui semblait-elle admirable? c'était celle-là précisément qui attirait le blâme des gens qui l'environnaient. (I, vii, 74)

In the seminary Julien is hated, despite great efforts to be as hypocritical as the rest, because he is different:

Eh bien, j'ai assez vécu pour voir que différence engendre haine. (I, xxvii, 320)

Julien avait beau se faire petit et sot, il ne pouvait plaire, il était trop différent. (I, xxviii, 325)

Pirard realizes that Julien is too different from the majority to be liked: 'Ta carrière sera pénible. Je vois en toi quelque chose qui offense le vulgaire' (I, xxix, 338). Throughout the novel there is tension between Julien and the characters he has to deal with. He constantly disdains the methods of 'le vulgaire', but at the same time the latter group will never understand his motives. Stendhal comments on Julien's hatred of the seminarists:

³⁰ Chélan, for example, describes Julien as 'fils d'un charpentier riche, mais qui ne lui donne rien' (I, xxv, 294).

Par une fatalité du caractère de Julien, l'insolence de ces êtres grossiers lui avait fait beaucoup de peine; leur bassesse lui causa du dégoût. (I, xxix, 357)

While awaiting trial, Julien realizes that his crime will be generally misunderstood:

Pour le commun des hommes, je serai un assassin vulgaire.
(II, xxxvi, 390)

Ma mort n'a rien de honteux que l'instrument: cela seul, il est vrai, suffit richement pour ma honte aux yeux des bourgeois de Verrières; mais sous le rapport intellectuel, quoi de plus méprisable! Il me reste un moyen d'être considérable à leurs yeux: c'est de jeter au peuple des pièces d'or en allant au supplice. Ma mémoire, liée à l'idée de l'or, sera resplendissante pour eux. (II, xxxvi, 392)

He understands too that society has kept its prizes for the vulgar majority and that his nobility of soul has alienated him:

Quel triomphe pour les Valenod et pour tous les plats hypocrites qui règnent à Verrières! Ils sont bien grands en France, ils réunissent tous les avantages sociaux. Jusqu'ici je pouvais au moins me dire: Ils reçoivent de l'argent, il est vrai, tous les honneurs s'accumulent sur eux, mais moi j'ai la noblesse du coeur. (II, xliv, 466)

It is revealing to examine Julien's crime from the point of view of his moral alienation. For if one takes into account Julien's strong sense of his own superiority, his desire to be seen to be different from the vast majority of men, then his crime is a logical conclusion to the chain of events which precedes it. Critics have differed greatly in their interpretations of Julien's attempted assassination of Mme de Rênal, as we have noted. Several writers have dismissed the incident as being unmotivated and out of keeping with Julien's ambitious character. Having achieved his dreams of fortune and nobility, they say, he was unlikely to jeopardize his future because of a mere slight on his honour. Henri Martineau, taking exception to Faguet's dismissal of the crime as madness, tries to justify it on the grounds that 'étant donné le caractère ardent de Julien Sorel, toujours prêt à passer de la méditation à l'acte, tout le prédisposait au crime passionnel'.³¹ Claude Liprandi, for his part, seizing on a remark made by Stendhal to his novelist friend Jules Gauthier about rendering her hero human

³¹ L'Oeuvre de Stendhal, Paris, 1945, ch.xxii, p.346.

by giving him some flaws, claims:

Selon nous, il faut voir que le crime de Julien est une gaucherie de héros, folle et impulsive, imprudente et généreuse, ardente et passionnée, nécessaire et inévitable.³²

More recently critics have begun to justify the crime on the grounds that Julien has to take revenge on the stain on his honour created by Mme de Rênal's letter to M. de La Mole.

For example, F.W.J. Hemmings wrote:

His motives were not ignoble, or not as ignoble as the letter suggests; but who will believe him, when the motives attributed to him are so plausible? . . . With absolute logic, Julien chooses the only course which can efface this suspicion, because it is the very last course of action that would be expected of an ambitious schemer . . . It is an act of self-justification.³³

Michael Wood is another critic who takes this view:

It confronts him with a view of his life which is false enough to be denied, but true enough to hurt. It [the letter] confronts him with his own bewildered purposes, with the uncertain self he has been evading throughout the book, the unknown moral centre he has papered over with plans.³⁴

Such a conclusion does impose itself if one considers that it is Julien's moral superiority which matters most, and not his ambition or his false sense of class-consciousness.

Stendhal deliberately avoids making his aims explicit as regards Julien's crime, since this event must take its place in the general lack of definition which surrounds all the characters and episodes in the book. He does, however, suggest that the various explanations put forward in the novel itself are best interpreted as at most half-truths. Julien's lawyer, for instance, applying his formal knowledge to a case which Stendhal obviously believes to be an exception, sees Julien's motive as jealousy:

L'avocat, homme de règle et de formalités, le croyait fou et pensait avec le public que c'était la jalousie qui lui avait mis le pistolet à la main. (II, xl, 426)

³² L'Affaire Lafargue et le Rouge et le Noir, Lausanne, 1961, ch.xiii, p.268.

³³ Stendhal: a Study of his Novels, ch.iv, pp.126-7.

³⁴ Stendhal, London, 1971, Part I, ch.vi, p.75.

Julien himself does not guide the reader to any definite answer to his crime; considering Mme de Rênal, he says:

Après une telle action, comment lui persuader que je l'aime uniquement? car enfin, j'ai voulu la tuer par ambition ou par amour pour Mathilde. (II, xlii, 445)

Yet he contradicts himself, for he also claims that money (or ambition) had nothing to do with the attempted murder: 'Mon crime n'ayant point l'argent pour moteur ne sera point dés-honorant' (II, xxxix, 423). Nor does it seem that love for Mathilde inspired the crime, since he often insists on vengeance as the motive:

J'ai donné la mort avec préméditation . . . Je me suis vengé . . . J'ai été offensé d'une manière atroce; j'ai tué, je mérite la mort, mais voilà tout. Je meurs après avoir soldé mon compte envers l'humanité. (II, xxxvi, 389-92)

This last remark suggests that Julien has sought revenge, not on Mme de Rênal for having made him out to be a base seducer of rich women, but rather on the kind of society which has forced him to appear other than he really is. By shooting Mme de Rênal he is reestablishing the moral supremacy which he knows is rightfully his and which his success in a venal society has threatened to remove. Once again it is a question of personal values, and this is why Julien rejects the various escape clauses offered him in prison. His sensibility prevents him from bribing the vulgar gaoler Noiroud; he refuses, as we have seen, to allow Valenod and company to mock his emotions and therefore attacks his jurors in the name of politics; he also rejects the opportunity offered by his confessor to make a spectacular religious conversion; and finally he exorts Mme de Rênal not to make a fool of them by seeking clemency from Charles X. His argument against conversion is significant: 'Et que me restera-t-il, répondit froidement Julien, si je me méprise moi-même?' (II, xlv, 480).

