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Stendhal's Theater of Authenticity:

the Performance of *le Naturel* in the Para-Fictional Works of Marie-Henri Beyle

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Laure Murat, Chair

Stendhal's conception of *le naturel* has long been defined in opposition to the theater: for the narrators and the authentic heroes and heroines of his fiction, there is nothing so vile as the histrionic personality who does not live life so much as perform it. But while most critics have interpreted the theatricality of Stendhal's fictional characters and that of his own authorial performance as an accidental lapse into the sort of hypocrisy he spends his *œuvre* simultaneously denouncing, this dissertation argues that his naturalism was not an inadvertent "comédie de sincérité," as Valéry suggested, but rather a carefully constructed "Theater of Authenticity." This theater comprises three performances of authenticity: the social, the private, and the written. To each performance corresponds one part of the Stendhalian self, which simultaneously inhabits three roles: actor, spectator, and narrator. Before these performances were staged in his novels and short stories, they were both

rehearsed and intellectually scrutinized in Stendhal's para-fictional writings—his “nonfiction,” autobiographies, and private journals. I contend that these genres should be read as an *atelier du roman*—the literary space in which Stendhal worked out the *règles du Je* of the authentic self, and how these rules are most authentically transformed into literature. Unearthing this process of intellectualization dispels many Shibboleths of Stendhal's naturalism as well as of the concept of authenticity itself—namely, that both are predicated on the suspension of rational, analytical faculties in order to liberate the raw passion required to fuel spontaneity and improvisation. While authenticity has been understood to be a problem of modern subjectivity, I argue that it is first and foremost a crisis of literacy: a problem of self-consciousness in the relationship between subject and language, which may be traced back to the invention of the phonetic alphabet in Ancient Greece. This self-consciousness is a narcissism of the word rather than of the image, and the source of Stendhal's anxiety of authenticity is his fear of indulging in what he famously called “cette effroyable quantité de *Je* et de *Moi*.” As such, Stendhal's para-fiction should also be read as an *atelier du romancier*, for they provide a narrative to the author's overcoming of this anxiety: after decoding the rules of authenticity, Beyle himself had to perform them in order to become Stendhal, the novelist.

The dissertation of Hadley Theadora Suter is approved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON REFERENCES.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
VITA.....	viii
INTRODUCTION: Stendhal et le Naturel.....	2
1. The Theater and Authenticity.....	27
2. Stendhal as Tourist and Critic: the Consumption and Creation of Authenticity.....	88
3. Not Repetition, But Redundancy: Echo and Tautology in Stendhal's Autobiographies and Private Journals.....	158
CONCLUSION.....	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	239

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON REFERENCES

In keeping with the tradition of Stendhalian studies, I have for the most part cited from the most recent “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade” editions of Stendhal’s writings, and from the Divan collections of his correspondence. The exceptions to this rule are the result of either a lack of availability, or a preference for another edition due to its presentation, editor, and (in the case of unfinished works) the particular manuscript on which it is based.

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“Ne pouvant être beau, M. de Stendhal s’en vengea en se faisant bizarre.”
La Revue de Paris, 4 février 1844

INTRODUCTION: STENDHAL ET LE NATUREL

In this dissertation, I offer an interpretation of Stendhal's naturalism as a *theater of authenticity*. Comprising three performances—the social, the private, and the written—this “theater” functions according to specific rules, whose theorization I trace across Stendhal's para-fictional writings to suggest that these genres should be read not only as an *atelier du roman*, but as an *atelier du romancier* as well. The rules that govern the theater of authenticity, as performed by Stendhal's fictional characters, are the same that Beyle himself adopted and executed in order to become a novelist.

For as long as we have been writing about Stendhal, we have been doing so—deliberately or not—through the lens of *le naturel*, which inevitably breaks down into a question of sincerity and/or authenticity. This tendency dates back to the peak years of Stendhal's career. Take, for example, Balzac's 1840 letter to Stendhal on *La Chartreuse de Parme*, which classifies mid-nineteenth-century French novelists into two schools of creation: there are those who belong to *Littérature des images*, and those others (Stendhal included) who in their repudiation of “[les] grandes images” and “[les] vastes spectacles de la nature” belong instead to the school of *Littérature à idées*, which favors “la concision” and “l'action.”¹ Though he does not use the terms themselves, Balzac's identification of Stendhal's *action*-based narrative in opposition to *imagery*-based lyricism designates *sincerity* and *authenticity* as the defining essence of the author's work at the same time that it reveals what, exactly, these concepts are understood to mean. Sincerity, from *sine cera* or without wax,² is predicated on the repudiation of *style*; authenticity, from the Greek *authentês*, is a system of valuation

¹ Honoré de Balzac, *Études sur Stendhal et la Chartreuse de Parme. Suivies de la réponse de Stendhal* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1997), 24.

² As noted by Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1971), 114.

privileging action.³ Essence over aesthetic; referent over representation; the *thing* over the *portrayal* of the thing. This is, in its simplest form, what we mean when we talk about *le naturel* in the works of Stendhal. Yet this same opposition, articulated as a conflict between *being* and *performing*, underwrites Valéry's famous dismissal of Stendhal's preoccupation with *le naturel* as inauthentic, his sincerity as an insincere "comédie de sincérité" in which Stendhal "plays" at being himself.⁴ But is this not precisely the accusation Stendhal, as a narrator, launches against his own fictional characters, and which they themselves incessantly launch against each other? For Stendhal's authentic heroes and heroines, there is nothing so vile as histrionics—and yet, they themselves cannot stop play-acting. Far from denoting a lack of awareness on the author's part, or a naïve belief in a "*Moi-naturel*," as Valéry argued, this theatrical status is the most fundamental element of Stendhal's naturalism: it provides the missing link to understanding his conceptions of sincerity and authenticity, of the self and of the real. For while we all know the famous line from *De l'Amour*—"On ne saurait trop louer le naturel"—what directly follows is rarely cited: "C'est la seule *coquetterie* permise dans une chose aussi sérieuse que l'amour."⁵

In this dissertation, I proceed from this crucial starting point: that Stendhal's naturalism is a self-conscious *coquetterie*, a *theater of authenticity* that is neither accidental nor incidental, but carefully choreographed and exceedingly self-aware. This "theater"

³ The etymology of *authentés* has wide interpretations. It was recently, and pertinently, defined as "he from whom an action" for the study of authenticity in Rousseau's œuvre. See *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et l'exigence d'authenticité: Une question pour notre temps*, ed. Yves Citton and Jean-François Perrin (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2014). This approach to naturalism through sincerity's rejection of style and authenticity's emphasis on action was solidified by Stendhal's response to Balzac, in which he made his famous proclamation of modeling the prose of *La Chartreuse* on the *code civil*: « je lisais chaque matin deux ou trois pages du code civil, afin d'être toujours naturel. » [Stendhal, "Lettre à M. de Balzac," in *Correspondance* (Paris; Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Le Divan; Kraus Reprint, 1934; 1968), 277.]

⁴ Paul Valéry, "Essai sur Stendhal," in *Variété II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930), 108.

⁵ Stendhal, *De l'Amour* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), 114. Italics are my own.

consists of what I call the *three performances of authenticity*: the social, the private, and the written. I consider the Stendhalian *Moi* undertaking these three performances to be a subjective entity which at any given moment inhabits three simultaneous roles: actor, spectator, and narrator of the self. For Stendhal, the natural self recognizes that while authenticity can never *not* be a theater, its performance or representation must be delivered according to specific rules. If existential authenticity is but a chimera, some ways of being are nevertheless more authentic than others. These *règles du Je* have been widely studied throughout Stendhal's novels, and the theater in particular has become a popular instrument of analysis.⁶ Agathe Novak-Lechevalier's 2012 doctoral thesis gives a historical perspective of theatricality in poetic genres to argue that the theatrical effect first appears independently of the dramatic form in the nineteenth century novel, especially as a result of the use of narrative speech, and through conditioning the reader's emotional paroxysm through critical distance.⁷ Francesco Spandri has considered Stendhal's relationship to the theater as a template for the construction of the self, as well as how Stendhal's criticism of *le comique* and

⁶ Indeed, the subject of the 2009 conference of *L'Année stendhalienne* was "Stendhal/Théâtre." See Agathe Novak-Lechevalier (Dir.), *L'Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012). Most of these studies consider this relationship literally, by examining Stendhal's attempts at playwriting. This dissertation is interested, rather, in the theater as a metaphorical lens for contemplating Stendhal's conception of authenticity. Other articles in this collection, such as those which treat Stendhal as a theater-goer, a theater-critic, and theatrically-inclined, are more pertinent to this metaphorical approach to the theater, and they are addressed as their subjects converge with points of analysis in subsequent chapters. See also Eric Avocat, "Théorie et pratique du théâtre chez Stendhal: un novateur saisi par la tradition," in *L'Année stendhalienne n° 7: Stendhal dialoguiste* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008). And Amina Rachid, "*Armance*. Théâtralité de la parole et repli sur soi," *ibid.* The articles in this collection that treat Stendhal's various unfinished plays follow in the path of Shoichiro Suzuki, *Stendhal et le théâtre*, Collection "Stendhal Club" (Moncalieri, Italy: Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerche sul "Viaggio in Italia", 1998). Suzuki's book takes a chronological approach to each of Stendhal's attempts at playwriting.

⁷ Agathe Novak-Lechevalier, "La Théâtralité dans le roman : Stendhal, Balzac" (Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2007). Additionally, see her article "Lucien Leuwen: le théâtre de l'histoire," in *L'Année stendhalienne n° 9: Lucien Leuwen* (Honoré Champion, 2010). And "Le ton du roman stendhalien: un anti-théâtre?," *Recherches et Travaux Le Ton Stendhal*, no. 74 (2009).

le rire in the theater translates into the methods employed in his novels.⁸ Maria Scott's most recent book puts forth precisely the "paradox" that Stendhal's most authentic, self-determined heroines are also the most theatrical.⁹ The same might be argued, it should be added, for Stendhal's male heroes. Certainly, this is a paradox, but one which must be accepted as a given, an inevitability stemming not only from the representational problems of the author to his text but also of the self to language. It is this focus on the self's relationship to the genealogical triangle formed by (written) language, the theater, and authenticity, as well as my insistence that this is not a strictly "modern" phenomenon, through which my dissertation diverges from previous interpretations of Stendhal's theatricality.

I have restricted this study to Stendhal's para-fiction—his writings published as nonfiction as well as his autobiographies and private journals—in order to illustrate how it is in these genres that Stendhal develops the rules governing the theater of authenticity, rules which pave the way for the staging of authenticity in his fiction. I argue that Stendhal's para-fiction should be read not only an *atelier du roman*—the literary space in which he analyzes and theorizes his approach to fiction—but also an *atelier du romancier*—the topos of an intense process of self-reflection and self-realization necessary to the transformation of Marie-Henri Beyle into Stendhal, the novelist. The performances of authenticity so memorably undertaken by his fictional characters are the same that Beyle himself had to

⁸ Francesco Spandri, *L'art de Komiker": Comédie, théâtralité et jeu chez Stendhal*, *Romantisme et modernité* (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2003). See also "Lire, voir, écrire le théâtre," in *L'Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* ed. Agathe Novak-Lechevalier Lucy Garnier, Myriam Sfar (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012). And "Stendhal et le théâtre: ou l'intégration du comique dans l'esthétique," *L'Année Stendhal* 4 (2000).

⁹ Maria Scott, *Stendhal's Less-Loved Heroines: Fiction, Freedom, and the Female* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013). Similarly, her 2008 article concludes that "Stendhal's writing radically challenges any opposition between the sincere and the artificial, not by revealing the truth behind the lies or the lies behind the apparent truth (although his writing certainly does this too), but by demonstrating the closeness of naturalness to pretense." ["Performing Desire: Stendhal's Theatrical Heroines," *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 62, no. 3 (2008): 270.]

execute in order to become Stendhal. To perform authentically is first and foremost to overcome the anxiety of authenticity, an operation dependent on the debunking, through rigorous intellectualization (so often believed to be hostile to the self's *nature*), of various illusions of authenticity. Often regarded as an end unto itself, Stendhal's preoccupation with *le naturel* should rather be explained teleologically: not just a legacy of Romanticism, not merely an eccentricity of the author's personality, but the very means to his creative end.

Nature, sincerity, and authenticity: definitions old and new

Across his œuvre, Stendhal's lexicon is limited to *nature*, *sincerity*, and their derivatives. He never uses the word *authenticity*, though it is this term which most accurately defines his preoccupation, as will be explained presently. In delineating these concepts, a looming shadow begins to take shape, signaling the legacy of the primary forebear from whom Stendhal inherited his naturalism—this is the shadow of Rousseau.

Since Antiquity, with very few exceptions, *nature* has been defined negatively—as what it is *not* rather than what it *is*. In Clément Rosset's words, it is that which remains after the shedding of all artifice.¹⁰ Such is certainly the case for Rousseau, for whom society is corruption, and for whom the release of man's nature is best nurtured amid the flora and fauna of nature, proper. For Rousseau, and across most of western thought, *le naturel* is a primary color, a monophonic voice, the holy shedding of all contradiction, a purity of self and this self's desires. *Naturalism* is more specifically the yearning for a lost nature, or a

¹⁰ Clément Rosset, *L'anti-nature : éléments pour une philosophie tragique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), 12.

nostalgic refusal of the present moment.¹¹ While Stendhal's naturalism is congruous with these terms, he diverges from Rousseau in his conception of nature or *le naturel*, and not only in that he has little use for bucolic isolation. For though he does not figure in Rosset's book, Stendhal would qualify as one of the rare exceptions to the rule of a negatively defined nature. He corresponds instead to the sort illustrated by the 1816 novel *Adolphe*, in which Benjamin Constant demonstrates man's only true nature to be artifice, his only constant inconsistency. Nature, for Stendhal, is based on a decidedly more positivist notion: it is the layering of the self's contradictions and conflicting desires, one which incorporates the omnipresence of artifice rather than trusting in the self's ability to abandon it.

Twentieth century critical thought was particularly taken with authenticity, but it was also keen on proving the concept to not exist—a trend portended early on by Valéry's *Essai*. Such was also the work of the most definitive theorization to date of Stendhal's œuvre: René Girard's *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (1961) debunks the same *Moi-naturel* derided by Valéry through the notion of mimetic desire; in doing so, Girard simultaneously discredits many of the virtues associated with Stendhal's conception of authenticity, revealing traits like spontaneity, autonomy, and disregard for the *doxa* to not only be farcical, but veritable theatrical currency whose values are socially derived, calculated not autonomously but according to the self's conception of others.¹² Coincidentally, 1961 was the same year Jean Starobinski further invalidated the negatively-defined, Rousseauian conception of a natural self, through his study of the paradoxes of the autobiographical impulse as exemplified by Stendhal, among others.¹³

¹¹ “[L]e refus du présent en tant que tel.” [ibid., 309.]

¹² René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1961).

¹³ Jean Starobinski, *L'oeil vivant: Corneille, Racine, La Bruyère, Rousseau, Stendhal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

While French criticism of the twentieth century, and increasingly of the later part, often worked to deflate the validity of authenticity as a philosophical ideal, members of the Anglo and American critical traditions of the same period can be more generally characterized as, if not believers, then at the very least proponents. Moreover, they have for the most part defined authenticity in contrast to sincerity, as indicated by the title of Lionel Trilling's authoritative 1971 tome, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, which identifies the crucial variable of differentiation to be the virtues' relationship to the *social*. For Trilling, while sincerity is essentially a social gesture, undertaken or performed in order to succeed within communal circumstances, authenticity has an autonomous goal, referring not to man's relationship to others but to himself. With this distinction, Trilling laid a foundation of delimitation that has been upheld by the majority of subsequent studies. Charles Taylor, for example, also defines sincerity and authenticity in direct reference to the social. He insists on the autonomy of authenticity's intention—one is true to oneself in order to be fully, truly, authentically human, rather than to fit in among one's social realm. But he differs from Trilling in that he qualifies this autonomous ideal by recognizing its inability to *escape* the social, the paradox being that the quest for one's inner, authentic voice is necessarily troubled by the simultaneous need for recognition.¹⁴ Jacob Golomb's *In Search of Authenticity* (1995) posits the social/autonomous distinction between sincerity and authenticity in terms of conformity to the prevailing ethos, or the norms that dominate public opinion and social life.¹⁵ While sincerity maintains a "congruence" between the self's inclinations and the prevailing ethos, authenticity depends on the rejection of "any intrinsic value in compliance

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1991), 44-5.

¹⁵ Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Sartre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.

with a given set of standards.”¹⁶ Most recently, Charles Larmore maintained Trilling’s distinction while tackling Stendhalian authenticity in *Les Pratiques du Moi* (2004). He writes that sincerity “is not synonymous with authenticity. Indeed, the latter never signifies a relationship to others that one can also assume toward oneself; it always designates what is, by its very essence, a way of relating to oneself.”¹⁷

But in spite of the overwhelming favor with which Trilling’s distinction has been received and reproduced by his heirs, it cannot fully function in light of the objection put forth by Valéry, Girard, and others, which is that there *is* no such thing as an autonomous self. To continue theorizing, as Taylor, Golomb, and Larmore have done, *as if there were such a thing*—that is, to continue discussing authenticity as harboring an ideal of autonomy even after explicitly recognizing this autonomy as an illusion—is hardly without merit. It is, after all, what Stendhal himself did throughout his works. But for the purposes of this study, I have endeavored to circumvent this rather large caveat by proposing new definitions of sincerity and authenticity that do not depend on the ideals’ relationship to the social. These definitions allow an opposition between sincerity and authenticity to exist, but do not depend on it. They are also tailored specifically to the trajectory of Stendhal’s naturalism, which is a passage from the youthful ideal of sincerity to the later ideal of authenticity, the former inspired and delineated by Rousseau, the latter dependent on “overcoming” this literary father. These definitions respond to the twentieth-century protestation, *But there is no self!*, in the spirit of nineteenth-century positivism: there may not *be* a self, but surely there

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Charles Larmore, *The Practices of the Self*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 10.

performs one. It is on the basis of this performance, rather than on the self's *essence*, that these definitions lay claim to consistency and attempt to outpace the aporia of authenticity.

The definitions are as follows: Sincerity is faithfulness to an emotion. Authenticity is faithfulness to an ideal. This may be an ideal of the self, of the self's idol or idealized other, or of the social itself. The emotion or sentiment to which the sincere self is faithful may be autonomously or mimetically derived. Both sincerity and authenticity may vacillate between the autonomous and the social—at the same time, or independently of each other. They are opposable but not inherently opposed. They may coexist in harmony or in contradiction; at other times one may preclude the other.

These definitions also allow us to get to the heart of the difference between Rousseau and Stendhal. For this acknowledgement that emotion may flare up at odds with the self's ideals is another way of accepting that ideals are one of the externalizations of the self which straddle the territory between sentiment and intellect, between passion and reason, between autonomy and imitation. Ideals are the synthesis of the natural and the affected, of innate inclinations and adopted logics. This is what Stendhal understood, and what he felt Rousseau did not. By assuming that true sentiment would always align with the self's ideals, that the only necessary work was to *access* that sentiment, Rousseau never made it past the realm of sincerity. This recognition is what built the bridge upon which Stendhal evolved from sincerity to the ideal of authenticity.

Dating the concepts

No matter how the virtues are differentiated from each other, sincerity and authenticity have been universally understood to be problems of modernity, the former

believed to predate the latter. If the birth of sincerity is attributed to Rousseau and its childhood to Romanticism,¹⁸ its pre-gestational period supposedly began with the Renaissance-era origination of the notion of the individual; its insemination is surmised to have taken place the next century with Descartes' *Cogito*; its gestation coinciding with the second half of the eighteenth century, to the period also credited with ushering in the revolutionary virtue of originality.¹⁹

Here is where the genealogy of sincerity begins to bleed into that of authenticity. Just as Girard has explained the myth of the Romantic *Moi* as stemming from the anxiety of equality, necessitating the positioning of the self above the rival *other*, Taylor has similarly explained the rise of authenticity as resulting from the flattening of societal hierarchies, whereby the onus of self-worth and self-realization was transferred from the external to the internal: from society to the individual. If the post-revolutionary context began with a demand for sincerity of the individual in his quest for self-determination, this ultimately transformed into a demand for authenticity, as this “flattened” social context came to be perceived as both homogenized and alienating, due to the rise of the bourgeoisie and to the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution. The self came to be experienced—like nature itself—as something lost that must be found, this search representing the most crucial part of self-determination.

¹⁸ The most notable exception would be Henri Peyre, who pegs Montaigne as the first author to propagate the virtue of sincerity, through his attempt to expose himself “tout nud” in his *Essais*. [Henri Peyre, *Literature and Sincerity* (New Haven and London; Paris: Yale University Press; Press Universitaires de France, 1963).]

¹⁹ See Roland Mortier, *L'Originalité: une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des Lumières* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1982), 9-11. Mortier also credits Rousseau with solidifying originality as a new aesthetic standard. [ibid., 151.] Rousseau is similarly pegged as the innovator of authenticity in: Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity: A Study of the Social and Ethical Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993). Marshall Berman traces the rise of authenticity, as the ultimate goal of individual identity, to eighteenth-century Paris, naming Montesquieu alongside Rousseau as its greatest proponents, in a quest he characterizes as antithetical to bourgeois, capitalist values. [Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).]

This is the era of subjectivation, in Taylor's words: it was inaugurated by Johann Gottfried Herder, a German philosopher admired by Stendhal, who was the first to suggest that every man has an "original way" of being human.²⁰ It is what Golomb describes as the "shift from philosophy to philosophers," as heralded by Kierkegaard and continued by Nietzsche, who both conceived of authenticity—and truth itself, for that matter—as a subjective, lived experience, in contrast to the objectivist tradition embodied by Hegel.²¹ It is what Baudelaire's *Correspondances* is credited with epitomizing through poetry, though it is what the novel as a genre also assumes: that truth is most accurately expressed through the individual's relationship to the world, as articulated through his senses.²²

These are the contours of the genealogy of sincerity and authenticity, as they have been theorized over the past century or so. Without contesting the significance of any of these factors, my first chapter proposes a new genealogy of authenticity, based less on the language of cultural changes and more on language itself, as a crisis of self-consciousness over the distance between representation and referent, the self-aware anxiety of the space between signifier and signified, the angst of perceiving difference (or *différance*, for that matter) between the meaning of the "thing" and the "thing" itself.

²⁰ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 28.

²¹ Kierkegaard wrote in his journals at the age of twenty-two: "The thing is to find a truth which is true *for me*, to find the idea for which I can live and die." [Søren Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 15.] Golomb also notes a difference between Kierkegaard and Rousseau in their movements of subjectivation: like Stendhal, Kierkegaard's prescription of intense self-reflection is opposed to the asocial sincerity endorsed by Rousseau. His search for authenticity demands rather an intentional engagement with the social world—no matter how restrictive or immoral this world may be. For Nietzsche, too, truth and authenticity corresponded to the subjective notion of truthfulness (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) rather than the objective truth (*Wahrheit*); the subject who searches for the truth of his world rather than of the world itself is he who finds authenticity. [Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Sartre*, 68.]

²² See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957).

This is, in its simplest terms, the passage from sincerity to authenticity; it is what appears as a literary phenomenon for the first time in Stendhal's writing: the realization that the lost self, whose absence was first voiced by the rise of sincerity as a cultural virtue, is but an *idea* of the self. The truth about sincerity, Stendhal's writings make clear, is that part of the search for the lost self is the recognition that only the representation, and not the referent itself, may be found. Authenticity, as a problem of ontology, then becomes amplified when it becomes literature; it necessarily becomes a problem of writing—of not only the replacement of the *self* by its *idea*, but of the replacement of this *idea of the self* by *words*. This quandary is narrated through the trajectory of Stendhal's œuvre, and also through the cross-section of Romanticism and Realism.

But if Realism continued Romanticism's campaign of subjectivation through its depiction of bourgeois protagonists, it replaced its predecessor's aesthetic ideal of art as autonomous—art for art's sake—with a revolutionary innovation, an aesthetic ideal based on the erasure of all art. While Romanticism's primary concern is with sincerity, Realism borrows its emphasis on the individual's subjective truth and imbues it with self-conscious attention to the representation of this truth; in other words, Realism replaces sincerity with authenticity because it more explicitly questions the function of representation. The erasure of the trace of representation, by another name, is the performance of authenticity. From sincerity to authenticity; from Romanticism to Realism; from representing the self to representing the self's self-representation. From Rousseau to Stendhal.

The narrative of Stendhal, reader of Rousseau, has been told as the classic story of paternal rejection. In some ways, my suggestion that the trajectory of Stendhal's relationship to Rousseau consisted of not only the overcoming of an idol but also the replacement of ideals—sincerity by authenticity—supports this narrative, but like any literary patricide, this one was not without ambiguity and ambivalence.²³ “”

On the one hand, Stendhal's renunciation of Rousseau is explained by his frequent derision of the latter's heavy-handed style, replete with “faussetés,” “charlatanisme,” “emphase,” and “pédantisme.”²⁴ On the other, it is precisely Rousseau's “phrases si belles” that Stendhal continued to cherish long after his conversion to the anti-style promulgated by the Idéologues.²⁵ And while this repudiation of Rousseau's style is, down to its etymological root, tantamount to a denunciation of Rousseau's sincerity as well, Stendhal nevertheless frequently betrays a certainty that he was in fact *more sincere* than Rousseau himself. A letter

²³ For an exhaustive compilation of these ambiguities, see Victor Brombert, “Stendhal, lecteur de Rousseau,” *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 92 (1958): 463. The article disproves the notion that Stendhal's “conversion” from 1803-6 to *l'Idéologie* was an unequivocal rejection of Rousseau, as Beyle in reality continued to read and admire Rousseau in fact throughout his life. [ibid., 464.] See also Francine Marill Albérés, *Le Naturel chez Stendhal* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1956).

²⁴ Again, we have Brombert to thank for assembling the various pejoratives used by Stendhal to describe Rousseau's work. [Brombert, “Stendhal, lecteur de Rousseau.”] For the sake of interest, I will list his sources for the three that I have borrowed: “faussetés” comes from Stendhal's 1840 letter to Balzac [Stendhal, “Lettre à M. de Balzac,” 270.] “Charlatanisme,” “emphase,” and “pédantisme” come from *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade”, 1982), 768, 352, 492.

²⁵ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 939. If Stendhal is often said to have been a nineteenth-century author with eighteenth-century sensibilities, this is in no small part due to his adherence to the ideas put forth by this group, with Destutt de Tracy, whose salon he memorialized in *Henry Brulard*, standing in as a flesh-and-blood replacement for the renounced patrimony of Rousseau. Cheryl Welch's study of the role of the Idéologues as stepping stone between the Ancien Régime astutely traces the group's “illumination of those changes in cultural sensibilities at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries that are at the root of the elusive concept of modernity.” [Cheryl Welch, *Liberty and Utility: The French Idéologues and the Transformation of Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 1.]

written in 1835 reads: “J’écris maintenant un livre qui peut être une grande sottise ; c’est *Mes Confessions*, au style près, comme Jean-Jacques Rousseau, avec plus de franchise.”²⁶

A conceivable explanation for the contradictions in Stendhal’s relationship to Rousseau’s sincerity and style lies in the possibility that authenticity is derived, in part, from the recognition of *sincerity as a style itself*. For Stendhal, this is what Rousseau did not do; it is what he then attempted. This lack of awareness extends far beyond the problem of sincerity. Compare, for example, the two authors’ approaches to the matter of originality. In *Les Confessions*: “Moi seul. Je sens mon cœur et je connais les hommes. Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j’ai vus ; j’ose croire n’être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent. Si je ne vaudrais pas mieux, au moins je suis autre.”²⁷ Whereas Rousseau actually believed himself to be original, Stendhal cannot help but treat the concept with a certain irony, transforming Rousseau’s declaration of singularity into an interrogative (“Ai-je été un homme d’esprit ? Ai-je eu du talent pour quelque chose ?”).²⁸ Where there is for Rousseau only certainty, there is for Stendhal acute anxiety, both generally speaking and in relation to Rousseau particularly: “Dois-je en tout parler comme Rousseau ? C’est une question qui m’inquiète.”²⁹

²⁶ Stendhal, "Lettre à M. Levavasseur, Libraire à Paris. Civita Vecchia, le 21 novembre 1835," in *Correspondance* (Paris; Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Le Divan; Kraus Reprint, 1934; 1968), 310. This letter is cited in: Raymond Trousson, "Rousseau, Stendhal, et l'autobiographie," *Bon à tirer: revue littéraire en ligne* 73 (2007). Trousson’s article also notes that Stendhal describes his efforts towards writing *Vie de Henry Brulard* as consisting of “moins de talent et plus de franchise que Rousseau.” [Stendhal, "Lettre à Mme Jules Gauthier, à Saint-Denis."] We should interpret talent, in this instance, more as artifice and less as aptitude. See also Raymond Trousson, *Stendhal et Rousseau: Continuités et ruptures* (Cologne: DME-Verlag, 1986).

²⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions. Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin; Marcel Raymond; Robert Osmond, vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1959), i, 5.

²⁸ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 533.

²⁹ *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, ed. Victor Del Litto, vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1981), 617. This difference also extends to their respective relationships to predecessors, as Richard N. Coe notes: “Rousseau claims uniqueness, yet his literary form is tied to tradition; Stendhal is constantly citing his models and authorities, and yet every page prefigures developments which lie still in the future.” [Richard N. Coe, "Stendhal, Rousseau and the Search for Self," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 16 (1979): 40.] Likewise,

It is also at the point of self-awareness where Stendhal diverges from Rousseau over the possibility of representing sincerity through writing. This divergence is not necessarily immediately obvious. Take, for example, Stendhal's oft-cited line, at the beginning of *Henry Brulard*, which describes the work's intention to classify or categorize his life "comme une collection de plantes."³⁰ For what is at first glance a tip of the hat to the lexicon of Rousseau might also be read as a send-up of the seriousness and scientific accuracy with which Rousseau imagined his autobiographical process to be imbued. While he admits to the possibility of factual errors in his *Confessions*, due mostly to lapses in memory, he nevertheless insists on the consistent truth of the fabula being relayed. Stendhal, on the other hand, commences *Henry Brulard* with a bald-faced lie—the story of his having been a soldier at Wagram, a tale whose fallacy is acknowledged just pages later, as he contemplates the impossibility of sincerity in autobiographical writing. And while Rousseau is willing to admit certain literal exhibitionistic tendencies, the most infamous example being of course his penchant for exposing himself to women in dark alleys, he is less ready to acknowledge the literary exhibitionism implicit in the writing of the self. Stendhal, on the other hand, lingers in his deliberation on this second type of exhibitionism, while the character of Henry Brulard is painted as a much more modest figure—never naked, perpetually "clothed." While Rousseau recounts his process of rewriting and editing in search of literary perfection, Stendhal insists, contrarily, on a total lack of revision; while the structure of the *Confessions* are perfectly modeled after the epic formula of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme* put forth the idea that if sincerity is but a style, it translates, structurally,

Gita May attributes Stendhal's criticism of Rousseau to the fear of being but one of his imitators. See Gita May, "The Rousseauistic self and Stendhal's autobiographical dilemma," *Oeuvres et Critiques* X, I (1985): 20. And "Préromantisme rousseauiste et égotisme stendhalien: Convergence et divergences," *L'esprit créateur* 6 (1966).

³⁰ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 548.

into rambling, digressive works which are left “unfinished.”³¹ This contrast of Rousseau’s confidence versus Stendhal’s skepticism illustrates the discrepancy between their respective faiths in the potential of autobiography as a genre, and in the possibility of self-knowledge as well. Many critics have noted that where Rousseau assumes a priori expertise, claiming to write what he knows, Stendhal narrates phenomenological discovery—the phenomenon of discovery being the very process of writing (“je devrais écrire ma vie, je saurai peut-être enfin, quand cela sera fini dans deux ou trois ans, ce que j’ai été”).³²

For the purposes of this study, however, the most crucial distinction between Rousseau and Stendhal stems from their respective conceptions of what or who constitutes the *spectator* of the self, and how the self must relate to spectatorship in the name of sincerity or authenticity. For Rousseau, the entity of the spectator takes a traditional form—it is, quite simply, other people who both elicit and inhibit the performance of the self. Achieving sincerity, as it logically follows, is a matter of avoiding others: the best way to stop performing is to remove that factor which renders the self’s behavior a performance—the audience. The only way to escape *le regard d’autrui* and a *doxa*-determined existence is to retreat into solitude—a notion echoed by many other philosophers of authenticity.³³ On one level, Stendhal’s problem of authentic performance is theorized based on this conception of the spectator-as-other; the navigation of this spectatorship takes place during the social

³¹ These are noted in Trousson’s article, and Coe echoes this observation: “Rousseau, for all his achievement, is never more than half-aware of the snags and difficulties which we have outlined, and skates happily over the surface of concealed traps, whereas Stendhal is agonizingly conscious of them from the outset.” [Coe, “Stendhal, Rousseau and the Search for Self,” 38.]

³² Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 533.

³³ This is at the root of pre-existentialist and existentialist thought, from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Sartre. Golomb writes of the first two: “Kierkegaard and Nietzsche “Kierkegaard and Nietzsche started from the solitary individual who strove to attain genuine selfhood in isolation from the common world and, after attaining authenticity, had to protect it from the inroads of society.” Sartre he likens to Rousseau in his assumption that corruption of the self’s authenticity “is brought about by sociability.” [Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Sartre*, 99, 129.]

performance of authenticity. But Stendhal's great innovation, the issue with which he most significantly distinguishes himself from Rousseau, is his introduction of what I call the *self-spectator*. This is the entity behind the *regard sur soi*, whose gaze upon the self is infinitely more inhibitive than the *regard d'autrui*. The very name of the self-spectator again belabors the premise of this dissertation, of Stendhal's conception of authenticity as theater. Exploring the genesis of this relationship between authenticity and the theater is the undertaking of my first chapter.

Chapter One: the theater and authenticity

Why is the discussion of authenticity, as an ontological pursuit, mired in the lexicon of the theater? What does it mean that those who fail in this quest are referred as actors; that inauthenticity is not just false or morally flawed, but theatrical? To be sure, the metaphor is congruous with more or less contemporaneous historical developments: the age of sincerity, dated as it usually is to Rousseau, directly follows France's seventeenth-century apex of theatrical production: the century of classicism, a time when the dramatic form infiltrated popular conscience to a higher degree than ever before and served as the lingua franca of cultural narrative currency. This chapter asks, however, whether the link between the theater and authenticity is more than just coincidental.

