

# Stendhal and Rousseau

## Habit, Interiority and Exception

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*Le Rouge et le Noir* is taken as an example of a novel in which the hero, and some other characters, experience strong tension between inner consciousness and social habits. Stendhal's novel is a particularly significant example because it is shaped by the immediate afterlife of the French Revolution and the writings of Rousseau. The revolutionary rupture with habit intersects with the themes of a consciousness looking for inner existence and the role of inner passions. The Revolution was an exception, prolonged by the rise of Bonaparte which appeals to a hero frustrated by the habitual conformity of anti-revolutionary France after the fall of Bonaparte. He seeks a great career, and he seeks grandeur in love, always combining passions with strategy in an unstable mix. He moves from love with a comparative innocent to love with a woman who shares his obsessions though they have different objects. The final crisis of the novel leads to a breakdown of the hero's habitual self, in an ending in which passions becomes both destructive violence and an idyllic solitary resignation. The journey into an interiority, through exceptional breaks with habit finds a culmination. This achievement rests on Stendhal writing in a world after Rousseau and understanding the full extent of this requires a rounded understanding of Rousseau, along with his context.

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In this article, the definition of habit is largely left implicit, as the examination of Stendhal in relation to Rousseau, along with other connections of Stendhal with the history of thought, hardly leaves space for an examination of habit as a concept. An excellent introduction to habit as an organising principle and object of reflection can be found in Clare Carlisle's *On Habit*. This book explores *habit* from a number of perspectives. The perspective which guides this article is

[H]abit is an obstacle to reflection and a threat to freedom. Insofar as we think and act out of habit, we are unable to know ourselves or reflect critically on the world, and so we are intellectually, morally, and spiritually impoverished<sup>1</sup>.

This is easily recognisable as a summary of what can be taken as a romantic aesthetic individualist critique of habit. The point is not make any claim that Stendhal or Rousseau advocate such a thing as a guide to life. The purpose here is to examine how Stendhal investigates an attempt to live as if guided by such a principle, taking Rousseau as a major point of reference in understanding what it is to explore inner individuality as opposed to the habitual social self, in so far as they can be separated. That is the exploration in literary fiction of an individual who seeks to be an exception. A more conceptual philosophical discussion of habit, including its place in literature, will have to wait for another occasion.

In *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, Stendhal relates the life of a man who seeks or encounters exception, the escape from constraining habits, and creates the exception at the end in the attempted murder of a former lover. This is Julien Sorel, whose story revolves around great passions with two women, Louise de Rênal, usually referred to as Mme de Rênal and Mathilde de La Mole, often referred to as Mlle de La Mole or Mathilde. The former

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<sup>1</sup> C. Carlisle, *On Habit*, Routledge, London 2014, p. 3.

passion is primary for Julien, as becomes clear in the closing chapters of the novel, but there is a grandeur in the passion shared with Mathilde, who is defined by her own exceptional passion associated with the queens and aristocratic women of fifteenth and sixteenth century, particularly Marguerite de Navarre, herself a major religious and secular writer. The sense, with Mathilde, that the most absolute passions belong to another age interacts with the models of passion that Julien takes from the Jacobin radicals of the French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte, the conquering general and Emperor who arose from the French Revolution and had himself been a Jacobin. The novel is set in the last year of the royalist and Catholic reaction to the Revolution and to Bonapartism, which characterised the Bourbon Restoration. The novel itself was published a few months after the July Revolution of 1830 which introduced a more liberal era and gave Stendhal the opportunity to be the French Consul in Trieste. Connections with Italy are important in this novel and many of Stendhal's other writings. At the end of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Mathilde de La Mole moves to Italy, where Stendhal thought grand passions had more of a place than in France. Stendhal had also been a Bonapartist administrator, so themes of the novel intersect with Stendhal's biography, and his other writings.

There is a defining tension between Julien and Mathilde in their search for political grandeur. Julien is a Jacobin-Bonapartist and Mathilde is a traditionalist monarchist-aristocratic, who dismisses the great revolutionary Georges Danton as «un Boucher»<sup>2</sup>. A spurious epigram from Danton opens the novel, valuing absolute truth – *la vérité, l'âpre vérité* – so Mathilde's attitude strikes at the heart of the novel. This is a significant aspect of the novel which takes the point of view of a frustrated Jacobin and makes of Julien a would-be Danton, though there are other perspectives the novel suggests for itself and Julien. The first chapter also opens with a spurious epigram which comes from the very unrevolutionary Thomas Hobbes, so we see alternative instances of revolutionary passion and scepticism about republican politics, as a debate in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, or as perspectives which qualify each other. It can be said that Hobbes was a revolutionary thinker in terms of the originality of his ideas and his challenges to older arguments for the legitimation of sovereignty. He was also, in equal measure, non-revolutionary in his firm opposition to any challenge the sovereignty of any existing government.

Julien and Mathilde are drawn to each other personally and in terms of their longing for some grand passion out of time, which is as much political as personal, so the contrasts

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<sup>2</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, éd. par Michel Crouzet, Librairie Générale Française, Paris 1997, p. 294.

are deeply ambiguous. Julien's Jacobinism does not stop him trying to pursue a career through the church and links with monarchist-legitimists (sometimes referred to as *ultras*) and Mathilde is drawn to the upstart Julien, who is a very long way beneath her aristocratic standing. Mathilde reveals herself to be a great admirer of Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>3</sup>, an inspiration for the Jacobins, and Julien is dismissive of Rousseau in this conversation, though presumably out of tactical hypocrisy, as we learn early on that he is an enthusiast for his writings. Energy and longing for an exceptional breach with a world of tired habits draws them together, but in terms of political symbolism, they cannot be together because they are drawn to different forms of this exception. Despite the ambiguities, Mathilde is primarily drawn to the grandeur of aristocrats and monarchs of an earlier age, regarding such people in her own time as mediocre and worthless. Julien is drawn to more recent memories of the peak of republican radicalism, though as we will see there are hints of an earlier republicanism in his ideals, along with the ambivalent figure of Napoléon, revolutionary and self-proclaimed emperor, French autocrat and liberator of Europe from feudal vestiges.

The amorous passions of Julien and of Mathilde cannot be separated from their political sentiments. The link between strong passions on one side; and the moral development of humanity, including attachment to liberty, on the other, are entwined in liberal thought of the time, so the emphasis on the passions has a political symbolism of its own. Chapter One of *De la liberté religieuse*, that is Book VIII of Benjamin Constant's *Principes de politiques: Applicable à tous les gouvernements* is a striking example of such a combination<sup>4</sup>, before Stendhal's own characterisation of it<sup>5</sup>. Tocqueville prolongs this line of thinking about liberty in passions to the end of the 1850s, overlapping with Stendhal's literary career.