Viewed from the standpoint of personal values, therefore, Julien's crime seems reasonable enough, and indeed is crucial for an understanding of his nature. Julien is an outsider in nineteenth-century society; it is only his false sense of history and class which allows him to progress at all, and eventually Stendhal brings him to realize his own mistakes. Julien's true character is thus incompatible with the moral

climate of France as Stendhal saw it. The novelist registered the fact in the only way open to him: he made Julien commit a crime, thereby placing him voluntarily outside society. Ironically, those critics who accuse Stendhal of having adopted the ready-made ending to the real life Berthet story on the grounds that he had run out of ideas seem to have turned Stendhal's intentions upside down. If the novelist wrote La Chartreuse de Parme with Sandrino's death in mind,³⁵ it is equally probable that he wrote Le Rouge et le Noir with Antoine Berthet's execution firmly at the centre of his plans.

It is fairly clear that the interpretation of the novel as a Jacobin attack on the reactionary politics of the Restoration fails to take account of Stendhal's purposes. Julien Sorel is not principally a political figure calling for rebellion against privilege and wealth. Stendhal's views on post-1789 France have already been examined, and it is evident that in his opinion the reforms of the revolutionary period had changed the political and social structure of France and destroyed privilege. René Girard sums up the novelist's view of the Restoration:

Stendhal trouve la Restauration révoltante mais ce n'est pas parce qu'il y voit un simple 'retour à l'Ancien Régime'. Un tel retour est impensable. La Charte de Louis XVIII est d'ailleurs un progrès vers la démocratie, le premier 'depuis 1792'. L'interprétation courante du Rouge et le Noir n'est donc pas admissible. Le roman revendicateur et jacobin que décrivent les manuels de littérature n'existe pas.³⁶

Stendhal himself makes this very point in his projected article on the novel, insisting that he is interested in giving a moral rather than a political picture of Restoration France:

Tout est changé du tout au tout en France . . . La France morale est ignorée à l'étranger. Voilà pourquoi, avant d'en venir au roman de M. de S[tendhal], il a fallu dire que rien ne ressemble moins à la France gaie, amusante, un peu libertine, qui de 1715 à 1789 fut le modèle

³⁵ Journal Littéraire, III, p.210.

³⁶ Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque, ch.v, p.134.

de l'Europe, que la France grave, morale, morose que nous ont léguée les jésuites, les congrégations et le gouvernement des Bourbons de 1814 à 1830.³⁷

Another pointer to the fact that this novel can be most fruitfully interpreted when one escapes from the temptation to impose a logical political meaning on it is the confused internal chronology. Henri Martineau has established beyond question that the writing of the novel dated from 25/26 October 1829, when Stendhal first conceived the idea, to 15 November 1830, when it was published. When Stendhal finished the book, therefore, France was already in the fourth month of the new regime, since the July Revolution had dethroned Charles X. If Stendhal took a year to write it, however, Julien Sorel's experiences cover a greater length of time than that. Because of certain references to contemporary events -- the premiere of Hernani and the allusion to Algiers are particularly pertinent examples -- critics have been able to estimate that Julien's execution ought to take place well into 1831. Yet there is no reference to the change of regime; indeed, as we have noted, Mme de Rênal considers begging for clemency from Charles X. Michel Baumont explains the consequences of this strange omission to refer to July 1830:

A partir du chapitre XVII [of Part II] nous sommes plongés dans les anachronismes puisque Stendhal continue à ligoter la France dans les liens de la Congrégation après l'avènement de Louis-Philippe.³⁸

He also realizes that from a political or social point of view Julien's career would have been very different had he lived through the July Revolution. Instead of being 'persecuted' by M. de La Mole and Mme de Rênal's letter, he would have joined forces with the liberals, and the marquis would have retreated with his fellow nobles into provincial exile. If above all Stendhal wanted Julien's execution under the Restoration, he need only have erased the references to Hernani and Algiers. Critics have accused Stendhal of carelessness,

37 Mélanges, V, pp.28-32.

38 'La Dernière Année de Julien Sorel', Stendhal Club, 15 juillet 1966, pp.346-52 (p.348).

or of attempting to pretend that his book had been written before the revolution, in order to avoid drastic changes. But if one goes beyond the political context, the confusion can be explained. The fact is that Stendhal had come, as we have seen in Part I, to a fairly fixed view of France in the 1820s; he saw the first quarter of the century as setting the scene for many years to come, and had no faith at all in the moral future of his country. Even after July 1830, therefore, he believed there would be no place for individuals with energy and passion; hypocrisy and base self-seeking would still be the secrets of success. In other words, if Julien's political situation would have been changed by the July Revolution, his personal position would have remained the same. Above all Stendhal saw him as a character isolated and alienated in nineteenth-century society. There is no place for him in either Restoration or July Monarchy France, so why bother registering the political change? Julien's execution is needed as a symbol of his inability to come to terms with life in the nineteenth century rather than as a means of arguing a class case, and Stendhal was getting the best of both worlds by leaving his denouement in the days of the Restoration. The author himself suggests that his conception of Julien is moral rather than political in a letter to Sophie Duvaucel in April 1831: 'La forme de notre civilisation exclut les grands mouvements, tout ce qui ressemble à la passion'.³⁹ In his Projet d'article sur le Rouge et le Noir he claims to have painted a picture of French society during the first third of the century, thereby hinting that the change of government in July 1830 has in no way altered his views:

Personne non plus n'avait peint avec quelques soins les mœurs données aux Français par les divers gouvernements qui ont pesé sur eux pendant le premier tiers du XIXe siècle.⁴⁰

³⁹ Correspondance, II, p.281.

⁴⁰ Mélanges, V, p.45.

But such an analysis still does not take account of the diversity in this novel, for it is not only Julien's false notions of history or class nor his self-imposed role of hypocrisy which blur the outlines of his character and lead critics to take such a variety of standpoints for or against him. Stendhal's own conflicting attitudes towards his creation contribute largely to the controversy. This process is to be found within the novel itself, in the form of Stendhal's frequent interventions, and after the publication, in his correspondence with friends.