In response, I explain that the inauthentic personality is conceptually aligned with the figure of the actor due to three primary "crimes" committed by the latter: *imitation*, *overdetermination*, and *playing to the crowd*. While many of these issues, which are essentially moral affairs, have figured in the philosophical inquiry into the theater from Plato to Diderot to Rousseau, I attempt to determine in this first chapter how for Stendhal the moral

dimension of these questions intersects with the aesthetic. For Stendhal, the crime of imitation is encapsulated by the hypocrisy of Restoration-era nobility, who refuse to acknowledge the realities of their historical present; his treatment of overdetermination vacillates between idealizing the notion of passion-driven behavior by portraying it as authentically “out of one’s control,” and revealing this sort of behavior to be a histrionic performance in its own right; finally, Stendhal toys with the sin of “playing to the crowd” by demonstrating that what is generally understood to be a mark of hypocrisy (a fluid, unfixed self) is, rather, a reconstitution of the self’s authenticity as an insincere relationship to the real—as the recognition of the real-as-theater. All of these crimes unveil the precarity of autonomy, for when the actor fails to successfully perform the illusion of this ideal, he betrays the most crucial tenet of authenticity, whereby the self’s *naturel* must appear to be a virtue enacted without effort or intention. Stendhal’s solution is to adhere to this tenet, but as an explicit performance: he outlines various methods of disguising ambition and/or intention as *effortless*, while simultaneously calling attention to the effort this illusion requires.

Because authentic performance is a crisis of self-conscious representation, it may also be called a crisis of *literacy*, in that it recognizes, and suffers from this recognition of, the gaping distance between signifier and signified. This is my basis for offering a new genealogy of authenticity which, instead of originating from problems of modern subjectivity, stretches all the way back to the dawn of the theater in ancient Greece during the sixth century B.C. By understanding the dramatic form as resulting from the invention of the phonetic alphabet, as the theatrical performance manifests a process through which the self takes on the letter’s representational function, authenticity then arises when the self adopts the representational anxieties imposed onto written language: *fixity*, *novelty*, and *comparison*. Stendhal’s theater of authenticity hinges on the relation of the self to its social world, to be

sure, but more crucially on the relation of the self to language. The triangulated relationship between the alphabet, the theater, and authenticity is depicted throughout Stendhal's œuvre as what I call *l'embarras du Je*—the angst he suffers from his self's being transfigured into the *word* of himself, and his inquiry into whether such a representational endeavor is but narcissism.

Three performances of authenticity: the social, the private, and the written

Once ensnared in the anxiety of authenticity, or in the consciousness of its representational fate, the self is condemned to perceive as secondary or derivative that which it longs to experience as primordial. The three performances of authenticity I trace throughout Stendhal's works are attempts to alternatively reconcile the self to the semantic and ontological distance between referent and representation, or to bridge this divide.

The social performance of authenticity is predicated on the assumption that for Stendhal, Rousseauian isolation is not an option. Because spectatorship cannot be willfully disregarded, its presence must be incorporated into the self's performance. Likewise, because the self's consciousness of its representational function cannot simply be "forgotten," the social performance puts forth certain methods of managing this consciousness. Some of these have undeniably aggressive aims, such as the retreat into silence, or the reversal of roles through which the actor transfers his own anxiety onto his spectator. Others are more congenial by nature, including sublimation of the "secondary" signifier into a "primordial" signified, and the construction of a "miniature" authentic social world that may be briefly enjoyed by two interlocutors within a larger social context of affectation and inauthenticity.

The private performance outlines a method for attempting authenticity in solitude. Having established the self-spectator as the most inhibitive force acting upon the self's theater of authenticity, this performance is perhaps the most difficult to execute. This is because while the social and written performances may succeed through the use of unilateral artifice—the duping of the spectator or reader through the deployment of theatrical illusions—the private performance cannot function if it depends on the “duping” of oneself by oneself. As such, the private performance is enacted for the most part through either *appeasement*—transforming the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*, or *distraction*—engaging with external stimuli, such as fine arts, music, or literature, in order to temporarily shake off the chains of self-inhibition.

If the social performance is primarily concerned with the actor-self, and the private performance with the self-spectator, the star of the written performance is the narrator-self. In Stendhal's fiction, this saga takes the form of characters who are perpetually under the influence of an inescapable voice in their heads, narrating their own actions in real-time—the Bovarysme phenomenon, which later in the nineteenth century became somewhat normalized into the literary experience, and which has since been transliterated into its modern day cinematic equivalent, whereby modern subjectivity is often described as living out the movie, rather than the novel, playing in one's head. But just as George Orwell, in *Why I write*, explained that little voice in his head as the driving force of his literary vocation, for Stendhal, too, the performance of the narrator-self takes an explicitly written form. Its task is composed of two distinct duties: either *writing the authentic* or *writing authentically*. The differentiation between these two goals allows us to situate Stendhal within the historical crossroads of Romanticism and Realism, and to apply his theory of the *illusion théâtrale*, put forth in *Racine et Shakespeare*, to the rest of his literary production.

These are the structural foundations upon which the subsequent chapters are constructed. Three performances; three roles. As their rules are cobbled together within the confines of Stendhal's nonfictional and autobiographical writings, another narrative begins to unveil itself, which is the story of how Beyle himself analyzed and theorized these performances. This intellectualization of his own naturalism—so often believed to be predicated, in the name of *passion* and *bonheur*, on precisely anti-intellectualism—would provide him with a sort of *mode d'emploi* of authenticity, which he needed not only to *recreate* in his fictional works but indeed *in order to create them*—in order to become Stendhal, the novelist.

Chapter Two: Stendhal's nonfiction

The chronology is not insignificant: though he continued to write nonfiction throughout his career, most of Stendhal's work in this genre was completed before he began publishing fiction. *Rome, Naples et Florence*, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, *Vie de Rossini*, the *Salon de 1824* essay, and *Promenades dans Rome* all appeared before *Armance*, Stendhal's first novel, was published in 1827. The literary début of “M. de Stendhal” took place in the realm of the real rather than of Realism, his subject matter ranging from art to music, from the pope to Rossini, from the tragedies of Alfieri to the romances of the Milanese nobility. But the one rather large caveat is that these works cannot be unambiguously classified as nonfiction. By identifying the various types of fictionalization at work, I demonstrate how these “tricks” are that which justifies reading these publications as proto-fiction, as they would go on to become narrative techniques crucial to his novels. The breadth of Stendhal's nonfictional subject matter, and his emphasis on his own foreignness in the milieus described, hint at

Stendhal's construction of the ideal fictional narrator as part-expert, part-tourist. If the Realist novelist forged the model of a divine narrator who is omniscient, omnipotent, and all-knowing, these works might be considered exercises in expertise, through which Stendhal inches closer to the godly role of novelist—but not without considerable ambivalence resulting from how the narrator's performance at times finds itself at odds with the fundamental tenets of authenticity. The various tropes that produce the illusion of authenticity provide entrée into a psychoanalytic interpretation of Stendhal's reluctance to perform as a fear of narcissism; specifically, it is a *narcissism of the word*, in which the self overidentifies not with its own "image" but with its (written) linguistic representation. This is his famous fear of saying *I*, his embarrassment over "cette effroyable quantité de *Je* et de *Moi*," and it is the explanation behind both Stendhal's début in the realm of nonfiction, and his peculiar penchant for (mis)titling these works.

The social performance, in this chapter, is considered in the literal setting of the theater—those visited by Stendhal throughout his writings on travel and music. Through his treatment of the Italian nobility as exemplary spectators, and exemplary actors on the social stage, I demonstrate how Stendhal's social performance of authenticity is founded on the paradoxical notion that the more "theatrical" the societal structure, the less "histrionic" the individual. The figure of the Italian is authentic insofar as he relates to his present, his past, and his own performance *as theater*. This tenet explains not only the *naturel* of the Italian character, but also his ability to more authentically relate to a veritable theatrical, or operatic, performance, which he enjoys without vainly preoccupying himself with *being seen enjoying*. The private performance is based on the self's role as solitary spectator of fine arts, an experience in which authenticity is played out as the perceived distance between *the thing* and *the idea of the thing*. The process of collapsing them takes several forms for Stendhal, including

his practice of writing coded marginalia, and his analysis of the relationship between music, memory, and selfhood of the spectator.

Many of the legends of Stendhal's writing habits, such as his speed, spontaneity, and refusal to edit, all of which have been accepted as methods of his *naturel*, are first born—spectacularly, that is, with much attention called to their presence—in his nonfiction. But inspected more carefully, they are unmasked as mere illusions of authenticity, whether this truth is unveiled subtextually (if not explicitly, then at least with Stendhal's furtive complicity), or thanks to the reader's ability to compare various versions of a particular work, as is the case for the three published editions of *Rome, Naples et Florence*. Stendhal's comparison of France with the cultures he encounters as a tourist disproves the longstanding assumption that *le naturel* is predicated on a rejection of certain qualities associated—often by the author himself—with French affectation and inauthenticity: wittiness, an ironic relationship to language, literary proficiency and intellectualism in general. That which prevents Stendhal from fully pinning his faith on Italy as the paragon of *naturel*—his disillusionment upon encountering the intellectual poverty of their culture—is also that which allows him to break down the opposition between passion and intellect, a binary which, though inspired by naturalism, must be abolished in the name of transforming authenticity into a practicable performance.

Chapter Three: Stendhal's journals and autobiographies

The third chapter turns to Stendhal's autobiographies and private journals to examine how these served his *atelier du roman*—how they continued the process of dissecting and theorizing the performances of authenticity staged in his novels—as well as how this

process furthered Stendhal's own self-realization as an artist. I commence with the particularities of the self-spectator of autobiographical and intimate writing, whose role is far more varied than in other genres. It is in fact split or doubled, mirroring the authorial split inherent to any autobiographical work: there is not only the self-spectator of the actor-self, but also the self-spectator of the narrator-self, who threatens to inhibit the author's written performance. I argue that this second entity, referred to as the echo, is an innovation made visible for the first time by Stendhal. The echo, as the aural specter of Narcissus, matches Stendhal's fear of saying *I* with a fear of *hearing himself say it*.

The process of outrunning the echo, the attempt at liberation from the *prison of self*, is—not surprisingly—best understood through the lens of the theater: this time, in terms of young Beyle's early ambitions to be a playwright. The question of how Stendhal relates to his own ambition, and the rules he lays out for *how one must show oneself as relating to ambition*, is the most direct route to the essence of his theater of authenticity. The trajectory of his convictions on this matter is encapsulated by the evolution of his notion of *genius*, a development which itself parallels in condensed form the historical transformation of this concept. By considering Stendhal's *De l'Amour* alongside Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, I propose that the key to Stendhal's authenticity is a tautological rhetorical method based on the possibility of *circular contact with the real*. It is this rhetorical device through which Stendhal learns to circumvent, rather than collapse, the distancing between referent and reference, between self and subjectivity.

This chapter's analysis of the social performance works to refute the myth of improvisation as a means of authenticity; on the contrary, passages from Stendhal's early private journals prove that his greatest social successes resulted from instances of careful choreography and calculated demonstrations of what he refers to as *fatuité*. As we learn in

Stendhal's 1805 *Journal*, the myth of improvisation is debunked by young Beyle as not only an illusion, but an ineffective one at that. Through this realization, he concocts a theory of authentic social behavior which foreshadows—almost moment by moment—a famous sequence from *Lucien Leuwen*. This parallel reinforces the reading of Stendhal's analytical treatment of authenticity as not only the method he would use to write novels, but the means through which he would become a novelist.

The private performance of authenticity, in Stendhal's autobiographies and journals, takes the form of the act of reading. *La lecture* is shown to be the most effective means for shaking off the echo, and achieving the subjective plenitude of authenticity, in the haunting intimacy of solitude. It is epitomized by his line, *Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis*, and this formula becomes the guiding principle for the relationship Stendhal attempts to construct for his own reader in the written performance of authenticity. This final performance reveals the fundamental question of autobiography to be a matter of authentically representing the self's relationship, over the course of its life, to its own ambition. I trace the evolution Stendhal's conception of genius through its various iterations, in order to demonstrate how his preoccupation with the idea of the *métier* is that which allowed him to experience his ambition primordially, as opposed to narcissistically, so that he might finally overcome his fear of saying *I*, and more specifically, so that he might finally be able to conceive—and assert—himself as an artist. As its treatment as a performance suggests, authenticity—from Montaigne to Diderot, from the German Romantics to Nietzsche, and of course most crucially for Stendhal—is a movement rather than a moment, an ontological passage rather than a position.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE THEATER AND AUTHENTICITY

Three crimes of the actor

Mathilde de la Mole kneeling at the altar of Julien's severed head before planting on it a final kiss; the spectacular sermons of a heartbroken Fabrice del Dongo playing at preacher; Octave de Malivert enacting his feigned fatal illness on board the ship to Greece before his suicide; Mme Grandet, so enthralled by her tearful performance as Lucien Leuwen's love-slave that she can no longer produce any tears.

The heroes and heroines of Stendhal do not live life so much as they perform it. And yet it is this theatricality that is denounced on almost every page—by the narrator and by nearly all Stendhal's characters—as the signal *par excellence* of the unnatural, *affected* soul. In *Lucien Leuwen*, the word *affecté* and its various derivations appear almost sixty times; variations of the word *naturel* clock in at just under one hundred. If the author's most authentic characters are plagued by the very theatricality that they despise in those around them, the question arises: is there even a relationship between existential authenticity and (not) performing? Why is the discussion of authenticity mired in the lexicon of the theater? And why does self-conscious theatricality manifest itself as the defining trait of human behavior for the first time in the works of Marie-Henri Beyle?

To be sure, the notion of real life as but a theater was, by the time Stendhal began writing, a tired cliché. Beaten into French consciousness—not surprisingly, during the heyday of French theater—by the Moralists (who for their part, were somewhat late to this

metaphorical game), the trope, most famously articulated in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, dates back as far as Epictetus at the dawn of the second century A.D.³⁴

If we subscribe to the metaphor that all the world is a stage, and that everyone in it actors, then to despise theatrical behavior is to hate humanity itself; it is misanthropy, pure and simple. Yet for all of his scathing social critiques, his contemptuous silence at prestigious salons, misanthropy was not generally Stendhal's beat; his only protagonists explicitly defined as such are the gloomy Octave de Malivert (also the sole character to commit suicide), and Lamiel, the *jeune fille sauvage* whose hatred of humanity is permissible because she exists in the fictional context the furthest removed from Stendhal's social realism. As a rule, misanthropy was for Beyle something to be avoided, something he advised himself against in an 1803 journal entry: "éviter de prendre le ton misanthrope qui dépare les ouvrages de J[ean]-J[acques]."³⁵

Stendhal's contempt for theatricality, if not misanthropy, should instead be understood as a hatred directed specifically onto a certain type of behavior that encapsulates what is despicable in all actors, but what goes unnoticed in the *good actor* by nature of his performing successfully. The crimes of the thespian are only visible in either the *bad actor* or the *theater-type*—the layman acting like an actor. Whether on the stage of the opera house or in the *hôtel de la Mole*, the Stendhalian "bad actor" is guilty of three primary transgressions: imitation, overdetermination, and playing to the crowd.

³⁴ A small difference in these two articulations of this idea is significant: while Epictetus urges to "[r]emember that you are an actor in a drama [...] [t]his is your business, to act well the character assigned you," by Shakespeare's time this role is multiplied: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts [...]" See Epictetus, *The Enchiridion*, ed. Albert Salomon, trans. Thomas W. Higginson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1948), 23. And William Shakespeare, "As You Like It," in *The Oxford Shakespeare: the Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 666.

³⁵ Stendhal, *Journal littéraire*, vol. I (Cercle du Bibliophile, 1970), 295.

Imitation, or “You’re doing it wrong”

The actor’s cardinal sin, that of *imitation*, is the crime to which the most theoretical attention has been paid. The question of whether the imitation involved in theatrical performance denigrates the integrity of the self dates back to the early days of ancient Greek theater, where it was treated by Plato, who not only theorized the effects of acting on the soul, but also famously renounced the dramatic form altogether.

Before his rejection of the theater, Plato, like a young Beyle, fancied he would become a distinguished playwright. And so in the story of this ancient philosopher’s relationship to the theater, a pattern is born, whereby the most fervent naturalists are often those whose rejection of what they deem “unnatural” is preceded by flirtations with these very forms. After Plato, and before Stendhal, Rousseau dismissed theatricality in *De l’imitation théâtrale* and rejected the theater in the *Lettre à D’Alembert*, in spite of having created several works intended for the stage.³⁶

The story of Plato’s turn away from the dramatic form is well known: on his way to submit a tragedy into the competition being held at the theater of Dionysus, Plato encountered his future teacher, Socrates, whose words cast a spell over the budding poet and dramaturge. Plato’s renunciation of the theater followed immediately: he burnt his poems and dramatic works and devoted himself on the spot to the pursuit of philosophy. As the reasoning behind this decision is nowhere explicitly outlined, this theatrical act of theater-rejection remains open to interpretation. Which means that philosophers understand it as the privileging of philosophy as the purest and most noble pursuit of knowledge, while those investigating the relationship between the theater and authenticity might find in this

³⁶ For the Platonic undertones to Rousseau’s position on the theater, see David Lay Williams, *Rousseau’s Platonic Enlightenment* (University Park, Pennsylvania Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

anecdote a corollary to Plato's belief that the actor's soul is deteriorated by his identification with the *morally inferior* characters he impersonates.³⁷ This is quite different, however, from saying that *all* imitation corrupts the soul, for it implies two things: first, that imitation of a worthy, noble model exempts the soul from the deterioration associated with mimetic or derivative behavior.³⁸ Second, and implicit in the logic of the first, is that this exemption is due to the fact that mimetic behavior can only for a finite period be called "imitation," as it will ultimately become *naturalized* into the composition of the self.³⁹ But no matter the mimetic source, the ideal of authenticity has been generally understood to eschew imitation for the reason that it subverts the notion of autonomy by suggesting that the self is perhaps not entirely self-spawning.⁴⁰

Stendhal's treatment of imitation sheds light on another manner in which we might understand the mimetic sin not as a crime in and of itself, but one that becomes a transgression only when executed the wrong way.⁴¹ What we find offensive is not only the

³⁷ These remarks were first made relevant to the discussion of authenticity by Trilling. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 64.

³⁸ Before Rousseau contemplated the ethical dimensions of imitation within a republic in his *Lettre à D'Alembert sur les spectacles*, the debate between Socrates and Adeimantus in Plato's *Republic* came to a similar conclusion, putting forth that the imitation of the real must have a didactic goal, with "actors" imitating only the most noble moral qualities. [Mortier, *L'Originalité: une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des Lumières*, 14.]

³⁹ This reasoning is also at the heart of Rousseau's "ancient exception" in his letter to D'Alembert, which pardons the theatrical productions of ancient Greece in light of the heroism and nobility of their dramatic characters.

⁴⁰ Diderot is a rare exception to the discourse of imitation, as he does not view it as a threat to the integrity of the self. In the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, he proposes that authentic imitation takes place when the actor relates to his role insincerely. To *authentically* portray the emotion his character is suffering, the actor should not aim at actually experiencing this emotion. To *appear* to feel greatly, the actor must actually feel nothing. See Denis Diderot, "Paradoxe sur le comédien," in *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*, ed. J. Assézat; M. Tourneux (Paris: Garnier, 1875-77).

⁴¹ There have been several recent studies of imitation and its variants (mimesis, repetition, emulation, etc.) in Stendhal's œuvre. See Spandri, *L'"art de Komiker": Comédie, théâtralité et jeu chez Stendhal*. And Francesco Manzini, *Stendhal's Parallel Lives*, vol. 8, *Le Romantisme et après en France* (Berne and Pieterlen, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2004). And Ann Jefferson, *Reading Realism in Stendhal*, Cambridge Studies in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

fact that the actor incarnates another person (something we are willing to overlook, are in fact desperate to forget, in a good performance), but that he is somehow *doing it wrong*: through his performance, the bad actor or the theater-type reveals himself to harbor an image of human nature and of reality that is fundamentally at odds with our own. *That's not how things are*, we say to ourselves, *that isn't how it's done*. Our contempt arises from both the fact that we feel he has botched his representation of reality, that he is *doing it wrong*, and from the fact that in spite of his error, he has forced us to confront that our subjective vision of this reality does not reign supreme. The bad actor forces us to confront that “what we think” is just that: what we think. Take, for example, the remarks of Altamira during the ball at the *hôtel de la Mole* in *Le Rouge et le Noir*: “Il n’y a plus de passions véritables au XIX^e siècle : c’est pour cela que l’on s’ennuie tant en France. On fait les plus grandes cruautés mais sans cruauté.”⁴² In this passage, the torch of authenticity, usually held by a protagonist, is passed by Stendhal to a peripheral character, so that with this comment Altamira inhabits the authentic point of view in his ability to see the world as a boring shell of its former self, whose rituals persist in spite of being devoid of passion or meaning. Altamira’s words recall Erich Auerbach’s explanation of the particular boredom of the salons described in *Le Rouge et le Noir* as stemming from its Restoration context, where Parisian society was attempting to restore its former glory by re-enacting its more illustrious days of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this time without daring to venture into the sort of political, literary, or religious discursive territory that made those former salons so very vibrant.⁴³

⁴² Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, Yves Ansel; Philippe Berthier ed., vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005), 614.

⁴³ Erich Auerbach, "In the Hôtel de la Mole," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 456.

Collectively, the aristocratic Parisians depicted in *Le Rouge et le Noir* are guilty of the sin of imitation, not because it is corrupting their souls but because—as all of the novel’s authentic characters perceive—they are *doing it wrong*, acting out a social world that does not accord with reality. And yet, with their rejection of their historical moment in favor of a collective game of make-believe, their mimetic performance trumps the reality of the authentic character who sees through it: Mathilde, for example, at this very ball, by refusing to take part in this theater, has no recourse but to articulate her own boredom: “Décidément, ce soir, je m’ennuie.”⁴⁴ This notion of the Revolution as that which interrupted the aristocracy’s authenticity underwrites Lucien Leuwen’s observation about the nobility of Nancy as being provincial actors whose performances betray their perpetual determination to inhabit a *pre-Terreur* time, before the loss of their beloved beheaded monarchs: “Je serais bien dupe de dire un mot de ce que je pense à ces comédiens de campagne ; tout, chez eux, même le rire, est une affectation ; jusque dans les moments les plus gais, ils songent à 93.”⁴⁵ Their affectation is thus specifically attributed to their failure to align their class’s reality with the social reality of France, which in Nancy Lucien alone is capable of perceiving.

Philip Mansel’s account of the decorum of Restoration salons further supports the notion of imitation becoming a sin only when performed in the wrong way. While these Restoration salons strictly codified the social performances of their guests and the physical spaces in which they were staged, the ideal dictating their operating codes had changed from one of *formality* to one of *comfort*: “The rooms were furnished with sofas and armchairs, more informally and with greater concern for comfort than they had been in the eighteenth

⁴⁴ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 612.

⁴⁵ *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1952).

century, when stools and chairs had been arranged in formal rows or circles.”⁴⁶ Like the space of the salon, the social interactions were codified, *but as if they were lax*:

When a guest arrived, the hostess did not rise from her armchair, but merely said *bon soir*, or *bonjour*: you could then move around and talk or remain silent as you wished. While ladies sat talking in a circle, or sewing round a table, men stood in groups known as *petits pelotons*, or leant on the back of the chairs of the ladies to whom they were talking. In some salons they were permitted to lounge, to put their feet on the fender or their elbows on the table.⁴⁷

The problem of the Restoration salon, then, is that it operates according to a code which presents itself as not a code; it is a performance which pretends it isn't one. This historical detail resounds with an important tenet of Stendhal's authenticity, which will be further explored in Chapter Two, whereby the individual's performance of authenticity can only function in a strictly choreographed social context—a code which presents itself as a code, rather than masquerading as social freedom.

At the particular moment of the late 1820s, the anxiety of imitation as a problem of *doing it wrong*—of attempting and failing to reproduce a no-longer reigning reality—was the definitive experience of the entire political spectrum in France. For the royalists, the Restoration court, by the very fact of its return after a loss of power, was likewise necessarily experienced as a *re*-presentation, a degenerated imitation of an ideal of authentic primordially.⁴⁸ For the republicans, this return of the monarchy following Napoleon's fall in 1814 ensured that any subsequent revolutionary activity was doomed to the same fate of

⁴⁶ Philip Mansel, *Paris Between Empires: 1814-1852* (London: John Murray, 2001), 127.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Stendhal's remarks on the court are interesting not only for the manner in which they reveal his inner conflict between aristocratic tastes and republican ideals, but because they seem to corroborate the notion of authenticity as a crisis of literacy, whereby one becomes self-conscious of the symbolic power of the representational word over the referent itself: “[Que Bonaparte] se voulait être roi, il fallait une cour pour séduire ce faible peuple français sur lequel ce mot cour est tout puissant.” [Stendhal, “De la cour,” in *Vie de Napoléon*, Tome I, ed. Henri Martineau (Paris: Le Divan, 1930), 202.]

reprisal—an engagement threatened by the consciousness of its previous failure. This sentiment was thus predestined to be compounded by the rise of Louis Philippe and the house of Orléans following the July Revolution of 1830: if a post-revolutionary Bourbon court is *already* inauthentic because of its poorly executed mimetic performance, the court of the secondary royal branch is then doubly so—not just an imitation gone wrong, but one based on the wrong original source.

So, too, can we understand in Stendhal’s critique of Rousseau that the charge of “affectation” is in fact an accusation of portraying a reality at odds with Beyle’s own. Here, the actor is Rousseau; his performance, his own writing; his affectation, his *style*. Not merely a cumbersome aesthetic choice, Stendhal designates this style as treacherous in its deceit: “J.-J. Rousseau, qui sentait bien qu’il voulait *tromper*, demi-charlatan, demi-dupe, devait donner toute son attention au *style*.”⁴⁹ And again, in his famous letter to Balzac: “Voici le fond de ma maladie : le style de J.-J. Rousseau [...] me semble dire [...] beaucoup de *faussetés*. Voilà le grand mot lâché.”⁵⁰ Style is affectation, whose status as mimetic is dangerous not simply because it is not autonomously-originated but because it misrepresents, forcing the natural soul—in this case, Stendhal’s—to confront a portrayal that does not fit into what he has deemed to be “reality.”

The sin of botched imitation is at the heart of the particular “bitterness” of *Le Rouge et le Noir*’s famous first epigraph—*la vérité, l’âpre vérité*. The truth, the bitter truth, is precisely this discrepancy between the self’s attempt to exist in reality and reality, proper. And this is the revolutionary innovation of Realism: to show that this discrepancy is itself the real. The pre-Realist novel presumes a *sincere* relationship between a character and its novelistic reality;

⁴⁹ *Mélanges intimes et Marginalia*, vol. I (Paris; Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Le Divan; Kraus Reprint, 1934; 1968), 287.

⁵⁰ “Lettre à M. de Balzac,” 270.

Realism achieves its realism, on the contrary, by repositioning this relationship as *insincere*—by giving us characters who fail to live in the “real” because they are too busy occupying delusions of the past—personal, historical, or literary.

It is upon this precept that Stendhal builds his theoretical discourse on the question of imitation, in *Racine et Shakespeare*. The work, first published as two articles in 1823 and 1825, was born of a specific, somewhat scrambled, political and artistic context: the progressives held antiquated literary tastes while the conservatives were arguing for artistic innovations. The liberals were adamant Classicists while the Romantics were staunchly royalist—“plus royalistes que le roi.”⁵¹ Both groups were thus guilty of inhabiting a delusional past, of indulging in imitation-gone-wrong; Stendhal’s defense of Shakespeare aims to construct a *romantisme de gauche*⁵² through which an author might be simultaneously true to his political *and* artistic time—not by eschewing imitation, but by effectuating it properly, in the form of the *tragédie en prose*. How exactly this process of proper imitation takes place will be explored presently as we define the written performance of authenticity, but what Stendhal’s fictional characters tell us is that *Racine et Shakespeare*’s tenet of being true to one’s time, is easier said (or written) than done.

Overdetermination, or “Your puppeteer is showing”

The sin of overdetermination involves the actor taking natural (in the sense of instinctive or universally codified) human reactions or emotions and disfiguring them by rendering them overly recognizable. His actions read as manifestations not of emotions but

⁵¹ See Bernard Leuilliot’s introduction. *Racine et Shakespeare*, ed. Bernard Leuilliot (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1994), 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

of the overwrought recollection of emotions. He transforms the physiological into the overly physical, by deliberately instigating those body movements understood as being out of one's control: the gasp! The flailing arms! Overdetermination is a crime because it reveals the actor to be his own puppeteer, his own god, as he calls attention to the intention and control involved in physical or behavioral manifestations of the self's emotional state. Through his overdetermined physicality, by extending his performance to invoke the physiological, the actor forces his spectator to renounce a particular delusion of sincerity, which posits that being *natural* means relinquishing control to both the instinctive and the physiological, by submitting fully to one's emotions at any given time. This surrender to sentiment is the stated project of both Rousseau and Stendhal's autobiographical works, and their proclaimed *modus operandi*. "Je sentis avant de penser," writes Rousseau in the first pages of *Les Confessions*.⁵³ In Stendhal's words: "Je n'ai de prétention à la véracité qu'en ce qui touche mes sentiments ; quant aux faits, j'ai toujours eu peu de mémoire."⁵⁴ The privileging of subjective truth over objective reality is of course a mainstay of Romanticism; within the context of authenticity, it is this supposed submission to sentiment through which both authors avoid the appearance of overdetermination. As actors of their own written stories, the gesture aims to paint their works as mere transcriptions of emotional states that are out of their own control.

At the level of physical appearance, Stendhal frequently rails against those who allow their self-determining intentions to show by denaturalizing their own *miens* through cosmetics: from the dozens of jabs at the men who wear powdered wigs in *La Chartreuse* (also another an example of inauthenticity through the bewigged men's failure to submit to

⁵³ Rousseau, *Les Confessions. Œuvres complètes*, I, i, 8.

⁵⁴ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 640-41.

their historical present), to two comments in *Le Rouge* bemoaning the young girls who hide their natural blushing beauty behind makeup. The first is the epigraph attributed to Polidori (“Une jeune fille de seize ans avait un teint de rose, et elle mettait du rouge”), followed by Stendhal’s own interpretation of the same lament, this time used as an analogy to Julien’s inability to recognize the success of his seduction of Mme de Rênal (“C’est une jeune fille de seize ans, qui a des couleurs charmantes, et qui, pour aller au bal, a la folie de mettre du rouge”).⁵⁵ In *La Chartreuse de Parme*, the sycophantic judge Rassi incarnates the sin of overdetermination in the court of Prince Ranuce-Ernest IV through the relationship between his corporality and his personality; taking a rare detour into bodily description of his character, Stendhal specifically designates Rassi’s exaggerated physicality as the source of his inauthenticity: from “les mouvements rapides et désordonnés de ses yeux” to the comical image of Rassi approaching the prince “saluant à chaque pas.”⁵⁶

The actor’s overdetermined performance irks the spectator by demanding that he confront an uncomfortable truth: that the self is not always “driven” by its emotions but that it sometimes does the “driving,” and that this choreographic enterprise is not controlled by the unconscious self but by the acutely conscious (and self-conscious) self. This is where Rousseau and Stendhal’s autobiographies diverge: Rousseau seems to believe fully in his power of submission to sentiment, in his ability to let his un(self)conscious take the reins without encumbrance from his own inhibitive self-reflection, claiming, “j’ai dévoilé mon intérieur” to reveal himself “dans toute la vérité de la nature.”⁵⁷ Stendhal, on the other hand, explicitly calls attention to the ways in which his performance is bound at times to be

⁵⁵ *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 421, 26-27.

⁵⁶ *La Chartreuse de Parme. Romans et Nouvelles*, ed. Henri Martineau, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1952), 259-60.

⁵⁷ Rousseau, *Les Confessions. Œuvres complètes*, I, i, 5.

navigated by the self-spectator, who, as the entity in charge of self-image, transforms the autobiographical gesture from one of unveiling to one of masking or deceiving: “Mais combien ne faut-il pas de précautions pour ne pas mentir !,” he writes, before going on to admit that in fact he started his autobiographical work with a lie about his having been a soldier in Wagram in 1809.⁵⁸ By calling his reader’s attention at the start to this fallacious debut, Stendhal thus recognizes that while his nature might be revealed through his submission to a force out of his control, the reins of self-presentation are never quite so easily handed over.

This is the appeal of *le devoir* for so many of Stendhal’s fictional characters: for to designate a deliberate action as a duty is to transform a conscious decision into an uncontrolled one. The “necessity” of a duty strips an “act” of its performative element; it is an action in which intention is disguised as surrender. When Julien takes Mme de Rênal’s hand because he feels it is his *duty*, he attempts to convert a calculated effort into the unconscious action of his own nature: “Julien pensa qu’il était de son *devoir* que l’on ne retirât pas cette main quand il la touchait. L’idée d’un devoir à accomplir, et d’un ridicule ou plutôt d’un sentiment d’infériorité à encourir si l’on n’y parvenait pas, éloigna sur-le-champ tout plaisir de son cœur.”⁵⁹ The motivation behind this “duty” is to permit Julien’s self-spectator not only to avoid feelings of inferiority, but to view his action as proof that in fact his superiority is both *effortless* and *natural*. And yet, self-reflective to a fault and unable to blind himself to the image-making function of his own intentions, he cannot forget the moment of calculation to yield himself fully to sentiment—his heart, recognizing the inauthenticity of the moment, feels no pleasure.

⁵⁸ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 537.

⁵⁹ *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 395-96.

Playing to the crowd

The actor's third sin, that of playing to the crowd, boils down to the fact that he demonstrates a *fluidity of self*. The ethics of authenticity demand that the composition of the self, in contrast to the ever-changing make-up of the audience, be evergreen. In playing to the crowd, the actor privileges the spectator's *reaction* over his own action, while authentic behavior presupposes an utter lack of causality—the authentic self does what it *will* do, circumstances and reactions be damned, because it cannot help but be guided by its feelings. The open acknowledgment of causality undermines the possibility of a self guided strictly by its own intentions or desires, thus revealing the notion of “autonomy” to be a chimera.⁶⁰ This is where Stendhal's conception of authenticity distinguishes itself as at once more sophisticated and more unadulterated than any of his predecessors, save perhaps Benjamin Constant, in that it more *sincerely* represents the reality of human emotions by showing them to be self-conscious, paradoxical, and lacking in autonomy—that is, by showing them to indicate the impossibility of sincerity itself. Consider Stendhal's remarks on the relationship between Julien Sorel and Mathilde de la Mole as being truly representative—as opposed to the depictions of love in the *romans de femmes de chambre*—of modern love or “les mœurs nouvelles” in Paris during the Restoration. In the *Projet d'article sur le Rouge et le noir*, written under the comical pseudonym “D. Gruffot Papera,” Stendhal writes that in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, “il a osé peindre le caractère de la femme de Paris qui n'aime son amant qu'autant qu'elle se croit tous les matins sur le point de le perdre.”⁶¹ The Parisian woman does not invest herself sincerely in affairs of the heart, but intentionally treats them as role-play; she knowingly

⁶⁰ This impossibility is of course part of the premise of Girardian mimetic theory.