Julien is identified early on as an avid reader of both Napoleon's *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*<sup>6</sup>, fitting with his politics. Particularly early on in the novel, he seems to live through his reading. René Girard comments on *Le Rouge and le Noir* as the model of the novel in which characters see themselves through literary and historical models, with the historical models experienced through literature, particularly Julien's relations with *Les Confessions*, in the first chapter of *Mensonge*

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<sup>3</sup> *Ivi*, p. 286.

<sup>4</sup> B. Constant, *Principes de politiques : Applicable à tous les gouvernements*, Hachette Littératures, Paris 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., pp. 139-144.

<sup>6</sup> *Ivi*, p. 26 and p. 29.

*romantique et vérité romanesque*<sup>7</sup>. This corresponds with an accusation that Mme de Rênal makes against him towards the end of the novel, that is he forcibly seduced her with words from novels<sup>8</sup>. The idea of learning love from novels and literature recurs in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, something which of course has a deep history before the novel going back at least to Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, in Canto V of *Inferno*, where the illicit love of Paolo and Francesca is attributed to reading about Lancelot, presumably referring to his adulterous love for Guinevere, as first related by Chrétien de Troyes.

The ideal of love in Stendhal's novel is at least in part seen through Rousseau's novel *Julie*<sup>9</sup>, a huge best seller in eighteenth century Europe, leaving a great mark on literary conceptions of love, which is rather more concerned with virtue, though the issue of illicit passion is central: the passion is seen as something that can be subdued by virtue. It is another variation of the theme, going back to Dante and Arthurian epic, of passion being at its greatest where it crosses a limit. Julien does this twice in his love for a married woman and then for the daughter of an aristocratic patron, who is a long way above him in status and wealth. In this respect Julien is a "bad" Rousseauist, though as many have noted his affair with Mme de Rênal has various echoes of the affair between Rousseau and Mme de Warens, related in *Les Confessions*<sup>10</sup>.

The theme in Rousseau which maybe most challenges the prescription of social adaptation, of a life of habits, is that of *amour-propre* in the first part of *Discours sur l'inégalité*<sup>11</sup>, a phrase which comes up in *Le Rouge et le Noir* in relation to Julien<sup>12</sup>, though sometimes he lacks *amour-propre*<sup>13</sup>. This is not in itself suggestive that Julien should be understood via Rousseau since the phrase appears in the *Maximes* of François de La Rochefoucauld<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, La Rochefoucauld is clearly drawing on a Jansenist/neo-Augustinian understanding of the weakness of natural reason and morality, and the idea of *amour-propre* refers to an understanding of humanity as driven by egotism, and the disguises of egotism, which regard to how we are seen by others and how we imagine we

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<sup>7</sup> R. Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, Bernard Grasset, Paris 1961.

<sup>8</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 452.

<sup>9</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Julie*, éd. par E. Leborgne and F. Lotterie, Flammarion, Paris 2018.

<sup>10</sup> See H. E. Hugo, *Two Strange Interviews: Rousseau's Confessions and Stendhal's le Rouge et le Noir*, "The French Review", 25, 3, 1952, pp. 164-172.

<sup>11</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, éd. par B. Bachofen and B. Bernardi, Flammarion, Paris 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 285.

<sup>13</sup> *Ivi*, p. 502.

<sup>14</sup> F. De La Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections: New Translations with parallel French Text*, translated and edited by E.H. Blackmore, A.M. Blackmore and F. Giguère, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, maxime 1, p. 4.

are seen by others according to our desires. In Rousseau's account, in *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, *amour-propre* both signifies a fall from the happiest state of humanity which Rousseau here suggests comes where humans have left nature and formed communities, but have not yet instituted property, laws and government. *Amour-propre* is defined in relation to *amour de soi*. *Amour de soi* has clear roots in a natural law tradition, going back at least to Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (*On Ends*), which refers to the impulse towards self-preservation, that is the form of self-love in which we wish to be alive and have some of the benefits of living in an ordered society.

*Amour-propre* also has deep roots in a Christian philosophy of sin, going back at least to Augustine of Hippo, but is formed by a sense that egotism can hardly be restrained by rationality, natural law, virtue or grace, in a world defined commercial society and individual status. The sense that individual egotism can hardly be restrained by natural law and that jealousy can hardly be restrained by virtue, leads to new terms. Rousseau projects the formation of *amour-propre* back into an early stage of the history of human society, but clearly sees it as particularly belonging to modern Europe, belonging to a *society of honour* as described by Montesquieu in *De l'esprit des lois*<sup>15</sup>. The world of *Le Rouge et le Noir* is a world of honour, even if the aristocratic essence of honour in Montesquieu has developed into a more bourgeois, even peasant-like sense of acquisitiveness and status competition. It is in part a parody of honour in Montesquieu, but also follows up on aspects of Montesquieu's concept which have to be understood as belonging to the *haute bourgeoisie*, and include the most vulgar forms of competition. The *amour-propre* of Julien Sorel despises the petty status competition of Besançon and the conformism of the seminary, that is to say the less grand forms of *amour-propre*. In that respect, it is a grander version of Rousseau's account of our drive to seem greater than others in our imagination and in our imagination of what others imagine. This grander form of *amour-propre* also leads to attempted murder, so we can see *amour-propre* as just as much as an anti-social passion as an adaption to a society of economic and social competitiveness. *Amour-propre* can be understood as turning against itself in the search for a pure passion, stretching at the limits of social conformity, and as the motivation for a grand crime, with the two coming together, as Julien Sorel seeks revenge on Mme de Rênal for undermining his chance of marrying Mathilde de La Mole. This is the anger that comes from being wounded by a person who had seemed to belong to an

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<sup>15</sup> Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois I*, Garnier Flammarion, Paris 1979, pp. 149-150.

idyll of pure passion. The naive provincial Mme de Rênal painfully reminds Julien that he has entered a world of money making and status seeking in Paris, that is tangled up with his love for Mathilde.