If Stendhal's interventions are often made in order to guide the reader to an understanding of Julien's superiority, nevertheless the author's attitude towards his hero is not uncompromising. He often takes a superior attitude to his protagonist, reminding the reader that Julien is young, oversensitive, and excessively distrustful. The author steps in on several occasions to correct or modify his hero's views. For example, he accuses Julien of banality:

On ne peut aimer sans égalité ... et tout son esprit se perdit à faire des lieux communs sur l'égalité. (I, xiv, 146-7)

He derides his hero's occasional capacity for unthinking admiration:

Julien était stupéfait d'admiration pour une si belle cérémonie. (I, xviii, 185)
Pour lui, il arriva séduit, admirant et presque timide à force d'émotion, dans le premier des salons où l'on dansait. (II, viii, 97)
Julien le suivit [Korasoff], rempli d'une admiration stupide. (II, xxiv, 286)

He exposes Julien's mistakes of judgement:

Toutes les premières démarches de notre héros qui se croyait si prudent furent, comme le choix d'un confesseur, des étourderies. Égaré par toute la présomption d'un homme à imagination, il prenait ses intentions pour des faits, et se croyait un hypocrite consommé. Sa folie allait jusqu'à se reprocher ses succès dans cet art de la faiblesse. (I, xxvi, 302)
Voilà un bon acteur, pensa Julien. Il se trompait, toujours comme à l'ordinaire, en supposant trop d'esprit aux gens. (II, xxiii, 272)

But there are degrees of irony in the novel, and Stendhal's sarcasm at the expense of his hero is of a far gentler nature than his treatment of Rênal, Valenod, and other vulgar figures.

On occasion, therefore, his irony is double-edged, and aims at deflating those who do not share Julien's qualities. When Stendhal ridicules his hero's provincial timidity in Besançon, for instance, he is really criticizing the over-confidence of Parisian youth and their vulgarity:

Quelle pitié notre provincial ne va-t-il pas inspirer aux jeunes lycéens de Paris, qui, à quinze ans, savent déjà entrer dans un café d'un air si distingué? Mais ces enfants, si bien stylés à quinze ans, à dix-huit tournent au commun. (I, xxiv, 279)

Even so the complexity of Stendhal's irony remains to be fully explained, for his tendency to intervene often has its roots in his irresistible desire to include himself in his own fiction. Georges Blin, in his study of the novels, makes this sensible point:

Comme homme, assurément, romancier de lui-même; comme romancier, si conscient de ne pas être épuisé dans sa substance d'homme par ses mandataires, que, à tout propos, il leur reprend, par "intrusion", le soin de le représenter.⁴¹

Stendhal takes a superior attitude towards Julien's inexperience as a lover, for example, and the interventions suggest that he could do better. He gives worldly advice about his hero's affair with Mme de Rênal:

Si Julien avait eu un peu de l'adresse qu'il se supposait si gratuitement, il eût pu s'applaudir le lendemain de l'effet produit par son voyage. (I, xv, 149)
Il fallait avoir le courage de livrer bataille, mais sur-le-champ. (I, xvii, 165)

The same technique reappears during Julien's liaison with Mlle de La Mole:

On voit que Julien n'avait aucune expérience de la vie, il n'avait pas même lu de romans; s'il eût été un peu moins gauche . . . Peut-être eût-elle été heureuse d'être devinée. (II, xviii, 213-14)
A ce coup terrible, éperdu d'amour et de malheur, Julien essaya de se justifier. Rien de plus absurde. Se justifie-t-on de déplaire? (II, xx, 239)

But this stance of worldly wisdom in matters of the heart acquires a particular savour when one considers that Stendhal

⁴¹ Stendhal et les problèmes du roman, Paris, 1954, p.339.

himself was deceived again and again by his mistresses, that he used, unsuccessfully, the very strategy which makes Julien ridiculous, and that his letters to Matilde in particular are full of vain attempts to justify himself. In short, Stendhal's fiction has a purgative influence on the novelist himself; but it can also be compensatory. It is interesting to note, for example, that he sometimes allows Julien to succeed where he himself has failed: his hero's tactic of absenting himself from Paris in order to render Mathilde jealous works well, whereas Stendhal's use of the same technique led more often than not to disaster.

Stendhal's irony at Julien's provincialism is also complex. He ridicules his hero's admiration for the architecture of the Hôtel de La Mole:

Quelle architecture magnifique! dit-il à son ami. Il s'agissait d'un de ces hôtels à façade si plate du faubourg Saint-Germain, bâtis vers le temps de la mort de Voltaire. Jamais la mode et le beau n'ont été si loin l'un de l'autre. (II, i, 19)
Les salons que ces messieurs traversèrent au premier étage, avant d'arriver au cabinet du marquis, vous eussent semblé, ô mon lecteur, aussi tristes que magnifiques. On vous les donnerait tels qu'ils sont, que vous refuseriez de les habiter; c'est la patrie du baillement et du raisonnement triste. Ils redoublèrent l'enchantement de Julien.
(II, ii, 22)

Stendhal obviously enjoyed posing as the man of the world in matters of taste and architecture. But if one refers back to Beyle's youth, to his uneasy first days in Paris in the company of his polished cousins, Pierre and Martial Daru, such interventions take on a different aspect. Stendhal was really being defensive about his own youthful enthusiasm and naivety, as well as purging them. For if he begins by ridiculing Julien's provincialism, he later joins his hero in a different standpoint:

Dès qu'il cessait de travailler, il était en proie à un ennui mortel; c'est l'effet desséchant de la politesse admirable, mais si mesurée, si parfaitement graduée, suivant les positions, qui distingue la haute société. Un coeur un peu sensible voit l'artifice. (II, v, 63)
La politesse toute seule n'est quelque chose par elle-même que les premiers jours. Julien l'éprouvait; après le premier enchantement, le premier étonnement: La politesse, se disait-il, n'est que l'absence de la colère que donneraient les mauvaises manières. (II, xi, 140)

Flitting to yet another pose, Stendhal sometimes directs an ironic statement against his presumed readers and no doubt also against himself. For example:

Mais de tels salons ne sont bons à voir que quand on sollicite. Tout l'ennui de cette vie sans intérêt que menait Julien est sans doute partagé par le lecteur. Ce sont là les landes de notre voyage. (II, xxviii, 320)

Feeling humiliated probably at having to seek influence with the aristocracy in order to secure a post, for Stendhal was, it will be remembered, in a most impecunious position when he wrote this novel, he seems to exact revenge by taking a superior tone with regard to their boredom and superficial politeness. He is not so self-deluding, however, as to ignore his own dual attitude in the matter, and thus the irony is double edged.

Stendhal's habit of intervening, and the variety of poses which he adopts, contribute to the general lack of definition surrounding characters and events, and make interpretation of the novel extremely difficult. Often his interventions have the task of guiding the reader to a correct assessment of Julien's superiority; they are to be seen as signposts. Sometimes he simply cannot resist commenting on episodes in order to purge his own emotions, past or present, or to take revenge on a society in which he does not feel at home. On some occasions, however, Stendhal's interventions mean to attract the reader's attention to the necessary ambiguity involved in making any judgement at all.