⁶¹ Stendhal, “Projet d'article sur Le Rouge et le Noir,” in *Romans et Nouvelles*, ed. Henri Martineau (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade”, 1952), 703.

becomes an actress who plays to her crowd of one lover; she not only engages in games of causality but delights in watching—and tampering with—this chain of actions and reactions that is the *récit* of her love life.⁶²

Stendhal recognizes that it is precisely the deliberate subversion of the primacy of one's own action over the reaction it inspires that makes *Le Rouge* so innovative—so authentic: “Cette peinture de l’amour parisien est absolument neuve.”⁶³ Yet while his written depiction of this inconstancy is what bestows *Le Rouge* authenticity, elsewhere the sin of playing to the crowd remains for Stendhal a crime to be avoided. In the written performance of authenticity, this translates into the attempt to “write for oneself,” as opposed to for the intended reader. Whether such a thing is possible will be explored more thoroughly in the last section of this chapter, but for now we may interpret Stendhal's dedication of his works to “the Happy few” (however this consecration might be articulated in different texts) as the taming of potential critics who might haunt his own imagination as a writer. By painting his readers as few and belonging to the future, or, as in *Henry Brulard*, by envisaging them as gentle and loving “friends,” Stendhal yields to the impossibility of “writing for oneself” while at the same time striving for this goal by rendering his imagined reader as friendly and innocuous as possible. In the social performance of authenticity, playing to the crowd is excusable in only one iteration: that of concealment of the whole truth, or keeping quiet as a means of self-protection. This “negative” performance is pardonable unlike its positive

⁶² While the phenomenon laid out in this article seems to suggest that these Parisiennes suffer from a Bovarysme *avant la lettre*, there is a key distinction. This is a difference in sincerity, which in turn determines contrasting ratios of two of the self's roles, actor-to-narrator: though, as Naomi Schor has shown, Emma's “androgyny” results from her being at once author and actor of her own drama, she maintains a greater degree of sincerity in her adherence to these fantasies than do the Parisiennes of Stendhal's article. As such, she remains more *actor* than *author*, while the ladies depicted by Stendhal, in their insincere engagement with their romantic dramas, are “androgynes” who skew towards the other side—they are more *author* than *actor*. See Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁶³ Stendhal, “Projet d'article sur Le Rouge et le Noir,” 712.

alternative—deceit—but only under one condition: that it be a calculated move by which the hero bides his time, like Julien in the seminary, in the tangle of jealous fellow students, or Lucien in Nancy amidst accusations of republicanism.

The sin of imitation supposes a lack of primordial self that is autonomous and self-generating; it also reveals the self's power to observe and define the world as subjective and relative rather than objective and definitive. The sin of overdetermination reveals the self as its own choreographer, continually making *conscious* decisions about its behavior, as opposed to the idealized model of utter submission to the “driving” force of unconscious sentiment. Playing to the crowd reveals the self to be fluid and reactionary rather than fixed and independently or autonomously determined. The three evils of acting, in their essentialized form, together demonstrate an important—and paradoxical—tenet of the ideal of authenticity: while all expressions of the self must be autonomously originated as opposed to mimetically adopted, these expressions must also appear to have been triggered *without effort or intention*. The authentic self is at once puppet and puppeteer, but this second role must remain invisible, as must the strings of intention through which he choreographs his own movements. The actor is despised first and foremost for this offense, for allowing the puppeteer to be not just visible, but a character in its own right, when the illusion of authenticity requires that only his puppet be seen.

But if we are not talking about actors so much as theatrical personalities—those who show a little too much enthusiasm or “oomph,” the question again arises of why we insist on the metaphor of the theater. Even more so considering that this performative gusto does not originate with the theater but actually predates it. Before the actor there was the ancient orator, who, we can safely assume, engaged in more than a little “flair,” or overzealous commitment to his role. Likewise, the epic poet's performance included elements generally

believed to have first emerged with the theater—from music and dance to costumes and corporeal figures.⁶⁴ Furthermore, many of the physical components that we associate with the theater predate the invention of the dramatic form. As Élie Konigson has suggested, before the physical theater there was the *lieu théâtral*, the theatricalized space whose symbolic significance is announced by various *objets de représentation*: the raised platform of the public hanging as a proto-stage; the *siège*, derived from the symbolic significance of the royal throne; and the *lieu de franchissement*, or those physical forms that lend themselves to metaphors of threshold crossing, such as doors.⁶⁵

We might say that all of Stendhal's topoi are *lieux théâtraux*, or that Stendhalian space is always already theatricalized. Moreover, the *objets de représentation* in his works may often be classified into Konigson's categories: there are the improvised stages such as Fabrice's preaching pulpit or M. Leuwen's rostrum in the Chamber. The *siège* takes the form of the symbolic power of seating arrangements: Julien, having read *Les Confessions*, worries that his impending employment for the de Rênal family will put him in mortifying position of having to dine with the domestic staff: "Mais, avec qui mangerai-je?"⁶⁶ The *lieu de franchissement* is a widely recognized trope in Stendhal, as several of his characters seem themselves to realize the symbolic significance and theatrical undertones of various crossings of thresholds: Julien sneaking through the hall to enter Mme de Rênal's bedroom; or his climbing up the ladder to enter Mathilde's; Gina, after announcing to her domestic staff that she will be allowed to stay in Parma after all, reentering the salon for a second curtain call to the sound of ecstatic

⁶⁴ See: Jennifer Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 11.

⁶⁵ Élie Konigson, "Les objets de représentation au théâtre (XVe-XVIIe siècles)," in *Nouvelle Revue du Seizième Siècle* (Genève: Droz, octobre 1996), 195.

⁶⁶ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 366.

applause. There is one more physical structure, recurring perhaps more than any other in Stendhal's works, through which the *lieu théâtral* seems to anticipate the theater's future transformation into its present-day counterpart: the screen. Its most obvious incarnation takes place in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, during the time Fabrice spends in prison, when he finally manages to saw off a square of wood from the colossal shades blocking his view to the outside world and to Clélia as she tends to the birds outside her window. This little piece of wood, when removed, creates a small, square "view-frame" through which Fabrice can communicate with Clélia, which permits him to both *see* and *be seen* ("qui lui permettrait de voir et d'être vu").⁶⁷ It would be silly to suggest that through this view-frame Fabrice and Clélia become both actors and spectators of a proto-television; less anachronous, perhaps, would be to compare the view-frame to Daguerre's dioramas. The "performance" seen through the view-frame is theatricalized in that it is squared off, encased like a stage; it is removed from the entirety of its spatial context, and thus miniaturized. It is these visual manipulations of Fabrice's reality into a (tiny) theater that allow him to see Clélia—though she turns around in modesty when the piece of wood is first removed—in her true emotional state: "Fabrice pouvait voir parfaitement son émotion."⁶⁸ Here we encounter a crucial component of Stendhal's relationship to theatricalized space: the suggestion that Fabrice is able to access a clear "reading" of Clélia's emotional state through this view-frame seems at first to be a resignation to the inevitability of performance and spectatorship in everyday life. Theatricality, it seems to be suggested here, does not necessarily need to be rejected in order to access authenticity within the social context, as it is that which allows the spectator to see clearly. But one distinction must be emphasized: the inevitability of

⁶⁷ *La Chartreuse de Parme. Romans et Nouvelles*, II, 321.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

theatricality is more threatening to the actor than to the spectator, for as demonstrated by the actor in this scenario, it is Clélia's modesty that preserves her *naturel* in this scene: she turns away from the stage in which the view-frame has encased her.

The view-frame also organizes the social life of Koenigsberg in *Le Rose et le Vert*, in the form of the ground-floor sitting rooms of aristocratic abodes, which orchestrate a spectacular game between men and women of mating age. The young ladies of Koenigsberg, seated at the windows of these salons, spend their afternoons observing male passersby, who for their part cannot see inside the windows, but who know nevertheless that they are being watched and as such cannot help but engage in a performance of calculated candor:

Dans toutes les maisons distinguées l'on voit aux deux côtés des fenêtres de rez-de-chaussée élevé de quatre pieds au-dessus de la rue, des miroirs d'un pied de haut, portés sur un petit bras de fer et un peu incliné en dedans. Par l'effet de ces miroirs inclinés, les dames voient les passants qui arrivent du bout de la rue, tandis que, comme nous l'avons dit, l'œil curieux de ces messieurs, ne peut pénétrer dans l'appartement, au travers des toiles métalliques qui aveuglent le bas des fenêtres. Mais s'ils ne voient pas ils savent qu'on les voit, et cette certitude donne une couleur particulière à tous les petits romans qui animent la société de Berlin et de Koenigsberg.⁶⁹

To be sure, the view-frame is the filter through which Stendhalian consciousness sees itself as being seen by others. The spectator has the advantage of being able to see through to the actor's true nature—whether this involves observational skills that pierce through the actor's feigned candor or, as with Clélia, by understanding the actor's reluctance

⁶⁹ *Le Rose et le Vert. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 2007), 1045. As a variation on the Romantic exigency for *couleur locale*, Stendhal's *couleur particulière* is here identified as stemming from the consciousness of being observed. As the novella takes place in Koenigsberg, we may understand this consciousness as inspired by German Romanticism, in particular, but belonging to more to Realist's transformation of the mimetic function or representation into the metalinguistic—the representation of representation. Moreover, it is this consciousness which endows originality to the "petits romans" of the city's society: it is the letter-self's anxiety of becoming a representation of oneself—and a representation which is original in its self-consciousness, and also self-conscious about its own originality. Again, we understand in this passage the transformation of sincerity to authenticity through the parallel movement from Romanticism to Realism.

to perform—but the awareness of this ever-present view-frame is a requisite for any sort of enlightened authenticity. To clarify within the context of the Koenigsberg parade: while the inauthentic actor struts before the young ladies’ windows knowing that he is being watched, but not knowing that his spectator knows he knows he is being watched, the authentic actor knows not only that he is being watched but that his awareness about this viewing is also known.

In choosing to discuss the problem of authenticity within the lexicon of the theater, it is likely to seem counterproductive to spend several pages proving that what we generally mean by “theatricality” in the context of people and places—that unnerving ardor of the inauthentic personality, or physical space organized in a way that recalls the stage and thus feels inauthentic and “staged”—dates farther back than the invention of the dramatic form. Though this type of “theatricality” may indeed have preceded the theater, it is the birth of the theater in the sixth century B.C. in ancient Greece which gives rise to the concept of authenticity. Furthermore, the problem of authenticity is only the result of the theater insofar as the theater is the result of another system of representation that forever changed Western culture: the phonetic alphabet.

The self as letter: the dawn of authenticity

The problem of authenticity is generally understood to be firmly rooted in modernity, developing out of two important strands of Renaissance thought, both articulated during *l'âge classique* by Descartes: naturalism and, with the arrival of the Cogito, individualism.⁷⁰ One might say that the injection of individualism into naturalism results in

⁷⁰ For a history of naturalism, see Rosset, *L'anti-nature : éléments pour une philosophie tragique*.

the ideal of sincerity, as it transfers naturalism's privileging of primordality onto man. As I have explained in the introduction, critics generally credit the rise of sincerity to Rousseau. The ideal of sincerity transforms into one of authenticity at the dawn of the nineteenth century, as it becomes even more acutely individualistic and naturalistic—this time in reaction to cultural changes such as the advent of the industrial era, and the rise of the bourgeoisie, which, as Charles Taylor has noted, brought along the flattening of social hierarchies and the resulting loss of honor as the social currency of nobility.⁷¹ In post-revolutionary France, the ethos of individualism flourished alongside the country's newly minted egalitarianism; the possibilities of the individual in such a society form the narrative of the authentic self as the *self-made man*, as realized through the rise of Napoleon. To be sure, these historical changes, and especially Napoleon's heroic "up-by-his-bootstraps" tale, are crucial to understanding Stendhal's conception of authenticity. But it is for Beyle also a much simpler issue: removed from its historical moment, authenticity is a problem of how the self relates to language.

Our sense of authenticity is disrupted when we are somehow alerted to the presence of representation; the alarm of inauthenticity sounds when we perceive that there has been a replacement, a substitution, a signifier in the place of the original signified. The actor, like the letter to the phoneme or the word to the noun, holds absolute narrative power over its subject and yet suffers from the same limits of representation—that difference between *standing in for* and *being*. In 1981 Derrick de Kerckhove made this connection when he argued

⁷¹ Taylor also explains the promulgation of authenticity as a social virtue through Hannah Arendt's theories of modernity and modern commodities as being threatening to the collective sense of permanence (see Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 7.) In Arendt's words: "The reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they are produced." [Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, ed. Margaret Canovan (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 95-96.] In this way, the preoccupation with authenticity is also a sort of fear of progress and change.

that the birth of Greek theater was a direct result of the invention of the phonetic alphabet.⁷² Contrary to the widely held belief that the theater emerged out of the Dionysian ritual, a proposition popularized, though ultimately renounced, by Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, de Kerckhove's theory suggests that it was the phonetic alphabet that sparked the shift away from the oral epic and towards the theatrical play.⁷³ This movement from a storytelling mode based on presentation by the epic poet to one of representation by a troupe of actors parallels the difference between speech and the written word;⁷⁴ both depend, moreover, on the literacy of a reader/spectator to translate representation into referent. De Kerckhove has also shown that the invention of the phonetic alphabet caused the self to identify with the letter.⁷⁵ I would like to argue that within the realm of Stendhal's oeuvre, this identification plays out as the self takes on three particular representational anxieties imposed onto the "letter" or written language: *fixity, novelty, and comparison*—that is, the primary issues at the heart of authenticity. As an extension of the problematic of the phonetic alphabet, authenticity is thus mired in the lexicon of the theater because it is precisely in the theater, as a direct result of the alphabet, that the "representational anxieties" of the letter were first explored.

⁷² Derrick de Kerckhove, "A Theory of Greek Tragedy," *Sub-Stance* 9, no. 4, issue 29 (1981): 23.

⁷³ See: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 1993).

⁷⁴ de Kerckhove, "A Theory of Greek Tragedy," 24.

⁷⁵ See "Sur la fonction du théâtre comme agent d'intériorisation des effets de l'alphabet phonétique à Athènes au V^e siècle," *Les Imaginaires II*, no. 10/18 (1979). Also "Theatre as Information-Processing in Western Cultures," *Modern Drama* 25, no. 1 (1982). And "Écriture, théâtre, et neurologie," *Études françaises* 18 (1982).

Fixity

Verba volant, scripta manent. That the introduction of the system of writing brought to language new possibilities of fixity and permanence is quite obvious; what is perhaps less evident is how it is only with the arrival of fixity as a semantic ideal that instability and contradiction can be considered threatening to a referent. Likewise, to flip a well-known maxim from Baudrillard, inauthenticity can only exist where an ideal of authenticity has been created.⁷⁶ And the authentic self aims above all to be a fixed self; only within the sphere of revered stability can hypocrisy emerge as undermining to such a self, otherwise the abandonment of one self and its set of values for another, or the discord between speech and action, cannot be conceived of as unnatural, inauthentic, or morally flawed.⁷⁷ Before the ideal of authenticity there can be no hypocrites.

“Tel j’étais à dix ans tel je suis à cinquante-deux,” Stendhal writes in *La vie de Henry Brulard*.⁷⁸ Also: “J’ai adoré Saint-Simon en 1800 comme en 1836.”⁷⁹ And again: “Mon idée sur le beau littéraire au fond est la même qu’en 1796.”⁸⁰ The autobiographical text is by nature an attempt at *fixity*, but Stendhal’s work in this domain aims not only to capture and freeze the ever-changing self, but also to demonstrate that its capture was *natural, effortless, and easy* because, thanks to his steadfast and unchanging character, his self was *already fixed before even being written. L’homme avant la lettre*—literally, the man before the autobiographical text—

⁷⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss; Paul Patton; Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

⁷⁷ Stendhal’s adoption of the ideal of fixity may be traced to Rousseau as well as to the Idéologues; for both, fixity was embraced as a means of rendering the self “virtuous through tight control over the conditions of its experience.” [Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 249-50.]

⁷⁸ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 634.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 931.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 818.

is, Stendhal seems to claim with these remarks, already a “letter” in all its fixed symbolic glory. And yet, when the self adopts the ideal of fixity imposed onto the letter, it must also suffer the burden of *representing* rather than *being*. Stendhal’s search for the authentic self is thus an attempt to find the self that predates the self-as-letter; it aims to find (and revert to) *l’homme avant la lettre* when already *l’homme is la lettre*.

As is often the case with Stendhal, the impossibility of authenticity is addressed through the open admission of this paradox, through demonstrating his acute awareness about this obstacle in order to prove that his pursuit, though it may be in vain, was at the very least not naïvely in vain. What this means, in *Henry Brulard*, is that for every reference to his own *fixity of self*, Stendhal admits simultaneously to change, adaptation, and instability: he admits that within this fixed self there is constant fluidity. Such is the case for what follows after his proclamation of enduring admiration of Saint-Simon: “Les épinards et Saint-Simon ont été mes seuls durables, après celui toutefois de vivre à Paris avec cent louis de rente, faisant des livres. Félix Faure m’a rappelé en 1829 que je lui parlais ainsi en 1798.”⁸¹ For all the fixity of spinach and Saint-Simon (a fixity somewhat belied by his use of the past tense), it must be noted that Stendhal qualifies them as his “only” enduring tastes, meaning that all his others were in constant flux—that is, that his fluidity of self is in fact more constant than his fixity. He goes on to return to the opposite position, that of fixity reigning over fluidity, in the following clause by suggesting that even his most fixed tastes are subordinate to the constancy of his *desire to write*: that is, that nothing is quite so fixed as the *desire to fix* through writing. In the final sentence, he reinforces this supremacy of fixity by simultaneously undermining it as *something he has forgotten*: though this desire for fixity has defined (fixed) him since his youth, it takes his friend Félix Faure to remind him as much.

⁸¹ Ibid., 931.

Similarly paradoxical are his proclamations about the fixity of his ideal of *le beau littéraire*, itself at once a symbol of the constancy of his tastes—that is, his character—and a reference to its own “fixing power” as a written artifact. For steady as Stendhal’s *beau littéraire* remains throughout his life, the manner in which it is expressed is constantly undergoing mutations, as he struggles to more accurately express it through preference for a continually rotating cast of authors. In his words, his *idée sur le beau littéraire* always remains the same, “mais chaque six mois elle se perfectionne ou, si l’on veut, elle change un peu.”⁸² By shedding light on the fluidity underneath the fixed self, Stendhal proves that he is conscious of his status as a “letter-self”; that is, that he is conscious that his inclination towards fixity exists because he identifies with the letter and with the representational anxieties attributed to it. Like the letter, where fixity is proclaimed, instability appears.

Novelty

Like the ideal of fixity, the valorization of novelty is inscribed within the system of the written word and may be understood as resulting from the invention of the phonetic alphabet. In a departure from the oral poetic tradition based on conservation, the literary arts—in particular, theatrical works in ancient Greece—began to demand novelty, innovation, and invention.⁸³ Novelty—that is to say, the originality and singularity of the individual’s creative power—is of course the virtue *par excellence* of the era of authenticity, first in the movement of subjectivation that characterized philosophical thought beginning in

⁸² Ibid., 818.

⁸³ These were the criteria by which literary poets were judged in drama festival competitions. [Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*, 60.]

the eighteenth century, then as taken up by artistic movements dating from that period and continuing throughout the nineteenth century, most notably Romanticism.

Like the shift in ancient Greece from an oral tradition of conservation to a written tradition of innovation, the period of subjectivation in European thought heralded a new artistic paradigm of poesis rather than mimesis, designating not only personal truth but its very novelty and originality as the new *valeurs sacrées*.⁸⁴ As we have seen in the introduction, Stendhal treats the possibility of originality with some irony while contemplating his own in *Henry Brulard*; he also does so while writing his fictional characters. Though the originality of his protagonists is the unequivocal premise of their novelistic worlds, Stendhal wryly echoes the tone of Rousseau's opening chapter in order to question its plausibility, as with his description of Octave de Malivert. Here Stendhal posits Octave as a primordially—that is, without trying or without having even done anything with his life—*novel* being, while simultaneously designating this self-aware alienation as the cause of his brooding stagnation and lack of accomplishments: “Sans avoir encore rien fait, il se voyait dès son début dans le monde classé comme un être à part.”⁸⁵ Other passages about Octave's originality are more markedly ironized versions of Rousseau's proclamation, but this irony is meant to reflect strictly on the author's relationship to his character, and never on the character's relationship to the loneliness that results from his uniqueness. Octave laments the downside of his individuality to Armance, in an almost verbatim reformulation of Rousseau: “Moi seul, je me trouve isolé sur la terre.”⁸⁶ More generally speaking, Stendhal's preoccupation with originality

⁸⁴ As Watts points out, this is evident in the very name of the genre. [Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*.]

⁸⁵ Stendhal, *Armance. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade”, 2005), 125.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

often manifests itself through the denouncement of language that fails to achieve this goal. In other words, inauthenticity in Stendhalian characters is often likened to words or documents that lack in originality: they are “carbon copies” who speak in “phrases toutes faites.” At the dawn of industrialization, it is not surprising that Stendhal’s vocabulary of inauthenticity should reference the qualities of being pre-packaged or industrially reproduced, as opposed to original, singular, and organically conceived. But most importantly, the equation of unnatural characters to pre-fab verbal expressions underscores the self’s representational anxiety of novelty, like that attached to the letter or the written word.

Comparison

The final representational anxiety that likens the self in search of authenticity to the letter is that of comparison. From the introduction of the written word comes the study of the written word; unlike ephemeral speech, the textual document lends itself to comparison as it exists within the circulation of other written artifacts. The anxiety of comparison, in Stendhal’s works, often takes place in a fittingly literary setting, the salon, underscoring the self’s identification with the letter. More than its predecessors (and more than its English counterpart), the Restoration salon served as the competing grounds for letter-selves vying for first prize in *l’art de la conversation*, because a guest’s worth was determined by his verbal virtuosity of artistic achievements rather than his innate social status: “In Paris [...] ‘the deference shown to talent, whether literary, political or artistic, in preference to mere rank or

wealth without this qualification, furnishes a striking contrast to an English party in high life.”⁸⁷

Stendhal’s tactic of avoiding the aspersion risked by the comparison of letter-selves representing themselves verbally through performances of their *esprit*, was to remain silent: “Je me taisais [dans les salons] par instinct, je sentais que personne ne me comprendrait [...] Ce silence amené par le hasard était de la meilleure politique, c’était le seul moyen de conserver un peu de dignité personnelle.”⁸⁸ Personal dignity—that is to say, the preservation of the authentic self—thus requires a withdrawal from the circulation of selves who, in the social setting of the salon, resemble textual signifiers within in the written system of exchange. Through silence Stendhal aims at preserving *l’homme avant la lettre*, the pre-literate state of the self who exists without externalizing such existence into a performance, a representation through which it is transformed into a symbol of the self.

In *Lucien Leuwen* the protagonist’s letter-self is hurled into comparative circulation quite literally, when he experiences himself as a person who is written about, in the slew of defamatory pamphlets and anonymous letters from both political ends of Nancy society, which denounce Lucien as both a *républicain* and an *ultra*. The tyranny of these letters is total; they demonstrate the ultimate failure of the letter-self to fix his own meaning once in circulation, as Lucien falls from grace and comes to be defined not autonomously but by the contradictory and absolute power of the *doxa*. The transfiguration-through-circulation of Lucien’s letter-self affects not only his public image but his relationship to his own being; he

⁸⁷ This is Mansel quoting from J.S. Buckingham’s 1847 travelogue. See Mansel, *Paris Between Empires: 1814-1852*, 123. And J.S. Buckingham, *France, Piedmont, Italy, Lombardy, the Tyrol, and Bavaria: an Autumnal Tour*, vol. I (London and Paris: Peter Jackson, Late Fisher, Son & Co., 1847), 36.

⁸⁸ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 901.

loses contact with *l'homme avant la lettre* and wonders, “Quelle opinion dois-je avoir de moi-même?”⁸⁹

The self's identification with the letter takes a literal turn in Stendhal's autobiographical works. Nowhere is this more explicit than in his famous lines discussing his misgivings about the autobiographical undertaking:

Je devrais écrire ma vie, je saurai peut-être enfin, quand cela sera fini dans deux ou trois ans, ce que j'ai été, gai ou triste, homme d'esprit ou sot, homme de courage ou peureux, et enfin au total heureux ou malheureux [...] Oui, mais cette effroyable quantité de *Je* et de *Moi*! Il y a de quoi donner de l'humeur au lecteur le plus bienveillant.⁹⁰

On the one hand, the self's identification with, and “metamorphosis” into, the letter is built into the autobiographical form. Jean Starobinski has explained the autobiographical intention as a desire to dominate one's reality and to define oneself through the transformation of the subject's passive gaze into the active word: “[L]e regard veut devenir parole, il consent à perdre la faculté de percevoir immédiatement, pour acquérir le don de fixer plus durablement ce qui le fuit.”⁹¹ But there is a difference between identifying oneself through letters and identifying with the letter itself. What Stendhal describes in the above passage is quite literally his embarrassment at having become a word.

L'embarras du Je encapsulates the textual process through which the self-analytical *égotisme* involved in autobiographical writing renders explicit that the self has become a symbol of itself, in this case a literal textual symbol—the word *Je*. Central to this realization is the self-consciousness of the self's representational function or performance. Starobinski alludes to this self-consciousness when he notes that there is an opposing force to the

⁸⁹ Lucien Leuwen. *Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 1276.

⁹⁰ *Vie de Henry Brulard*. *Œuvres intimes*, II, 533.

⁹¹ Starobinski, *L'œil vivant: Corneille, Racine, La Bruyère, Rousseau, Stendhal*, 12.

word's intention: at the same time that it desires to define and fix, it also yearns to disappear: "En revanche, la parole cherche souvent à s'effacer pour laisser la voie libre à une pure vision, à une intuition parfaitement oublieuse du bruit des mots."⁹² What might be added to this observation is that this "pure vision" of silence is an attempt to escape the double performativity of the letter and the letter-self who writes its own autobiography.⁹³

Yet when Starobinski treats performativity as a problem of authenticity in Stendhal's works, he understands it in terms of sincerity; he understands the *performed* in Stendhal's œuvre to represent a *feigned* sentiment that only very rarely—and almost by accident—corresponds with the self's sincere, natural feelings:

Quand Stendhal écrit : 'Il est impossible de mieux jouer la passion, puisque je la sentais en effet', il indique l'un des moments fulgurants où le naturel et la feinte se réconcilient ; alors, contrairement à ce que prétend Diderot dans le *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, le jeu devient d'autant plus parfait qu'il exprime un sentiment vécu et réciproquement le sentiment est d'autant mieux éprouvé qu'il est mieux joué.⁹⁴

But the problem here is considering the performance of any sentiment as necessarily *feinte*. It is not really that Stendhal inherently finds performativity to be fake or feigned, but that he is troubled by the fact that the performative self is self-conscious of its status as representative, that it is embarrassed by its own symbolic power, which resembles the remote representational power of the letter. Freedom then comes from escaping this self-consciousness, rather than from escaping a feigned emotion: freedom from performativity is thus a unity of sincerity—faith to an emotion—and authenticity—faith to an ideal. And this

⁹² Ibid., 12-13.

⁹³ It should be noted that unless specifically discussing Judith Butler's theory of performative gender, as in the subsequent chapter I shall do, I intend "performativity" in an entirely positivist sense—the conscious, outward (theatrical) comportment of the self, rather than the unconscious repetition of rituals and conventions, which may or may not manifest in "behavior," as it was defined by Butler.

⁹⁴ Starobinski, *L'oeil vivant: Corneille, Racine, La Bruyère, Rousseau, Stendhal*, 221.

ideal, for Stendhal, is decidedly nostalgic for all that is *preliterate, illiterate, and preverbal*. What concerns Stendhal is not only the self's entry into the symbolic in the Lacanian sense as it colors his interpretation of exterior reality, but more importantly how this entry affects his understanding of his own subjective truth, insofar as he himself has become symbolic, a performing letter, to others and to himself.

The rejection of performativity in the name of authenticity can then quite logically be effectuated through rejection of the letter in the form of the material textual document; to refuse the symbolic system of representation is to attempt to disentangle one's own identification with it. For Stendhal's characters, this constitutes the flipside to their tendency to privilege the *récit de vie* over life itself; it is at once a nostalgic fetishization of the preliterate and an attempt at attenuating their overidentification with the symbolic letter. We recall Mathilde de la Mole's repugnance for the textual document that would render inauthentic her "heroic" and spontaneous relationship with Julien: "Entre Julien et moi il n'y a point de signature de contrat, point de notaire, tout est héroïque, tout sera fils du hasard."⁹⁵ In the same vein is the fact that her "marriage" to Julien is consecrated not by a contract but by her pregnancy: "N'est-ce pas une garantie ? Je suis votre épouse à jamais."⁹⁶ This rejection of the textual, and even sometimes of the verbal, is the implicit undercurrent of all the "coded" language in Stendhal's œuvre—from the farcical semaphore line through which Gina and Fabrice communicate during his time in prison, to the enigmatic marginalia Stendhal himself recorded in his own library and in his manuscripts. All of these encrypted systems of communication aim to bypass traditional semantic representation; though the problem

⁹⁵ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*. *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 630.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 736.

remains that they are still *representative* systems, they do however succeed in rejecting the literate logic of the alphabet.

The fetishization of the illiterate continues in Stendhal's frequent subordination of literature to the more "authentic" forms of music and *beaux arts*, as will be explored in the next chapter. Within the confines of his fictional worlds, in one of its most extreme incarnations, this fetishization is personified by the simple, credulous, and barely literate Fabrice del Dongo—"ignorant à plaisir, et sachant à peine écrire."⁹⁷ It is in this light that we might reconsider Julien Sorel's relationship to Latin, which at first glance seems to undermine the notion of authenticity as preliterate or illiterate. For is it not Julien's knack for this ancient language that first allows him to become the hero of his own story, to self-realize and attain authentic glory, by preparing him to be hired as the tutor of M. de Rênal's children? To be sure, it is Latin that initiates Julien's transformation from the sad, beaten talent amid a family of low-life illiterates to the titled almost-husband of a Parisian aristocrat. But his relationship to written Latin is very different from his relationship to written French. He knows Latin only insofar as he has committed to memory the entire Bible; it is an uncorrupted, preliterate relationship to the language, based on rote memory rather than mediated reality. Julien's knowledge of Latin does not dominate his relationship to reality; that is, it does not prevent authentic experience by prefabricating his imagination in the same way that he recognizes literature written in his mother tongue as doing.⁹⁸

That Latin constitutes an *authentic exception* to the inauthenticating force of written language reflects the nostalgia at the heart of the illiterate fetishization; it also introduces

⁹⁷ *La Chartreuse de Parme. Romans et Nouvelles*, II, 35.

⁹⁸ For the contradictions of Beyle's relationship to ancient languages, in particular to Greek, see Georges Kliebenstein, "Stendhal face au grec," in *Stendhal à Cosmopolis: Stendhal et ses langues*, ed. Marie-Rose Corredor (Grenoble: Université Stendhal Grenoble, 2007).

Stendhal's inability to completely renounce the written word in his pursuit of authenticity, an ambivalence that will be further explored in Chapter Two. But the authenticity of (illiterate) ancient cultures is a particular illusion that pervades much of Stendhal's work. Lucien Leuwen, for example, echoes this sentiment during his studies with the lieutenant who teaches about the "temps héroïque [lorsque] nul n'était hypocrite alors!"⁹⁹ The heroic times when nobody was a hypocrite—that is, when nobody was *literate*. This is why the epic characters of pre-dramatic lyrical poetry are so often idealized as the last authentic ones, for Homer's heroes, for example, "unlike their dramatic embodiments, were illiterate."¹⁰⁰ As such, it is no coincidence that Rousseau adopts the structure of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as the basis for his own epic in *Les Confessions*, a choice which positions him as precisely this sort of unstained hero whose experiences are primordial rather than derivative. The stain of the literary imagination, as that which prevents authentic experience, is not limited to the era of Romantic and post-Romantic literature. For the very presence of "literate" literary heroes creates a *mise en abîme* of mediated reality: the imagination of the reader of *Madame Bovary* is just as corrupted by Flaubert's novel as Emma is by those she reads herself, and as the fictional characters she reads about are by their own encounters with literature. It is a cycle that continues until the point of purity: the moment at which those we read about cannot themselves read. For in the illiterate is the illusion of a reality unmediated; in the preverbal, the illusion of authenticity. Through the representational anxieties of fixity, novelty, and comparison, Stendhal demonstrates the manner in which the literate self identifies with the letter, a relationship which, apart from explaining the theatrical lexicon of authenticity, is

⁹⁹ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 827.

¹⁰⁰ "[I]n the tens of thousands of lines of Homeric verse, there are no references to alphabetic writing at all, neither as a thing done nor as the subject of a trope." [Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*, 19.]

further proven by the author's attempts at rejecting this identification through either bypassing the textual representational system or vilifying it, giving way to a fetishized ideal of the preverbal or illiterate.

The internalization of the letter's "anxieties" of fixity, novelty, and comparison plays out in one of *three performances of authenticity: the social, the private, and the written*. To each performance corresponds one role of the trisected Stendhalian self: actor, spectator, and narrator. The inevitability of performing results not only from this internalization, but also from the transformative power of the theatrical experience on the self's encounter with its own emotions. De Kerckhove writes that "[t]he stage was, in effect, a sort of prototype of imagination, a try-out space for new experiences, emotions, attitudes, and reflections which became the ground of Western ways of life."¹⁰¹ There is nary a difference, then, between the two senses of *affect*: to *feel*, in the literate society of the theater, is to *perform*. All affect is, by nature, affectation.