These movements of *amour-propre* struggle with a world of habit. The rather mechanical way that Montesquieu has of understanding a society of honour suggests a world of predictable order which seems less certain when we consider the more radically egotistical aspects of *amour-propre*. Julien's early form of a reading as an idyll in which he escapes from labour imposed by his father is one way of escaping habit. Reading is itself a kind of habit, but one which for Julien allows an escape from repetitive tasks in an idyll of self-absorption. Teaching the children of Monsieur and Madame de Rênal is a habitual task, interrupted by the idyll of pure passion with Mme de Rênal. The life of the seminary is one of constraining habits disturbed by Julien's egotism, as is the life of service to the Comte de La Mole. The whole society is one of conformity to beliefs that are formed and reinforced by habit. Stendhal partly articulates this through the suggestion that French small town life is dominated by tyrannies of habit and conformity, which anticipate Alexis de Tocqueville's arguments about the tyranny of the majority in *De la démocratie en Amérique* [1835 and 1840]<sup>16</sup>, indicating the depth of Stendhal's political and social perceptions. Stendhal even suggests that the United States is a place where the tyranny of opinion is even more extreme than in the small towns of France, suggesting that Tocqueville was drawing on earlier ways of thinking in his idea of tyranny in a democracy: « La tyrannie de l'opinion, et quelle opinion ! Est aussi *bête* dans les petites villes de France qu'aux États-Unis Amérique »<sup>17</sup>.

René Girard suggests a reading compatible with, though not directly drawing on, Rousseau's conception of *amour propre* in his discussion of *Le Rouge et le Noir* in Chapter V of *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, where he discusses envy and *la vanité triste*, with reference to Alexis de Tocqueville. Girard takes it as typical of the thought, culture and politics of early nineteenth century France, taking Stendhal as both a political writer and as a writer who takes us beyond the politics in the metaphysical force of envy. This last point is very much Girard's own philosophy, and we should not regard *Le Rouge et le Noir* as so much anti-political, but more political with a depth and completeness, which enables us to see the roots of political scepticism as well as political idealism. This is because Stendhal interrupts political habits with the exceptional

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<sup>16</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique I & De la démocratie en Amérique II*, Gallimard, Paris 1961.

<sup>17</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 14.

moments, the moments of the revelations of both Machiavellianism and historical dreams in the consciousness of Julien and Mathilde.

Erich Auerbach argues in «In the Hôtel de la Mole» in *Mimesis* that Stendhal was himself partly formed by a sense of restlessness with the world that conforms with Rousseau's sensibility, and which never left him: «Discomfort in the given world and inability to become part of it is, to be sure, characteristic of Rousseauian romanticism and it is probable that Stendhal had something of that in his youth», though Stendhal «in contrast to Rousseau had a bent for practical affairs» and «he admires energy and the ability to master life»<sup>18</sup>. Comments a few pages later on regarding Rousseau and Rousseauism situate Stendhal very appropriately, though Auerbach overestimates the extent to which Rousseau had an active revolutionary attitude, which is more true of his Jacobin admirers:

The next generation, deeply influenced by his [Rousseau's] fascination, who found themselves not at home in the new world which had utterly destroyed their hopes. They entered into opposition to it or they turned away from it. Of Rousseau they carried on only the inward rift, the tendency to flee from society, the need to retire and to be alone; the other side of Rousseau's nature, the revolutionary and fighting side, they had lost<sup>19</sup>.

Later in the paragraph, Auerbach supplies a particularly apposite summary of Rousseau's legacy:

Rousseau, by passionately contrasting the natural condition of man with the existing reality of life, determined by history, made the latter a practical problem; now for the first time the eighteenth-century style of historically unproblematic and unmoved presentation of life became valueless<sup>20</sup>.

The issues of a sense of disconnect with the world partly appears in *Le Rouge et le Noir* with regard to Jansenists. There are frequent references to Jansenists<sup>21</sup>, along with Jesuits, refereeing to a famous religious conflict that emerged in the seventeenth century between the two groups. There are some issues about what defines a Jansenist in the strictest sense, but here we will take Jansenist to refer to a widely understood current of French Catholic

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<sup>18</sup> E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard H. Trask, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1953, p. 461.

<sup>19</sup> *Ivi*, p. 466.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 105, p. 179, p. 203, p. 260, pp. 264-265, p. 415, p. 502.



Christianity which is broader than those who adhered most closely to the writings of Bishop Cornelius Jansen on Augustine of Hippo in the *Augustinus* [1640]<sup>22</sup>, the book which inspired Jansenism.

The vital moment in the Jesuit-Jansenist conflict, in terms of literary history, is Blaise Pascal's attack on Jesuit laxity, worldliness, and casuistical arguments, which takes up the whole of *Les Provinciales*<sup>23</sup>. Pascal's more general philosophy, in *Pensées*, develops a view of human passions and institutions as inherently lacking in reason and justice. This proved influential on a secular view of the human world as driven by passions and power, self-interest and force, including Stendhal's views of social rules and individual passions in his novels and in the thoughts gathered in *De l'amour*<sup>24</sup>. In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, the Jansenists are the honest priests, while the Jesuits are a prime religious support for a France of stifling conformity and hypocrisy.

Jansenist honesty about the depravity of the human world in Christian terms beats Jesuit accommodation in Stendhal's assessment of the passions. Though even on this issue, there is some ambiguity, as Erich Auerbach points out in his discussion of *Le Rouge et le Noir* in *Mimesis*<sup>25</sup>, where it is a Jansenist Abbé and mentor of Julien who is shown to be eager to defer to the Marquis de La Môle. Auerbach does point out that this can be justified theologically as the inevitable submission to all forms of worldly evil, but it does seem to bring the Jansenists into Jesuitical territory. Nothing is pure in the novel. Not only are the Jansenists sometimes Jesuitical, the political liberals are shown to be part of the opportunism and corruption of Restoration France, even though Stendhal was a self-declared liberal. Julien contains these ambiguities which makes him both a product of a fallen age, but also a kind of elevated hero containing all the points of view and tensions of his age.

Purity of passions is not a simple topic in Stendhal. Julien evidently represents personal and political passions styled in Restoration France, itself given a presiding thinker in references to Joseph de Maistre's reactionary-traditionalist masterpiece *Du Pape*<sup>26</sup>. It is suggested that Julien believes as much in his Latin Bible as he does in *Du Pape*, so clearly not at all<sup>27</sup>. De Maistre is a convenient counter to Julien Sorel's

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<sup>22</sup> Cornelius Jansenius, *Augustinus*, 3 voll., Typis Jacobi Zegeri, Louvain 1640.

<sup>23</sup> B. Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, Folio, Paris 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Stendhal, *De l'amour*, Gallimard, Paris 1984.

<sup>25</sup> E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, cit., chapter XVIII «In the Hotel de la Mole», pp. 454-492.

<sup>26</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 190; Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape*, Garnier, Paris 1984.