In his two attempts at autobiography Stendhal reveals his views on the difficulty, or even impossibility, of achieving truthfulness in his judgements. The Souvenirs d'égotisme, written in 1832, begin with a series of questions:

Quel homme suis-je? Ai-je du bon sens, ai-je du bon sens avec profondeur? Ai-je un esprit remarquable? En vérité, je n'en sais rien. Ému par ce qui m'arrive au jour le jour, je pense rarement à ces questions fondamentales, et alors mes jugements varient comme mon humeur. Mes jugements ne sont que des aperçus.⁴²

La Vie de Henry Brulard, begun three years later, displays the same doubtful self-questioning: 'Qu'ai-je été? que suis-je? En vérité, je serais bien embarrassé de le dire'.⁴³ 'Mes jugements ne sont que des aperçus': this capital comment can explain much of the ambiguity in Le Rouge et le Noir, where Stendhal is intent on demonstrating to reader, hero, and author alike how unreliable human judgements necessarily are. By his irony and by his constant use of conditionals, Stendhal is warning us that any opinion is open to question. He often casts doubt on the interpretation of Julien's motives, for instance:

Pour lui, il n'éprouvait que haine et horreur pour la haute société où il était admis, à la vérité au bas bout de la table, ce qui explique peut-être la haine et l'horreur. L'émotion et la terreur de Julien étaient telles qu'il lui semblait être sur le point de tomber. Un philosophe eût dit, peut-être en se trompant: C'est la violente impression du laid sur une âme faite pour aimer ce qui est beau.⁴⁴

At all times, it seems, Stendhal is aware of the disparity between appearance and reality. He reveals, for example, the real nobility of soul in Pirard, which the public cannot understand:

Le vulgaire, aveuglé par l'amour de l'argent, n'était pas fait pour comprendre que c'était dans sa sincérité que l'abbé Pirard avait trouvé la force nécessaire pour lutter seul pendant six ans. (I, xxix, 359)

Throughout the novel Julien suffers from the misunderstanding of other characters. Expecting an apology from M. de Rênal on one occasion, he receives only a reluctant offer of money (I, x, 109). Mme de Rênal's letter makes Julien aware of the false opinion which others have formed of him, and throughout his imprisonment he is concerned mainly with seeming to be what he really is:

L'excès de mon désespoir et de mon repentir eût passé, aux yeux des Valenod et de tous les patriciens du pays, pour l'ignoble peur de la mort; ils sont si fiers, ces coeurs faibles que leur position pécuniaire met au-dessus

⁴³ I, i, 4.

⁴⁴ Le Rouge et le Noir, I, ch.vii, p.61; ch.xxv, p.291. We underline.

des tentations! Voyez ce que c'est, auraient dit MM. de Moirod et de Cholin, qui viennent de me condamner à mort, que de naître fils d'un charpentier! On peut devenir savant, adroit, mais le coeur! ... le coeur ne s'apprend pas. (II, xlii, 449)

Julien concludes that he too has been taken in by appearances:

A mesure que j'aurais été moins dupe des apparences, se disait-il, j'aurais vu que les salons de Paris sont peuplés d'honnêtes gens tels que mon père, ou de coquins habiles tels que ces galériens. (II, xliv, 468)

It is revealing to note that Stendhal stops intervening altogether before Julien's trial; thereafter it is the hero himself, with his constant musing about his own motives and those of others, who reflects for his author the ambiguous nature of all the opinions and values he had hitherto believed to be fixed.

The controversial nature of Le Rouge et le Noir can thus be explained to some extent by Stendhal's belief in the impossibility of imposing fixed interpretations upon the actions and attitudes of any character. In particular he was convinced that in the days of Restoration France the disparity between appearance and reality was both greater, since hypocrisy was being so widely practised, and more difficult to discern, precisely because there were so many past-masters of the art. Hence the variety of standpoints which he adopts in the novel. He is determined above all not to be duped. Yet one more consideration plays a part in the confusion and complexity generated by this novel, and that is Stendhal's attitude towards Le Rouge et le Noir after its publication.

In letters to friends after the appearance of the novel Stendhal seems to give a picture of his intentions which is at odds with the moral interpretation which we have suggested. He admits, for example, that Julien Sorel is an ambitious, calculating character, even a 'coquin'; and he also suggests on one occasion that the Julien Sorels of France are bound to desire the removal of the ineffectual people in power:

Comment voulez-vous que deux cent mille Julien Sorel qui peuplent la France, et qui ont l'exemple de l'avancement du tambour duc de Bellune, du sous-officier Augereau, de tous les clercs de procureurs devenus sénateurs et

comtes de l'Empire, ne renversent pas les niais susnommés?⁴⁵

This seems a strange remark, coming as it does from a man who was convinced that the revolutions in France were over and that the lower classes would gradually be integrated without force into the political life of the country. It is even more strange to find Stendhal arguing that 200,000 Julien Sorels could possibly exist, when he intended to make of his hero a superior, different, even impossible individual in nineteenth-century society. Having blocked the political horizon before July 1830 in order to stress the human qualities of his hero, it seems that Stendhal was now suggesting that Julien Sorel was representing a certain class in France. The reasons for the novelist's self-contradiction regarding the character and significance of his hero appear to lie in two major directions.

In the first place, one can detect a selfish reason for Stendhal's volte-face about the nature of Julien Sorel. The fact is that his hero was badly received by all the writer's friends as well as by the critics of the time. He was universally denounced as a monster. What is more, Stendhal's friends insisted on equating Julien Sorel with his creator. He wrote incredulously to Virginie Ancelot in March 1831:

Toutes les femmes de mes amis se reconnaissent dans ma dernière rapsodie. Grand Dieu! Est-ce que jamais j'ai monté à votre fenêtre par une échelle?⁴⁶

In a letter written shortly afterwards to Alberthe de Rubempré Stendhal shows signs of bitterness at the general reaction to his hero:

Vu que Julien est un coquin et que c'est mon portrait, on se brouille avec moi. Du temps de l'Empereur, Julien eût été un fort honnête homme; j'ai vécu du temps de l'Empereur; donc ... La ressource de l'envie quand un auteur peint un caractère énergique et, par conséquent, un peu coquin, c'est de dire: L'auteur s'est peint. Quelle réponse voulez-vous faire à cela?⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Correspondance, II, p.254. 17 March 1831.

⁴⁶ Ibid., II, p.243.

⁴⁷ Ibid., II, p.256.

He was clearly perplexed that his friends should have failed to realize firstly Julien's superiority and true character, and secondly the distance created between Stendhal and his hero by the former's irony. But instead of pointing out the misunderstanding, Stendhal admitted his friends' point of view regarding Julien's ambition. It becomes evident on studying his replies that the novelist was concerned mainly to justify himself in the face of criticism; Julien Sorel must take his chance in the future; at the moment it was Henri Beyle's reputation which was at stake. We have suggested in Chapter 2 that Stendhal tried to make himself out to be a martyr to the cause of Napoleon, thereby explaining his lack of fame and fortune; now his integrity was being threatened by friends who were assuming that Julien would have been, and that Stendhal was, ambitious and self-seeking during the Empire. Suddenly it was imperative for the novelist to right such 'wrongs' against himself. Hence his disgruntled reply to Sophie Duvaucel in April 1831, for example:

Mme Az[ur] me croit l'original de Julien parce que pour être nommé Inspecteur du Mobilier, le général Duroc qui m'aimait (par parenthèse à cause de ma sincérité) voyant: fils de noble chevalier Beyle dans mon extrait de baptême, me donna De Beyle dans le projet de décret qui fut signé le 11 août 1810 . . . Si j'avais voulu faire le Julien dans le salon de M. Aubernon, chez M. Pastoret que je ne suis jamais allé voir au Luxembourg, chez M. de Fayettella [sic], etc., etc., je serais tout au moins préfet de Guéret.⁴⁸

Once again one cannot afford to overlook Stendhal's personal and selfish preoccupations in a study of his comments and the motives behind them.