The social performance of authenticity

When retreat into silence is not an option, when a social (and verbal) performance is required, Stendhal lays out a plan for how to do so authentically. The alternative to withdrawing from the word is sublimating it; instead of circumventing the representational limitations of the self and its speech by attempting to *revert* to a pre-representational state of being, Stendhal demonstrates a method of transforming this representational status into one of *being* in and of itself. This strategy responds to the particular problems of performing in a

¹⁰¹ de Kerckhove, "Theatre as Information-Processing in Western Cultures," 149.

public context: first, the problem of *inverted transmission*, whereby the more natural one is, the more affected he is perceived to be, and vice versa. Next, there is the fact that in a social context, *le naturel* is not contagious; on the contrary, an interlocutor's lack of affectation may preclude the self's own authentic comportment. Other tactics for the social performance include the creation of a smaller, more natural world inside the larger context of affected society, consisting of an audience who is "in" on the secret of the larger world's affectation; and requiring that all present parties recognize that the space of *le naturel* which they have succeeded in creating is ephemeral, and that a return to the affected world is inevitable. One must also interact directly with one's spectators, as opposed to pretending they are not present or adhering to any pretense of not being able to tell what they are thinking. Lastly, the self may perform authentically in the social context by executing a reversal of roles, whereby he forces his spectator to assume the role of actor and all of its performance anxieties.

Many of the problems of the social performance of authenticity are at play in the scene of Mme de Marcilly's ball in *Lucien Leuwen*, during which Lucien finally meets Mme de Chasteller and lets her know of his interest in her. The scene may be summarized as follows: having already earned the admiration of much of Nancy society, Lucien cuts a dazzling figure at the start of the ball, yet his brief introduction to Mme de Chasteller, whom he has already been admiring from afar, fails to live up to his reputation as an enchanting young officer and leaves the young widow wondering what all the fuss is about. During a second interaction between them, Lucien stumbles further, falling into the sort of self-conscious awkwardness that results in his feeling not only like an actor, but a bad one at that: "Tout le brillant courage, tout l'esprit de Lucien disparurent en un clin d'œil."¹⁰² In the passage that

¹⁰² Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 916.

directly follows this line, Stendhal redirects his focus onto Mme de Chasteller, but the phenomenon discussed is just as crucial to the social performance of authenticity as is Lucien's behavior throughout the scene:

Elle avait une simple robe blanche, et sa toilette montrait une simplicité qui eût semblé ridicule aux jeunes gens de ce bal, si elle eût été sans fortune. Les bals sont des jours de bataille dans ces pays de puérile vanité, et négliger un avantage passe pour une affectation marquée. On eût voulu que Mme de Chasteller portât des diamants ; la robe modeste et peu chère qu'elle avait choisie était un acte de singularité qui fut blâmé avec affectation de douleur profonde par M. de Pontlevé, et désapprouvé, en secret, même par le timide M. de Blancet, qui lui donnait le bras avec une dignité plaisante.¹⁰³

Here we encounter a conundrum confronted by all of Stendhal's heroes and heroines, which is that all social performances of authenticity are troubled by an inverted transmission, so that the more *natural* one is—that is, the more one refuses to *present* and *represent* oneself, the more one is perceived by an audience as being *affected*.¹⁰⁴ The reverse is also true: the more one gives oneself over to affectation, the more natural one will appear within the social context. Mme de Chasteller's simple white gown and modest toilette are an affront not only to the gentlemen mentioned above, but especially to the aristocratic women at the ball, for her refusal to adhere through dress to the conventions of high society undermines the importance and self-importance with which this social rung is purported to be imbued. The ladies ask, "Est-ce ainsi qu'on se *présente* un jour tel que celui-ci ?"¹⁰⁵ Lucien's

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Think, for example, of Mina de Wanghen's entrée into Parisian society in *Le Rose et le Vert*, or of Fabrice del Dongo among his French comrades during the battle of Waterloo in *La Chartreuse de Parme*.

¹⁰⁵ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 916. Interestingly, the guests also reveal their own conception of who constitutes their own public, or for whom these conventions must actually be upheld. Their audience does not merely consist of their fellow aristocrats; in fact, they are far more concerned with how Mme de Chasteller's casual *tenue* might be perceived by those occupying lower social rungs, especially those rungs hostile to the existence of the aristocracy: "Que vont dire les républicains ? s'écriaient toutes les nobles dames." [ibid., 917.] In *Armance*, Octave de Malivert understands this phenomenon perfectly, as he explains to his cousin the reason for widespread affectation among the nobility as "la classe qui a le plus d'affectation, parce qu'elle se croit regardée." [*Armance. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 160.]

privileged status as an authentic hero amid a decidedly inauthentic Nancy society allows him to see through this mirror of inverted transmission. He is able to recognize Mme de Chasteller's getup as unpretentious, but sensing her *naturel* causes him to lose his own as he slips into overwhelming shyness and awkwardness. Moreover, this downfall takes place first and foremost in his relationship to language, as his words fall victim to the sort of pre-fab platitudes ridiculed by Stendhalian heroes. And to be caught in a lexicon of platitudes is to find oneself stuck in the symbolic function of language—devoid of meaning, his verbal discourse is all signifiers and no signifieds. Indeed, Mme de Chasteller is struck by his inept banality and begins to doubt his glowing reputation, deciding instead that Lucien might perhaps be all surface with no substance; all word with no referent: “Ce ne sera qu'un homme de cheval, comme tous les autres,” she decides.¹⁰⁶

Lucien's choices for redemption are limited. Unlike young Beyle in some snobby salon, he cannot resort to silence; having already clumsily mismanaged his words, he is no longer able to renounce them in order to escape the paralyzing and self-conscious identification with their representational limitations. The option he chooses is common throughout Stendhal's œuvre: when unable to repudiate the word in order to cease resembling it, one must instead sublimate it. That is, one must embrace these limitations in order to fully inhabit them; Lucien's words, which incriminate him as being not himself but a stylized shell of himself, must be turned into skilled actors. Which is to say, he must give himself over completely to representation—he must make a scene. From a prison of stilted banalities, Lucien liberates himself through a calm and virtuosic logorrhea:

Tout à coup il osa parler, et beaucoup. [...] Les idées nettes et plaisantes ne lui manquèrent pas plus que les paroles vives et pittoresques pour les peindre.

¹⁰⁶ *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 920.

Dans la simplicité noble du ton qu'il osa prendre spontanément avec madame de Chasteller, il sut faire apparaître, sans se permettre assurément rien qui pût choquer la délicatesse la plus scrupuleuse, cette nuance de familiarité délicate qui convient à deux âmes de même portée, lorsqu'elles se rencontrent et se reconnaissent au milieu des masques de cet ignoble bal masqué qu'on appelle le monde. [...]

Cette simplicité noble n'est pas, il est vrai, sans quelque rapport avec la simplicité de langage autorisée par une ancienne connaissance ; mais, comme correctif, chaque mot semble dire : 'Pardonnez-moi pour un moment ; dès qu'il vous plaira reprendre le masque, nous redeviendrons parfaitement étrangers l'un à l'autre, ainsi qu'il convient. Ne craignez de ma part, pour demain, aucune prétention à la connaissance, et daignez vous amuser un instant sans tirer à conséquences.'¹⁰⁷

Upon first encountering Mme de Chasteller's *naturel*, Lucien was deprived of his own. In order for both his and hers to coexist, he must create the illusion of a world-within-a-world, a haven which only through its implicit denunciation of the outer world's affectation allows for two natural souls—"deux âmes de même portée"—to escape this "ignoble bal masqué." To access the intimacy of this inner world of shared *naturel* does not, however, require the dropping of a mask—as would be impossible, within the self-conscious literate world of letter-selves—but rather relies on the donning of a new veil of "noble simplicity."¹⁰⁸ Entry into this inner authentic world does not demand the eclipsing of the greater world from which they retreat; indeed, the doom of an impending return to the masked ball is that which impregnates the inmost milieu with its excitement, for *le naturel* can be accessed only when understood as ephemeral. And this new mask, unlike the masks of the ball which purport to be natural extensions of the guests' persons rather than manifestations of internalized conventions, is explicitly an aesthetic choice for Lucien—the biggest dandy of Stendhal's heroes; indeed, Stendhal goes on to insist several times that it is Lucien's *tone*—that is, his

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 923.

¹⁰⁸ That authenticity might be located in the open admission of affectation is a position later echoed Nietzsche's suggestion that "whatever is profound loves masks" [Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 40.]

style of self-representation, rather than the matter of the words themselves, as the reader is given no specifics as to what Lucien actually says, other than that he is speaking about the party rather than himself—which is responsible for his transcending his own awkwardness and winning over Mme de Chasteller.¹⁰⁹ The first method of sublimating the letter-self is thus to surrender to the aesthetic; a move that at first glance might seem to run counter to Stendhal's frequent commenting on his own style, but even there we might glean an effort towards sublimation, for in making the aesthetic choice to deliver himself to, say, the non-style of the Code Civil, Stendhal attempts to sublimate this rudimentary aesthetic so that it becomes, rather than a mere representation, a referent in its own right.

It is this devotion to a chosen style through which Stendhal is able to describe Lucien as being *sincere* in the midst of this affected monologue: “[I] pensait tout ce que son ton semblait dire [...]. C’était l’illusion d’un cœur naïf.”¹¹⁰ For through his uncorrupted adherence to this tone of noble simplicity, Lucien need no longer worry about either semantic sincerity (his belief in the content or the value of what he is saying), nor whether these words *seem* sincere, or ring true, to his spectator. In this way, Stendhal designates a means of bypassing a certain pitfall later identified by Sartre in *L’Être et le néant*, whereby the pupil who by *acting* like he is paying attention hears nothing, demonstrating the impossibility

¹⁰⁹ Here we must distinguish between *submission to* and *sublimation of* the representational limitations of the letter-self. Starobinski has argued that hypocrisy is, for Stendhal, a means of action; that one must play at others in order to remain oneself. The moment of Stendhalian authenticity occurs when the life one plays at (*la vie jouée*) is enacted with enough speed and vigor so as to coincide—or collide—with “real” life. What I mean by sublimation of the self's letter-status designates more than a “sincere” giving over of oneself to one's representation of self. Rather, like the acronym that ceases to merely “stand for” the abbreviation of several words and takes on its own new meaning, it implies a sublimation of symbolic status, or the transformation of self-representation into a self unto itself.

¹¹⁰ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 923-24.

of simultaneously *being* and *appearing* to be.¹¹¹ For instead of trying to *be*, Lucien successfully turns *appearing* into a state of being.¹¹²

Interestingly, it is precisely through his performance as a discursive aesthete that Lucien begins to enchant Mme de Chasteller. It is only when she pronounces him to be an « habile comédien » that she falls under his spell: “Et, tout en faisant cette belle réflexion, tout en formant cette magnifique résolution, son cœur était déjà occupé de lui ; elle l’aimait déjà.”¹¹³ To sublimate the actor-self or the letter-self is not to position the self above its symbolic double, but to raise this mediation into a referent.

A second means of sublimating the letter-self requires the actor to deal directly and explicitly with his audience. Lucien demonstrates this method during the dinner that follows, where, seated close by but not next to Mme de Chasteller, he must simultaneously deal with two discrete audiences: Bathilde and the other ladies at the table.¹¹⁴ Lucien talks through these women to communicate, covertly and symbolically, with Mme de Chasteller. In doing so he pays explicit reference to the fact that his behavior is a performance; it is a way of signaling to Bathilde that he is resigned for the duration of dinner to the “masked ball” of the outer world, while at the same time also designating Bathilde as his real spectator:

Il eut l’idée d’exprimer ses sentiments réels par des mots qu’ils adresserait, en apparence, aux dames assises auprès de lui. Pour cela il fallait beaucoup

¹¹¹ This dialectic is, however, later synthesized in *L’Être et le Néant*, through a portrait which this time collapses the being/performing opposition into a means of self-realization—« le garçon de café [qui] joue avec sa condition pour la réaliser. » [Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 95.]

¹¹² Which is not to say that this binary is upheld, and indeed greatly feared, elsewhere throughout Stendhal’s œuvre. In his chapter, “Paraître,” Blin has proposed that behind this opposition lurks timidity rather than pure vanity. [Georges Blin, *Stendhal et les problèmes de la personnalité: Tome I* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1958).]

¹¹³ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 925.

¹¹⁴ This is what Erving Goffman calls “audience segregation,” based on the principle articulated by William James that each person “has as many different social selves as there are distinct *groups* of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups.” [Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Penguin, 1959), 58.]

parler : il y réussit sans dire trop d'extravagances. Il domina bientôt la conversation ; bientôt, tout en amusant fort les dames assises auprès de madame de Chasteller, il osa faire entendre de loin des choses qui pouvaient avoir une application fort tendre, ce qu'il n'aurait jamais pensé pouvoir tenter de sitôt.¹¹⁵

There is something of the avant-garde in Stendhal's depiction of the social performance of authenticity as one which calls for direct interaction with one's audience as opposed to pretending it is not there. To do so is to make use of the very representational limitations by which the self and its words must appear to be endowed with semantic fixity or pure referentiality, in order to open these up to the possibility of abstraction and variable interpretation.

The final method of sublimation takes place when Lucien reveals to Mme de Chasteller that he harbors a *souçon* about her, having learnt through the grapevine of the existence of a previous lover. Like the moment later on in the novel when Lucien proves the authenticity of his love for Bathilde by admitting to her that it had momentarily waned, this admission of suspicion towards his love interest has the effect of leading Mme de Chasteller to deepen her belief in Lucien's sincerity: "mais combien il était sincère!"¹¹⁶ By far the most aggressive means of sublimating the letter-actor-self into its own state of being, Lucien's acknowledgment of his suspicion about Mme de Chasteller works by shifting the focus away from his own representational limitations as an actor and onto Bathilde's. It consists in reversing the actor-spectator hierarchy, which as Goffman has noted, always skews in favor of the spectator;¹¹⁷ by casting his doubts upon what Mme de Chasteller *signifies*, he escapes his own representational self-consciousness and displaces it onto her, so that she sees that

¹¹⁵ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 926.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 930.

¹¹⁷ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 18.

she is seen through her representational status—determined by the *doxa* to be a sultry, scandalous widow. Through this act, Lucien upsets the notion of the spectator as by default more authentic or natural than the actor, by opening up his interlocutor to the same representational limitations of the actor-self.

Plagued primarily by the problems of inverted transmission, of the ephemeral nature of any access to *le naturel*, the self who performs authentically in the social realm sublimates the representational limitations of himself and his dialogue, transforming his status from “referential” to “referent.”

Le théâtre intime, or the private performance of authenticity

Popular wisdom, as found in the form of greeting cards and refrigerator magnets, calls for us to “dance as though no one is watching” and to “sing as if no one can hear.” This sort of existential authenticity, propagated by Rousseau, predicated on a total disregard for the *doxa* and the renunciation of the *regard d’autrui*, is proven by Stendhal to not only be impossible, but, more importantly, *laughable*.¹¹⁸ The private performance of authenticity, in

¹¹⁸ For the self who strives towards authenticity, at first glance it might seem that the problem of spectatorship can be overcome by a simple resolution: *I will be as I am, others be damned*. But this approach, which proclaims, *I don’t care what people think*, leads to a problem of transmission, and in two ways. First, because it inverts as it is transmitted—that is, the more one proclaims not to care what others think, the more it *appears* as if one cares deeply. In Stendhal’s world, this becomes clear in almost every work: all that is *natural*, once it is transmitted into the social realm, appears as *affected*; conversely, all that is affected appears through transmission to be natural. The process goes like this: to renounce the influence of spectatorship, to *be oneself* and to *not care what others think*, one must start from a position of *knowing and understanding* what others think; this withdrawal from the *doxa* must be initiated from a place of intimate connection with the *doxa*. At the start, one *knows* what others think, and *knows that they do not or might not approve* of one’s self or behavior: whence the renunciation. But once one renounces the *doxa*, one cannot help but lose one’s ability to *gauge* the *doxa*; one ceases to *know* the *doxa*. The self dives headfirst into the fantasy of inhabiting a self-bubble; it makes a willful move towards the autistic, and in doing so *becomes* autistic. Then, in losing contact with the *doxa*, a new self-consciousness arises. This self-consciousness is not the product, as it is for the self-conscious performer in contact with its spectatorship, of *caring* what others think; rather, it is the self-consciousness of *no longer being able to tell* what they think. The self who renounces the *doxa* is doomed to become preoccupied with the *doxa* in realizing that it is no longer understood.

his works, presents the niggling problem of the self-spectator as one whose gaze might never be escaped, but whose power of inhibition may at times be eluded through transforming the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*. If the self-spectator cannot be vanquished, he at the very least may be *appeased* through being *entertained*: the private performance is, in Nietzsche's words, "the art of 'putting oneself on stage' before oneself."¹¹⁹

The expression *le théâtre intime* designates those interior dramas that unfold not before one's eyes but in the tiny head-space that is the stage of the self's own narcissism, where one "affects" for the self-spectator the role of the ideal self. Within the context of the history of the theater, *le théâtre intime*, or the chamber play, was envisioned by Max Reinhardt and August Strindberg to use spatial constraints as a means of allowing a theatrical work to "authentically" unfold: real psychological drama could be accessed through the claustrophobic setting of one room; it was this sort of imprisonment through which the play's few characters were forced to resolve or produce conflict. That even the most solitary moments are theatrical performances is perhaps the one element left out of the critical commentary on Stendhal's characters' oft-noted predilection for the cloistered confinement of prison. As Fabrice del Dongo famously marvels: "Mais ceci est-il une prison?"¹²⁰ And for Julien, just before his execution: "Tout se passa simplement, convenablement et, de sa part, sans aucune affectation."¹²¹ At the most obvious level, the spatial restriction of the prison organizes a physical setting in which the self may self-reflect without the interruption of interlocutors. It earns its Romanticized credentials through the fact that because it is necessarily the result of a transgression—that is to say, *an action*—it is able to avoid the sin of

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78.

¹²⁰ Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme. Romans et Nouvelles*, II, 311.

¹²¹ *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 804.

inaction due to reflection, and also to circumvent the Romantic nostalgia that conceives of the post-revolutionary present as a time in which action is no longer possible. That is, prison provides the setting in which the self is permitted to indulge in the Romantic vice of inactive reflection but without the guilt of inaction.¹²² And also without the guilt of “acting,” in the sense of inauthentically performing, because as the staging of a sort of duel with the self-spectator, the prison allows the self to explore how this relationship may be navigated.

The self-spectator’s greatest power is inhibition; it reigns over a temporality of both the imminent future of action and the distant future of feared retribution. This is why Goffman frames the phenomenon of the self-spectator (without naming it as such) in terms of morality: “The individual may privately maintain standards of behavior which he does not personally believe in, [...] because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards. In other words, an individual may be his own audience.”¹²³ Stendhal’s self-spectator is not explicitly concerned with the self’s adherence to standards of morality, but rather to standards of authenticity or naturalness. Yet we must consider these concerns as only superficially aesthetic, and in themselves profoundly moral, by recalling several important tenets and innovations of the era of authenticity. Though not articulated until decades after Stendhal’s death, Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God meant, in practical terms, that every man had become his own god. This notion was already manifesting itself in Stendhal’s works, where the self takes on not one but two god-like roles—that of the puppeteer, who *controls* the self’s behavior, and that of the self-spectator, who *judges* this comportment. The self-spectator, as an arbiter of the self’s *naturel*,

¹²² See: Charles Dédayan, “Le thème de la prison dans la création romanesque de Stendhal,” in *La création Romanesque chez Stendhal* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1985). Dédayan demonstrates how Stendhal’s readings of memoirs of the revolution—that greatest *action* of all—informed the prison theme in his novels.

¹²³ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 87.

replaces God as authenticity replaces conventional morality. Though not yet fully articulated in the form of the self-spectator, this replacement already begins to be hinted at by Rousseau in *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, where he refers to “chaque homme [...] se regardant lui-même comme le seul Spectateur qui l’observe, comme le seul être dans l’univers qui prenne intérêt à lui, comme le seul juge de son propre mérite.”¹²⁴

The main question surrounding the Stendhalian *théâtre intime* of authenticity is this: Must the self-spectator be killed in order for the authentic self to emerge? We have seen that the opposition between naturalness/affectation, or passion/reflection, is faulty at best; yet because the binary of self/self-spectator may be so easily placed in parallel to the former equations, the resounding critical answer has been: yes. Starobinski builds from this premise of opposition, with slight modifications of the terms: “Le conflit, chez lui, oppose la vie immédiate (la sensation) et la conscience réfléchie (la perception).”¹²⁵ He also argues that the *regard sur soi* must die for happiness to be attained: “Au moment du bonheur, le regard sur soi doit mourir, sinon ce n’est pas un vrai bonheur.”¹²⁶ And finally, he connects the same requisites for happiness to the equation of authenticity: “Ce qui est vrai du bonheur est vrai également du naturel, dont la perfection suppose la suppression de tout dédoublement intérieur.”¹²⁷ Charles Larmore develops his argument from a similar position in *The Practices of the Self*, which posits that for Stendhal, the analytical nature of self-reflection is equated with vanity and opposed to being natural.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "note XV," in *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité. Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1964), 219.

¹²⁵ Starobinski, *L'oeil vivant: Corneille, Racine, La Bruyère, Rousseau, Stendhal*, 223.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Larmore, *The Practices of the Self*, 23.

To be clear, this is somewhat true. But nowhere in Stendhal's œuvre is he willing to completely renounce the (self-)analytical in the name of *le naturel*: not in his fiction, where his protagonists come to life insofar as they live and self-analyze in their own heads; not in his autobiographies, whose very existences are predicated on self-reflection; not even in his travel writings touting the authenticity of Italian culture, which he simultaneously laments as unintellectual and as such not entirely satisfying. Perhaps, then, it is not (always) that the analytical impulse of the self-spectator prevents *le naturel* (indeed, it is the rigorous analysis upon which self-reflection should be based that distinguishes Stendhal's *égotisme* from mere *égoïsme*), but rather that its imagined future shame proactively impedes natural comportment. And this shame results primarily from triangulation of the self, the self-spectator, and language: it is the recognition that even self-reflection that takes place in solitude is somehow limited by its means of articulation. The self-spectator alerts the self to the fact that there is something stale or prefabricated about even the most intimate thoughts once they are put into words, victim to the clichés and well-worn idioms of language that the brain cannot escape once it has been absorbed into language. From this horror of its own imagined triteness, the self-spectator's power of censorship and inhibition is preemptively obeyed.

Just as the opposition between the analytical and the natural must be collapsed, so too must the binary between the self and the self-spectator break down in the name of a more nuanced understanding of the private performance of authenticity. They must be conceived, rather, as conjoined and not ultimately separable; but if the self-spectator cannot be abandoned, at the very least the inhibitions it unleashes upon the self may be. This is why, as Stendhal demonstrates, the private performance of authenticity should not concern itself so much with escaping the self-spectator as with *pleasing* it. When the *regard sur soi* manages to

metamorphose into a *rire sur soi*, the conjoined twins of the self and the self-spectator, who lean away from each other in moments of shame, may now embrace in a sort of healthy, uninhibited type of self-love, a kind that might be classified as more closely resembling Rousseau's *amour de soi* as opposed to *amour-propre*. Self-awareness is also at the heart of this transformation: through the explicit recognition of the self-spectator's inevitable presence, or through surrendering to the inescapable theatricality of solitude, the self is able to drop its own inhibitions by allowing itself to have a little fun.

The *rire sur soi* is of course the quintessential mark of the Stendhalian hero. Their laugh is a chuckle that pardons their own ridicule, or manages to enjoy this ridicule; it is an act of self-absolution and a means of softening the glare of the self-spectator. It is a form of entertainment, even, as Julien recognizes: "Oui, couvrir de ridicule cet être si odieux, que j'appelle *moi*, m'amusera."¹²⁹ Lucien Leuwen is perhaps the protagonist the least troubled by the *regard sur soi*, and this freedom from its gaze may in part be explained by the frequency of his laughter. Almost a hundred times throughout the novel, he is described as "étouffant de rire" or on the verge of convulsing from an "éclat de rire." In this case it is not even necessary for the laughter to be directed at himself; but in giving himself over fully to laughter that seizes his entire being, Lucien's authentic *rire fou* is distinguished from the *rire affecté* of both the provincials in Nancy and the sophisticated Parisians.

That there are theoretical intentions behind Stendhal's use of laughter is made clear in comments written in the manuscript of *Lamiel*, where he wrote on May 25th, 1840: "le grand objet actuel est de rire" and "trop de profondeur dans la description d'un caractère

¹²⁹ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 715.

empêche le rire.”¹³⁰ This premise of too much character description as an impediment to laughter draws a link between Stendhal’s method for creating psychological realism and his prescribed means of performing authentically before the self-spectator. The *rire sur soi* may be understood as a way of escaping over-analysis; while it may not be capable of shaking the self-spectator, it at the very least pauses the self-spectator’s reflective function, so that through laughter it is allied with, as opposed to rivaling, the self. For Stendhal himself, the *rire sur soi* is described as a game in *Henry Brulard*, in the form of his grimaces: “C’est un art dans lequel je fis les plus rapides progrès, je riais moi-même des mines que je faisais pour faire rire les autres. Ce fut en vain qu’on s’opposa bientôt au goût croissant des grimaces, il dure encore, je ris souvent des mines que je fais quand je suis seul.”¹³¹ The art of appeasing the self-spectator through entertainment is thus learnt through entertaining other spectators; the private performance may be said to be modeled then on the social performance—a significant point for Stendhal to disclose, for it reveals that he makes no pretense of it being autonomously derived. Moreover, as a self-manipulated mask, the grimace acknowledges the self as an actor; these grimaces lay no claim to being natural, organic, physiological responses to an external reality; they are, rather, explicitly affected reactions to an internal reality; they perform Stendhal’s response to his own *théâtre intime*. The grimace represents a piece of theater to itself, and for itself, just as each of Stendhal’s novels may be characterized as its own self-directed theater.¹³²

¹³⁰ See Gabrielle Pascal, *Rire, sourires et larmes chez Stendhal: une initiation poétique* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1993), 143-4.

¹³¹ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 579.

¹³² This relationship between the novel and theatricality in the works of Stendhal has been noted by Michel Crouzet (among others) in his preface to *Lucien Leuwen*, where he implies that the Stendhalian self consists not, as is usually argued, in an actor/spectator binary but indeed incorporates the third role of narrator as well: “l’acteur est l’auteur de son scénario, le coauteur du roman, qui le représente dans l’organisation de sa propre représentation. La construction du récit est en somme dédoublée : il y a un jeu sur le récit dans le récit, il

The private performance of authenticity depends not so much on a self getting “caught up” in its own performance as on pausing the reflective function of the self-spectator, by transforming the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*, so that it may join with the self in an intimate moment of alliance that temporarily eludes inhibition. Self-reflection and self-analysis cannot be escaped, nor should they be categorically avoided, but through the *rire sur soi* the self receives a momentary reprieve from them, for as the title of Chapter XIX of *Le Rouge et le Noir* reminds us, “Penser fait souffrir.”¹³³

The written performance of authenticity

The last performance of authenticity that takes place in Stendhal’s œuvre is the written performance, undertaken by the narrator-self. Its categorization as separate from the social and private performances, given that all three pertain to works of literature, raises the question: isn’t this all about writing? Of course. In this sense, both the social and private performances are also written performances. But the written performance designates more specifically the writing that is self-referential about its own status as a written document, or that comments explicitly on the process of writing. This means, for Stendhal, a few different things: how the acknowledgment of the written status of his works is a gesture aimed towards authenticity; how certain stylistic (or anti-stylistic) choices relate to the goal of authenticity; how the trisected Stendhalian self reproduces itself in his fiction so that the written performance is also undertaken by his characters in the form of their relationship to

devient le spectacle d’un spectacle, une fiction à deux degrés.” [Lucien Leuwen, ed. Michel Zink; Michel Jarrey (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, “Livre de Poche”, 2007), 34.]

¹³³ Book I, *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 448.

textual documents. But the written performance is recognized as its own phenomenon above all in light of the fact that authenticity has been thus far demonstrated to be a problem “of letters.”

Throughout the genealogy of authenticity, writing has often been conceived of as an integral component of self-realization. Both Herder and Nietzsche construed the process of self-discovery in terms of writing, with the finished product representing the most authentic reflection possible of the artist’s soul. Kierkegaard, too, envisioned the quest for authenticity as undertaken through an ideological engagement effectuated through the act of writing. For Heidegger, the piecing together of discrete life events into a cohesive narrative was a means of realizing authenticity through the narrative gesture. To talk about writing and authenticity in terms of Stendhal is to refer to one of two endeavors: either *writing the authentic* or *writing authentically*. The distinction between the two may be understood superficially as a divide between content and form—while *writing the authentic* aims to reproduce an “authentic” reality of both an external context and the interior lives of fictional characters, *writing authentically* is concerned with how authenticity is achieved through language. And because we are dealing with a problem in which the narrator-self identifies with the “anxieties of the letter,” the question of *writing authentically* is decidedly more entangled with the author’s personal subjectivity, or the performance of his own authenticity. As such, we might also categorize these two missions along the lines of the literary movements at whose crossroads Stendhal found himself: while *writing the authentic* ultimately encapsulates the issues at the heart of Realism, *writing authentically*, as a more subjective conundrum, pertains to Romanticism as it aims to achieve through language the mythologized Romantic self, a natural expression of the author’s interior composition.

Writing the authentic

Writing the authentic attempts to render the external world and its inhabitants on the page. Despite the temptation to oppose *writing the authentic* and *writing authentically* along lines of externality and interiority, Stendhal's "Realism" proves that such a distinction cannot be made; for in attempting to reproduce in writing the reality of his social context, Stendhal's primary focus *is* the interior. In other words, his psychological Realism is achieved first and foremost through his portrayal of the inner lives of his fictional characters as actors: he paints their *naturel* by showing them to be affected. This move, however, is not merely a reflection of Stendhal's perception of the world as being made up of "phonies." It is also, more significantly, an aesthetic choice based on specific theoretical decisions regarding the limitations of the written performance. Consider his remarks on how it is easier to paint the fake than the real:

Il est très difficile de peindre ce qui a été *naturel* en vous, de mémoire. On peint mieux le *factice*, le *joué*, parce que l'effort qu'il a fallu faire pour *jouer* l'a gravé dans la mémoire. M'exercer à me rappeler mes sentiments naturels, voilà l'étude qui peut me donner le talent de Shakespeare. On se voit aller en *jouant*, on a la *perception*. Cette sensation est facilement reproduite par l'organe de la *mémoire* ; mais pour se rappeler les *sentiments naturels*, il faut commencer par faire la *perception*.¹³⁴

To be sure, in focusing his narrative efforts on *le factice* and *le joué*, Stendhal is aiming to authentically demonstrate that there is nothing so lacking in the nineteenth-century human character as authenticity, nothing so natural as to be constantly "performing." As the novel solidified its reign over all other literary forms in the nineteenth century, Stendhal's words also reflect the manner in which this genre naturally subsumed others, demonstrating, as de Kerckhove has observed, that "the novel form is interiorized [theater]."¹³⁵ But

¹³⁴ *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 267.

¹³⁵ de Kerckhove, "Theatre as Information-Processing in Western Cultures."

Stendhal's comments are more useful in their elucidation of the why *le joué* lends itself better to representation through writing than does *le naturel*. The play-acted is better reproduced on the page because it is "gravé dans la mémoire." It is through this invocation of how *memory* works in the process of writing that Stendhal further links the function of the actor to that of the letter. The affected behavior of "play-acting" becomes inscribed in the author's memory—that is, through its performance of *fixity* it becomes *fixed* in the author's mind—in a way that *le naturel*, like the thought that is not put into language, cannot be. Moreover, this emphasis on writing people as actors may be considered an attempt to bestow upon fictional characters a physicality and material presence of which the page necessarily deprives them. It is as if Stendhal, through painting *le factice*, aims to address the inherent problem of written language later identified by Barthes in *Le Grain de la voix*, whereby the speech-word loses its physical presence when it becomes written; through writing, it is robbed of "quite simply, *the body*."¹³⁶ Like these disembodied speech-words, Stendhal's characters reclaim their own physical presences through their theatrical performances. By transforming not only his characters but also his *words* into actors, Stendhal re-bodies the disembodied, bestowing upon them not only *une certaine présence-dans-le-moment*—his own criterion for experiencing authenticity—but also posterity, as their performativity carves out a space for them in the memories of his readers.

Of course, writing the authentic is also a problem of what, precisely, constitutes the real. Stendhal theorizes this question, in *Racine et Shakespeare*, as one which hinges more on the subjective experience of the spectator than that of the dramatist—the reader, rather than the writer. Romanticism itself is construed as a means of writing the authentic, and its

¹³⁶ Roland Barthes, "De la parole à l'écriture," in *Le Grain de la voix* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1999), 11.

success depends upon not *flattering* the spectator, but giving him “le plus de plaisir possible.”¹³⁷ And this pleasure relies, for its part, on an adherence to the present moment; it is derived when readers witness “l’état actuel de leurs habitudes et de leurs croyances” as opposed to those habits and beliefs of their “arrière-grands-pères.”¹³⁸

This “pleasure” of seeing the (present) real reflected, in its most hyperbolic form, is *illusion théâtrale*: successfully executed, this illusion causes the spectator to lose himself to the reality represented, to fully suspend his disbelief; it is “l’action d’un homme qui croit véritablement existantes les choses qui se passent sur la scène.”¹³⁹ In Stendhal’s dialogue (itself quite theatrical) between *Le Romantique* and *L’Académicien*, the former recounts the legendary anecdote about the white soldier in Baltimore who loses himself in this way during a performance of *Othello*: so incensed at the sight of a black man on the verge of killing a white woman, he shoots the actor playing the title role. This somewhat gruesome example nevertheless exemplifies the manner in which the context of the present (historical, political) real determines the spectator’s relationship to an artwork’s authenticity: it is the racial climate of the American South, in this case, which allows the soldier to forget the artifice of dramatic representation and to fall for the *illusion théâtrale*.