<sup>27</sup> *Ivi*, p. 29.

assumptions, given his contempt for Rousseau, individualism, Jacobinism and Bonapartism (as can be seen in essays gathered in *Écrits sur la Révolution*)<sup>28</sup>. In de Maistre, the well ordered society is one of habits of conformity to tradition. Julien Sorel suggests the desirability, or at least inevitability, of passions in reading, politics and love which disrupt the model of habits of conformity to ways of living which are so primordial for de Maistre that any theorising of them risks the creation of abstractions unmoored from experience. Julien Sorel is a character who suggest that experience of living and capacity for imagination will always disrupt societies akin to Restoration France and social philosophies akin to that of de Maistre, even when they appeared to have conformed to such a society and become opportunistic social climbers.

The presentation of Julien Sorel is not of a moral paragon. The attempted murder of Mme de Rênal is evidently not morally admirable, and whatever Stendhal's appreciation of the passions, it does not extend to murder of a love object who disappoints. This point is reinforced by the general presentation of Mme de Rênal as an innocent caught between the conformity of her upbringing and the inner passion that Julien Sorel arouses in her. She does in the end die shortly after Julien's execution, apparently as the result of a broken heart. There are many indications of Julien's egoism and hypocrisy, highlighted by the contrast with the kindness and modesty of his first and greatest love.

Julien does also represent a purity of passion, which inevitably becomes entangled with a world where such passions are disruptive and constrained. Stendhal's own autobiographical work has the title *Souvenirs d'égotisme*; the essays and fragments that make up *De l'Amour* could themselves be considered a work on the ambivalence of passionate love as a form of restless egotism. The sides are deeply connected, as the conjunction of Rousseau and Napoléon in Julien's early reading obsessions hints. The obsession with Napoléon is evidently an admiration for a role model of extreme egotism, who for a while realised the greatest dreams of egotism and seemed to command history itself. The Rousseau enthusiasm does not indicate megalomaniacal desire for power over nations and is oriented towards *Les Confessions* rather than political material. It indicates a fascination with a troubled and self-obsessed mind, moving between: claims to sincerity and absolute self-revelation, on one side; self-justification and self-mythologisation on the other side. We can take this further with regard to the autobiographical works that Stendhal does not mention: *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* and *Les rêveries du*

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<sup>28</sup> J. De Maistre, *Écrits sur la Révolution*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1989.

*promeneur solitaire*<sup>29</sup>. These take the troubled consciousness of *Les Confessions* further in reactions to accusations and the exploration an isolated consciousness, in tension with its environment. Stendhal does not mention Rousseau as a writer on *amour propre*, but he attributes this psychology to Julien Sorel. The phrase was used by de La Rochefoucauld in *Maximes*, and like much else in Rousseau has earlier Jansenist Neo-Augustinian echoes and frissons. Julien Sorel's sense of solitude, and desire for it, is linked with his reading, particularly early in the novel, so not always with egomaniacal stratagems. Other people may react with the suspicion that he is an egotist and hypocrite, as in the conflict with the other novices at the seminary and their belief that he is a Luther<sup>30</sup>, confronted with his desire for solitude.

The early solitary reading is despised by his abusive and greedy father, himself an example of an individual dominated by material self-interest, lacking in sympathy for even those closest to him. There is an indication in this that reading is linked to a capacity for sympathy and improved sensibility, even if the career of Julien shows that this can develop in dark directions. Napoleon's St Helena *mémoires* are lost because of his father's brutality, ending up in a stream, but not Rousseau which might be a hint at which is most relevant to the life of Julien Sorel and understanding his consciousness. He will not impose his will through great battles and titanic political struggles, but he will live the life of self-absorbed self-obsessed self-consciousness, where both sincerity and egotism are at the centre, in unavoidable hypocrisy. A life of hypocrisy is in some degree imposed if Julien is to make any progress in the world of his time. He must hide his Jacobin and Bonapartist inclinations, as well as his enthusiasm for a writer disliked by religious and political conservatives of the time. The possibility of an ideal passion, in his love for Mme de Rênal, itself requires deception and hypocrisy, as this love cannot be known to anyone else. The affair also follows on from Julien's obsessions with tactics of conquests, but it would be too extreme to deny sincerity to Julien's passion simply because he tries to fulfil it through strategic thinking, which is anyway poorly conceived and ineptly implemented. When the affair does become known to M. de Rênal, due to the scheming of a jealous chambermaid, Julien has to leave for the seminary.

The love is associated with hypocrisy, but provides an idyll for Julien and his greatest idyll since his solitary reading above the stream where his father's workshop is located,

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<sup>29</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Dialogues: Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques – Le Lévitte d'Ephraïm*, Flammarion, Paris 1999; Id., *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Le livre de poche, Paris 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 199.

which precedes his life as tutor to the de Rênal children, under the patronage of the church and the Marquis de La Mole. This idyll does require some distress for Mme de Rênal, who has been living completely for years with the assumption that she should be a loyal wife and follow church teachings on sexual conduct. She is devoted to her children and completely accepting of the spiritual authority of her Confessor. She apparently lacks Julien's egotism and enjoyment of solitude, though the act of jealous destruction in which she writes to the Marquis de La Mole to draw attention to his seduction of a married woman, does deprive her of complete innocence. Innocence of the passions and hypocritical egotism keep intersecting in Stendhal. The solitude of Julien's prison cell, the peace, authenticity and self-reconciliation he seems to achieve at the end, recalls the solitary boy who liked to hide and read, whose mind was shaped by Napoleonic glory and Rousseauesque self-absorption.

The early reading is partly in nature, in the mill over a stream, so fits with the emphasis in Rousseau on nature, longing for the natural, and solitude. Rousseau's vision of natural humanity, in *Discours sur l'inégalité*, imagines isolated individuals roaming the forests only encountering other humans for the purposes of reproduction<sup>31</sup>. These humans live in the moment and live with themselves in an immediate inner self-awareness. For Rousseau, this sense of pure uninterrupted self has a strong attraction, which is also the diagnosis of a general desire for such a state as part of the human condition. Any use of language, any sociability, any awareness of other people, and comparison between self and others, is a loss of a primal peace. This is not to say that Rousseau has a project for a return to such a happy time, and he has various other suggestions as to when humanity is at its happiest. Nature and some idea of natural existence always has a strong pull for Rousseau, but as a source of criticism of some kind of social deformation, which can be corrected without a return to natural existence. Much as Rousseau seems to idealise natural humanity, there is always some stage between natural existence and the society of Rousseau's times which serves as the guiding ideal.

In *Du Contrat Social*, it is the republics of antiquity, particularly Sparta and Rome, though with reservations about the existence of slavery in these states, as the condition of citizen participation in politics<sup>32</sup>. This qualification indicates the constant ambiguity in Rousseau of where the ideal human existence lies. *Projet de constitution pour la Corse* is the clearest account in Rousseau of what the ideal modern republic might be, though it

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<sup>31</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, cit., pp. 170-221.