A second reason for Stendhal's presumed change of emphasis with regard to his hero can be discerned if his desire to be accepted as a realistic (in a narrow sense) writer is taken into account. When he presented his characters and episodes from such a variety of viewpoints, Stendhal must have realized that he was demanding of his reader a certain facility for mental

⁴⁸ Correspondance, II, pp.281-2.

gymnastics, that he ran the constant risk of being misunderstood. In January 1830, before beginning the novel, he seemed to anticipate difficulties with the reader: 'Un auteur actuel, ayant toujours l'idée qu'il parle en présence d'un ennemi, refroidit toujours en corrigeant'.⁴⁹ His misgivings are also reflected in the novel itself. For example, during the episode set in the seminary Stendhal pretends to spare his readers the worst of the details, thereby hoping to meet in advance the objection that his picture of religious life is unrealistic or exaggerated:

Le lecteur voudra bien nous permettre de donner très peu de faits clairs et précis sur cette époque de la vie de Julien. Ce n'est pas qu'ils nous manquent, bien au contraire; mais, peut-être ce qu'il vit au séminaire est-il trop noir pour le coloris modéré que l'on a cherché à conserver dans ces feuilles. (I, xxvii, 319)

Realizing that the character of Mathilde was likely to be misconstrued, Stendhal wrote: 'Cette page nuira de plus d'une façon au malheureux auteur. Les âmes glacées l'accuseront d'indécence' (II, xix, 223).

Certainly Stendhal's precautions did not suffice, for the novel was received with incomprehension on all sides. His closest literary friend, Mérimée, found the character of Julien inconceivable, and he pressed Stendhal for an explanation:

Vous êtes encore homme de lettres et bien chatouilleux sur l'article du Rouge. Avec tout cela vous ne répondez pas à mon objection: Pourquoi avez-vous choisi un caractère qui a l'air impossible?⁵⁰

We have suggested that the answer to Mérimée's question is to be found in the novel itself: Julien is impossible because he displays those qualities which, in Stendhal's view at least, were no longer relevant or common. He is not a realistic figure, in the sense that his character is an exception rather than the rule among Frenchmen of the Restoration period. Yet Stendhal did not reply to his friends' criticisms in these terms. Instead, he attempted to justify the 'realism' of his hero by claiming

⁴⁹ Journal, V, p.55.

⁵⁰ Correspondance, II, appendice (Lettres à Stendhal), p.861.

that Julien represents a social class. Indeed, there is some evidence in Stendhal's analyses of French society in his articles for English reviews to support the narrowly realistic view he later took in his letters to friends. For instance, his treatment of the episode set in the seminary in Besançon was anticipated on several occasions throughout his descriptions of French life for his English readers.⁵¹ His remark about the 200.000 Julien Sorels who were bound to overthrow the Bourbons was also prefigured in his Courrier Anglais to some extent. In 1825 he wrote:

C'est parmi les classes moyennes, celles qui n'exercent aucune profession ou métier et qui vivent en province avec six à dix mille francs de rente annuelle, que se recrute la jeunesse dont les écoles et les collèges de Paris sont pleins. Cette jeunesse forme la principale pierre d'achoppement pour les Bourbons.⁵²

Such descriptions, however, hardly constitute all that there is to know about Julien Sorel, and it is evident that Stendhal was, to some extent at least, distorting his real intentions in the novel in order to appear a realistic writer. We have already seen that he was faced with conflicting aims as a novelist: on the one hand he was certain that the nineteenth-century norm could not provide the basis for heroism in his fiction; his hero therefore had to be different; on the other hand he longed to be read in his own day and was convinced that realism (in a strictly narrow sense) was necessary in modern fiction.

Stendhal faced similar difficulties with the character of his second heroine, Mathilde de La Mole; she was considered to be a totally incoherent creation by most of the novelist's friends and critics. Stendhal undoubtedly foresaw criticism when he wrote the novel, and he admitted to portraying an exceptional character:

Nous nous hâtons d'ajouter que ce personnage fait exception aux mœurs du siècle. (II, xiv, 140)
De tels caractères sont heureusement fort rares. (II, xiv, 176)

⁵¹ Courrier Anglais, III, p.77 for example.

⁵² Ibid., IV, p.111.

Ce personnage est tout à fait d'imagination, et même imaginé bien en dehors des habitudes sociales qui, parmi tous les siècles, assureront un rang si distingué à la civilisation du XIXe siècle. (II, xix, 223)

But this last remark from a man who so often vilified the society of his own day and looked back nostalgically to past centuries, and other equally ironic comments such as: 'Ce n'est pas en général le manque de prudence que l'on peut reprocher aux élèves du noble couvent du Sacré-Coeur' (II, xi, 140-1), indicate that Stendhal was criticizing the average aristocratic young lady more than he was ridiculing Mathilde. He evidently hoped by his irony to convey to the attentive reader his own preference for his heroine's character. He could never, as he told Mareste in January 1831, create a heroine from the run-of-the-mill noble type:

Les jeunes Montmorency et leurs femelles ont si peu de force de volonté, qu'il est impossible de faire un dé-
nouement non plat avec ces êtres élégants et effacés.⁵³

Yet as a self-conscious, realistic writer he knew that his heroine had to be possible in nineteenth-century society in order to appeal to a nineteenth-century public. One phrase in the novel, delivered ironically against dull conventionality, against the reader who prefers types to exceptions, and to some extent also against Mathilde whose unconventionality is a little contrived, was taken at the letter by critics:

Maintenant qu'il est bien convenu que le caractère de Mathilde est impossible dans notre siècle, non moins prudent que vertueux, je crains moins d'irriter en continuant le récit des folies de cette aimable fille. (II, xix, 224)

Stendhal's friends complained that Mathilde's character and her love for a mere roturier were impossible. Imprisoned by his own wit, Stendhal justified himself as best he could, admitting to Mareste that Mathilde was an exception, but claiming that he had been inspired by just such an exception in real life; he evidently hoped thereby to defend his character on the charge of lack of realism:

Cette fin me semblait bonne en l'écrivant, j'avais devant

⁵³ Correspondance, II, p.218.

les yeux le caractère de Méry, jolie fille que j'adore. Demandez à Clara [Mérimée] si Méry n'eût pas agi ainsi . . . Cette vue du manque de caractère dans les hautes classes m'a fait prendre une exception. C'est un tort. Est-il ridicule? C'est bien possible. Le comment, c'est que j'ai pensé à Méry.⁵⁴

Whether Stendhal really was inspired by the example of Mary de Neuville, daughter of one of Charles X's ministers, who eloped briefly with Mérimée's friend Grasset, is not relevant; the fact is that Stendhal was only too pleased to be able to use the excuse in the face of contemporary criticism. It is highly unlikely that Mary had any more than a superficial connection with the character of Mathilde.