It was an accidental synchronicity between *les petits faits vrais* of Shakespeare’s *Othello* and nineteenth-century Baltimore which created the conditions of the theatrical illusion in this case. The difficulty, as Stendhal makes clear in *Racine et Shakespeare*, lies precisely in how to write these *petits faits*, or *détails naïfs*, into a play: for if the spectator is the ultimate judge of a work’s authenticity, through his capacity to fall into the theatrical illusion, the problem is

¹³⁷ Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare*, 36.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 22.

that as an entity, he is ephemeral whereas the text is fixed. If to be Romantic is to be *modern*, then nothing can be Romantic for long—hence, the expiration date of *le comique*, especially Molière’s outdated humor: “*le comique est comme la musique : c’est une chose dont la beauté ne dure pas.*”¹⁴⁰ While an old play might be experienced as inauthentic for its failure to relate to the spectator’s contemporary reality, too much contemporary truth can also preclude the theatrical illusion from taking hold by weighing the play down with the heaviness of “*la bourse et la politique, et les haines des partis.*”¹⁴¹

Writing authentically

How then, at a practical level, is the theatrical illusion executed by the dramaturge? Instances of the *illusion théâtrale* are few and far between (“*délicieux et si rares*”),¹⁴² because apart from external conditions of the spectator’s “reality,” they depend on specific *written* criteria. *Le Romantique* names a few: the *illusion théâtrale* cannot take place during scene changes, for example, nor during long monologues that serve expository functions, nor at the height of theatrical *action*. The *illusion théâtrale*, which Stendhal insists is more frequently effectuated by Shakespeare than by Racine, is most often attributable to scenes composed of hurried, breathless dialogue—“*lorsque les répliques des acteurs se pressent.*”¹⁴³ Above all, the theatrical illusion most certainly cannot be pulled off in versed lines, as the *vers alexandrins* “*repousseraient avec dédain*” the truth exposed by the *détails naïfs* employed by

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴² Ibid., 23.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Shakespeare.¹⁴⁴ The alexandrine is but a *cache-sottise*: writing one would be tantamount to walking around dressed as a bedazzled marquis from Louis XIV's court.¹⁴⁵ In the same vein, in *Racine et Shakespeare* Stendhal dismisses the necessity of the Aristotelian unities of time and place in dramatic works to the successful production of "le véritable effet dramatique."¹⁴⁶ His reasoning for this opinion is that it is naïve—on the author's part—to believe that his spectator may only experience theatrical time and space *literally* or *sincerely*. To write as if the spectator cannot differentiate between his own temporal/geographical experience and that of the actors is to preemptively quash any possibility of inviting the spectator to *forget* this difference; it precludes the possibility of the theatrical illusion from taking place.

These tenets—of representational truth being located in hurried vernacular; of theatrical illusion stemming from an alignment of the contextual truths of both spectator and play; of the depiction of precise political reality without the weight of politics, proper; of helping one's (literate, discerning) spectator lose himself not through skirting artifice but by acknowledging it—would go on to serve as the foundations of Stendhal's written performance of authenticity in his novels.¹⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that they were first theorized in terms of the theater (and more specifically, in *criticism* of playwrights) not only in light of the aims of this chapter to explore the relationship between the theater and authenticity,¹⁴⁸ but

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 18. In the dismissal of Aristotle's unities, Stendhal of course was echoed by Victor Hugo's 1830 Preface to *Cromwell*. Though hardly alone in this rallying cry, *Racine et Shakespeare* and Hugo's Preface were "the two main works" of the period "advocating a decisive literary break with the past." [Alison Finch, *French Literature: a Cultural History* (Cambridge and Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2010), 64.]

¹⁴⁷ As would the driving force of his first attempt at the dramatic form, *Selmours*, which in spite of its failure reveals the early workings of Stendhal's construction of « une esthétique fondée sur la sensation intense ». See Spandri, "Lire, voir, écrire le théâtre."

¹⁴⁸ As we shall see in coming chapters, the chronological order of Stendhal's works—that his criticism preceded his creation—constitutes a substantive subversion of the traditional conception of authenticity and authentic

also because they offer a narrative of Stendhal's own turn away from the theater. Stendhal worked from 1804-1813 on *Letellier*, his last failed attempt at becoming the Molière of his time; his theoretical positions on playwriting were solidified through *Racine et Shakespeare's* publications in 1823 and 1825, but his renunciation may be understood to take place with the appearance of his first novel, *Armance*, in 1827.¹⁴⁹ A “soft” renunciation, to be sure—no public immolations, no essays denouncing the theater—but a renunciation nevertheless, as Stendhal never wrote another play. This turn is in part explained by a comment in his response to Lamartine's criticism of *Racine et Shakespeare*, where Stendhal concedes that the Romantic revolution he had argued for in the theater would be better pulled off in the novel, as it had become the expression of new society.¹⁵⁰ Stendhal's response to Lamartine should thus be designated as a crucial step towards his “becoming” a novelist—instead of a dramaturge, yes, but without having to relinquish his hard-fought theoretical points. Instead, his novels would go on to function according to rules of the theater. The answer to the difficulty of the *illusion théâtrale* is, simply, the novel. First because it allows the theatrical entrance of he who stays off stage in dramatic works—the author. And this presence, apart from providing an embodied personality where in the theater there is only a name, is also, crucially, able to provide the sort of background context that, when relegated to members of the cast, strikes the spectator as inauthentic. Stendhal rails against this last transgression in the form of the expository monologues that plague Classical tragedies, whose modern-day equivalent usually takes the cinematic form of a one-sided telephone conversation, in which the actor repeats what he is being “told” so that the spectator might also hear it. The answer

poiesis. For more on Stendhal as a critic of the theater, see Muriel Bassou, "Critiques théâtrales à quatre mains: Le duo Beyle-Crozet à pied d'Oeuvres' en 1811," *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ This novel, as Leuilliot points out, abounds with Shakespeare epigraphs.

¹⁵⁰ Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare*, 8.

to the theater's problems of authenticity is the novel; the solution to Stendhal's renunciation of the theater is the theatricalized novel. And crucially: this movement towards the novel took place on the heels of Beyle's rigorous intellectual theorization of authenticity in the theater.

Outside of *Racine et Shakespeare*, the discourse on how Stendhal achieves written authenticity usually centers around his well-known penchants for speed, spontaneity, and his distaste for revising his work. Stylistically, certain expressions—the famous *etc., etc., j'anticipe, je m'égarer*—inscribe his writings with the temporality of writing as a means of signaling the author's authenticity—his own *présence-dans-le-moment* of writing. Other tenets of writing authentically include explicit self-contradiction both at the level of content and process; eschewing any pretense of writing not being a performance, including but not limited to the explicit referencing of a spectator or reader; and the method of intentional mislabeling. All of these techniques are at work in the series of prefaces that give *Lucien Leuwen* its stuttering start.

For this unfinished novel, Stendhal wrote at least three prefaces and two different versions of an opening to the first chapter, both addressed to a *lecteur bienveillant*, with the second containing a preliminary dedication, “*To the Happy Few.*” The *Première préface*, instead of assuming the voice of the invisible God of the realist novel, is rather a treatise on the author himself—a being plagued with contradiction: “L’auteur du roman que vous allez lire, ô lecteur bienveillant ! si vous avez beaucoup de patience, est un républicain enthousiaste de Robespierre et de Couthon. Mais, en même temps, il désire avec passion le retour de la branche aînée et le règne de Louis XIX.”¹⁵¹ There is no pretense of this piece of writing not

¹⁵¹ *Lucien Leuwen*, 55. Here I cite from Crouzet's 2007 “Livres de poche” edition, which includes all of Stendhal's various versions of the prefaces.

being a performance; the reader is not assumed to have dropped by chance into an autonomously-defined fictional world, nor to be experiencing this world without the mediation of either the author's narrator-self or that of the text itself. By acknowledging his (contradictory) presence at the novel's opening, this written performance never presumes that the authorial presence might be able to disappear behind his narrative function. Unlike the pretense of authenticity upon which the "found manuscript" device of many eighteenth-century novels is founded, whereby the reader's mediated experience of the story is accounted for through an explanation of *why* a particular ("true") story happens to have been written, here Stendhal presents his tale as written without any excuse for its textual status, and quite explicitly as *his own* written performance. The conflicted nature of the narrator is miniaturized in the character of Lucien, a parallel the reader discovers through Stendhal's use of asterisks and footnotes, revealing his protagonist's speech-words and actions to often be at odds with his true character: for example, "*Dans l'opinion du héros, qui est fou et qui se corrigera" and "** C'est un républicain qui parle," this second often paired with Lucien's verbal renunciations of republicanism.¹⁵² This technique aims at both *writing the authentic* and *writing authentically*: the former takes place through revealing Lucien's contradictory persona to be an authentic portrayal of human nature à la Benjamin Constant; more interestingly, the latter breaks with the novel-narrator's traditional "unity" to comment on that which he is reporting—and this in the name of authentically rendering his hero and proving the narrator-self's omniscience in spite of his tangible presence.

¹⁵² *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 769.

The fact that the second preface is titled “Deuxième préface réelle” sheds more light on Stendhal’s supposed stance against self-correction and rewriting.¹⁵³ Not only because its very existence disproves the notion that Stendhal never revised his work, but more importantly, because its designation as “real,” even if only intended to be seen by Stendhal himself, makes clear that he envisioned the multi-layer process of writing along the terms of authenticity or realness and their opposites. The second version of his preface is not, in his own eyes, “revised” or “corrected,” but “real”—and thus an entity whose authenticity trumps its previous iteration, reversing the primacy and privilege of firstness, so long believed to be the foundation of Stendhal’s methodology of authenticity. It is a way of reconciling his claim to never rewriting with the material traces of proof otherwise: he did not “rewrite” so much as “write again”; each draft was a “new” attempt at the “real.” Though obviously Stendhal did not himself choose to include both prefaces in the posthumous publication of this unfinished novel, this eccentric mix of veracity and falsehood, of reality and fiction, is echoed throughout his works as the essence of his Realism. It is at the heart of any of his novels, but also calls to mind, more specifically, the curious collection of epigraphs throughout *Le Rouge et le Noir*, whose sources range the entire spectrum of falsehood to accuracy. From Machiavelli to a certain “Modern,” from ancient writers to Stendhal’s contemporary peers including his friend Mérimée, from Dom Juan, fictional hero of the European literary landscape, to Valenod, a fictional character from the novel itself.

¹⁵³ *Lucien Leuwen*, 57. Here again, I am citing from Crouzet’s 2007 “Livre de poche,” as this particular preface is left out of the Pléiade editions.

The first version of the first chapter of *Lucien Leuwen* begins with Stendhal expounding on his concept of a small readership cabal, to which he adds in the second version the famous formula, “*To the happy few*”:¹⁵⁴

Lecteur bénévole,
Écoutez le titre que je vous donne. En vérité, si vous n’étiez pas bénévole et disposé à prendre en bonne part les paroles ainsi que les actions des graves personnages que je vais vous présenter, si vous ne vouliez pas pardonner à l’auteur le manque d’emphase, le manque de but moral, etc..., etc., je ne vous conseillerais pas d’aller plus avant. Ce conte fut écrit en songeant à un petit nombre de lecteurs [...].¹⁵⁵

We have already seen why the simple method of denying one’s audience is not an effective means of avoiding the inevitability of performance. Just as the social and private performances of authenticity require the actor’s open acknowledgment of his audience, so, too, must the narrator-self admit the presence of his reader.¹⁵⁶ By designating his reader as a *lecteur bénévole*, by preemptively attributing a marked benevolence to his readership, Stendhal reverses the sin of *playing to the crowd* by delegating the reader’s will as that which must bend to the writer’s will, as opposed to vice versa. It echoes the tactic undertaken later by the novel’s protagonist, discussed as a part of the social performance, whereby Lucien

¹⁵⁴ *Lucien Leuwen. Romans et Nouvelles*, I, 765.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 767.

¹⁵⁶ In the context of fiction, it might seem silly to presume that any writer question would compose a novel for himself, as the form both treats and is intended for *society*. But the question applies more specifically to the *process* of writing—to create authentically, must one “write for oneself” *before* submitting one’s work to public consumption and public opinion? The traditional focus on autonomy in the discourse of authenticity—autonomous self-realization, autonomous artistic creation—has long suggested that the answer to such a query is a resounding, *yes*. This affirmative reply has long been the presumed basis for autobiographical writing in particular. Yet theorists of autobiography have, for the most part, disregarded such claims to autonomous intentions as suspect, especially when propagated by those who, like writers, are by *métier* as well as by nature, entangled in the fantasy of an audience; those who, as Barbara Carnevali puts it while describing the relationship between writers, artists, and the desire for recognition, “*vivent littéralement de reconnaissance*.” [Barbara Carnevali, *Romantisme et Reconnaissance : Figures de la conscience chez Rousseau*, trans. Philippe Audegean (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2011), 33.] However, it is not really until the twentieth century that it becomes commonplace to recognize both the futility and the impossibility of such a quest as creating “for oneself,” even in the genre of *journaux intimes* and autobiography. Both in his conception of the self-spectator and in his continual referencing of the ever-present figure of the spectator/reader, Stendhal is thus ahead of his time.

transcends his limitations as an actor by casting the fate of theatricality upon his spectator, Mme de Chasteller.

A line from one version of the first chapter's introduction highlights the final tenet of the written performance, which is the tactic of intentionally mislabeling a strategy undertaken by the narrator-self. Stendhal writes: "Si le lecteur bienveillant veut me pardonner un style sans élégance, sans fraîcheur, sans sensibilité, je continuerai."¹⁵⁷ The labeling of his own style as an anti-style is actually a means of distinguishing *style* from *stylishness*; though Stendhal claims to eschew the first, it is the second he truly disdains. But only in renouncing *stylishness* can his *style* shine through without risking coming off as affectation. We might further understand this distinction through Barthes' differentiation between *écriture* and *style*. In repudiating *élégance*, *fraîcheur*, and *sensibilité*, Stendhal aims to avoid *écriture* in favor of *style* ("le style, c'est l'homme même"), only the *langue de bois* that Barthes characterized as being mired in sensibilities and ideologies is, for Stendhal, more of a *langue de fleurs*—that overly *stylish* Romantic rhetoric favored by Chateaubriand, George Sand, et al. Stendhal's supposed rejection of style is, at first glance, an attempt at accessing the *degré zéro* of writing, but only at the surface level. For embedded in this intentional mislabeling of his style as an anti-style is another set of beliefs, these closer to the modifications Derrida would make to the concept of *écriture*. Just as Derrida debunked the myth of Rousseau's logocentrism, his supposed "presence" in both his speech and writing, Stendhal has already demonstrated an awareness that such a presence, transmitted through the non-style of the mythical *degré zéro*, whether in a social or written performance, is impossible. For the actor, like the letter, is disembodied through its representational gesture. His solution, therefore, echoes one of Nietzsche's maxims, "to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they

¹⁵⁷ Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen*, 60.

are.”¹⁵⁸ The intentional mislabeling of his *style* as a non-style breaks down the very opposition between *écriture* and *style* upon which he seems at first to rely, allowing the re-bodiment of these words to be *read* as if there were actually a *presence* behind them, as opposed to a *performance*. It is in the spirit of this logic that we will approach Stendhal’s so-called nonfiction.

¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 69.

CHAPTER TWO:
STENDHAL AS TOURIST AND CRITIC:
THE CONSUMPTION AND CREATION OF AUTHENTICITY

“But I can’t write, poetry,
Just prose,

I mean
This is prose
Not poetry
But I want
To be sincere”

Jack Kerouac, *Macdougall Street Blues, Canto Uno*.¹⁵⁹

Part I: Nonfiction? A preamble

Before there was Stendhal, the novelist, and Stendhal, the autobiographer, there was *M. de Stendhal*: tourist, biographer, historian of fine arts and music, and cultural critic. Generally classified—somewhat problematically—as works of nonfiction, the writings of “M. de Stendhal” might be better categorized as proto-fiction, both due to their flimsy adherence to journalistic truthfulness and contemporary standards of scholarly integrity, and, with regards to our study of Stendhal’s conception of authenticity, for the manner in which they delineate several themes and tenets that would go on, in his novels and autobiographies, to become defining traits of this conception. Accordingly, for the purposes of this chapter, the works of “nonfiction” that will be of most interest are those that were published before or just during Beyle’s initial success as a novelist,¹⁶⁰ and under the name of M. de Stendhal or Stendhal.¹⁶¹ These include *Rome, Naples et Florence*, first published in 1817 as *Rome, Naples et*

¹⁵⁹ Jack Kerouac, *Book of Blues* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 110.

¹⁶⁰ Stendhal’s first novel, *Armance*, was published in 1828. *Le Rouge et le Noir* followed two years later, in 1830.

¹⁶¹ Beyle’s earliest published work, *Vies de Haydn, Mozart et Métastase*, first appeared under the pseudonym L.A.C. Bombet. Because the cultivation of the personality and/or character of Beyle as Stendhal or M. de Stendhal is crucial to this study of the author’s conception of authenticity, this first book will not be considered in this chapter. As we are primarily concerned with the manner in which his early nonfiction may be treated as

Florence en 1817, with subsequent editions appearing in 1818 and 1826; *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* (1817); *Vie de Rossini* (1823); *Salon de 1824*; and *Promenades dans Rome* (1829). The accompanying stories of some of these works' publications and/or republications break with the well-worn myth of Stendhal's refusal, in the name of authenticity-through-spontaneity, to edit his writing. These anecdotes will prove indispensable to the last section of this chapter on the written performance of authenticity throughout these "nonfictional" works.

These works should be read as proto-novels, for it is here that Beyle first tested out the techniques required for fiction: translating an anecdote onto the page, dealing with multiple characters and dialogue, narrating at both the diegetic and extradiegetic levels. So too was it here that he began to flesh out his pseudonymous persona: the self-ennobling particle hinting at what would later become known as his *ducomanie*, or his predilection for situating both his narrator and characters amid the upper echelons of the aristocracy.¹⁶² Élite and extravagant, the character of M. de Stendhal indulges in a mode of travel and lifestyle that eluded the cash-strapped Beyle—free from the duties of a career, M. de Stendhal spends lavishly and travels in a *voiture personnelle*, a perk Beyle himself had not known since his financial demise in 1814.¹⁶³ The German surname, taken from Stendal, birthplace of art historian and pioneering archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, is an appropriate choice considering the subject matter of Beyle's first forays as an author; it is, however, an

proto-fiction—the literary space in which Stendhal first navigated methods of authenticity later used in his fiction and autobiography—we will likewise use his success in 1830 following the publication of *Le Rouge et le Noir* as a sort of temporal boundary. And while *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823, 1825) has been considered in Chapter One within the context of the theater, Stendhal's other most famous nonfictional work, *De l'Amour* (1822) will be examined in Chapter Three's inquiry into autobiography and narcissism, to which the question of love is indispensable.

¹⁶² For more on Stendhal's *ducomanie*, see Michel Crouzet, "Le romanesque de la cour dans "La Chartreuse de Parme"," in *La création romanesque chez Stendhal: Actes du XVI^e Congrès international stendhalien: Paris, 26-29 avril 1983*, ed. Victor Del Litto (Genève: Libraire Droz, 1985).

¹⁶³ See Victor Del Litto's note. [Stendhal, *Voyages en Italie* (Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1973), 1366.]

identity somewhat inconsistently worn throughout his first books.¹⁶⁴ Certain details, such as the author's professed preference for the gates of Berlin to those of Rome, clearly serve the fleshing-out of Beyle's pseudonymous persona more than the articulation of the author's aesthetic. But often, M. de Stendhal quite literally forgets himself, writing about Germany as a tourist would, flubbing his German flourishes, and lapsing into commentary that reveals him to be a Frenchman.

Reading Stendhal's nonfiction as proto-fiction is further justified by considering the breadth of his subject matter across these works, a range which aims to establish M. de Stendhal as an expert thinker not only on fine arts, music, and travel, but also, more grandly, on human nature and society itself, through his explicit focus on *les mœurs* of the people whose countries he visits and, sometimes less explicitly, on politics and religion. It is in these texts that we first glimpse Stendhal as not only a proto-novelist, but a proto-Realist as well. Here he anticipates the duty of the Realist novelist to represent his fictional world in its entirety by establishing himself as clairvoyant, all-knowing, an all-around expert—in other words, the god to the world of his literary creation. This conception of the Realist novelist as a replacement for the creator is most commonly associated with Balzac and what Lukacs called the insular “totality” of his novels' milieus, a totality which exists uniformly across his oeuvre as recurring characters appear in multiple works, alongside references to real-life figures and geographical details of the Paris in which Balzac himself lived.¹⁶⁵ This totality, predicated on a “diversity within unity,” or the ever-changing subjects of his works within the invariable “real” world in which they are set, creates a relationship between Balzac's

¹⁶⁴ Though Winckelmann is generally understood to be the inspiration behind Beyle's choice of pseudonym, some critics, including Allison Finch, have suggested that “Stendhal” was in fact a play on the surname of Mme de Staël, and a tribute to her work on Germany and German Romanticism, *De l'Allemagne*. [Finch, *French Literature: a Cultural History*, 68.]

¹⁶⁵ Georg Lukacs, *Balzac et le réalisme français*, trans. Paul Laveau (Paris: François Maspero, 1973), 9.

individual characters and the social world that is ruled by “necessity” rather than “chance”: the Balzacian character never once escapes the rules of fate laid out by his divine creator, and this destiny manifests itself across even the most minute physical and aesthetic details. Lukacs contrasts this heavy-handed approach to Stendhal’s alternative, where description is not “necessary” but “superfluous”; it is a lighter touch from the Stendhalian god, where characters exist in a more fluid, less regulated world.¹⁶⁶ The unity across Stendhal’s œuvre is, as Genette has suggested, an “*unité morcelée*”—based not on the consistency of his novelistic milieu, nor on recurring characters or the creation of an autonomous fictional society, but on something more open-ended and anarchic.¹⁶⁷

But in spite of the truth of these observations, Stendhal’s nonfictional works develop what must be understood as a gesture of authorial totality. The difference between this totality and the sort attributed to Balzac is that Stendhal sees his authorial omnipotence less as the *power* to act upon the fate of his characters¹⁶⁸—in fact, his relationship to plot might better be termed a *submission* rather than a *domination*, since so many of his books are renderings of real-life anecdotes. Rather, Stendhal conceives of this ideal of omnipotence as a *duty*—the duty of being able to comment on and explain, with well-informed authority, just about anything. The social codes of Italian nobility in *La Chartreuse de Parme*; the insider’s knowledge of the mechanics of *la bourse* in *Lucien Leuwen*; the petty details of local and seminary politics in *Le Rouge et le Noir*; more generally, the ever-present historical and political consciousness that reverberates throughout Stendhal’s narrative voice—this brand of authorial omnipotence begins in his nonfictional works, where the vast range of subject

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 55-57.

¹⁶⁷ Gérard Genette, “Stendhal,” in *Figures* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 178.

¹⁶⁸ On this point, our analysis diverges from the traditional take on the narrator’s divinity in relation to his characters, such as that of Claude Perruchot, “Stendhal et le problème du langage,” *The French Review* 41 (1968).

matter establishes M. de Stendhal as a purveyor of infinite knowledge (no matter if lifted from another work) before daring to venture into the god-like role of novelist. The fact that this array of subjects was first broached by Beyle under the guise of nonfiction betrays a certain timidity at claiming his “divine right.” The most compelling proof of this ambivalence towards authorial omnipotence takes the form of a figure that further distances both Beyle from Stendhal, and Stendhal from his own narrative. This figure was first conceived in his travel writings, appearing likewise in *Histoire de la peinture* and *Vie de Rossini*, and it went on to become a recurring technique and signature element of so many of his novels—the *tourist-narrator*.

The tourist-narrator

In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, it is the anonymous traveler who introduces the reader to Verrières by describing its geographical details as well as the public opinion of its people (“aussi bête [...] qu’aux Etats-Unis”).¹⁶⁹ In *La Chartreuse de Parme*, this figure appears in the form of the lieutenant Robert, a Frenchman staying with the del Dongo family during the arrival of Bonaparte in Milan in 1796, though in this case he does not himself recount the tale that follows but rather passes it on to the invisible narrator whose intimacy with the tale is thus second-hand. So too does the unfinished novella *Le Rose et le Vert* commence with a voyageur-raconteur, this time the general major count von Landek, returned from Paris to Königsberg, who details for his enthusiastic compatriots the marvels of the French capital.

¹⁶⁹ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*. *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 354.

In his nonfictional works, most explicitly in his travel writings, it is “M. de Stendhal” himself who plays the role of the tourist-narrator.¹⁷⁰ But in the same way that his fictional characters often miniature the role of their author by revealing the manners in which they narrate their own lives to themselves, the figure of the tourist-narrator finds itself miniaturized in Stendhal’s nonfiction as well. Take, for example, the lengthy presence of the English colonel Forsyt in *Rome, Naples et Florence*, speaking of his travels in France and the difference in pre- and post-revolutionary Parisian culture: “[E]n 1775 [...] [i]l me semble qu’on vivait trop en public.”¹⁷¹ Through this filter of the Englishman, Stendhal is able to enter into the paradoxical heart of Restoration culture: for the sin of living too much *en public*—that is, inhabiting an existence determined by the spectators’ gaze—is a sin more commonly associated with the hypocrisy of post-revolutionary and post-Napoleonic period. It is that age of nostalgia, where heroism is no longer possible and where all efforts towards returning to some sort of authentic reality are threatened by an undercurrent of farcical reinterpretation of the *ancien régime*, that is linked with histrionics, theatricality, and spectatorship-determined existence—in relationship to both Europe at large, recalling Marx’s famous quip about primordial tragedy becoming secondarily farce,¹⁷² and to Stendhal’s works in particular, as Auerbach has shown using the *Hôtel de la Mole* to epitomize the Restoration *salon*.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ With the exception of “*le touriste*” Philippe L*** in *Mémoires d’un Touriste*, who is meant, like the lieutenant Robert, to have passed the story on to the book’s proper narrator. A quick etymology of the term will be useful: “touriste” first appeared in the Littré dictionary 1872, though its English counterpart dates to 1772. Its usage was popularized by the Grand Tour, which died out around 1840 with the advent of mass rail transit.

¹⁷¹ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie* (Paris: Gallimard, “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade”, 1973), 109.

¹⁷² “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.” [Chapter I. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Saul K. Padover, 1869 ed. (1852).]

¹⁷³ Auerbach, “In the Hôtel de la Mole.”

If, throughout his nonfiction, Stendhal is comfortable speaking “as himself” on the politics and cultures of Italy, Germany, and England, he is apparently not always ready to expound on France—when the mask of his pseudonym does not suffice, he puts on another, such as the character of colonel Forsyt. That the latter’s words are meant to be endowed with some degree of authorial validity, as opposed to their being put forth as a counterargument to the work’s own thesis, is made clear by the fact that the Englishman’s words are presented as a monologue, devoid of interlocutors, and spanning for several pages uninterrupted by “M. de Stendhal’s” own voice. Through colonel Forsyt, Stendhal is thus able to talk about France with the same distanced objectivity that he sanctions when discussing other countries.

Whether the tourist-narrator who speaks is M. de Stendhal or his miniature, this distanciation creates a narrative voice that aims for authenticity by being simultaneously subjective, in that it is attributed to an individual with a name and a persona, and objective, because his foreignness grants him the ability to tell the story without having to acknowledge any complicity in the (cultural, historical, or political) conditions which have made that story possible. It evades all responsibility for creating these conditions—a responsibility the divine Balzacian narrator cannot escape. The tourist-narrator encounters stories first-hand, yet they are not his own—neither his creation nor his native reality—and is therefore able to recount with more *naturel* than God himself, who cannot disown responsibility for the totality of his creation.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ The difference between Stendhal’s approach to authorial omnipotence and that of Balzac is paralleled when we compare the figure each author employs as a miniature of himself. Balzac’s Vautrin mimics the author’s control over the characters’ fates with a diabolic but godly omnipotence; Stendhal’s various miniatures, on the other hand, take a more passive, observational role: though they may at times intrude with opinions and commentary, they do not *act* themselves upon the diegesis nor upon the fates of any characters. The one possible exception to this rule is perhaps Dr. Poiret in *Lucien Leuwen*, a less-competent version of Vautrin (*Lucien Leuwen* may be read, after all, as a response of sorts to Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*). The difference is that Dr.

If on the one hand this anchoring of the story in the human experience of the tourist-narrator is an attempt at a more authentic Realism than those attempted by an omniscient but un-personified narrator, so, too, is it a way of acknowledging the role-play implicit in narrative voice—but *without transforming the narrator into an actor*. Genette remarked in 1972 that “le narrateur est lui-même un rôle fictif,” and yet, by fitting this authorial role into the figure of the tourist-narrator, Stendhal manages, paradoxically, to escape the fate of role-play by creating a theatrical gesture that wavers between actor and narrator, presence and absence, subjectivity and objectivity.¹⁷⁵ While in his nonfiction, as he who plays the role of the tourist-narrator, Stendhal has no choice but to inhabit a homodiegetic role, in his novels this figure manages to occupy a narrative space not so easily defined: for example, in *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *La Chartreuse de Parme*, the tourist-narrator is introduced as homodiegetic, though not necessarily party to the story, but is never again mentioned as an actor in the novel’s world—he disappears into omniscience, present in his extradiegetic intrusions but absent, as an actor, from the diegesis itself. But though the tourist-narrator is more present in his nonfiction than in his novels because he cannot quite so literally “disappear” into omniscience, here, too, he works out several tactics of receding from view, which suggest a narrative ideal of *presence-within-absence*.¹⁷⁶

Poiret is not exactly a miniature of the narrator in any respect other than his desire to toy with the fate of Lucien.

¹⁷⁵ Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit," in *Figures* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 226.

¹⁷⁶ Roger Pearson has suggested that Stendhal’s fictional narrators create the conditions for the reader to experience something similar to what I have called “presence-within-absence” by essentially transforming the reader into a sort of tourist within the novel: “On the one hand the reader is given the illusion that he himself is present in the text; on the other, he is required to be under no illusion in response to the evidence with which he is provided.” [Roger Pearson, *Stendhal’s Violin: A Novelist and his Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 75.]

The tourist-narrator is an actor who is not really there: his presence made explicit by his voice, but his absence alluded to in several ways. In *Rome, Naples et Florence* and *Promenades dans Rome* this presence is structural as the works take the form of the *journal intime*—that is, they are presented as the day-to-day recordings of the thoughts and observations of M. de Stendhal, the tourist-narrator. He is present in his opinions, but often absent in his diegetic role as a character, creating a presence that manages to be ghost-like and immaterial in both oeuvres. In *Rome, Naples et Florence*, Stendhal speaks for the most part in a first-person singular, but while the journal entries are episodic they are nevertheless fragmented: they do not “open” and “close” with the purpose of creating tidy narrative arcs, and they are often lacking in enough contextual background to stand alone as individual, autonomous stories. They read more as notes an author might take in order to write a story at a later time. Though a certain level of “theatricalization” of the narrative can be said to underscore the retelling of anecdotes involving multiple characters, or actors, these scenes are not theatrical in the way that scenes from novels usually tend to be—there is very little back-and-forth dialogue, even less in the way of description of the actors’ physical gestures or “staging.” And though Stendhal’s witnessing these anecdotes is proof of his presence, as a character he interacts very little with those persons whose words and actions he is recounting. When another character does speak, as in the case with the colonel Forsyt, Stendhal tends to bow out completely, so that through recording their monologues his presence is entirely forgotten.

In *Promenades dans Rome*, this disappearance is effectuated by a first-person narrative that becomes pluralized. The *je* of *Rome, Naples et Florence* becomes, for the most part, a *nous*—in reference to the fictional group of people with whom Stendhal purports to be traveling. Here the theatricalization of the narrative becomes more literal as these characters

interact and speak with each other more often than do any of the actors in *Rome, Naples et Florence*. But this company of seven *maitres* and three servants, as Del Litto notes, come together without explanation and are so barely fleshed out as characters that they serve rather as archetypes through whom Stendhal is able to put forth a multiplicity of opinions and viewpoints.¹⁷⁷ More importantly, they are agents through which Stendhal, the tourist-narrator as an individual, may disappear. The episodes of *Promenades dans Rome* are tales of opinions rather than of actions. The scenes are composed not around what *happens*; indeed, all the actions involving the group's journeys are rather incidental, merely excuses to expound on other subjects—the conclave of 1824, the role of the Pope, the significance of *beaux-arts* in society. While this may sound like a nod to the philosophical novel of the eighteenth century, *Promenades dans Rome* is no *Neveu de Rameau*, for here, too, Stendhal shuns any sort of narrative totality derived from the relationship between setting and discourse. Unlike the opening scene in *Le Neveu*, where the reader must contemplate from the very first page the implications of the jarring juxtaposition of the café where the subsequent dialogue takes place and the view of the *palais royal*, in *Promenades dans Rome* as in Stendhal's other travel writings, the geographical settings and the narrative discourse are not meant to function—as they did for Diderot's work, and as they would in a Balzac novel—as part of a narrative totality, that is, as loudspeakers through which the philosophical viewpoints are metaphorically amplified. And while Stendhal is willing to say *I* or *we* in reference to his philosophical, political, or aesthetic opinions, he is less amenable to a being physically present actor—as *Moi* is in *Le Neveu*—putting forth these perspectives.

¹⁷⁷ Del Litto. "Notice." Stendhal, *Promenades Dans Rome* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1973), 1602-03.

That the foreignness of the tourist experience is crucial to this narrative presence-in-absence is made evident in Stendhal's preface to *Promenades dans Rome*, labeled an *Avertissement*, where he explains that while in terms of facts, an Italian might make a superior author of the book he has undertaken to write, it is precisely his outsider status that accounts for the book's authenticity—that is, its intention towards subjective truthfulness:

M. Tambroni, M. Isimbardi, M. Degli Antoni, M. le comte Paradisi, et plusieurs autres Italiens illustrés que je nommerais s'ils étaient morts, auraient pu faire avec toutes sortes d'avantages ce livre que moi, pauvre étranger, j'entreprends. Sans doute, il y aura des erreurs, mais jamais l'intention de tromper, de flatter, de dénigrer. Je dirai la vérité.¹⁷⁸

Narrative *vérité* is thus found in a voice that must be at once present in its subjectivity, and, to twist the parallel into a chiasmus, objective through its absence—that is, through its native absence from the context it treats as subject matter. The tourist-narrator is Stendhal's alternative to the Balzacian author-god: endowed with the objective curiosity of a foreigner, he *discovers* that which Balzac professes to *already know*; the tourist-narrator nevertheless possesses enough cultural and literary background knowledge to translate for his audience the significance of his discoveries and touristic encounters. This is a conception of narrative authenticity that is based on the *human* rather than the divine; and yet, while acutely individuated, this voice must remain at a certain level disembodied. The performance of the narrator-self must eclipse the performance of the actor-self when the two exist within the same text—a rule to which Stendhal adheres later in his autobiographical works, where, as if anticipating Barthes' dismissal of the Balzacian author-god's paternal relationship to his creation in favor of the *scriptor's* being born simultaneously with his text, his *quête du moi* is more about capturing the Stendhal who writes—his narrator-self, if you will—than the

¹⁷⁸ "Avertissement." Ibid., 598.