<sup>32</sup> Id., *Du contrat social*, éd. par B. Bernardi, Flammarion, Paris 2011.

in large degree a fantasy about an island which had a brief period of self-government in the eighteenth century<sup>33</sup>. Rousseau had never visited it and he must have had very limited information about it, despite his correspondence with the Corsican diplomat Matteo Buttafuoco. The *Projet* suggests early in the text that the more rural Swiss cantons might be the only other region in which Rousseau could hope to see his ideals fully realised. As he was from Geneva, Rousseau may have had more direct acquaintance with, and knowledge of, these places, but Geneva itself, at least in the dedication to the Republic of Geneva that opens *Discours sur l'inégalité*, also appears sometimes as the ideal.

Whether it is Geneva or the more rural cantons, Rousseau's ideas of a pure foundation for sovereignty and justice, were disturbing to de Maistre and other conservative thinkers. Though Rousseau's vision has very conservative aspects, including a preference for the rural, suspicion of modern society, and moral traditionalism, his interest in purity of foundations, creates a tension with conservative thought. This leads Edmund Burke, as well as de Maistre, to refer to him in the most contemptuous ways, as in Burke's *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791)<sup>34</sup>, and made him a hero for Jacobin revolutionaries. Burke's essay in the form of a letter is amongst other things an early example of the condemnation of the vanity and hypocrisy of Rousseau, which perhaps overlooks Rousseau's deep contribution to the understanding of what he himself sometimes exemplified. In some ways Rousseau was the most conservative of thinkers, so this is a strange state of affairs. Rousseau was a critic of modernity, looking back to more natural forms of existence.

This is a complex series of thoughts in Rousseau expressed across texts and it would take a separate paper to investigate both the affinities and disagreements with Burke and de Maistre. In brief, both Maistre and Burke have more of a belief in the virtues of monarchy and organised religion than Rousseau. Burke is more open to Enlightenment idea of progress than de Maistre, but both prefer a Europe of traditional states to a new revolutionary order. Rousseau has more suspicion of property and social hierarchy than Burke and de Maistre, but does not advocate their overthrow given that they are deeply embedded parts of human society since laws and civil institutions emerged. For Rousseau, the ideal is a small self-enclosed agricultural republic with strong moral traditionalism. It contains property, trade and inequality, but these are less than in a larger

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<sup>33</sup> Id., *Discours sur l'économie politique et autres textes*, Flammarion, Paris 2011.

<sup>34</sup> E. Burke, *A Letter from Mr Burke to a Member of the National Assembly; In answer to some objections to his book on French affairs*, J. Dodsley, London 1791, pp. 31-32.

state or a state more oriented towards trade with the outside. The firm advocacy of tradition often matches de Maistre and exceeds Burke. Their repugnance for Rousseau comes from underemphasising these aspects and overemphasising the revolutionary intentions behind Rousseau's republicanism and his desire for laws rooted in an immaculate expression of popular sovereignty at the moment of the formation of the state.

The extent to which he regarded commercial society with suspicion and his interest in the idea of foundations on new principles, along with the absorption in individuality, combined to create a disruptive impact even if we can see elements of his thought in Montaigne, Hobbes, Locke, and Fénelon, even if Rousseau had no intention of promoting revolution, egotistical individualism and the destruction of existing commercial societies, even if in *Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, Rousseau expressed an aversion for radical changes in an existing constitution, however troubled, as can be seen in the first chapter<sup>35</sup>. There is still just too much in Rousseau, even if not articulated by him as a desire for political revolution, which opens up the possibility of radical rejection, building on new principles, and curtailing commercial society, along with deeply egotistical forms of individualism, which sometimes seems to go beyond the limits of any kind of rational adaption to the social environment. Those conservative suspicions are confirmed by *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*, which goes beyond *Les Confessions* in its *speech* of a self-obsessed consciousness that feels persecuted by external enemies and is divided in itself. This is a discourse which goes to the limits of socially adapted reason, as Michel Foucault discusses in his lengthy *Introduction* to Rousseau's dialogue<sup>36</sup>. These are tensions embedded in Julien Sorel's state of mind towards the end of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, and which are emerging from the beginning.

There is a rather more reductive view of Julien Sorel, as a mere *parvenu*, someone driven by the desire to rise socially with the greatest speed. There is some reality in this view, as can most plausibly be seen in his hopes of marrying the daughter of a count. Even in the instance of the self-interested pursuit of Mathilde, there is clearly passion at work, and it is a very one-sided view of Julien that does not see him as deeply motivated by passion and the wish to avoid the boredom of habit, at least as much as social climbing as an end in itself.

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<sup>35</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Considerations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, in *Discours sur l'économie politique et autres textes*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, M., « Introduction » to *Rousseau : Juge de Jean-Jacques* in *Dits et Ecrits I*, éd. par D. Defert, F. Ewald et J. Lagrange, Gallimard, Paris 1994 [reprinted from Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1962].

From the point of view of social ambition, it is hard to see what he has to gain from the affair with the unworldly wife of a local notable, possibly some nudging of her husband and others to help Julien ascend, but she hardly seems the type for such manoeuvres. The element of underlying revenge on a man associated with his abusive father, that is M. de Renal, further associated with Royalist reaction and opportunistic money making as well as political ambitions, can be seen as part of the passion. The passion for Mme de Rênal may not be completely pure of motives other than that of love, but then what would the love be that is so detached from any other motive? By most standards, Julien is frequently driven by his passions rather than calculation, and even his calculations seem based on dreams of greatness rather than more utilitarian forms of self-interest. This is maybe egotistical, but it is not petty. He wishes to break with the life of petty habits. His reaction to Mme Rênal's sabotage of his socially advantageous marriage is not very calculating.

His methods for finding love with Mathilde certainly have overtones of *De l'Amour*, which brings a mixture of strategy with psychological and cultural observation. He almost seems motivated by Stendhal's own writing, as well as the books he has read within Stendhal's fictional world. Underlying Julien's strategies and the essays *De l'Amour*, we can see the influence of La Rochefoucauld for whom a love devoid of egotistical motivations is desirable but highly difficult to achieve. This has a literary expression in the novel *La Princesse de Clèves* by his close friend Mme de Lafayette, so these ambiguities already have a deep presence in French literature well before Stendhal. We can also mention Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* from the intervening century, as an example of this current in the French novel. Julien's character is more a sketch of the ambiguities within the most grand passion, than a portrait of a mere *parvenu*. Perhaps these are the dreams and illusions of a *parvenu*, but surely one inclined to the most intense passions.