Le Rouge et le Noir is certainly to be seen as a most complex and paradoxical novel, and the controversy surrounding its interpretation will continue. The reasons for arguments among critics lie mainly in the ambiguous nature of the novel itself. The contradictions within the book can, however, be explained to some extent at least if one takes account of Stendhal's diverse standpoints, of his tendency to take a variety of attitudes towards characters and their significance, both within the novel and in letters to friends after publication. The approach adopted in Part I of this study can thus be repeated in an examination of Stendhal's first major novel. Having discovered that the writer's preoccupations with politics were often contaminated by considerations of a totally unpolitical nature, having explained the openness which naturally characterized all Stendhal's judgements because of his constant shifts of emphasis, we decided to analyze Le Rouge et le Noir with these facts in mind. A purely political approach to the novel necessarily fails to take account of Stendhal's diversity, and merely leads to contradiction. A study of the different political opinions represented in the book, for example, reveals a certain tension which Stendhal deliberately created between political values and

⁵⁴ Correspondance, II, p.218.

those of a more personal or ethical kind. There is no political symbolism in the novel, and on several occasions Stendhal points to the significance of a different scale of values.⁵⁵

An investigation into the personal or moral importance of the characters, in particular the hero, can be illuminating. For if Julien's self-imposed role of hypocrite and his personal sense of history and social class have encouraged critics of all periods to denounce him as a monster, nevertheless Stendhal was constantly at pains to underline the real superiority of his hero, and he also exposed the false nature of Julien's judgements. If one accepts that Stendhal meant above all to portray a morally superior human being, then Julien's crime and the confused internal chronology of the novel can be explained. The hero, in order to prove his heroism, has to erase the false image he has given of himself and reveal the fact that he has personal qualities which alienate him in nineteenth-century society, be it Restoration or July Monarchy.

Stendhal's own contradictory attitudes also contribute to the controversy surrounding this novel. The author's interventions in the novel itself, for example, indicate his deliberate reluctance to present Julien Sorel as a fixed, defined character. The interventions are of three main types. On the one hand, Stendhal often intrudes to guide the reader to a correct view of Julien's superiority; he does this either by praising his hero directly, or by ironizing at the expense of other characters. On the other hand, he often uses his irony against Julien, and such interventions must be linked to Stendhal's own inability to escape from the self in his fiction. Many of his ironical comments can therefore be attributed to his

⁵⁵ Some critics, following Proust's remark (in La Prisonnière) about the significance of altitude in Stendhal's novels, have attempted, usually unsuccessfully, to turn heights (the cave above Verrières for instance) into symbols of personal and political values together. Grahame C. Jones, for example, in L'Ironie dans les romans de Stendhal, sees Julien's climb inside the cathedral in Besançon as symbolic of his Quixotic desire to confront a hostile society in the name of all mankind (ch.ii, pp.63-4).

desire to purge his own youthful faults, to defend them against a hostile society, or to compensate for past mistakes by allowing Julien to succeed where he, Stendhal, had failed. Thirdly, the author's interventions often have the deliberate aim of blurring the outline of a character or event, and they are based on Stendhal's conviction that all human judgements are necessarily open to suspicion. The disparity between appearance and reality, a problem which preoccupied Stendhal for most of his life and which is most tellingly expressed in his autobiographies, is revealed on countless occasions in this novel. Often Stendhal deliberately refuses to give clear, unambiguous solutions to the questions raised in the book; Julien's crime is clearly a case in point. Stendhal knew only too well that the constant uncertainty surrounding characters and events created insuperable difficulties for the observer in his attempt to arrive at a definite point of view about them.

The picture was also distorted by the strange claims which Stendhal made about novel and hero in his attempts to justify his composition to his friends. His confession that Julien is an ambitious, calculating character can, however, be attributed to Stendhal's own selfishness and his need to clear his own name in the face of suspicion and criticism. And behind his attempts to fit Julien into a certain social category lies his desire to be accepted as a realistic writer.

Roger Fayolle writes:

Il est peut-être plus utile de faire une distinction très nette entre les opinions ou attitudes contradictoires d'Henri Beyle et la signification politique de ses romans, celle-ci n'étant pas nécessairement éclairée par celles-là.⁵⁶

Yet this depends on one's interpretation of the word 'politics'. If one escapes from a purely ideological framework and investigates the background to Stendhal's views, a whole variety of standpoints can be seen to contribute to the formation of a political judgement. The contradictory political ideas of Henri Beyle can be explained largely in the light of the different

⁵⁶ 'Stendhal et la politique', pp.67-8.

criteria involved. In the same way, the controversial 'political' interpretations which critics have offered of Le Rouge et le Noir can also be illuminated by an analysis of the various poses which Stendhal adopts both in the novel itself and in his subsequent justification of it.

Conclusion

As the preceding pages have, it is hoped, shown, the subject of Stendhal and politics, though already widely discussed by critics of this century and last, can still be studied. However, method is all-important. Stendhal's political ideas and inconsistencies can acquire new significance if they are approached from the standpoint of his diversity, or, to put it in different terms, if one accepts the fact that many other considerations, besides purely political factors, contributed to the formation of his views.

Henri Beyle's personal experience of life under various nineteenth-century governments was crucial. For instance, it was his personal and emotional reaction against his royalist family, whom he loathed, which originally made of him a republican and a Jacobin. As a child he identified his own struggle against his relatives with the grander conflict of the great revolutionaries against the reactionary forces of Allied Europe, and his retrospective attitude towards the Revolution always contained an element of personal nostalgia. It can also be claimed that Stendhal's admiration (after 1815) for Napoléon, his tendency to create a series of myths around his own experiences during the Empire, and his desire to highlight the generosity and glory of the period, were the result of a personal need to take revenge on the ingratitude and venality of post-1815 society, in which he felt alienated and unfulfilled. In the same way, his criticism of the workings of administration during the July Monarchy may well have been due, in part at least, to his own unhappy experiences as a bureaucrat, first of all under Napoleon, and then under Louis-Philippe himself.