Stendhal who acts—young Beyle, the actor-self and subject of the page.¹⁷⁹ Like his autobiographies, and perhaps like his novels, too, Stendhal’s nonfiction may also be categorized as belonging to this lifelong project of the *quête du moi*. But what the tourist-narrator makes apparent is that the “birth of self” attained through a narrative search for self is simultaneously an annihilation of self: for in creating this narrative voice “without origin” (nor a constant corporeal presence), he arrives at the place “where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes.”¹⁸⁰ Just as the letter-self seeks to sublimate its representational status into an existence unto itself, when Stendhal reaches for divine omniscience of the Realist narrator, only to disappear into a cracked mirror behind it, the tourist-narrator’s voice—while subjectivized through the heavy presence of Stendhalian “personality”—nevertheless is not weighted down as a material, physical subject. And it is this absence which permits Stendhal’s nonfictional prose to enact what Barthes said of Mallarmé: “c’est le langage qui parle, ce n’est pas l’auteur.”¹⁸¹ In other words, it is the letter-self who speaks, not the actor, nor even the narrator. Omniscient but not divine, human but not fully present, Stendhal’s nonfictional narrator establishes this enigmatic persona that would go on to write novels and autobiographies. Ever the atheist, even in his literary creation, Stendhal eschews the single “theological” meaning (“le ‘message’ de l’Auteur-Dieu”)¹⁸²—by simultaneously establishing his authorial know-all and surrendering it; by both giving birth to and annihilating himself; like a pagan god, by inhabiting both the celestial and

¹⁷⁹ “[L]e scriptor moderne naît en même temps que son texte.” [Roland Barthes, “La mort de l’auteur,” in *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), 64.]

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 62.

¹⁸² Ibid., 65.

terrestrial realms of his oeuvre—through filtering his voice through the figure of the tourist-narrator.

Fictionalizations and fabulations; monophony versus polyphony

The preface of *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*, like so many other of Stendhal's prefaces, comments directly on the work's authenticity: "Cette esquisse est un ouvrage naturel," he writes, but what exactly, in this case, does *naturel* mean?¹⁸³ Because his travel writings and criticisms were published as nonfiction, it would be easy to assume that Stendhal's preface is an attempt to assure his reader of the veracity of his story and/or narrative, when in fact this claim must be understood with regards to his narration alone. It refers to an authentic means of transmission rather than authentic subject matter—a means of transmission which promises, as did his characterization of his voice in opposition to possibly better-equipped Italian narrators in the citation from *Promenades dans Rome*, to avoid any affectation, trickery, or flattery.

For it should be clear by now that—even apart from the tourist-narrator's fluid, theatrical role—Stendhal's nonfiction is not exactly free of fictional invention. While the classification is useful in differentiating these works from his novels, short stories, and autobiographies, any implications of factual accuracy, or of original scholarship or journalism, are misleading. At the same time, though the character of Stendhal does appear in these works, this is not exactly autofiction. Stendhal's nonfiction is, more simply, fictionalized nonfiction. Their fictionalizations are not added in the name of narrative cohesion; on the contrary, they most resemble nonfiction in their refusal to lend themselves

¹⁸³ Stendhal. "Préface." Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 3.

to the sort of beginning-middle-end illusion of narrative tidiness into which fictional stories often transfigure the messiness of reality. It is rather this messiness that creates the illusion of nonfiction—that is, of authenticity—for the very act of storytelling seems to be deferred by these works’ digressions, jarring transitions, and often unfinished appearance. They read, again, as notes jotted down for a later act of writing. Through this deferral Stendhal aims to engage in the “act of writing” rather than the “act” of writing: an action rather than a performance, a sketch rather than a sketch comedy. The fictionalizations throughout these works fall into one of three categories, the first of which consists in *fabulations*, that is, fictionalizations at the level of content. These span from the changing of dates of events from Beyle’s own life—the shortening, lengthening, and rearranging of his travels—to more fanciful inventions, such as encounters with people Beyle never actually met (Manzoni, Rossini, e.g.); reviews of opera performances he never actually saw (such as his supposed presence at the reopening, after a fire the previous year, of the San Carlo opera house in Naples); and voyages he never actually undertook (such as the long and darting journey around the tip of the Italian boot that is recounted in the third edition of *Rome, Naples et Florence*, when in fact Beyle never ventured farther south than Naples).¹⁸⁴

The invention of characters who serve as M. de Stendhal’s travel companions, apart from allowing for the narrator’s presence-in-absence, is significant for what it reveals about an important paradox in the quest for authenticity. For in spite of the presence of these imaginary friends, Stendhal is quite adamant throughout his travel writings and private journals that an authentic experience of a foreign country must be undertaken alone.

¹⁸⁴ The question of whether Beyle ever met Rossini is somewhat ambiguous. While Del Litto suggests that the event may in fact have taken place, Pierre Brunel is more skeptical, attributing Stendhal’s account of it to his passion for the composer combined with an active imagination. That said, inventions of this sort—an author claiming to have met and known various historical figures—is not a caprice of Stendhal alone. A meeting between Stendhal and Rossini, after all, seems infinitely more probable than the one purported to have taken place, for example, between Chateaubriand and George Washington.

Je m'applaudissais de voyager seul. [...] Deux Français, voyageant dans une bonne voiture avec un domestique intelligent, peuvent transporter l'amabilité de Paris et les jouissances de salon au milieu de l'Apennin, mais ils ne goûtent pas l'Apennin, comme moi, voyageant seul dans une voiture tout ouverte.¹⁸⁵

And yet, Beyle's solitary travels become, when recounted, Stendhal's voyages *en groupe*. This seems to indicate that for the experience of the real, solitude trumps sociability, while for the experience of the written page, multiple voices better capture the discoveries and judgments of an encounter with the foreign. Monophony versus polyphony: this opposition hints at the two poles between which the narrator-self often finds itself. Does the search for the authentic auto-narration—the constant chatter in one's head, if you will—require finding one “true” singular voice so that all others are silenced, or does it, conversely, involve the inhabiting of multiple voices—an auto-narrative schizophrenia whereby permitting this game of the interior role-play of multiple characters, it is possible to unleash one's own *nature*?

These two possible methods aimed at *authentic being* plague all three performances of authenticity, but by considering them within the social performance, it becomes clear that a polyphonic practice provides more consistent access to *le naturel*. The “bad actor” who slips into the sin of overdetermination is, if nothing else, a victim of what I will call the *illusion of singular affect*. At the core of bad acting is the actor who understands sincerity, and tries to perform sincerity, as the self acting in accordance with its emotion—but *as if only one emotion can exist at a time*, at the exclusion of all others. The illusion of singular affect is this false singularity which betrays his performance as myopically affected. Likewise, in the private performance, the notion that quieting the polyphonic symphony in one's head in order to hear one's *true voice* has become a clichéd truism of New Age thought and characterizes much

¹⁸⁵ Stendhal, *Voyages en Italie*, XXXV-XXXVI.

of the popular contemporary discourse on locating the authentic self. Which is not to say that striving for singular affect—the introspective process of identifying at any given moment the strongest emotion driving the self; attempting to tune in to the frequency of a monophonic narrator-self—is not an integral part of performing the self. While such an endeavor, in the social and private performances, cannot help but be seen by the spectator or self-spectator as overdetermined and affected, it is crucial to the written performance: after all, the very act of writing requires the self to channel a monophonic voice, thought, or emotion, and to the exclusion of all others. In his autobiographical *La règle du jeu*, Michel Leiris describes early on playing with toy soldiers as a child. The scene is at once a metaphor for the author’s divine role over his characters and an inquiry into his child-self’s relationship to language (“...Reusement !”) and to the authentic interior experience, which is shown to be one of voicing several characters rather than any sort of singular, monophonic subjectivity. To give voice to all the toy soldiers running wild in one’s head: like the tension between solitude and society, the parallel struggle between monophony and polyphony is at the heart of all three performances of authenticity. That Beyle’s authentic solitary journey must be pluralized into several characters when it becomes a text demonstrates how the mind—and the mind’s narrator—vacillates between the two, alternately reaching for the ideal of singular affect and embracing the inhabitation of multiple voices, a sort of schizophrenic speaking in tongues.

La part du plagiat, de l'emprunt, du pastiche, de l'apocryphe est chez lui presque impossible à déterminer. Mérimée, on s'en souvient, disait en 1850 que personne ne savait exactement quels livres Beyle avait écrits, et en 1933 Martineau, préfaçant son édition des *Mélanges de littérature*, s'avouait incapable de dire avec certitude quelles pages lui appartiennent authentiquement, et ajoutait : 'Il est probable que tout ce qui a été tracé par sa plume n'a point encore été mis au jour.' Nul ne peut encore, et sans doute nul ne pourra jamais tracer les limites du *corpus* stendhalien.¹⁸⁶

The second type of fictionalization in Stendhal's nonfictional works is the infamous question of plagiarism. Though the number of passages lifted from other sources is too great to necessitate a complete listing, some of the most egregious examples include the following: during his visit to Paestum in *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*, he claims to have culled his information about the city's antiquities and ruins by reading "tous les auteurs *originaux* du Moyen Âge," when in fact he has done little more than copy into French passages from *La Storia della Toscana fino al principato con diversi saggi sulle scienze, lettere ed arti* by Lorenzo Pignotti.¹⁸⁷ Published in Pisa in 1813-1814, just a few years before his own tome, it is a work from which he also borrowed heavily for *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*.¹⁸⁸ Likewise, most of Stendhal's commentaries on Alfieri, Goethe, and Schlegel come not from reading the authors firsthand, as he implies, but from presenting as his own thoughts translations of articles from the *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁸⁹ Sometimes these plagiarisms are filtered into the mouths of other characters, such as the colonel Forsyt's remarks on the old city of Paris (poached again from Stendhal's favorite periodical, the *Edinburgh Review*). Stendhal's

¹⁸⁶ Genette, "Stendhal," 174-75.

¹⁸⁷ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 50.

¹⁸⁸ See Del Litto's note. *Ibid.*, 1357-58.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1380, 88, 99, 400.

seemingly blasé bravado in claiming these passages as his own demonstrates a prescient subversion not only of the notion of authorship, but of translation as well.

Of course, the notion of plagiarism is an historical contingency, but not one from which Beyle would have been necessarily exonerated, as the notion of original authorship is, by the nineteenth century, and thanks in no small part to the *culte du moi* of Romantic authors, inextricably linked to *le nom d'auteur*. Stendhal's nonfictional plagiarisms seem to gleefully, with self-awareness and in the spirit of subversion, put into play all four of the *fonctions-auteur* that Foucault would define over a century later:

- 1) The implicit transgression enacted by these writings against (Italian in particular, but also French) institutions of religion and government, which, as most Stendhalian scholars agree, suggest that they should be read as political pamphlets.
- 2) The background information on the publication of these works and their various editions, all of which are what Foucault would categorize as *séries d'opérations complexes*.
- 3) The fact that Stendhal, the author, is not a real individual.
- 4) Lastly, that the author-function does not exert itself in a uniform fashion across all genres of writing:

This last point proves especially pertinent to Stendhal's plagiarisms. Foucault writes in "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?":

Un chiasme s'est produit au XVII^e siècle, ou au XVIII^e siècle ; on a commencé à recevoir les discours scientifiques pour eux-mêmes, dans l'anonymat d'une vérité établie ou toujours à nouveau démontrable. [...] Mais les discours littéraires ne peuvent plus être reçus que dotés de la fonction auteur : à tout texte de poésie ou de fiction on demandera d'où il vient, qui l'a écrit, à quelle date, en quelles circonstances ou à partir de quel projet.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?," in *Dits et écrits 1954-1975*, ed. Daniel Defert; François Ewald (London and New York: Quarto, 2001), 828.

The distinction drawn by this *fonction-auteur* between the *scientific* and the *literary* becomes for Stendhal a distinction between *fact* and *affect*; this divide is at the heart of what we can glean from his intentions and awareness on matters of his own plagiarism, which point to the conviction that appropriation in the travelogue genre is far less important than it would be in “original” authorial productions such as novels. His nonchalance towards purloining facts from other sources without attribution may be in part explained by his insistence that the real substance of these works lies in their affective, rather than historical, accuracy: “Je ne prétends pas dire ce que *sont* les choses ; je raconte la *sensation* qu’elles me firent.”¹⁹¹ Restricting the purpose of these writings to the explicitly sensible or affective, the question of plagiarism becomes irrelevant as in this realm it would be impossible: “Puis-je sentir autrement que moi ?”¹⁹² For in a gesture aligned with both the subjectivation of philosophy and its future incarnation of Existentialism, it is only through the author-subject’s affective experience that the emotional heart of his subject matter—Italy, in this case—may be accessed and revealed: “Je cherche [...] à donner une idée des mœurs et de la manière de sentir des Italiens.”¹⁹³ Stendhal views the originality of his creation in these nonfictional works as the superimposition of *affect* onto *facts*, as he pits this goal in opposition to the traditional historical-cultural approach of travel writing and art history, writing of himself: “au lieu de décrire des tableaux ou des statues, il décrit *des mœurs, des habitudes morales, l’art d’aller à la chasse au bonheur* en Italie.”¹⁹⁴ This declaration of originality is a fair assessment,

¹⁹¹ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1973), 360.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 418.

¹⁹³ *Promenades Dans Rome*, 899.

¹⁹⁴ *Voyages en Italie*, XXXVIII.

as Del Litto points out, given that before Beyle, books on Italian culture and art read like dissertations, and talked only of archaeology or beaux-arts, geology or history.¹⁹⁵

And yet, Stendhal seems to contradict this claim when he writes, in *Rome, Naples et Florence*: “Je me borne à noter des faits.”¹⁹⁶ But this relationship to factuality should be understood in the same vein as his novels’ to *les petits faits vrais*: as a refusal throughout his travel writings to engage in the superfluously aesthetic—physical details of characters and geographical settings, for example—and as an adherence to the goal of creating affective renderings of factual events—in other words, the transformation of the anecdote into literature.¹⁹⁷ The newspaper clipping on which *Le Rouge et le Noir* is based; the young bonneted girl glimpsed by Stendhal on a train ride who inspired *Le Rose et le Vert*; the rewriting of Mme de Duras’s *Olivier ou le secret* into *Armance*; the sixteenth-century recording of the Farnese family history upon which *La Chartreuse* is modeled; *Lucien Leuwen*’s reinterpretation of the manuscript of *Le Lieutenant* given to Beyle by Mme Jules Gauthier—the anecdote served as the basis for much of Stendhal’s fiction. That the anecdote is the storytelling form which leads most directly to emotional truth is a reflection first made during his travels in Italy. Speaking of the true-to-life tales he hears recounted by his Italian companions, he writes: “J’aime à la folie les contes qui peignent les mouvements du cœur humain.”¹⁹⁸ In Italy, he explains, the stories culled from the real-life dramas and exploits of

¹⁹⁵ Del Litto. « Préface. » *ibid.*, XV.

¹⁹⁶ *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 410.

¹⁹⁷ On the exclusion of aesthetic detail, Stendhal writes: “J’ai bien examiné [le pont Saint-Esprit], et le nombre des arches, mais comme ces détails physiques, qui ne sont pas touchants, ne m’intéressent pas, je les ai oubliés. La même chose m’est arrivée dans tous mes voyages.” [*Voyages en Italie*, XXXIV.]

¹⁹⁸ *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 370-71.

the Italian people are better than anything invented: “Comme cela est supérieur à tous les romans inventés ! quel imprévu et quel naturel dans les événements !”¹⁹⁹

The anecdotal approach to his literary creation might be described as *affective positivism*: in its collapsing of the binaries of objective and subjective, of reason and passion, it also closely resembles the notion of *synthetic thought*, a theory of knowledge situating that which appears *a priori* as *a posteriori*, dependent on the subject’s experience in the world.²⁰⁰ In psychoanalysis, *synthetic thought* signifies a method of interpretation which considers experience as “the sole objective bridge between individual analyzable facts and meaning of the whole,” and affect as “the most objective thing, indeed the only objective thing.”²⁰¹ For Stendhal, too, it is not the fact itself, but the epistemological process of filtering it through affect, that *le naturel* to which he lays claim is achieved. In approaching the act of translation—whether of historical writings into his native tongue or of real-life anecdotes onto the page—as an affective as well as linguistic endeavor, this method of synthetic thought provides a theoretical justification to Stendhal’s egregious plagiarism.

The mask of the mistitled

The third type of fictionalization that permeates Stendhal’s nonfiction is the sometimes subtle, other times jarring, discrepancy between these works’ titles and their content. Whether it is a chapter alone or the entire book whose subject digresses away from what its title has designated, this mistitling has been understood by critics such as Del Litto

¹⁹⁹ Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. *Voyages en Italie*, 37.

²⁰⁰ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer; Allen Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁰¹ Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Freud Journal*, ed. Mary-Kay Wilmer (New York: Quartet Books, 1987), 165-66.

and Brunel as a means of disguising the fact that these works are in fact highly charged political pamphlets. *Rome, Naples et Florence*, through its exploration of the “moral situation” of Italy under Napoleon and afterwards, makes clear Stendhal’s opposition to the post-Empire regime in France: a subject which, following on the heels of Waterloo, gives a weighted significance to both the Germanic root of Beyle’s pseudonym and his persona of an *officier de cavalerie*—for it is not just French censorship Beyle was worried about (legitimately, as correspondence with his publishers makes clear), but Austrian as well, as he was in Milan during these years.²⁰² Likewise, in *Promenades dans Rome* Stendhal makes light of the work’s political heft—its extensive treatment of religion, democracy, and the government’s relationship to the arts—by painting political discourse as an accident, though an inevitable one, which emanated from the Italian people rather than from the author himself: “C’est à regret que j’ai parlé politique, mais dès qu’il y a intimité, on ne parle d’autre chose en Italie.”²⁰³ This comment on the inevitability of the political echoes a similar remark from *Rome, Naples et Florence*: “On ne peut plus, au milieu de la grande révolution qui nous travaille, étudier les mœurs d’un peuple sans tomber dans la politique.”²⁰⁴ But while the political motivations behind Stendhal’s intentional mistitling of his nonfictional works cannot be overstated, the mask of these titles pertains also to Beyle’s reluctance to *perform*, even in the role of his pseudonymous self: writing in the fictionalized first person of these works provokes an acute ambivalence about the same problem that would trouble his

²⁰² Del Litto. “Notice.” Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 1313.

²⁰³ *Promenades Dans Rome*, 760.

²⁰⁴ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 139.

autobiographies—that is, “cette effroyable quantité de *Je* et de *Moi*!”²⁰⁵ Mistitling designates a subject other than Stendhal’s narrator as the central “actor” of the work.

It is hardly surprising that an undercurrent of the political surfaces in travel writings that explicitly treat the “moral” situation of a foreign country, yet the most striking examples of mistitling take place in works dedicated to seemingly apolitical realms of the arts: *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, which is hardly an account of the history of Italian painting, and *Vie de Rossini*, which is barely about Rossini at all. The former often relies on a secondary subject matter embedded into lengthy footnotes, which by far exceed the text of the chapters themselves. In chapters XCVI and CI in particular, Stendhal’s footnotes—constituting an attack against Schlegel and an elegy of Shakespeare—become literal sub-texts, dense armies of words which may be printed in smaller font but in number succeed in overpowering the texts under which they appear (*Le Flegmatique* and *Comment l’emporter sur Raphaël?*, respectively). These two chapters represent synecdochally what the work as a whole masks with its (mis)title: that what Stendhal is talking about is not in fact painting but literature, that the aesthetic he sketches out in this work—however rough and rudimentary it may be—is more pertinent in how it relates to his *beau littéraire* than to *les beaux-arts* alone. And the articulation of this aesthetic stance is but a reiteration of the intentions behind his travel writings—that search for emotional truth that underpins his voyages as a tourist. Referred to in *Histoire de la peinture* as *l’expression* rather than emotion, Stendhal again emphasizes the subjective and affective route to objective truth, privileging this trait above questions of both line and color: “Par l’expression, la peinture se lie à ce qu’il y a de plus grand dans le cœur des grands hommes [...] Par le dessin, elle s’acquiert l’admiration des pédants. Par le coloris,

²⁰⁵ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 533.

elle se fait attacher des gros marchands anglais.”²⁰⁶ An aesthetic stance which practically does away with aesthetics itself, this book should be read instead as the early drafting of various tenets central to Stendhal’s *beau littéraire*, not least of which is the belief in a synthetic thought, or affective positivism, which would later underscore his approach to Realism.

In *Vie de Rossini*, Pierre Brunel points out that the book’s eponymous subject is often eclipsed not only by his predecessor, Cimarosa, but also by Stendhal himself. While Rossini disappears from the text for the length of pages, and sometimes entire chapters, Stendhal emerges, often as the implied practitioner of the method of listening he prescribes. We recognize traces of his autobiography, for example, in the second of *Les deux amateurs* delineated in Chapter XXV. In opposition to the first passionless pedant, *le connaisseur*, schooled in music but ignorant to matters of affect, is M. le comte C***, *le dilettante*, who in spite of his tone deafness emerges as the figure whose listening skills are to be emulated. Like young Beyle in his singing lessons, this Venetian Count may sing off key, but “il aimait la musique avec une passion remarquable même en Italie. [...] [O]n voyait que la musique faisait une partie nécessaire et considérable de son bonheur.”²⁰⁷

If in *Henry Brulard*, Stendhal balks at becoming a *Je* or a *Moi*, here too he shrinks before the dreaded personal pronoun—even though he is not explicitly the subject matter of the work in question. This is why for all the emphasis on the personal and subjective nature of the emotional truths he aims to put forth in his nonfiction, they may only appear incidentally as byproducts of a topic that is unequivocally other than his own self. The journal form of his travel writings reaches for the authenticity of a first-person narrative

²⁰⁶ *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 131.

²⁰⁷ *Vie de Rossini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 335.

while absenting the author as an actor; in *Histoire de la peinture* and *Vie de Rossini*, Stendhal instead pokes his head out from the wings of a play about Something Else Entirely. Like Kerouac attempting to escape the stigma of the lined verse poem while remaining within the formal confines of the genre—“This is prose/Not poetry/But I want/To be sincere”—the figure of the *dilettante* demonstrates that Stendhal’s nonfictional writings should not only be understood as proto-novels, but proto-autobiographies, as well: a way of revealing himself without “presenting” himself.

Égoïste but not *égotiste*—the distinction Beyle invented with his Anglican neologism suggests that his “fear of saying I” might also be characterized as a *fear of narcissism*—that is, fear of the self who lives through his relation to his own image rather than to the real.²⁰⁸ Though Alain once pronounced Stendhal to be “aussi loin qu’on voudra de nos freudiens,” in part, as Genette has noted, because of Beyle’s penchant for openly articulating what psychoanalysis assumes is repressed and unsayable—his famous desire, for example, to cover his mother with kisses, “et qu’il n’y eut pas de vêtements.”²⁰⁹ Psychoanalytical interpretations of Stendhal’s works have focused on the interplay between Beyle’s youthful Oedipal desire, his subsequent loss of his mother at age seven, and Freud’s notion that if melancholy is the incorporation into identification of the unrieved lost object (the mother he was forbidden from mourning), narcissism is the libidinous relationship to this drawn-in, internalized object—“The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to

²⁰⁸ For the relationship between egotism and narcissism across the nineteenth-century French literary landscape, see Jean-Jacques Hamm, “Egotism and Narcissism: Avatars of the Masculine Imagery in Nineteenth-Century French Literature,” in *Echoes of Narcissus*, ed. Trista Selous Lieve Spaas (New York: Bergahn Books, 2000). Hamm identifies them as two consecutive movements, with egotism or the “seizure” of self preceding narcissism’s “loss of the self,” that played key roles in defining the “masculine ego and imaginary” and their representations across the century. [ibid., 78.]

²⁰⁹ Genette, “Stendhal,” 158. And Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 556.

the ego.”²¹⁰ For Steven Sand, for example, the Oedipal is inextricable from the narcissistic in Stendhal’s works, precisely because of Mme Beyle’s early death.²¹¹ This drawing in of the object-cathexis, “a retreat to a romantic and nostalgic inner world of fantasized attachments that are designed to preserve a lost object and the sense of self built upon it,” aims to recreate the self’s primary narcissism—the self-love based on the illusion of self-sufficiency and perfection, enjoyed by the child not yet individuated from the mother.²¹²

For our purposes, Stendhal’s fear of narcissism shall focus less on the Oedipal and more on the spectral; it might be envisioned as a sort of amalgam of Lacan’s Mirror Stage and Kallias’s fifth century B.C.E. *Grammatike Theoria*, a play which acted out the function of the phonetic symbols by employing a chorus consisting “of the twenty-four letters of the Ionian Alphabet.”²¹³ Imagine, then, that a baby Beyle peers into Lacan’s mirror, and, rather than seeing the image of his *Moi*, he sees the word itself: *M-o-i*. The subsequent birth of his ego, through sudden consciousness of his fragmented, imperfect self, results not from its comparison to the perfect “whole” of the reflected image, but rather from the self-consciousness of seeing his own verbal representation—which may succeed in idealizing, approximating, or reproducing the true self, but which will never *be* the self it depicts. Stendhal’s fear of narcissism, moreover, is that second layer of self-consciousness on top of

²¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Freud's "On Narcissism: an Introduction"*, ed. Ethel Spector Person Joseph Sandler, Peter Fonagy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 5.

²¹¹ Steven Sand, "Narcissism as a Defense Against Object Loss: Stendhal and Proust," *Psychoanalytic Review* 72 (1985). Sand aligns with Kohut’s definition of narcissism through his understanding it not as a pathology of character, as Kernberg suggested, but as an arrested development following unmet childhood needs—or more specifically, in Beyle’s case, a regression following his mother’s death. See Heinz Kohut, *An Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971). And Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Aronson, 1975).

²¹² Sand, "Narcissism as a Defense Against Object Loss: Stendhal and Proust," 127.

²¹³ Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*, 15.

his spectral confrontation with the verbal, which forces him to wonder if the fact that he “sees” the word *Moi* instead of his *Moi* implicates him as a narcissist, through his efforts to purge this swallowed, internalized, verbal *Moi* onto the page. Narcissism, for Stendhal, is a displacement of the real by the *word* rather than by the *image*.²¹⁴ It is a self who overidentifies not with the *visual* of his ideal self but with its *verbal* representation; the fear of narcissism is thus a fear of “falling” for—either becoming libidinally attached to, or simply subject to the transfiguring authority of—the letter-self.

Stendhal’s drive to write himself becomes at times conflated with this conception of *narcissism of the word*; it is a tangle he must continually navigate. And this navigation, problematically, can take place only through the process of writing: by exploring the limits of subjective creation as it alternately relies on or evades the entry of the subject himself—whether as Beyle, Stendhal, or a fictionalized version of either. By masking his creative practices as nonfiction, Stendhal seems to be pondering whether artistic creation itself is or is not a narcissistic endeavor. The use of the journal form, for example, implies a work that is reproductive rather than productive—it records rather than invents, and thus dodges that embarrassing duty required of the artist to define himself as such and to present his creation as proof of this identification. *I am an artist. Look at what I’ve made.* And yet thanks to the various fictionalizations throughout these works we understand that they were in fact instances of poiesis.

Fear of saying I; fear of appearing as the actor; fear of narcissism. In a departure from the Freudian interpretation of the myth of Narcissus, Andreas-Salomé’s 1921 reading

²¹⁴ This narcissism “of the word” in some ways resembles Kristeva’s reading of the myth, in which Narcissus’s “primary identification is not with the image but with the sign,” so that he “is the figure who discovers the self-referential (or ‘empty’) sign.” But Stendhal is concerned less with the “emptiness” of the I-sign/*Moi* than with its distanciation. [Karla Schultz, “In Defense of Narcissus: Lou Andreas-Salomé and Julia Kristeva,” *German Quarterly* 67 (1994): 185.] See also Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

of the tale, entitled *Narzissmus als Doppelrichtung*, offers a loophole to these anxieties that plagued Stendhal by insisting on the creative potential of narcissism. Furthermore, it includes a case study which uncannily echoes Stendhal's predicament and the trajectory of his literary career.

In her psychoanalytic practice Andreas-Salomé worked with a little boy whose sweetness, upon entry into language, had transformed into hostility and displays of physical violence. This was paired with an adamant refusal to say "I"; instead he would refer to himself only in the third person. A linguistic stance common in young children, the story becomes relevant to Stendhal when Andreas-Salomé recounts what happened when the boy began to use the first person personal pronoun. Though his adoption of the "I" resulted in improved behavior, the story of how it finally entered into his speech is more revealing: it was at first used only to talk about his "naughty" self, no matter whether this designation was self-inflicted or determined by an outside party after an instance of misbehavior. Meanwhile, he clung to the third person for his "good" self. This distinction was interpreted by Andreas-Salomé as a sort of mirror stage before Lacan would define it: she explains the boy's naughtiness as a sort of mourning of the birth of self that coincides with the process of individuation and separation from the mother—a crisis of individuality and its accompanying alienation.²¹⁵ What is curious about the boy's distinction between pronouns is how it seems to posit, linguistically, that the "real self" is the naughty child—the "I,"—while the good child's "he" is distanced—the unattainable ideal self. But perhaps the relationship between the two is not to be understood as an opposition, but rather a Pascalian duet of inner contradiction—or, for that matter, the Stendhalian polyphonic symphony that when sung in unison allows access to a true, unified self.

²¹⁵ Schultz, "In Defense of Narcissus: Lou Andreas-Salomé and Julia Kristeva," 188.

The conclusion of Andreas-Salomé's case study is even more fascinating in relation to Stendhal: eventually, the boy dropped the "I" as a designation for the naughty self and began to use it universally, finally abandoning the third person—except in times of psychic stress. In particular, he would use it while singing to comfort himself in the terrifying moments before falling asleep: a lullaby of the explicitly alienated, yet ideal self. The parallels to Stendhal are two-fold. First in the boy's attempt to create a unified voice-of-self from simultaneous usage of first- and third-person pronouns—referencing the constant interplay between real and false, real and ideal, superego and id, primordial and representative. Second in the story's foreshadowing of the trajectory of Stendhal's career: though he continued to write in this genre in his later years, the fact that his early nonfiction preceded his novels and autobiographies suggest that it is the formal literary incarnation of the boy's initial, troubled state of entry into the verbal, during the period in which he refused to say "I." For the "I" in his nonfiction is not unequivocal—it vacillates between present and absent, fictionalized pseudonymously and further fictionalized through the filter of other speakers and subjects. Stendhal's novels, then, become the form corresponding to the boy's usage of the third person to refer to his good self, his ideal self. Beyle poured through the sieve of his protagonists becomes, after all, the hero in an age when heroism is no longer possible: he commits suicide and attempts murder; he fights in battles and seduces; he gambles and makes his fortune only to renounce it. As the last milestone of his development as an author, Stendhal's autobiography aligns with the young boy's adoption of the "I"—with ambivalence and much hesitation, *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme* take comfort in narrating Beyle's "naughty" self—not in the manner of Rousseau, et Al., as a means of self-justification, confession, or a search for redemption, but rather as the necessary analog of "I" to the novel's "he." And within all three of these genres, a touch of the boy who takes comfort in

singing himself to sleep in the third person: that is, the comfort of narrating one's life, even—or especially—in a lexicon of distanciation. Stendhal's nonfiction proves Beyle to be the original "boy who couldn't say I."

Part II: Three performances of authenticity in Stendhal's nonfiction

If each of these three types of fictionalizations is an attempt at writing authentically, so too are Stendhal's nonfictional works themselves based on the pursuit of authenticity—that of a culture, a social structure, a work of art, and of the consumption all of these.²¹⁶ The social performance will be delineated within the purview of the theater—this time, literally, as the physical setting of much of these travel writings. The consumption of authenticity in the private performance employs Stendhal's formula—*jouir bien de son âme*—as the spectator's precept in the solitary act of enjoying fine art. The written performance that takes place in these nonfictional works revives the crucial question of the self's relationship to language and literature: here Stendhal's celebration of Italy's *naturel* comes head to head with his reluctance to disown his own analytical impulse. In each of these performances, the nuances and contradictions of Stendhal's prescription for authenticity demonstrate an author trying to navigate the past and the present, the social and the solitary, the illusory and the material. These tensions are best summed up in a passage from his *Salon de 1824*, in which Stendhal proclaims that the "real" depicted in artistic representation must be based on a "clothed"

²¹⁶ As Barthes notes in "L'Effet de réel," the nineteenth-century craze for authenticity was not only seen in the realm of fiction: it also manifested in the development of photography; a new passion for an "objective" and positivist approach to history, especially that of Antiquity and the Middle Ages; the explosion of journalism; and the birth of modern tourism, all of which are tied to both the continuing growth of the bourgeoisie and their material culture, spurred by industrial and advancements and the development of capitalism. All of these factors led to the conception of the real (or the authentic) as an end in itself, a suitable goal for artistic and material pursuits. [Roland Barthes, "L'Effet de réel," in *Littérature et réalité* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1982).]

model rather than a “naked” one—on *le naturel* as a shrouding in artifice rather than its shedding. This ethos should color the criticism offered throughout the rest of the chapter.

Renouncing nostalgia: when the “new” means “not nude”

The authentic narration of Stendhal’s nonfiction is predicated on the foreign status of the tourist-narrator, whose access to objective, spontaneous judgments corresponds to the author’s dictum for authentic travel (“Un voyage, pour être instructif, doit être une suite de jugements sur les divers objets que vous rencontrez”).²¹⁷ Yet it is important to note that this foreignness is not only that which *imbues* the tourist-narrator’s voice with authenticity, but also that which allows him to *experience* authentically. In this regard, Italy’s *naturel* is in some ways incidental—it is authentic only insofar as Stendhal is *there*, in Italy, and is not Italian.

For in spite of its reputation as Stendhal’s authentic ideal, Italy is not universally celebrated in these works as a flawless site of *le naturel*—in fact, it is often criticized for failing to adhere to the standard prescribed by the author. For every tribute to its authenticity, there exists a critique of its affectation, suggesting that the perception of authenticity or lack thereof in others may signify little more than the caprice of the self who perceives. In contrast to his recurrent praise for the utter lack of mimetic affectation on the part of Italians, Stendhal writes in *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*: “Le mot *imiter* semble avoir été créé en faveur de ce pays.”²¹⁸ Moreover, Italy is not the only country Stendhal designates as a contrast to French affectation—“[l]es hommes supérieurs de l’Angleterre,” for example,

²¹⁷ Stendhal, *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 22.