Even given the self-interest in Julien's liaison with Mathilde, there are deep links between their passionate natures of Julien and Mathilde, including their admiration for great passionate figures of the past. For Mathilde, this goes back to late medieval and Renaissance France. For Julien, it only goes back to the Jacobin leaders and Napoleon. Napoleon's rise is more the stuff of passionate romantic imagination than calculated social climbing. The Jacobin leaders were only in power for short periods before their own revolutionary methods and institutions brought them down.

We should also consider the association Stendhal sees between political calculations in Machiavelli and the nature of passion. Machiavelli appears early in the novel by means of a fake epigram, which is a frequent practice of Stendhal for his chapter headings.

E sarà mia colpa  
Se così è<sup>37</sup>?

This translates as: Is it my fault if things are like this? This is from chapter IV «Un père et un fils», which clarifies the bad relations between Julien and his father. The father finds him reading the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* and gives him a blow which leads to Napoléon's memoirs falling into the stream. The reader learns that Julien returns the contempt his father and brothers have for him which leads to frequent beatings. He stands out from them, with his thoughtful nature and pale appearance, which goes with his good looks, so that he is at least admired by the girls. The early interest he attracts, despite his unsociability, foreshadows his entanglements with two women which take place despite his apparent social unsuitability as a romantic interest, certainly in relation to marriage. The dark passionate eyes, which sometimes show great anger and wicked tendencies, also set him apart and hint at what he will become in the novel.

The references to his earlier life include a surgeon-general who is a substitute father figure and connects Julien with Napoléon's Italian campaign of 1796, which launches the great military career that becomes a great political career. The fake Machiavelli epigram might seem extrinsic to all these issues, but the sense of deep rather dark inner energy and the admiration for the grand leader do suggest links with Niccolò Machiavelli that are parts of Julien's story. A story in which passion ruptures habit and social conformity. Machiavelli's writings suggests both adaptation to the way the world is, but also a passionate energy which challenges fate to bring about political goals, that is a personality structure which may apply to more personal passions.

Julien, s'exagérant cette expérience, croyait à Mlle de La Mole la duplicité de Machiavel. Cette scélérateuse prétendue était un charme à ses yeux, presque l'unique charme moral qu'elle eût. L'ennui de l'hypocrisie et des propos de vertu le jetait dans cet excès<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir : Chronique de 1830*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> *Ivi*, p. 41.



Ce machiavélisme la frappait. Quelle profondeur ! se disait-elle ; quelle différence avec les nigauds emphatiques ou les fripons communs, tels que M. Tanbeau, qui tiennent le même langage<sup>39</sup> !

Stendhal spreads two references to Machiavellianism across hundreds of pages to create an equality between Mathilde and Julien with regard to the Machiavellianism they see in each other. Julien first noticing the Machiavellianism in Mathilde. In both cases, Machiavellianism is a blow that shakes Julien and Mathilde, respectively, out of habitual conformity and everyday hypocrisy. The hypocrisy in Machiavelli arises from deeper passions to serve the state and the public, and to imitate antique models of greatness. There is a long-standing tradition of seeing Stendhal as a connoisseur of Machiavellianism, and even seeing this as a shaping force in his novels, particularly *La Chartreuse de Parme*, going back at least to Honoré de Balzac. György Lukács quotes him on this matter in chapter three of *Studies in European Realism*: «He has written the modern *Il Principe*»<sup>40</sup>.

How we interpret this may depend on how we understand Machiavelli and how we think Stendhal understood Machiavelli. There is the stereotypical Machiavelli who as an advocate of evil, or evil undertaken by rulers, or at least of a belief that there are no moral limits to the means used towards an end. There are also good reasons to see Machiavelli as a man of a political strategies motivated by broader passions with regard to republicanism, memories of great republics and great men of the past, the public good, and the good of his home city of Florence, or maybe of Italy in general. This is explained by Machiavelli in the language of passions, in the ideal of a man who has prudence but leans towards a struggle with fortune to bring about the public welfare and the grandeur of the state, coming out of a restless energy and dislike of passivity. So in *Machiavellianism* we see the urge to break with mere habit. Julien's life of love and ambition is one of restless passions which resist habit.

Space and considerations of coherence do not allow a proper reconstitution and examination of Machiavelli's political thought, but a brief synopsis of points widely accepted by Machiavelli commentators is necessary here in evaluating the place of "Machiavelli" and "Machiavellianism" in Stendhal. The way Machiavelli conceives of the life of the passions, in relation to public life, is most eloquently summarised in chapter

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<sup>39</sup> *Ivi*, p. 418.

<sup>40</sup> G. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and others*, translated by Edith Bone, Merlin Press, London 1972 [reprinted from Hillway Publishing 1950], p. 69.

XVIII of *The Prince* where he famously suggests that the ruler has the qualities, so the passions of a human and an animal, which finds mythical expression in the education of Achilles by the centaur Chiron. The animal passions themselves are divided between the fierceness of the lion and the cunning of the fox. The human passions are thought of as expressed through adherence to law, which we certainly see as passionate, if we follow Machiavelli's interest in the purpose of a state whether monarchical or republican, which is to have strong laws and protect the public good<sup>41</sup>. These are not just abstract ideals, they are expressions of Machiavelli's passions for struggling to mould fortune, in founding or maintaining a political community strong enough to endure changing fortunes. Machiavelli's own enthusiasm for a republic with a democratic aspect, combined with his admiration for heroes of state creation and respect for monarchies which have laws and traditions of city self-government, anticipate Julien Sorel's admiration for the Jacobin heroes and for Napoleon. Napoleon might not seem to be the ruler most respectful of laws and autonomy within his own domains, but he did associate himself with the code civil also known as the code Napoléon, and in adopting the title of Emperor legitimised his rule as what has a Roman republican foundation, rather than a foundation in absolute personalised power. Foucault explores the legacy of the idea of a Roman or medieval emperor who commands but does not rule, in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France in *Il faut défendre la Société*<sup>42</sup>. Like the Roman Empire, at least in its early years, some account is taken of the autonomy of the units of the empire, and republican forms are retained with at least some residual functions.

If it is not possible to be sure of how far Stendhal is aware of all these points, or how far we should imagine Julien and Mathilde to have such an awareness, it is at least possible to say that Machiavelli had such an impact on both the development of historical-political understanding and of republican theory, that all these points reached Stendhal in some form, in some context, and shaped his own liberal-republicanism, along with his own view of the place of the passions in politics. The elements and structure of Machiavelli's political theory are remote from Julien's inner reflections, but Stendhal chose to insert references to Machiavelli so we should draw the appropriate conclusions. We should also note that though Julien does not reflect on Rousseau's political theory, his enthusiasm both for Rousseau and for Jacobinism, combined with

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<sup>41</sup> N. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, edited and translated by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997: «The founders of a republic or a kingdom deserve as much praise as those who found a tyranny deserve blame», pp. 47-50.