Selfishness, a will to survive, and an instinct for the personally expedient were also contributory factors to Stendhal's political opinions. In financial difficulties, he was willing to work for the Restoration government whose policies he openly despised; in 1829, when his hatred of the regime and his conviction of its instability and inefficiency had reached their height, he nevertheless undertook to write a memoir for Charles X's government, and he also entertained hopes of gaining employment in the Bibliothèque royale. He sometimes wrote pamphlets which were intended partly to pander to convention and gain him fame.

Thus his second essay on Racine et Shakspeare was printed at a time when the Académie Française was speaking out in favour of classicism in literature, and D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels appeared towards the end of 1825, the year in which the Bourse had been the scene of financial scandals. Stendhal was also prepared, in 1816-17, to exaggerate about his experiences during the Empire when he realized that intellectuals in Milan were taking an interest in Napoleon's exploits. Such activities can, of course, be related not only to the selfishness of Henri Beyle himself (and despite the claims of some critics, it must be acknowledged that he was thoroughly selfish) but also to the times in which he lived. Never had girouettisme been so widely practised; personal expediency had overtaken philosophy and principle to such a degree that the phrase 'manger au budget' had become a byword in Restoration France.

If Stendhal remained unsuccessful in worldly pursuits, however, if his life was, in materialistic terms, a failure, then such a failure seems to be attributable to three main factors. In the first place, Stendhal undoubtedly suffered from a certain social inadequacy which accounted for his feeling of alienation. Jean Starobinski and Georges Blin in particular have put forward convincing arguments to this effect; the former, for example, wrote:

Stendhal a beau sentir que le monde n'est pas fait pour lui, c'est dans ce monde qu'il veut réussir. Son inadaptation sociale se traduit immédiatement en besoin de conquête ou en projets de défense.¹

Secondly, Stendhal's ambitions for fame and fortune were often superseded by his spontaneity in matters of the heart or happiness. In 1810, as we have seen, he was willing, momentarily at least, to jeopardize his chances of promotion in order to stop Victorine Mounier from marrying another man. Thirdly, he persisted in writing original, witty, and often impudent works which were not destined to secure for him the comfortable life and literary reputation he coveted. He exasperated his prudent

¹ 'Stendhal pseudonyme', Temps Modernes, octobre 1951, pp.577-617 (p.595).

friend Louis Crozet in 1817, for example, by offering corrections for Histoire de la peinture en Italie which were as 'dangerous' as the passages his friend had implored him to replace. Despite some deliberate attempts to pander to convention, therefore, Stendhal's personal make-up was such that he was unable to practise any sustained form of girouettisme. Geneviève Mouillaud makes an interesting point in this respect:

Plusieurs fois sous la Restauration, il espérera d'ailleurs retrouver une place, mais jamais il ne fera ce qu'il aura fallu pour cela: fréquenter assidument des salons influents et ennuyeux, modérer l'expression de ses opinions . . . Les formes stendhaliennes du courage politique sont la paresse, la versatilité et l'imprudence.²

Stendhal's tendency to play with opposites, his delight in taking up almost any standpoint as long as it was not expected of him, also contributed to the apparent contradictions in his political thinking. The tendency began, of course, during his unhappy childhood, when he opposed on principle anything his hated family valued. But the mature writer admitted that the same inclination remained with him throughout his life, and indeed he became known in Paris salons in the 1820s for his 'esprit d'opposition'. There was a definite element of reaction involved in his Jacobinism and in his retrospective admiration for Napoleon. But there was also a serious side to his cynical playing off of one opinion against its opposite, for he was in fact, as Michel Crouzet has suggested, indicating the importance of reaction in the formation of any judgement. This was a realistic position to adopt in view of the situation in post-1815 France. It was sensible to evade positive commitment, to avoid being caught up in the confines of any ideology or system in a society whose main characteristics were hypocrisy and instability, and in which a definite lack of principle or philosophy was the key feature.

Perhaps the main virtue of the 'variety of standpoints' method is that it enables us, to some extent, to clear up apparent

2 'De Henri Beyle à Stendhal', p.19.

inconsistencies in Stendhal's 'political' thought by simple reference to his personal situation at any given moment or to his unique psychological make-up. Once the number of ambiguities has been reduced in this way, the real value and relative consistency of his political views can be pointed up. What strikes the student of Stendhal's politics most forcefully are the consistency of his liberal views and his lucidity regarding the political and social realities of nineteenth-century France. All Stendhal's judgements on the regimes which he experienced point to one crucial date: 1789. In other words, his attitudes towards Empire, Restoration, and July Monarchy derive directly from his interpretation of the events of the French Revolution. Throughout his life Stendhal remained a devoted admirer of the period 1789-99 (especially the Convention), and despite continual disappointments in the face of reactionary, inefficient governments, he retained his faith in the legacy which, in his view, the Revolution had left to France and, to a lesser extent, to the rest of Europe. He was convinced, and historical opinion agrees with him, that in spite of the setbacks encountered after 1799 the Revolution had inaugurated the reign of political liberty in France: a free press and a bicameral system of government were two of the chief benefits in which he placed his faith. Even more important to him perhaps was the social evolution which was taking place in France, thanks to the revolutionary reforms of the 1790s, an evolution which he regarded, rightly, as irreversible and undeniable. The theme of continuing revolution is therefore a constant in his writing. Behind his theory of the class structure in Restoration France was his lucid interpretation of the changes which had taken place in the period 1789 to 1799. His prophecy for a liberal, mainly middle-class regime for France in the later part of the century also owed its main argument to his views on the Revolution. In short, although some of his predictions were wrong (for example, he did not believe that France would experience further rebellion and was proved wrong in 1848), Stendhal must be regarded as one of the first major nineteenth-century writers to have understood and recorded the impact of the 1789 Revolution on nineteenth-century French society.

Where Stendhal did have reservations about the effects of the Revolution on French society — and he often recorded them — his objections were not always made from a specifically political point of view, and cannot therefore detract from the relative consistency of his politics. Convinced as he was that liberty and social equality of a kind would necessarily come sooner or later to France and all Europe, he turned his attention to the effects of the Revolution on French society as a whole, and it is here that he was less than impressed by what he saw. The political benefits gained through the Revolution had brought with them certain unforeseen and undesirable results which were to perplex and haunt many nineteenth-century literary figures: Stendhal was followed in this respect by Gautier, Flaubert, and Baudelaire in particular. As he grew older, therefore, and as he became a more concerned artist himself, Stendhal began to take the view that while political progress was inevitable, the future of the arts — in the forms which he most cherished — was not at all assured. His concern for the future of artistic creation, and his reservations about the effects of 1789 on French society, can be represented by three main arguments.

Firstly, Stendhal was frustrated by the new tendency, in view of the post-revolutionary economic and social situation, to place great emphasis on the acquisition of wealth and material possessions to the exclusion of other pursuits in life. In particular he was concerned that the Revolution, by spreading wealth among greater numbers of people, had created a new kind of public for the arts. The writer, painter, or musician was now faced with the choice of catering (or refusing to cater) for an audience who had suddenly become wealthy enough to patronize the arts, but who had no tradition of art appreciation to guide them.