²¹⁸ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 78.

also serve as a model of *le naturel*, demonstrating that foreignness is more crucial to the tourist's experience of authenticity than Italy in particular.²¹⁹ This formula is echoed by Stendhal's miniaturized tourist-narrator, the English Colonel Forsyt, who inverts the previous reflection, proclaiming *naturel* to be a French trait while deeming affectation the plague of the English: "la société de Paris, dans ma jeunesse, offrait infiniment plus d'élégance, d'aisance et de naturel, qu'il n'y en a jamais eu en Angleterre."²²⁰ That this illusion of *naturel*, that veil through which shortcomings are recast as charming eccentricities, posturing as quirkiness, is but a byproduct of foreignness does not escape Stendhal: "Le philosophe qui a le malheur de connaître les hommes méprise toujours davantage le pays où il a appris à les connaître. Le patois de mon pays me présente toutes les idées basses : un patois inconnu n'est pour moi qu'une langue étrangère."²²¹

Authenticity is generally understood to be an ideal with naturally nostalgic tendencies, for it is inevitably in the past that the ideal of the real, if lost presently, must be rooted. Naturalism itself is defined by Rosset as a *refus du présent*,²²² and nostalgia has been one of the main lenses through which critics have explained both Romanticism, broadly, and Stendhal's ethos and historical context, specifically. But it is precisely nostalgia—and in fact, the chains of temporality, more generally—which Stendhal attempts to jettison from his conception of authenticity; his travel writings, especially, aim to recast the search for *le naturel* from the realm of time onto the realm of place. His tourism abandons the naturalist's *refus du présent* in favor of a *refus du lieu natal*. The tourist's yearning for authenticity stems from the

²¹⁹ Ibid., 68.

²²⁰ Ibid., 103.

²²¹ Ibid., 71.

²²² Rosset, *L'anti-nature : éléments pour une philosophie tragique*, 273.

feeling that anywhere is more natural than his own culture; that any reality is realer than the one he experiences as his own. The *spatially adrift* replaces the *temporally adrift*: nostalgia, through the tourist's movement through geographical space, is given a new temporality in the present. The foreign, for Stendhal, is a replacement for the past—that entity reached for by an entire generation of Romantic writers, but which according to Stendhal's terms must be disowned in favor of the modern, the contemporary, the new.²²³ Stendhal thus travels to the land of ancient ruins in pursuit of the new: “pour trouver du neuf et voir les hommes tels qu'ils sont.”²²⁴

Stendhal's stance against nostalgia is on several occasions justified by the *pleasure*—spiritual, social, artistic—that is the happy outcome of all that is new and modern, and all that is progress: “Comment veut-on que nous ressemblions à nos pères ?,” he asks during his stay in Rome, before going on to comment on how much greater social freedoms are in his day than they were thirty years ago, when ventures like visiting ladies in the middle of the night or clandestine political meetings would have been impossible.²²⁵ Similarly, the pursuit of authenticity enacted spatially through travel will inevitably result in pleasure and joy—a material gain that a temporal nostalgia can never offer, as time cannot be crossed and traversed as land and sea can. Stendhal writes that he does not travel to know Italy, “mais

²²³ The use of “romantic” to designate “modern,” was not unique to Stendhal; it recalls, after all, the famous line from Baudelaire's *Salon de 1846*: “Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne.” Though not alone in employing the word this way, this sense of “romantic” underscores Stendhal's attempt to distinguish his own Romantic naturalism through a refusal of nostalgia. This dictum pertains not only to the Romantic artist's ethos but to the subject of his creations as well, as Stendhal writes in *Salon de 1824*: “Le romantique dans tous les arts, c'est ce qui représente les hommes d'aujourd'hui, et non de ces temps héroïques si loin de nous, et qui probablement n'ont jamais existé.” [Stendhal, “Le journal de Paris, 22 décembre 1824,” in *Mélanges d'art*, ed. Henri Martineau (Paris: Le Divan, 1932), 141.]

²²⁴ *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 412.

²²⁵ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 60.

pour me faire plaisir”;²²⁶ in his journal he again links pleasure to the new, recalling that all of his travels led to joy stemming from being able to “voir du nouveau.”²²⁷

The *refus de la nostalgie* represents the main coup by which Stendhal differentiates his own conception of authenticity from that of other iterations of Romanticism. This insistence on modernity—which underwrites not only his own artistic production but his discourses on the subject as well, as in *Racine et Shakespeare* and *Histoire de la peinture*, is best encapsulated by an anecdote taken from his *Salon de 1824*, whose commentary may also be applied to the performance of the authentic self as well as its rendering-through-writing:

Nous sommes à la veille d’une révolution dans les beaux-arts. Les grands tableaux composés de trente figures nues, copiées d’après les statues antiques, et les lourdes tragédies en cinq actes et en vers, sont des ouvrages fort respectables sans doute ; mais, quoi qu’on en dise, ils commencent à ennuyer, et, si le tableau des *Sabines* paraissait aujourd’hui, on trouverait que ses personnages sont sans passion, et que par tous pays il est absurde de marcher au combat sans vêtements. –Mais tel est pourtant l’usage dans les bas-reliefs antiques ! s’écrient les classiques de la peinture, ces gens qui ne jurent que par David, et ne prononcent pas trois mots sans parler de *style*. –Et que me fait à moi le bas-relief antique ? tâchons de faire la bonne peinture moderne. Les Grecs aimaient le nu ; nous, nous ne le voyons jamais, et je dirai bien plus, il nous répugne.²²⁸

Imitation of the past is not just inauthentic; much worse, it is boring, as it precludes access to novelty as a source of pleasure. In both the copies of ancient statues and the “heavy” five-act tragedies, the “passionless” personages portend the lack of passion inevitably felt by the spectator. Lionel Trilling has demonstrated that pivotal to the conception of authentic art in the nineteenth century was the notion of a “transfer” which necessarily took place, from œuvre to spectator, so that the latter “acquires the authenticity

²²⁶ *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 501.

²²⁷ *Voyages en Italie*, XXXVI.

²²⁸ “Salon de 1824,” 21-22.

of which the [art] object itself is the model and the artist the personal example.”²²⁹ Stendhal’s passage above proves that the converse is also true: the inauthenticity of art is contagious to the spectator. But most important in this paragraph are the implied reasons for which nakedness, *le nu*—traditionally the only state in which (self-)representation has been understood to be sincere and/or authentic, from the art of Antiquity through the *Essais* of Montaigne to the *Confessions* of Rousseau—is deemed not only ridiculous, but an artifice. An outdated and impossible ideal, the “naked” self is nostalgic in its refusal of the present—not a laying out of the real so much as an affront to Realism. With this paragraph Stendhal flips on its head Montaigne’s vow to show himself « nument » by declaring *le nu* to be unrealistic, boring, and even repugnant. And what Stendhal contends here about art holds true for the characters he would go on to create in his fiction: authentic art must portray the experience of the *nom*, and what is modern is to be *clothed*. The enigma of the self is not revealed through any sort of undressing, but in showing layer-by-layer the clothes in which it shrouds itself.²³⁰

²²⁹ Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 100.

²³⁰ That which Georges Blin first dubbed Stendhal’s *esthétique du miroir*, the duty of a novel to be « un miroir qu’on promène le long d’un chemin », as Stendhal wrote in *Le Rouge et le noir*, is an exigency which must be situated in terms of the evolution of the novel form, in addition to the rise of the “modern” autobiography. If Rousseau’s *Confessions* marks the dawn of the latter, these two genres were decidedly less differentiated in the period preceding its publication—this was the period of the eighteenth-century memoir-novel, whose blurring of formal boundaries would be resuscitated in its twentieth-century incarnation of autofiction. Before “autobiography,” there were memoirs, but there was also the memoir-novel, which Philip Stewart has argued to be a reaction to the earlier novel’s treading too far into the territory of artifice, thus “falling into disrepute as a frivolous genre”: “The rising status of memoirs—the recourse to historical disguise by a genre once overtly given to pure imagination—must be traced in the evolution of the novel in the seventeenth century. [...] The trouble was that the pleasure [novels] may have provided was undermined by a growing fatigue with their conventional classical or pastoral characters, ‘puérilités fastueuses’ of plot, and altogether too lengthy contents.” [Philip Stewart, *Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir-Novel, 1700-1750: the Art of Make-Believe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 14.] From the excessively fantastical seventeenth-century novel, to the “realer” memoir-novel of the eighteenth-century, to the distinction implied by the advent of “autobiography,” proper, to Stendhal’s insistence on the reality-reflecting function of the novel—but a specific reality that is *not naked*.

It is under the shadow of this dictate that the social performance should be interpreted. In Stendhal's nonfiction, the theatrical form that this performance takes is quite literal. For what has not yet been mentioned about these writings—from *Rome, Naples et Florence* to *Vie de Rossini*—is just how much takes place at the theater, or is dedicated to the discussion of the theater and the various theatrical performances at which Stendhal was (or, sometimes, pretended to be) present. The theater—the opera—is, in fact, the *raison d'être* of his travels: “Il entre dans la politesse d'un voyageur de se donner un but en voyageant. [...] La musique m'intéresse assez pour que je puisse me mettre toujours sous sa protection.”²³¹ The same might be said for his nonfiction writings as well: lengthy descriptions of the seating arrangements of the different opera houses; accounts of the masked balls that take place inside their walls; pages-long lists of the alternating casts of productions; comparisons of the pluck and virtuosity of various opera stars.

The setting of the theater is where Stendhal stages the important lesson of how to be an *authentic spectator*—the nonfiction iteration of the social performance of authenticity. In *Rome, Naples et Florence*, this lesson compares the affected French spectator who performs his appreciation of an opera, thereby transforming himself into the actor, to the more natural Italian spectator, whose cheers, because he is fully immersed in the musical experience, are expressed for the sole purpose of enhancing the on-stage actor's performance rather than eclipsing it with his own. It is the classic Stendhalian dichotomy between vanity (being *seen* enjoying) and passion (enjoying, proper). “Le plaisir que les jeunes gens trouvent aux Français n'est pas la joie du théâtre, c'est le plaisir d'un cours de littérature bien fait, le plaisir

²³¹ Stendhal, *Voyages en Italie*, XXXVI.

des souvenirs classiques. Ces jeunes gens sont réduits aux jouissances des vieux pédants.”²³² This lesson is reprised in *Vie de Rossini*; this time contrasting the pedantic French *connaisseur* to the passionate Italian *dilettante*. The difference in authenticity lies not only in the degree to which each figure is or is not *theatrical*, but also in the level of sincerity of his engagement with the music—of *interior jouissance* spawned by amour-propre, versus the *exterior jouissance* that, though more eye-catching than the Frenchman’s applause, signals a soul who has lost himself to the greater beauty of the music, so that his corporeal reactions are authentic in that they are beyond his control. Stendhal writes of the *connaisseur*: “Tout bon Parisien, en couvrant d’applaudissements une scène de Racine ou de Voltaire, jouit intérieurement, et s’applaudit encore plus lui-même de ses connaissances en littérature et de la sûreté de son goût [...] la vanité ravie de pouvoir faire preuve de savoir.”²³³ Meanwhile, the *dilettante*’s reaction looks rather like this: “*bello! bello! o che bello!* [...] [C]e n’était plus un applaudissement à la française et de vanité satisfaite [...]: c’étaient des cœurs inondés de plaisir.”²³⁴ In the recurring fable of the two spectators emerge Stendhal’s instructions for how the self, by fully immersing itself in the sensory experience of a musical performance, can elude—however momentarily—its status as an actor. This sort of *being* which escapes all the self-consciousness of *seeming* is fundamentally an experience of *authentic consumption*—that is, a route to selfhood based on external stimuli rather than internal. A sort of antithesis to the Romantic *culte du Moi*, this route is based on sensible and sensory reactions rather than introspective reflection. Stendhal’s position on this process, in fact, is consciously anti-

²³² *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 79.

²³³ *Vie de Rossini*, 343.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 347.

critical: “Même en musique, pour être heureux, il ne faut pas en être réduit à examiner”;²³⁵ that said, it is a stance to which he himself will find it impossible to adhere.

But the theater as a setting does not only refer to the performances Stendhal and his parabolic spectators attend; for it is at these famed opera houses that he receives instruction in that other theater at the theater—the spectacle of *les mœurs italiennes*. It is there that another tenet of social authenticity reveals itself: that the more theatrical—the more choreographed, preordained, and mannered—the society, the less theatrical the individual. “Le théâtre de la Scala est le salon de la ville,” he writes, “Il n’y a de société que là, pas une maison ouverte. ‘Nous nous verrons à la Scala’, se dit-on pour tous les genres d’affaires. Le premier aspect est enivrant. Je suis tout transporté en écrivant ceci.”²³⁶ As the quintessence of Milanese social life, it is paradoxically at the theater where the actor-self is best able to stop performing. The theater itself is the true site of Italian authenticity. Not only because, as the nightly meeting place of Milan’s elite, it provides a stage for the manners of the Italian nobility, but also because it more literally imposes the strict social order through which individual authenticity may paradoxically be achieved. This is due, as Stendhal observes at Rome’s Valle theater, to the fact that the laws governing Italian opera houses were exaggeratedly stringent: the social hierarchy laid out by an opera house’s architecture, where classes are stratified by seating sections, was, for example, enforced to the point where any infringement of this order constituted a serious crime, as did a variety of other social faux-pas—none of which went unpunished:

Je m’amuse à lire le règlement de police ; le gouvernement connaît son peuple : ce sont des lois atroces. Cent coups de bâton, administrés à l’instant sur l’échafaud qui est en permanence à la place Navone, avec une torche et

²³⁵ Ibid., 201.

²³⁶ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 6.

une sentinelle, pour le spectateur qui prendrait la place d'un autre ; *cing ans de galère* pour celui qui élève la voix contre le portier du théâtre (*la maschera*) qui distribue les places.²³⁷

The literal despotism of the theater, which Stendhal finds so amusing, is a stand-in for the tacit despotism of Italian mores—whose virtues he might not extol so openly, but whose fixed social structure is precisely that which allows for the *naturel* of its people. A Girardian idea, but not *only* a Girardian one: to be sure, it does paint a picture of the mimetic crisis of democracy—a consciousness of the *other* as potential rival; more importantly, it suggests that the more pernicious consciousness brought about by the freedom of self-determination is a consciousness of the self-as-actor. This self-consciousness or performance anxiety manifests itself as a *crisis of improvisation*—where spontaneity is precluded strictly because it is sought. Improvisation may only succeed, rather, where the self aims not to invent his own role but to play a prescribed one. To leave early-nineteenth-century La Scala, momentarily, for the early-nineteenth-century English ballroom, the phenomenon works like this: consider how Jane Austen's heroes and heroines are at their wittiest, their most courageous, their most flirtatious, during that scene written into all of her novels—the group dance at the ball. It is invariably during those brief and recurring tête-à-têtes, brought about by the partner-changes which punctuate the precise choreographies of group dances, that individual characters enact their most brilliant moments of verbal improvisation. What Austen makes clear is that improvisation works best within the confines of choreography; conversely, when chaos and anarchy replace a strict social choreography, the individual becomes paralyzed by a crisis of improvisation. Compare the Regency ballroom choreography to the autistic “free-form” dancing of contemporary eras, where each dancer is

²³⁷ Ibid., 22.

meant to invent her performance on the spot, but, self-conscious of this freedom, can instead only mirror and mimic the moves she sees being performed around her.

Stendhal, like Austen, demonstrates throughout his nonfiction that improvisation does not arise out of social anarchy, nor even of social democracy. Call it his reactionary side, the antidote to his revolutionary fervor—a sort of post-revolutionary schizophrenia which hurls him back and forth between the two poles of intellectual ideology and his somewhat guilty indulgence in the pleasures of the social world that had to be destroyed for those progressive ideologies to be enacted. Stendhal has no qualms in admitting certain royalist tendencies: “Il y a une fibre adorative dans le cœur humain. Moi-même, quand je songe à la mesquinerie et à la *pauvreté prude* des républiques que j’ai vues, je me trouve tout royaliste.”²³⁸ Furthermore, on several occasions he links post-revolutionary democracy to the decline of the individual and its originality: “Un des grands traits du XIXe siècle sera l’absence totale de la hardiesse nécessaire pour n’être pas comme tout le monde. [...] Elle porte tous les hommes d’un siècle à peu près au même niveau et supprime les hommes extraordinaires.”²³⁹ Likewise, the decline of the individual has resulted in the parallel decline of nations’ arts—“Les choses qu’il faut aux arts pour prospérer sont souvent contraires à celles qu’il faut aux nations pour être heureuses.”²⁴⁰ Stendhal seems to suggest that his concept of artistic poesis depends to some degree on a lack of freedom, on the passion inspired by the very social confines within which each individual is imprisoned. Free from an explicit social code, the individual in a democracy falls victim instead to a structure imposed upon itself—that of bourgeois morality, or rather bourgeois mediocrity. The

²³⁸ Ibid., 33.

²³⁹ *Promenades Dans Rome*, 649.

²⁴⁰ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 57.

individual thus finds his freedom bludgeoned by the petty prudishness of the bourgeois who “font la police les uns sur les autres.”²⁴¹

Interestingly, Stendhal returns often to the observation that this death-by-bourgeois-morality hurts no one more than women. In one instance, his remarks on the matter are filtered through Colonel Forsyt, who laments the loss of intellectual equality that French women suffered as a result of the Republic’s bourgeois sanctification of the productive, passionless nuclear family:

À mesure que vous allez devenir plus constitutionnels, vos femmes deviendront moins aimables ; je crois même avoir déjà remarqué cette nuance. Vous avez beaucoup plus de bonnes mères de famille qu’en 1775 ; et il n’y a rien d’ennuyeux au monde comme une bonne mère de famille. [...] Une suite irrémédiable de la liberté est donc de faire considérer les femmes comme des êtres d’un esprit moins élevé, et, qui pis est, de donner quelque fondement à ce préjugé.²⁴²

Prudery and misogyny; the decline of the arts and of the individual; self-conscious affectation where there was once inspired improvisation; self-imposed regulation where there was once the freedom of nuance: Stendhal’s reactionary side is unequivocal in its preference for a pre-revolutionary social structure. But his appreciation for democratic ideals nevertheless reverberates throughout his judgments on Italy: echoing the notion that authenticity is found in a polyphony rather than monophony, in plurality rather than singularity, Stendhal lauds the naturally democratic undercurrents to Italian culture that are the result of the country’s lack of central capital dictating from on high the tastes and mores of the entire country. Because it lacks a Paris equivalent, Italy’s authenticity lies in the plurality of its cities and cultures and tribes, each a discrete autonomous unit of the Italian whole, interested in self-determination rather than imitation of such a capital. The

²⁴¹ Ibid., 97.

²⁴² Ibid., 107-08.

democracy inherent to Italy's pluralistic geography, in other words, makes for an authenticity elusive to places that have but one social model.

En France, défaut d'originalité par le despotisme du *ridicule* et d'une grande capitale. Ici, Brescia, qui est à vingt lieues de Milan, ne songe pas plus à imiter Milan que Philadelphie. Toutes les familles, toutes les aventures galantes, se connaissent d'une ville à l'autre ; mais pas la moindre trace d'imitation.²⁴³

This hatred for a monophonic expression of culture aligns with his childhood admiration for Alfieri's denunciations of tyranny and authoritarianism;²⁴⁴ it also underscores his lengthy rants against the Pope in *Rome, Naples et Florence* and *L'Italie en 1818*. Nevertheless, just as Stendhal's youthful subscription to the Rousseauian school of sincerity developed into a more complex conception of authenticity that does not eschew contradiction, so, too, does Beyle demonstrate that even the most fervent republicanism is sometimes plagued by opposing truths—namely, that it is precisely in Italy's unquestioning adherence to proscribed social mores that the *naturel* of the Italian individual is made manifest.

This is because, on the one hand, what is implicitly understood collectively does not have to be referenced—that is, performed and represented—by the individual. Take Stendhal's remarks on the discretion of Italian nobility, who because their position has not been challenged are not wont to call attention to it: "J'ai soutenu la conversation, pendant trois heures, avec [un] jeune homme qui a deux cent mille livres de rente, et vingt-deux ans, et il ne m'a pas fait comprendre qu'il était duc. On dira en France que j'exagère."²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Ibid., 149.

²⁴⁴ In many ways, Stendhal's relationship to Alfieri reveals the Italian author to be a parallel figure to Rousseau. Though Beyle was as a young man enchanted with Alfieri's staunch opposition to tyranny of all forms, he grew to find this sort of absolutism, like Rousseau's naturalism, somewhat naive and simplistic. He eventually lamented, again as he would for Rousseau, Alfieri's *manque d'esprit* and the manner in which any sort of Realism in his works was hampered by his heavy-handed style. For more on the trajectory of Stendhal as a reader of Alfieri, see Victor Del Litto, *La ve intellectuelle de Stendhal: genèse et évolution de ses idées (1802-1821)* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1959).

²⁴⁵ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 17.

If originality and authenticity are unleashed because the hierarchy of social class is in Italy uncontested, this stratification is nevertheless not taken *au sérieux* but rather in the spirit of the theater—that is, as a game of role-play. The counterintuitive formula, again, suggests that the more theatrical the social structure, the more authentic the individual. The more coded, the more ritualistic the social interactions, the more room there is for personal expression and improvisation. The onus of the performance is on the collective social unit, allowing for a more improvisational self to exist. Conversely, when that onus shifts onto the individual self, it freezes in self-consciousness and mimetically-imposed self-restrictions; it is overcome by a crisis of spontaneity. A theatrical social setup saves the individual from theatricality—from the bother of what the Italians call being *sostenuto*—sustained, posed, in performance. The rule then, is that while collective role-play fosters *l'amour de soi*, individual role-play promotes vanity and *l'amour-propre*.²⁴⁶ Just as the modern, authentic subject of fine arts must be *clothed*, the Italian self is revealed through its enshrouding in strict social codes and careful social choreography.

This logic is built into the very architecture of the Italian theater, as Stendhal makes clear through his recurring appreciation for the opera boxes at La Scala and San Carlo theaters, where *les loges* provide the stages for the mini-dramas taking place among the Italian élite, a theme famously reprised throughout *La Chartreuse de Parme* in Gina's box, the location

²⁴⁶ This contrast evokes Barbara Carnevali's paralleling of Rousseau's opposition between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* to the difference between *romantisme* and *reconnaissance*. For Carnevali, *l'amour de soi*, "[la] voix intérieure qui guide avec assurance l'individu dans le monde et lui enseigne clairement et distinctement ce qui sert à sa survie et à son bien-être" corresponds to the Girardian notion of *romantisme*—the myth of the primordial and autonomous self that reigned during the nineteenth century, while *l'amour-propre* aligns with *romantisme's* inverse—*reconnaissance*, or "l'ensemble des questions psychologiques, sociales et morales ayant trait à la dépendance de l'homme à l'égard de l'estime d'autrui." [Carnevali, *Romantisme et Reconnaissance : Figures de la conscience chez Rousseau*, 7.]

in which she enacts her *révolution d'intérieur*.²⁴⁷ In these boxes, social interactions are choreographed in the spirit of courtly love; Stendhal describes, for example, the game of musical chairs that takes place in the box of every noble Milanaise, whose *loge* serves as her salon, with callers staying politely in the back of the box in order to leave the front to the lady and her “cavalier *servante*.”²⁴⁸ Because there is a formalized ritual of paying respect to the lady, there is no battle of vanities among her callers, no clamoring for her attention. Socializing itself is shown to be organized theatricality, which takes the theatrics out of individual interactions. The same goes for Stendhal’s account of the nightly *promenades* in Italian cities, where the nobility parade themselves down one of the town’s main streets. Here, again, the individual’s exhibitionist needs are met by the very architecture of the city, thereby allowing the self to perform *but without acting*.

The function of this theatrically-structured society relies, as does a theater performance, on the collective suspension of disbelief on the part of the actors and spectators. In the same way that the spectators of a play agree to embrace stage sets, props, and costumes as real, in order to give free reign to the actors to authentically express human emotion, Italian society agrees to various contraptions in order to give free reign to the individual passion. This is social authenticity *à l’italienne*: the collective theatrics which save the individual from histrionics; it follows Stendhal’s mandate: “regarder la vie comme un bal masqué.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ As Pierre Brunel notes in his introduction to *Vie de Rossini*, Gina’s box even physically resembles a mini-stage: it houses the calculations of her most pivotal social orchestrations and serves as the platform on which she is dramatically presented, through the opening of the box’s own curtain, to her future lover, the count Mosca. Indeed, Stendhal so admires the box’s conformity to the physical structure of the stage that he cannot help but criticize *les loges* of the San Carlo theater for not having curtains. [Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, 460.]

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

²⁴⁹ *Œuvres Intimes*, ed. Victor Del Litto, vol. I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1981-1982), 663.

What Stendhal finds Italy to possess in terms of authentic social graces is but a memory in his own France, and this is again attributed explicitly to the Revolution: “L’esprit, si délicieux pour qui le sent, ne dure pas. Comme une pêche passe en quelques jours, l’esprit passe en deux cents ans, et bien plus vite, s’il y a révolution dans les rapports que les classes d’une société ont entre elles.”²⁵⁰ The social performance of authenticity can at times be expressed, after all, in the form of the idealized *perfect conversation*, whose interlocutors are at their most natural, most brilliant, most quick-thinking and spontaneous. On the one hand, the site of the perfected conversation—the salon—peaked in the eighteenth-century and was by Stendhal’s time somewhat of a relic, reeking with Restoration nostalgia and the self-consciousness of imitating a bygone era. On the other hand, even devoid of historical context, nostalgia is built into the system of valorizing conversational *esprit* as a social good, or as an outlet for elevated, spontaneous, authentic social performance. As Chantal Thomas writes in *L’Esprit de conversation*, “Mais la conversation, les formes de politesse, la délicatesse, ne sont-elles pas des choses que, depuis toujours, on n’évoque qu’au passé ?”²⁵¹ Like the ideal of authenticity itself, the ideal of the perfect conversation conceives of time in a decidedly prelapsarian way. But given Stendhal’s efforts to reject this sort of nostalgia in his pursuit of an authentic performance, it becomes clear that his yearning for *l’esprit* of yore, while rooted in the sociopolitical conditions that created the milieu in which it could flourish, has nevertheless more to do with the curious fact that these conditions were understood to be theatrical. For the salon of the Ancien Régime was itself already a *jeu*

²⁵⁰ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 923.

²⁵¹ Chantal Thomas, *L’esprit de conversation* (Paris: Éditions Payot et Rivages, 2011), 12-13.

théâtral, as Thomas establishes in her book. Of the seventeenth-century salon, typified by Mme de Rambouillet's *Chambre bleue*, she writes:

Les habitués de la Chambre bleue se comportent et parlent comme dans un roman. Ils jouent à se donner des noms, à reprendre des situations romanesques, à en développer de nouveaux épisodes. Ils évoluent en pleine féerie. Cette application et cet enjouement à se détacher du réel ne sont pas sans conséquence. Sur la scène de leur théâtre on aime avec plus de douceur et de délicatesse que dans la vie réelle. On aime pour le plaisir d'aimer.²⁵²

Thomas extends this theatrical foundation through the eighteenth-century salon as typified by Mme du Deffand—“[c]ette actrice si admirée” who directed in her salon a game of role-play “fondé sur le naturel.”²⁵³ By Stendhal's nineteenth century, the salon differentiates itself from this model by engaging in a game of mimetic role-play *but without understanding its premise as such*. That is to say, the attendants of the nineteenth-century salon are engaging in a type of role-play that masks itself as real life, rather than engaging in a type of real life that openly declares itself a game of role-play. Stendhal's nostalgia for bygone mores is in this way somewhat depoliticized, as it is displaced from the temporal realm of Ancien Régime France to the geographical site of Italy, for his reactionary tendencies are tempered when interpreted as a yearning for a theatricalized social structure rather than the sociopolitical conditions themselves. The Italian mode of social choreography references the past-as-narrative rather than the past-as-real; it draws from literary and performative traditions—romanesque and theatrical—rather than from an ideal of a social that exists independently of these traditions. For example, the conventions of courtly love, which still dominate: “Un étranger qui a passé par une grande ville d'Italie, est moins connu par son

²⁵² Ibid., 13.

²⁵³ Ibid., 47.

nom que par celui de la dame qu'il *servait*. *Esser in servitù* est le mot..."²⁵⁴ The difference between the Italian and French modes of nostalgic role-play is then this: while in the former, the actor-self imitates the courtly knight who himself sees his role as part of a theatrical game, in the latter, the actor-self imitates this same knight as if his existence were entirely free of self-consciousness or self-conscious histrionics. This view of the past as theater is the paradoxical access to the authentic real; it is the doubling-up of artifice, the theater of a theater, which transforms the farce of reenacted tragedy back into a tragedy in its own right.

This is also the logic behind Stendhal's rendering of the *authentic feminine*—his so-called feminism that first unveils itself in his early nonfictional works. Here, as is the case throughout his œuvre, women are touted as far more *naturel* and authentic than men. And this is all the more pronounced in Italian women, who see what Stendhal deems French-style vanity—"notre grand art de représenter"—as "le comble de l'ennui."²⁵⁵ From this observation a parallel becomes clear: the decorum of Italy's stratified culture is to the equality and freedom of post-revolutionary France as *woman's* existence is to *man's*. Like Italy, "woman," as a construct, is *always already theatricalized*—both are understood to be choreographed, performing, decorous in their adherence to decorum, instances of the aestheticization of existence itself. "Naked" existence—devoid of artifice, free of the sins of the actor, is a gendered notion—to be natural, naked, is to be male. Femininity, on the other hand, is understood to be ornamental—to be clothed, made up, affected, is to be female.

That the "performance" of femininity is decidedly more theatrical than that of masculinity is universally accepted. De Beauvoir wrote: "On ne naît pas femme : on le

²⁵⁴ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 84.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

devient.”²⁵⁶ Lacan suggested that women “are more prone than men to engage in masquerade because of their different positioning within the Symbolic Order. Women, for Lacan, engage in masquerade in order to be the phallus [...] where men compete to have the phallus, to own it.”²⁵⁷ In comparing men performing femininity to women performing masculinity, Judith Butler acknowledges that “the latter is, in effect, to perform a little less, given that femininity is cast as the spectacular gender.”²⁵⁸

It is difficult to say whether the women in Stendhal’s works are indeed *more* theatrical than the men, but it is certain that feminine theatricality is depicted as *more authentic* than masculine masquerading. This phenomenon functions similarly to the theatrical social choreography of the Italian opera houses. De Beauvoir described Stendhal as “[c]e tendre ami des femmes” within a lexicon of authenticity: he wrote “real” women, and did not believe in any sort of “mystère féminin.”²⁵⁹ Yet her critique of the ornamentality of feminine existence²⁶⁰ is precisely that which provides the Stendhalian loophole for woman as more authentic than man. Because the artifice is doubled—the performance of femininity does not claim to be a performance of a self but a performance of an image—woman is not the actor of a woman but the actor of an actor, the signifier of a signifier. This resembles Butler’s discussion of drag performance as that which “imitates the imitative structure of gender,

²⁵⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, “Enfance,” in *Le Deuxième sexe: II: l’expérience vécue* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949, 1976), 13.

²⁵⁷ Scott, “Performing Desire: Stendhal’s Theatrical Heroines,” 269. It is the reorganization of this Symbolic Order, Scott argues, that is undertaken by Stendhal’s theatrical heroines: “Stendhal’s amazons, to borrow Prévost’s term, seem to use their disguises and masquerades as a means of becoming not causes of desire but autonomous desiring subjects of desire within the Symbolic Order.” [ibid.]

²⁵⁸ Judith Butler, “Melancholy Gender—Refused Identification,” *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 5 (1995): 177.

²⁵⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, “Stendhal ou le romanesque du vrai,” in *Le Deuxième sexe: I: les faits et les mythes* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949, 1976), 377.

²⁶⁰ See especially de Beauvoir’s analysis of dress-up and make-up in “La vie de société.”

revealing gender itself as an imitation.”²⁶¹ Stendhal’s woman, likewise, performs the performative function of her letter-self—the representation is of the representation, not of the referent, in the same way that what is “‘performed’ in drag is, of course, the *sign* of the gender, a sign which is not the same as the body it figures, but which cannot be read without it.”²⁶² Along these lines, we might say that Stendhal’s “woman” has accepted her existence as a letter-self, and all the “reiterating and repeating” of constitutive norms such a representation requires, whereas Stendhal’s “man” (his *Je*, included) tends to fight this status, because he believes, fallaciously, in the possibility of recovering a pre-performative self that can exist autistically within conventions.²⁶³ Because her social performance is by default theatrical, Stendhal’s “woman” is freed from theatricality, and is permitted to exist within it authentically. Like the clothed portrait subjects Stendhal envisions as modern and authentic in the *Salon de 1824*, woman, having already metabolized the crisis of representation that spawns the problem of authenticity, is thus a better representative of “human nature” than is man—this is, at its most basic, the essence of Stendhal’s feminism.

The private performance of authenticity: comment jouir de l'art

If the operatic performance is a public spectacle, where the self must access its emotional interiority in order to consume authentically, rather than turning this spectatorship into a performance unto itself, the consumption of fine arts is a more solitary affair. First

²⁶¹ Butler, "Melancholy Gender—Refused Identification," 176.

²⁶² "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1993): 26.

²⁶³ Since it was first put forth in *Gender Trouble*, Butler’s theory of performativity has frequently been misinterpreted to mean that gender-performance is simply a “choice” the self consciously makes, “a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning,” as opposed to “a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of a gendered self.” [ibid., 21-22.] See also *Gender Trouble* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

because it is static, with no discrete linear temporality along which specific reactions—laughter, shock, suspense—are elicited from the spectator at specific times; second, because fine art may be viewed alone, independently both of the social architecture of the theatrical performance and of the presence of actors. It provides an easier context, then, within which the spectator may avoid acting out his consumption. But like the social performance of spectatorship at the theater, the private performance of fine arts depends on the locating of the self's emotional truth. This time, the self risks falling into theatricality not due to the presence of other spectators, but through the intrusion of preconceived (intellectual) aesthetic tenets of art criticism.