<sup>42</sup> M. Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société: Cours au Collège de France, 1975-1976*, éd. par F. Ewald, A. Fontana et M. Bertani, Gallimard/Seuil, Paris 1997.

Bonapartism, inevitably leads to this connection. The connection between Rousseau's goals in his political thought and the actions of governments of the French Revolution is questionable, but there is no doubt that the revolutionaries were themselves familiar with Rousseau's thought and were eager to enact the antique republican elements of it. In some ways Rousseau is closer to his conservative critics than his Jacobin admirers, but there is something about the direction of his thought which leads many readers to draw revolutionary conclusions. The admiration for ancient republics, the subordination of religion to the public good, the desire for a pure contractual foundation, and the suspicion of the structure of human passions in a commercial society based on property rights, can lead into revolutionary thoughts.

At the heart of these considerations is a suspicion of habits of conformity and egotism, compared with pure sincerity of the self and sublime absorption in the deepest inner self. The desire for purity of sincerity and self-examination must lead the way of hypocrisy as much as anything, as any reader of La Rochefoucauld would expect, and we see this in Julien's egotism. We also see in Julien that the self which seeks its deepest inner life, will become obsessed with its own confessions of wrong doing, while still insisting on its inner purity. *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* is an extended example of this, exemplified by its most notorious passages where Rousseau admits to abandoning his infant children to an orphanage, while still claiming that he would have been the most tender of fathers<sup>43</sup>. *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* shows at length how the desire for, and assumption of, a pure inner self expressed itself in paranoia and division of the self against itself. These all arise from the wish to escape the habitual nature of existence in society, so obtaining something like a secular form of grace, something like what the Jansenists hoped God would grant them, beneath the *amour-propre* and the conformity, which represent a fall from the purity of self in natural humanity.

In *Le Rouge and le Noir*, we can see the intersection of Machiavelli, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, and Rousseau, along with the legacy of the French Revolution and Bonapartism, in a struggle with habit and the search of some kind of higher passion. In Machiavelli it is the passions of human action and struggle with fortune in politics. In Pascal, it is a struggle to find grace amongst the egotistical and conflicting passions of human nature. For La Rochefoucauld, an ideal of a pure and absolute romantic love looms

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<sup>43</sup> See Matthew D. Mendham, *Rousseau's Discarded Children: The Panoply of Excuses and the Question of Hypocrisy*, in "History of European Ideas", 41, 1, 2015, pp. 131-152, for a full discussion and comprehensive citations.

up in the tangle of self-centred human passions and the tendency to *amour-propre*. Rousseau puts forward the pure passions of inner self-presence, sincerity, and a desire for a political community with ideal foundations, together with an ideal of virtuous self-denying love.

The politics of this in the novel is Danton and Robespierre are models of a passion for a republic of pure virtue and justice, which pays whatever price in violence is necessary to rise above habits of injustice and hypocrisy. At least sometimes, Mme de Rênal herself seems to associate Julien with the most radical revolutionary, Maximilien de Robespierre. Chapter XII of Book II has the title «Serait-ce un Danton», presumably alluding to Julien's attempt to seduce Mathilde and Danton's famous 1792 incitement to revolutionary courage: «Il nous faut de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace, et la France est sauvée»<sup>44</sup>, in the context of war with Austria and Prussia. Napoléon Bonaparte offers the hope that revolutionary republican passion, if it collapses into political chaos, might be directed by an exceptional individual who rises from obscurity to turn France as a great power and who becomes the architect of a European order as an Enlightened empire.

It is Rousseau who ends the list of thinkers above and while we should take account of what precedes him, and what shapes his thought, we must give some priority to Rousseau as the end point. Though Rousseau offers political ideals, he also offers a view of the social world as inherently lacking compared with natural humanity. His criticisms of political economy suggest that the modern commercial world is lacking compared with the relative lack of commercial society in ancient republics, and that he even has an aversion to allowing the growth of economies of monetary exchange and external trade. This is not to say that Rousseau advocates primitivism or a literal return to ancient republics based on slavery. It is to say that Rousseau has a very traditional belief that the human world tends to get worse over time, and that to some degree reforms requires awareness of what has been lost. The belief that the world becomes worse over time can be found in Plato, in Polybius, in Cicero, in Tacitus, and many other ancient writers who think of history as the story of declines from an early point of divinely inspired goodness. This is particularly evident in Plato's *Republic*. Other versions of it can be found in Polybius' belief that any form of political authority is corrupted over time by human weakness. We can see similar assumptions in the writings of Cicero and Tacitus about the history of Rome. This has continued into the present with the conviction of many

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<sup>44</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, cit., p. 317.

conservative thinkers that progress is to be regarded with at least scepticism, and often outright rejection.

This any force on the natural tends to be seen by Rousseau as some kind of loss, but also necessary to development. Language itself requires some subordination of natural force, the way we naturally articulate sounds. The social contract is just but requires a painful loss of natural liberty. The relative spontaneity and naturalness of the earliest communities is eroded by the violence of property and the associated rise of *amour-propre*. The natural pity of pre-social humans is not a perfect morality, but has a purity lost in *amour-propre*.

Julien Sorel goes through a series of moves which roughly parallel Rousseau's anxieties about historical development. Julien's relatively natural and innocent life reading by the mill, is disturbed by the move to tutor Mme de Rênal and then have a love affair with her. This love affair is idyllic and innocent compared with the life of the seminary. The jealousies of the seminary are themselves innocent in comparison with the intrigues in Paris and life in the grand home of the Comte de La Mole. The love for Mathilde is influenced by ambition and strategies, even if it does show some purity of passion. This corruption is itself ended by the jealousy of Mme de Rênal who becomes herself prey to intrigues. Julien's attempted murder of Mme de Rênal is the return of a kind of spontaneous natural passion, but itself shaped by the kind of self-consciousness and inner division which constitute Rousseau's autobiographical writings, and in a particularly disturbed way in *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*.

There is no argument here that Stendhal deliberately constructed a kind of application of and commentary on Rousseau in his novel, but the importance of Rousseau for Stendhal shows itself in the architecture of the novel, as well as in direct reference to Rousseau. It is not a Rousseauesque novel, but it is a novel which could only appear after the writings of Rousseau and is full of traces of Jean-Jacques. We can see this in the significance, in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, of the movements between social habit and more inner self-absorbed modes. The novel does not exactly justify this in its entirety, as it ends in attempted murder and the execution of the individual who has broken traumatically with law. It does present a vision of why humans are constantly drawn to a break with habit, by going back to inner passions. It shows the egotism of *amour-propre* and the inevitable egotism in which we try to break with the habits of *amour-propre* in gestures of pure passion.