Secondly, Stendhal was alarmed that in an industrial, commercial society which tended to standardize everyone in the name of utility, there would be no room left for the individuality and energy which, in his view, were necessary both for the creation and for the subject-matter of all great art. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that he took a pessimistic view of the future in this respect.

Thirdly, Stendhal began to see that the republican, utilitarian society which had already resulted to some extent from the revolutionary changes, and which would continue to evolve in nineteenth-century France, was fundamentally incompatible with gay, witty conversation and a high standard in the arts. It followed that in his works a dualism between civilization and artistic creation found constant expression. Sometimes he represented the conflict in terms of utility versus beauty, and Gautier and Flaubert were to echo these sentiments some years later. On other occasions he thought in terms of freedom of expression versus artistic creation: 'Les journaux ont sauvé la liberté et perdu les beaux-arts' (1827).³ More often than not, however, Stendhal chose to express his doubts in terms of an antagonism between bourgeois vulgarity and a finer taste for literature and art supposedly displayed by the aristocracy.

In the last analysis, it is often difficult to distinguish between the personal, ethical, and artistic considerations which tended to cut across Stendhal's meditation on political affairs. Richard Coe, in a far-reaching article, shows how the word 'grâce', as used by Stendhal, can contain any number of implications over a range of subjects from Italian painting to class warfare, and he makes one point which is particularly valid for our present argument:

What starts out as an innocuous term relating, say, to harmony, or to architectural form is often so overloaded with a whole range of social, moral, emotional or political implications, that the borderline between aesthetic judgement, ethical comment, ideological speculation and personal reminiscence is totally blurred.⁴

What the 'varying standpoints' method has tended to show is that Stendhal's use of what seem to be straightforward political terms is often complex: sometimes they are invested, in his writing, with certain nuances or connotations which have little or nothing

³ Mélanges, III, p.110.

⁴ 'From Correggio to Class Warfare: Notes on Stendhal's Ideal of "la grâce"', in Balzac and the Nineteenth Century, Festschrift for Professor Hunt, Leicester, 1972, pp.239-54 (p.239).

to do with the strictly political.

For example, the word 'Jacobin', for Stendhal, could contain implications which went beyond the narrowly political application of the term. By his belief in continuing revolution and his admiration for the reforms made by the Convention, he was showing realism and pragmatism rather than an adherence to ideology. His Jacobinism was not therefore political in a precisely historical sense. Often, too, the term had more personal connotations for him. Henri Beyle's early Jacobinism was, for instance, merely a symptom of his constant tendency to oppose his relatives in every matter, to react in the opposite way expected of the only son in a conservative, royalist family. As a mature adult Stendhal still looked back on his youth during Revolution and Empire with definite nostalgia, highlighting, and often exaggerating, the glory of the period. His admiration for the famous 'Jacobin' figures of the 1790s therefore fitted in to what amounted to an almost systematic propensity to glamorize the events and personalities of the Revolution. His hatred, for personal and political reasons, of the Restoration and July Monarchy regimes also encouraged Stendhal to react in favour of a past era in which life was at least exciting. His contempt for the prevailing values in post-1815 society caused him to see the revolutionary period in terms of courage and energy. In this case he was not only taking a personal stand against the dullness of life and politics in nineteenth-century France; he was also adopting the position of a disappointed artist who was afraid that the general lack of energy which he perceived would be fatal to the future of his favourite art forms.

Another term which reveals the complexity of Stendhal's use of political phraseology is ultra, since it can take on different nuances of meaning depending on his particular point of view. The word was pejorative when used in a precise political sense: Stendhal was consistently contemptuous of the excessive royalism and intransigent conservatism of the nobles under the Restoration. But it was often devoid of any political meaning at all. For example, Stendhal's sensibility, his dislike of vulgarity and brashness, caused him to admire the savoir-faire of the aristocracy in society: at least they knew how to behave. He therefore

believed that the nobles had the potential qualities required if gaiety and honourable standards of behaviour were to be brought back to a society which he felt to be sadly lacking in both. From an artistic point of view, too, Stendhal tended to place his faith, however sceptically, in the ultra-royalists' latent ability to judge good art from bad. When examined carefully, his appeals to the aristocracy as art critics lose some of their force, since it becomes apparent that he only really believed in their talent for understanding psychological subtleties and comic nuances in literature. He simply elected to express his doubts about the future of the arts in terms of an antagonism between the supposedly art-conscious nobility and the bourgeois philistines, and this is clearly another symptom of his love of opposites.

One final demonstration can reveal the care with which Stendhal's use of political terms must be approached. The word 'liberal' also has different strands of meaning, depending on the standpoint which Stendhal was taking. Politically, of course, Stendhal was a liberal, in the sense that he had a progressive belief in increased political liberty and social equality in France; and he often used the term to describe himself. In addition, the difficulties which he encountered in his dealings with the Austrian authorities in Milan and elsewhere were due to his 'reputation' as a dangerous writer who expressed liberal opinions in the salons he frequented and revealed liberal ideas in the books he wrote. Often, however, his use of the word was pejorative, especially after 1820. His contempt for the 'liberals' of the Restoration was based on sound political reasons, for it is a historical fact that political labels became distorted and therefore meaningless in a society whose chief characteristic was hypocrisy. Stendhal's sarcasm at the expense of the 'liberal' bourgeois of the July Monarchy was also political in nature, since he soon realized that these so-called 'liberals', who in fact constituted only the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie, were as selfish and reactionary as the ultra-monarchists of the Restoration had been. But the term often had no political connotations at all. Stendhal's hatred of the 'liberals' of the 1820s and 1830s was frequently based on more personal reasons. His sensibility, for example, was at odds with the vulgarity and self-importance

of the nouveaux riches. From an artistic point of view, too, he regretted the general emphasis on wealth, commerce, and industry, and feared for the future of the arts. With more people making their fortunes, the arts were becoming more accessible to greater numbers, and Stendhal believed that the nineteenth-century artist might have to lower his standards to suit a new 'liberal' majority whose taste was far from refined.

It is possible to argue that the contradictions inherent in Stendhal's political thinking are not altogether inexplicable. They can, to some extent at least, be illuminated and explained. By examining Stendhal's attitudes to the political events and personalities of his time, and by scrutinizing his use of what appears to be strictly political terminology, the apparent inconsistencies in his thought can often be cleared up. It becomes evident that he did not always approach politics from a specifically political point of view, but had various other criteria for forming his opinions. In particular, his concern, in dealing with politics, often covered the whole spectrum of nineteenth-century society. Such a conclusion explains the title and subtitle of this study; it also tends to reveal the prominent place of politics, regarded in the widest possible sense, in Stendhal's life and works.

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