Clarification of Stendhal's intersection of psychological and political themes can be found in György Lukács, even though his approach is sometimes reductive and schematic with regard to social and political explanation; this still allows some great insight into Stendhal's heroes as men who feel exceptional and long for a more heroic phase in the emergence of the bourgeois-liberal world:

The fate of these characters is intended to reflect the vileness, the squalid loathsomeness of the whole epoch – an epoch in which there is no longer room for the great noble-minded descendants of the heroic phase of *bourgeois* history, the age of the revolution and Napoleon. All Stendhal heroes save their mental and moral integrity from the taint of their time by escaping from life. Stendhal deliberately represents the death of Julien Sorel on the scaffold as a form of suicide<sup>45</sup>.

Lukács' (and Balzac's) thoughts on politics in Stendhal are confirmed and elaborated by Dennis Porter in the chapter on Stendhal in *Rousseau's Legacy*, where he refers to *Le Rouge et le Noir* as «probably the first, and certainly the most important, early example of a political novel in Western literature»<sup>46</sup>. He also implicitly elaborates on Auerbach's thoughts about Rousseau and Stendhal, when he suggests that Stendhal criticises Rousseau's supposed assumption of the superiority of politics, as in the ideal ancient republic, by showing the more politicised world of France after the Revolution, even given the reactionary monarchist context of *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Like Auerbach, Porter is in danger of confusing Rousseau with some of his admirers, though it is certainly true that Rousseau's ideal was a republic sourced in the general will of all citizens, acting as a rational virtuous collective legislator. Rousseau's enthusiasm for other forms of political participation and concern is at the very least more qualified. Nevertheless, like Auerbach, Porter shows the relevance of a tension, within Rousseau, between an ideal idyllic inner life and a political communal ideal.

Stendhal's writing reflects the emergence of experience of a world of modern republics in the late eighteenth century in France and the United States, which have a commercial and Epicurean self-interest removed from Stoic ideals of virtuous republics. There is a well established literature on the use of Epicureanism in Enlightenment advocacy of commercial society, though of course it is a matter of debate whether this is based on the

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<sup>45</sup> G. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and others*, cit., pp. 72-73.

<sup>46</sup> D. Porter, *Rousseau's Legacy: Emergence and Eclipse of the Writer in France*, Oxford University Press, New York 1995, p. 78.

best possible understanding of Epicureanism. Examples of scholarly work on the Epicurean aspects of the advocacy of commercial society include *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science* and *Du Châtelet, Voltaire, and the Transformation of Mandeville's Fable*<sup>47</sup>. Machiavelli had already foreshadowed this split, and we can even take it back to Augustine, which might be one reason that Neo-Augustinian Jansenism was such a force in early modern and Enlightenment thought in France, at least up to the time of Tocqueville, who was a very regular reader of Pascal.

Porter places great emphasis on Rousseau's *Les Confessions* and the ways in which Stendhal is both close to its self-revelation, along with some of the personal experiences and distant from its «shamelessness»<sup>48</sup>. The discussion of Stendhal, particularly *Le Rouge et le Noir*, in relation to *Les Confessions* is inevitable given Julien Sorel's own reading material and the general fame of the text. Despite its self-revelation which includes issues of egotism, hypocrisy and personal instability, we can get a stronger view of Stendhal's relation with Rousseau if we think of Julien in relation to *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*, which goes much further in the direction of unstable, even mentally disturbed, consciousness revealing itself. That is related to the place where Julien arrives at the end of the novel and gives a deeper appreciation of Rousseau's exploration of consciousness and self-consciousness.

It is appropriate that Michel Foucault wrote a long introduction to the latter text, given his own lengthy exploration in *Histoire de la folie* of madness excluded from reason, and the argument he makes that the voice of madness should not be excluded from rationality.

*Les Dialogues*, texte autobiographique, ont au fond la structure des grands textes théoriques : il s'agit, dans un seul mouvement de pensée, de fonder l'inexistence, et de justifier l'existence. Fonder, selon l'hypothèse la plus proche, la plus économique, la plus vraisemblable aussi, tout ce qui relève de l'illusion, du mensonge, des passions déformées, d'une nature oubliée et chassée hors d'elle-même, tout ce qui assaille notre existence et notre repos d'une discorde qui, pour être apparente, n'en est pas moins pressante, c'est à la fois en manifester le non-être, et en montrer l'inévitable genèse<sup>49</sup>.

We could even follow Foucault in *Les mots et les choses* in seeing the Marquis de Sade as the real turning point writer of the modern world; and think of Stendhal' writing in

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<sup>47</sup> P. Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003; F. Gottmann, *Du Châtelet, Voltaire and the Transformation of Mandeville's Fable*, in "History of European Ideas", 38, 2, 2011, pp. 218-232.

<sup>48</sup> D. Porter, *Rousseau's Legacy: Emergence and Eclipse of the Writer in France*, cit., p. 99.

<sup>49</sup> M. Foucault, « Introduction » to *Rousseau: Juge de Jean-Jacques*, cit., p.179.

terms of the collapse of representation into delirious fantasies of unlimited desire, of realism as the depiction of natural desires unrestrained by hypocrisy and shamelessness<sup>50</sup>. We could also suggest that Georges Bataille could reasonably have devoted a chapter of *La littérature et le mal* to *Le Rouge et le Noir* and speculate that it has an implicit place in the book<sup>51</sup>. This goes beyond the scope of the present argument, but is useful in thinking of the underlying energy of *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

As Francesco Manzini suggests, in *Stendhal*: «the “idea of *Julien*” is [...] the idea of producing an entirely new kind of male anti-hero [...] rather narcissistic and neurotic»<sup>52</sup>, though Manzini does go to the extreme in portraying Julien as mediocre and uninteresting. The point surely is that Julien dramatises narcissistic and neurotic individuality as present in all, and tending to the anti-social, or even criminal, when followed through by an exceptional individual. At worse, Julien is the dark side of an extravagant mixture of the egotism and romanticism necessary to strong individuality. In all possibilities, he does break through habit in exceptional moments where inner consciousness emerges, in a structure of psychological analysis dependent on Rousseau. As such, he presents a significant examination in literary fiction of the positive possibilities and the self-destructive tendencies of the individual who struggles to breach habit in the exception.

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<sup>50</sup> Id., *Les mots et les choses : Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Gallimard, Paris 1966.

<sup>51</sup> G. Bataille, *La littérature et le mal*, Gallimard, Paris 1957.

<sup>52</sup> F. Manzini, *Stendhal*, Reaktion Books, London 2019, p. 120.