Stendhal's insistence on emotional truth as the criterion with which the spectator must judge fine arts is an echo both of the legacy of eighteenth-century stances put forth by Diderot and Rousseau,²⁶⁴ and of his own era, one of the "chief intentions" of nineteenth-century art being "to induce in the audience the *sentiment of being*," a sentiment which over the course of the century became "increasingly subsumed under the conception of personal authenticity."²⁶⁵ Like the authentic voyage, Stendhal suggests that the authentic consumption of fine arts demands the meditative state of solitude, for it is not only the gaze and (imagined) opinions of other spectators that might disrupt this consumption's authenticity, but any sort of verbal disruption at all: "Pourquoi parler? Pourquoi se mettre en communication avec cet éteignoir de tout enthousiasme et de toute sensibilité? *Les autres*."²⁶⁶ The rules of the private performance thus seem to reinforce the binary of passion and emotion against analysis and affectation: only alone, without the physical presence of others

²⁶⁴ As Del Litto notes in his preface. [Stendhal, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, 29.]

²⁶⁵ Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 99.

²⁶⁶ Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, 336.

or the immaterial presence of critical thought—that voice in one’s head laden with the analytical tools and judgments developed through book-learning—can emotional truth, sincerity, be channeled. But ironically, this method, when successfully enacted, results in a rather theatrical display of emotion—what has become famously termed “Stendhal Syndrome.”²⁶⁷ It is that idealized state where the puppet-self takes over control from its puppeteer; when yielding to the emotional results in total submission to the physiological, as Stendhal characterizes his viewing of Giotto’s frescoes in Florence in the 1826 version of *Rome, Naples et Florence*. It is ironically this excess of emotion which makes Stendhal’s prescription for authentic consumption inadvertently theatrical:

Là, assis sur le marchepied d’un prie-Dieu, la tête renversée et appuyée sur le pupitre, pour pouvoir regarder au plafond, les *Sibylles* du Volterrano m’ont donné peut-être le plus vif plaisir que la peinture m’ait jamais fait. J’étais déjà dans une sorte d’extase, par l’idée d’être à Florence, et le voisinage des grands hommes dont je venais de voir les tombeaux. Absorbé dans la contemplation de la beauté sublime, je la voyais de près, je la touchais pour ainsi dire. J’étais arrivé à ce point d’émotion où se rencontrent les *sensations célestes* données par les beaux-arts et les sentiments passionnés. En sortant de la *Santa Croce*, j’avais un battement de cœur, ce qu’on appelle des nerfs à Berlin ; la vie était épuisée chez moi, je marchais avec la crainte de tomber.²⁶⁸

The paradox is this: only through channeling true emotion can the self go from “acting out” his consumption of art to authentically consuming it; yet it is the very *transports* of emotion that, when made physically manifest—even in an authentic manner—render the scene visually performative. This contradiction would later permeate Sartre’s *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions*, in which he pronounces all emotion to be but play-acting.²⁶⁹ If any proof is needed that the height of non-theatrical, authentic appreciation of art ends up “causing a

²⁶⁷ The term “Stendhal Syndrome” was coined by the Italian psychiatrist Graziella Magherini, *La sindrome di Stendhal* (Firenze: Ponte Alle Grazie, 1989).

²⁶⁸ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 480.

²⁶⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions* (Paris: Hermann, 1938).

scene,” look no further than the fact that “Stendhal Syndrome” was made into the modern-day theatrical performance—the 1996 Italian horror film by Dario Argento.²⁷⁰ Furthermore, Stendhal’s description of ecstatic spectatorship went on to mimetically inspire a whole generation of art tourists in Florence, as after the publication of *Rome, Naples et Florence*, Stendhal Syndrome became a widely reported phenomenon in Italy.²⁷¹

Could such a paradox really go unaccounted for in the works of someone so sensitive to any trace of hypocrisy or theatricality? Not exactly. Within the famous passage, Stendhal clearly refers to his consciousness of the inescapable distance between imagination and reality, for he attributes his ecstasy not to his physical presence in Florence but to *l’idée d’être à Florence*. Thus even the moment which most closely approximates a total loss of self to emotional passion does not, in fact, completely merge the self’s subjectivity with the experience of the real. It is not the moment, but the *idea* of the moment—for this reason, the physical response could not be anything but theatrical—representational and thus distanced from the referent. *L’idée d’être à Florence* signals the presence of the conscious self—the spectator-self turned self-spectator—who even in this height of emotional frenzy fails to disappear behind the sensory self.

That this theatricality is inevitable does not mean it is not denounced—with regards to either the spectator or the subjects of the paintings themselves. Stendhal’s conception of authenticity in painting is, not surprisingly, formulated within a theatrical lexicon. His stance might be summarized by a few lines from his *Salon de 1824* in which he compares the subjects of the Salon’s paintings to a famous actor of the period: “Veut-on savoir ce qu’on

²⁷⁰ Dario Argento, *Stendhal Syndrome* (Italy: Cine 2000, Medusa Produzione, 1996).

²⁷¹ John Walsh, “Pictures, Tears, Lights, and Seats,” in *Whose Muse? Art Museums and the Public Trust*, ed. James Cuno (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 84.

trouve sans cesse au Salon de cette année au lieu d'expression ? L'imitation de Talma."²⁷² His subsequent denunciation of David's *Sabines* similarly reproaches the artist's work for what Michael Fried called an "emphasis on pose and self-display at the expense of action and expression."²⁷³ Indeed, Stendhal's vocabulary seems to have inspired Fried's own terms for distinguishing the "absorption" of paintings from the 1750's from the overtly "theatrical." The subjects of absorptive paintings follow Diderot's dictum that authenticity is achieved when the work exists in a closed-off pictorial world, refusing the "primordial convention that paintings are made to be beheld"; theatrical paintings, on the other hand, explicitly perform for the beholder, or spectator.²⁷⁴ So, too, does the Stendhalian formula of *présence-dans-le-moment* resound in Fried's notion of "presentness," or "the quality that some artworks have [...] of filling the field of experience, and absorbing the viewer's gaze and thoughts."²⁷⁵

That Stendhal holds figurative subjects to the same standards of non-theatricality as real persons reveals a discrepancy in the rules of authentic artistic creation, which in turn demonstrates the author's divergent conceptions of what different arts are capable of achieving. For while his literary Realism is predicated on the manner in which characters exist authentically insofar as they live under the heavy gaze of the spectator and the self-spectator, he suggests that the rules for fine arts are different—here, the painter achieves authenticity by portraying subjects who have no such concept cast over them. Because in his literary works this state of absorption is proven to be restricted to moments of

²⁷² Stendhal, "Salon de 1824," 47.

²⁷³ Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 32.

²⁷⁴ *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980), 93.

²⁷⁵ James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 146. For Fried's chapter on presentness, see Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

overwhelming passion or ecstasy—and even there, he has shown, it is somewhat theatrical—the standards that Stendhal sets for fine arts thus represent a departure from his own brand of Realism. It is as if he insists that painters convey a subjective state which he has dedicated his own entire œuvre to proving is impossible to inhabit. This might be explained by Stendhal’s extreme sensitivity to the representational distancing necessitated by the verbal arts: because words can only call to mind that which a painting can indeed (re-)create, verbal arts are in this respect secondary, or necessarily derivative, to the (relative) primacy of visual arts. In literature, the word is the actor of the image. Stendhal takes this formula literally, on several occasions, by demanding that his texts enact the art he is describing. This is effectuated according to the two possibilities of authentic role-play: the monophonic and the polyphonic. While Stendhal Syndrome might be considered the monophonic route—channeling subjectivity into a single-voiced ecstasy—the polyphonic route is navigated in *Vie de Rossini*, where the text, by imitating in form the music it is describing, becomes what Brunel has termed *un texte-opéra*:

Cette *Vie de Rossini* est donc bien un texte-opéra, écrit par un homme qui eût rêvé d’être un compositeur [...] Il ménage des *sol*i (les chapitres à caractère monographique, consacrés à des œuvres précises), des *duetti* (‘les deux amateurs,’ mais aussi Rossini et Velluti, Rossini et Barbaja, Rossini et la Colbrand, ou, dans un autre registre, Mayer et Paër), des ensembles (jusqu’à ce concert des nations dans une époque troublée qui va en France de la Révolution à la Restauration, en Italie du départ des Autrichiens à leur retour). Stendhal sait que le lecteur-spectateur a besoin d’entractes (d’où les digressions), de ballets (je pense moins ici aux échappées vers l’art de Viganò qu’aux anecdotes piquantes, sautillantes, aux ‘petits faits’ qui sont petits pas).²⁷⁶

Bereft of the symphonic genius to create music as a composer, Stendhal resigns himself to recreating verbally the effects of the music he can only experience as an audience member. In light of the musical ambitions of Beyle’s childhood, it is difficult to read *Vie de*

²⁷⁶ Brunel. “Préface.” Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, 16-17.

Rossini without thinking of both Rousseau's forays into musical composition and writing about music and, perhaps more importantly, *Le Neveu de Rameau*. The parallels to Diderot's novel are striking: Rameau's nephew makes up for his own lack of musical creative genius with his performance as *l'homme-orchestre*, proving his own mimetic talents to be a sort of theatrical transliteration of his uncle's primordial masterpieces. *Vie de Rossini's texte-opéra* attempts to overcome its reproductive constraints in the same way—the account of an artwork, deadened through verbal representation, but resuscitated by the energetic performance of its words which take on a life of their own. This task, assigned by Diderot to his character *Lui* so that its function remains *within* the text, is taken on not by Stendhal the tourist-narrator but by the text itself, through its formal mimicking of the structural elements of an operatic work, liberating the author from performing his genius, freeing him from being the actor.²⁷⁷

If the central question about Rameau's nephew—whether he is a new kind of genius or not a genius at all—remains ambiguous by the novel's end, Stendhal's opinion is clear on whether his own stab at *l'homme-orchestre* manages to upset the primacy of nonverbal arts over the literary. He openly laments that the latter fails to live up to the former on not only a sensible level but a practical one as well: “J’ai le Malheur de ne pouvoir rappeler les chants de Rossini qu’à l’aide des paroles qui les accompagnent. On eût trouvé ridicule de mettre, au lieu des paroles, une ligne de musique en note au bas de la page, pour nommer un air.”²⁷⁸ So

²⁷⁷ Both Trilling and Golomb point to Diderot's *l'homme-orchestre* as an embodiment of Hegel's notion of the Disintegrated Self. For Trilling, *Lui* exemplifies “a momentous abandon of individual selfhood to become all the voices of human existence, of all existence” [Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 44.] For Golomb, *Lui* is proof of Hegel's maxim that “the ‘disrupted consciousness’ [manifests] ‘the greatest truth’” [Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Sartre*, 15.] Stendhal's attempt at a polyphonic *texte-opéra* should be interpreted as a similar enactment of this Hegelian path to Selfhood.

²⁷⁸ Stendhal, *Vie de Rossini*, 21. Though cited by Brunel in his preface, these lines, which originally appeared in a footnote to Chapter XXIII (“Suite de ‘La Gazza ladra’”), were for some reason removed from this edition of the text.

inferior are words to music that Stendhal dismisses them as irrelevant to the creation of an authentic operatic scene, explaining that his critique of certain libretti, while referred to in *Vie de Rossini* by the lines of their text, are nevertheless not actually concerned with the words themselves but only with the degree of Realism achieved by the situational contexts of the scenes: “Pour moi, je m’attaque aux *situations* fausses; les paroles d’un libretto sont toujours fort bien à mes yeux, je ne les écoute pas.”²⁷⁹ Moreover, the preeminence of the nonverbal art extends its influence over the spectator as well, because it calls forth a superior use of imagination than that required by the reader of literary texts. Of the merits of the ballet, for example, Stendhal writes: “Il faut que l’imagination du spectateur, pleine des souvenirs des romans et du théâtre, développe elle-même toutes les situations ; il faut aussi qu’elle soit lasse des développements donnés par la parole. Chaque imagination fait parler à sa manière ces personnages qui se taisent.”²⁸⁰ Here Stendhal puts forth an alternative, more creative function of the imagination, whereby the self’s process of image-creation can in some cases assist in the sensory *jouissance* of nonverbal arts. This operation contrasts with the imagination’s function in the case of Stendhal Syndrome, where it is but the mental image that prevents the self from fully seizing reality—the barrier of *l’idée de Florence*. Imagination, that which welds the sensory experience of the spectator to the work of art is also, paradoxically, that which dissociates the two, through the mediation of the metaphysical—the consciousness of the image as separate from the real. This consciousness is the true disruption of existential plenitude, more than the image itself.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. For a study of Stendhal’s treatment of libretti in terms of the theater, see Béatrice Didier, “Stendhal et le libretto,” in *L’Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* ed. Agathe Novak-Lechevalier Lucy Garnier, Myriam Sfar (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012).

²⁸⁰ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 40.

The use of imagination in the self's quest to seize the real of the present is precarious, as it can lead exactly to the opposite end—alienation from the present. Yet Stendhal suggests that it is much more reliable as a means of seizing the emotional real of the past. This is the power he attributes to music, which serves the imagination as a trigger of involuntary memory. Before Proust's madeleine, Stendhal described a similar phenomenon through his experience as a spectator of the opera *Aureliano* viewed in Palmira:²⁸¹

Lorsque, songeant à quelque souvenir de notre propre vie, et agités encore en quelque sorte par le sentiment d'autrefois, nous venons à reconnaître tout à coup le portrait de ce sentiment dans quelque cantilène de notre connaissance, nous pouvons assurer qu'elle est belle. Il me semble qu'il arrive alors une sorte de vérification de la ressemblance entre ce que le chant exprime et ce que nous avons senti, qui nous fait voir et goûter plus en détail les moindres nuances de notre sentiment, et des nuances à nous-mêmes inconnues jusqu'à ce moment. C'est par ce mécanisme, si je ne me trompe, que la musique entretient et nourrit les rêveries de l'amour malheureux.²⁸²

The nourishment of “unhappy love” is less important here than the unity this sort of auditory experience provides between past and present selves. In his discussion of Proust, Walter Benjamin famously differentiated between voluntary and involuntary memory—the former conscious, spawned by the intellect, the second unanticipated and unintentionally summoned from “the unconscious reserve of the deposits of the individual's childhood memory.”²⁸³ It is the rupture between voluntary and involuntary memory that for Proust prevents the self from seizing its own experience. What Proust made clear to Benjamin—that authentic experience, an experience of subjective plenitude, can only be brought about from these moments of involuntary memory—is articulated here by Stendhal with slight

²⁸¹ Brunel also makes this connection to Proust in his preface. [*Vie de Rossini*, 24.]

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁸³ Ban Wang, “Memory, Narcissism, and Sublimation: Reading Lou Andreas-Salomé's Freud Journal,” *American Imago* 57, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 218.

modifications: love-life in the place of childhood; music in the place of the madeleine; the ear in the place of the mouth. In Andreas-Salomé's theory of narcissism—again, her divergences from Freud are particularly befitting of Stendhal—the creative potential of the narcissistic impulse is accessed by a conception of recollection that echoes involuntary memory; moreover, it is unlocked through “the libido's constant surge forward through representation and affects.”²⁸⁴ This is the phenomenon at work in the passage above: Stendhal's libido (quite literally manifested as the remembrance of past love) is able to surge forward through representation (the mental state of imagination sparked by the musical trigger) and affect (the sensory pleasure derived from the music). The sensory present of the music combined with the sensory past of the involuntary memory prove that the function of imagination, or the “mental image,” can at times abandon its tendency to splice, isolate, and separate, in favor of allowing the self to achieve momentary unity and plenitude; in other words, if employed properly, the image can help overcome the meditative disruption caused precisely by said image.

This sort of memory trigger takes other shapes across Stendhal's œuvre, most notably in the verbal form of his marginalia. Ranging from coded notes, acronyms, and initials to simple recordings of the dates of readings,²⁸⁵ the function of Stendhal's notes to himself is similar to the musical trigger of authentic artistic *jouissance*. The act of recording marginalia is inscribed with a temporality geared towards the future, when the rereading of the note will spark a union between the (future) present reader-self and the emotional state of the recalled past writer-self. This union is triangulated with artistic *jouissance*, so that the

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 215.

²⁸⁵ Stendhal wrote of this habit: “Quelquefois j'écrivais une date sur un livre que j'achetais et l'indication du sentiment me dominait.” [Stendhal, *Souvenirs d'égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1982), 471.]

subjective plenitude includes not only these two selves but the work of literature in question as well. The marginal note aims to record for later recovery the precise emotional state of the reader-self spawned by a specific moment in the literary text.

The written performance of authenticity, or the illusion of writing authentically

Similarly, a fictionalized version of the marginalia note appears in Stendhal's journals, enacting Andreas-Salomé's depiction of the creative power of narcissism—this time, as a textual projection of the ideal self Stendhal hopes to one day become, but also with the anticipated temporality of later reading, whereby this past projected self might be aligned with the future self who comes across it. It demonstrates the cross-section between the private performance of authenticity—authentic, solitary *jouissance* triggered by involuntary memory while consuming a work of art—and the written performance. The passage below consists of a letter written to publishers announcing the completion of *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*. But it was written before Stendhal had even completed a first draft of the book, and was in fact never sent to any publishers:

Bologne, 25 octobre 1811

Messieurs, J'ai composé en deux volumes l'*Histoire de la peinture en Italie* depuis la renaissance de l'art, vers la fin du XIII^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours. Cet ouvrage est le fruit de trois années de voyages et de recherches. L'histoire de M. Lanzi m'a été fort utile.

J'envoie mon ouvrage à Paris pour l'y faire imprimer. On me conseille de vous prier de l'annoncer. Il paraîtra en deux volumes in-8 à la fin de 1812. Si l'article suivant ne convenait pas, je vous supplie, Messieurs, de le corriger.

Il paraîtra à la fin de 1812 une *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* depuis la renaissance de l'art, à la fin du XIII^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours. L'auteur de cet ouvrage qui voyage en Italie s'est aidé des histoires publiées par MM. Fiorello et Lanzi. Celle qu'on annonce sera composée de deux volumes in-8.

Agrérez, Messieurs, l'assurance de ma haute considération.

Is. Ich. Charlier²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ *Œuvres Intimes*, I, 812.

In his preface to *Histoire de la peinture*, Del Litto marvels at the curiosity of this letter that would never make it to publishing houses; while pointing out that it includes quintessential Stendhalian tropes such as the false date, comical pseudonym, and information that does not reflect reality, he acknowledges that it might be difficult to take seriously Stendhal's note to himself, calling it the expression of a *velléité*—a vague desire. But there is not really anything vague about this letter—it is perhaps the literary equivalent of practicing one's Oscar speech in front of the mirror. It is pure, steaming ambition. It is not, as Del Litto suggests, that the material does not correspond with reality—rather, it is through recording this ideal reality that Stendhal attempts to give materiality to the immaterial confines of his imagination, to jumpstart his narcissistic impulse into a veritable feat of poiesis. The act of literary creation, then, may be aided by writing about said literary creation as if it has already taken place. Writing about writing about art, as a means of engaging with said art for the subjective plenitude of artistic *jouissance*: this recalls the sublimation of the letter's representational status, as outlined in Chapter One, into a referent in its own right. This text about a text about painting takes the inherent failure of *Histoire de la peinture*—its verbal limitations in representing a visual art—and preemptively transforms the text (before even being written) into precisely that referent—a thing in and of itself. It projects onto the not-yet completed text a status of *being* before this state of being becomes, through its transliterative function of depicting a primary art, secondary or referential.

Stendhal's make-believe letter bridges the rules of the private and written performances in a way that blurs the line between the actor- and narrator-self, the spectator and the self-spectator, the reference and the referent. Its supposed date—25 October 1811, two months before he began dictating *Histoire de la peinture*—takes to heart the obligatory *refus*

de la nostalgie: it pits the fantasy of the future-ideal-self, whom Beyle has not yet become, into the past, reversing the temporal direction of fantasy and lending a (fictionalized) historical truth to the future, while simultaneously rescuing Stendhal from a fixed, and mortal, temporality. The risible pseudonym saves Beyle from unequivocal inhabitation of the role of actor, as it saves Stendhal from the vexatious and vain role of the self-promoter. Furthermore, it highlights the process by which the narcissistic impulse can be at once employed to creative ends, and transfigured from image into word: the missive is the projection of the narcissistic image of the ideal self onto a verbal materiality. This is the coup by which Stendhal dodges the pitfall of narcissism, proper, by transforming its mechanics from imagery to the word itself. Lastly, the letter reprises the mandate first outlined in Chapter One, which proposed the authentic performance as that which explicitly acknowledges the presence of the spectator: it is written “for others” but is in fact a conversation between Stendhal and himself. Insofar as it is a note to his future-self, it reinterprets his favorite dedication, “To the Happy Few,” as, rather, “to the many selves who are Stendhal,” transforming once again the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*. And yet, the publishers addressed are also the “others” of *le regard d’autrui*; summoned as they are in this fantastical entry from a private journal, Stendhal demonstrates that their company is omnipresent, that even in the most private of literary performances, the notion is “writing for oneself” is comically impossible.

Which is not to say he does not at times attempt to give the impression of being able to do so, and of scorning those who seek an audience for their work. In *Rome, Naples et Florence* he highlights the inevitable hypocrisy of the written performance when he scoffs at the “sots qui écrivent leurs Mémoires” before pondering in the sentence that directly follows

his intention to publish this very journal, which of course was never a real private journal at all, and whose public utility is part and parcel to the genre of travel writing.²⁸⁷

Several other methods which have been traditionally understood as proof that Stendhal wrote not for others but “for himself” are first developed in his nonfiction—his speed, the myth of his refusal to edit in the name of spontaneity—and yet when considered more closely, they reveal not only Stendhal’s acknowledgment that such a task is impossible, but also just how carefully and consciously constructed the legends of his craftsmanship were. This is because it is often precisely his proclamations of this speed and spontaneity that underwent the most rigorous revisions. The promulgation of these myths spans the three editions of *Rome, Naples et Florence*: from the 1817 version’s assurance that the book was published directly from his nightly note-taking (“Je n’ai presque rien changé à ces phrases incorrectes”)²⁸⁸ to the 1826 version’s *ébauche de préface*, which aims to present itself not as a rewriting but merely a supplementation (“L’auteur n’a pas même relu la plupart des notes sur lesquelles fut imprimée la première édition”).²⁸⁹ While as the preeminent Stendhalian scholar, Del Litto has played a pivotal role in corroborating the validity of these claims, his Pléiade edition of *Voyages en Italie* nevertheless reveals in its careful study of Stendhal’s manuscripts just how forged these myths are—but without commenting on these findings in terms of the contradictions they divulge. For example in reference to Stendhal’s reiterated claim, “Je n’ai pas changé vingt lignes à ces notes telles qu’elles furent écrites en 1817,” Del Litto points us to a note written by Stendhal in the manuscript: “*Variante au crayon d’une autre main*: J’avais

²⁸⁷ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 59.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸⁹ “Ébauche de préface.” *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 1509.

une telle horreur pour l'affectation que je tombais souvent dans l'excès contraire."²⁹⁰ The contrary excess—that is, the overdetermined “spontaneity” so carefully constructed that it requires several periods of editing and revision to achieve. Likewise, almost in the same breath as he writes of Stendhal’s refusal to edit, Del Litto lists the numerous examples of passages of *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817* that were reworked in the subsequent editions. Most curious in this regard are Del Litto’s footnotes which tell the reader that the manuscripts of both the 1817 and 1826 editions of *Rome, Naples et Florence*, like the manuscripts for many of the works published in his lifetime, disappeared after publication and were probably destroyed.²⁹¹ It is difficult to accept the myths of Stendhal’s speed and spontaneity, most famously promulgated by the legend of the fifty-two day writing marathon during which he dictated *La Chartreuse*, in light of this convenient tendency for early drafts to disappear.²⁹² All the more so as several drafts of his unfinished novels exist, and this is how many of them were pieced together for publication. Though his scholarship often points to the contrary, Del Litto’s faith in Stendhal’s speed and spontaneity shows just how enticing these virtues are to the production of authenticity.

Of course, the very fact that three editions of *Rome, Naples et Florence* were published underscores the impossibility of disregarding spectatorship in the performance of writing. Furthermore, the changes between editions, considered alongside the biographical details of Stendhal’s road to publication, aimed not only to increase spectatorship, quantitatively, but

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 1509-10.

²⁹¹ See Jacques Neefs, "With a Live Hand: Three versions of textual transmission (Chateaubriand, Montaigne, Stendhal)," in *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes*, ed. Jed Deppman; Daniel Ferrer; Michael Groden (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 109.

²⁹² The speed with which Stendhal dictated *La Chartreuse* must be contextualized by the fact that for six years prior to the famed fifty-two days, since 1832, he “had had in his possession a large Italian manuscript recording the rise of the Farnese family in the sixteenth century,” and had been carefully making notes for what would become his masterpiece. [Matthew Josephson, *Stendhal* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1946), 418.]

also to appease his spectators. The 1818 and 1826 versions respond directly to criticisms of the 1817 edition, to which Stendhal proved himself to not be immune. Not all critical reception of this first version was bad, in spite of the relative silence with which it was met, and its poor sales: a certain Duvergier, for example, characterized Stendhal as the only travel writer who managed to give a good idea of *les mœurs italiennes*, though he qualified this compliment by juxtaposing it against Stendhal's "bizarrerie et son originalité souvent affectée."²⁹³ The most influential press Stendhal received, in terms of its effects on subsequent editions, was by far the article written about *Rome, Naples et Florence* in the *Edinburgh Review*, where the author's affinity for the publication did not prevent his book from being panned. The reviewer, who understood the book to be a veritable travel journal—unfictionalized, that is—called it "the hasty observations of a superficial person,"²⁹⁴ lambasted Stendhal's poor use of Latin, and took issue with his portrayal of the English character.²⁹⁵ But the main critique the review launched against Stendhal was the accusation of "flippancy," a charge later echoed in *L'Universel's* review of *Promenades Dans Rome*.²⁹⁶ In both cases, Stendhal went immediately to work on new versions of his books, explaining in the instance of the latter: "Je cherche à me justifier du reproche de légèreté."²⁹⁷ Flippancy—that is to say, not engaging *sincerely* with one's text: in the face of this allegation of insincere (self-) representation, the changes Stendhal effectuated in his subsequent versions deal with

²⁹³ *Journal de Paris*, 13 février 1828. See Del Litto's note in Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 1495.

²⁹⁴ The article appears alongside Del Litto's notes, translated into French ("les observations hâtives d'une personne superficielle"). [ibid., 1430.]

²⁹⁵ With the notable exception of colonel Forsyt, whom the reviewer from the *Edinburgh Review* found to be a far superior raconteur, preferring the colonel to Stendhal in matters of style and perspicacity.

²⁹⁶ Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 1441.

²⁹⁷ *Promenades Dans Rome*, 1600.

precisely this question. Indeed, some of the most carefully edited and reworded passages are those that discuss exactly this dilemma.

The entry marked *6 février 1817* from the 1817 edition reads: “Je cours les loges ; les dames se plaignent d’être trop vues. Je me fais répéter ce reproche inouï. Il est fort réel ; elles sont en continuelle représentation...”²⁹⁸ The same notion reappears under a new date, *14 février 1817*, along with other modest modifications, in the 1826 edition: “Mon ami de Milan me présente dans plusieurs loges ; les femmes se plaignent d’être trop vues ; je me fais répéter ce reproche incroyable. Grâce à la profusion des lumières, ces dames sont en continuelle représentation...”²⁹⁹ Though the syntactical differences are slight, they are nevertheless interesting: the second version explicitly attributes the theatricality of these women to *la profusion des lumières*—the profusion of lights which, like the critical spectatorship of his own 1817 version of the book—that shining glare of *le regard d’autrui*—exacerbate the representational status of the women just as they have heightened his self-consciousness about his own written performance.

Chapter One explained how the “representational anxieties” of the letter, when adopted by the actor-self, often lead to the fetishization of the illiterate and the notion that with the advent of the alphabet comes a loss of authenticity. In Stendhal’s nonfiction this idea takes hold of his regard for Italy’s authenticity as somehow explained by its more innocent relationship to language compared to that of France. Recalling Fabrice Del Dongo’s illiterate authenticity, the Italian language is portrayed in these works as more primitive—closer to the referent, less self-conscious of its representational status—than France’s over-intellectualized and over-ironized tongue. Before going into Stendhal’s reasons

²⁹⁸ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 35.

²⁹⁹ *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826). Voyages en Italie*, 515.

for seeing it as such, we might first recall that his *fear of saying I* would be naturally mollified by the fact that the Italian language allows personal pronouns to be dropped. The *Je* required by French is the superfluous (for the most part, excluding emphasis) *Io* in Italian. But for Stendhal, Italy's language is more authentic first of all because of the plurality of dialects spoken there, many of which were strictly vernacular, not written: "Tous les patois sont naturels et plus près du cœur que les langues écrites."³⁰⁰ The Tuscan dialect of written Italian Stendhal finds affected, harboring false pretensions of intellectuality: "Un [Italien] qui écrit une lettre ouvre son dictionnaire, et un mot n'est jamais assez pompeux ni assez fort. De là, la naïveté, la simplicité, les nuances de naturel, sont choses inconnues en italien."³⁰¹ The authenticity of the Italian language is thus restricted to its pluralistic spoken dialects, and lost once rendered into a written form; it is natural in its simplicity—in its stupidity, almost—and only insofar as it eschews intellect, wit, polysemy and abstraction. When it reaches for *l'esprit*, it becomes more affected even than French. *L'esprit italien*, as a rule, must be the product of spoken spontaneity and does not succeed in a textual form: "Les gens d'esprit [en Italie] sont ceux qui n'en font pas métier. Dès qu'ils veulent se cultiver ils deviennent pédants [...] [imitant] quelque platitude imprimée au XV^e siècle."³⁰² A binary is thus constructed across Stendhal's travel writings, paralleling the divide between passion and intellect, pitting Italy against France, spoken language against written. His discourse on the subject unrolls as if Italian has a more direct semantic line from referent to word, whereas the witticism and nuance of French, along with the French language's fetishistic sense of self, echoes the remarks on the French language made by Laurence Sterne (that tourist-narrator *avant la lettre*)

³⁰⁰ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817. Voyages en Italie*, 30.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 86.

in *A Sentimental Journey*: “All that can be said against the French sublime [...] is this—that the grandeur is *more* in the *word*; and *less* in the *thing*.”³⁰³

That Italians might maintain a more innocent, less ironized relationship to their native tongue than French is perhaps a subjective truth at best; that Stendhal, as a foreigner, might find this idealized simplicity in his own relationship to Italian is perhaps a more objective certainty. It is precisely this innocence he means to preserve and convey when sprinkling Italian words throughout his prose, or adopting the definite article before proper nouns: as if attempting to have it both ways, Stendhal borrows the *naturel* of spoken Italian without having to renounce the intellect of French. It is an effort towards language without the pitfalls of language.³⁰⁴ This points to the crucial contradiction of Stendhal’s desire for authenticity in his relationship to language—it is a literary creation which fetishizes the illiterate. « Remarquez que la plupart des auteurs originaux ont presque entièrement manqué d’éducation, » he writes in *Rome, Naples et Florence*.³⁰⁵ In other words, the best literature comes from an illiterate source—again, like Homer’s illiterate heroes.

But whether Stendhal finds a more authentic linguistic relationship to Italian because of the language’s imminent qualities or because it is a second language, Italian authenticity nevertheless proves to be insufficient to Stendhal’s naturalistic impulse. For Stendhal’s construct of the Italian language’s *naturel* as being lodged in its simplicity, sincerity, and lack of intellectualism is precisely that which leads Stendhal to recognize that he cannot completely disown his own analytical impulse. The passion/intellect binary that sets Italy

³⁰³ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 90-91.

³⁰⁴ A desire which resembles Stendhal’s wish for a secret language: “Je regrette souvent qu’il n’y ait pas une langue sacrée connue des seuls initiés; un honnête homme pourrait alors parler librement, sûr de n’être entendu que par ses pairs.” [Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826)*. *Voyages en Italie*, 366.]

³⁰⁵ *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*. *Voyages en Italie*, 127.

against France at first seems to provide the author with a solution to his quest for authenticity. Yet it cannot be reconciled with Stendhal's competing hunger, as a creator and consumer of literature, for a conflicting type of authenticity rooted in analysis, wit, and the intellect—all of which he finds lacking in Italy. This becomes clear through his frequent postulation that the key to understanding any foreign culture is its literature. "C'est la prose qui est le thermomètre des progrès littéraires d'un peuple," he writes.³⁰⁶ His final judgments of foreign cultures are uniformly accompanied by remarks on their literature; in both *esprit* and literature, he is unimpressed by the Germans: "Ces pauvres Allemands meurent d'envie d'avoir du caractère [...] En littérature, les Allemands n'ont que des prétentions."³⁰⁷ His comprehensive views on England likewise are based on its literature, yet understanding in this case is not synonymous with affinity. For in spite of the omnipresent Anglophobia of his travel writings, complaining often of the *froidueur* of their character, Stendhal wholeheartedly approves of the authenticity of English literature, which he finds full of innovation and novelty: "Je trouve plus d'idées nouvelles dans une page anglaise que dans un *in-octavo* français."³⁰⁸

Italy is thus the inverse of England for Stendhal: while he appreciates their character, he bemoans the poverty not only of their literature but of their intellectual culture as a whole. Though it may be semi-illiteracy that endows Fabrice with authenticity as a character in a novel, this aversion to reading proves not quite so charming in real people; indeed, Stendhal finds their ignorance to translate into a total lack of ability to make literary judgments: "[Les Italiens] ont une sensibilité si profonde et si vraie, et ils lisent si peu, qu'un

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 119.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 117.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 155.

roman dialogué quelconque, pourvu qu'il y ait des événements, est sûr de toute leur sympathie."³⁰⁹ Encountering the distinguished intellectuals of Bologna, he writes, simply: "quels sots!"³¹⁰ On Italian literature itself, Stendhal is no less harsh: his childhood admiration of Alfieri is renounced in *Rome, Naples et Florence*, where he also dismisses so-called examples of Italian masterpieces ("*Le Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* ne sont qu'une imitation de *Werther*") and declares bluntly, "l'Italie n'a pas un roman."³¹¹ What nurtures the actor-self does not necessarily nourish the narrator-self; what pleases the man does not inspire the artist.³¹² In other words, that which brings about authenticity in the imaginary is what prevents it in the real. The illiterate self, who escapes the representational crisis of the tyranny of the word, can only exist as an example of existential plenitude in literature; though seemingly reproduced in the realm of the real in Italy, whose people appear to live within a more simplified, more primordial, less self-conscious, and more overtly *representational* relationship to language (meaning its representational status is not necessarily a source of anxiety), this same ideal proves inadequate—*because it fails to reproduce itself authentically in the form of great literature*. Torn between naturalism and intellectualism, Stendhal must break down the very opposition he himself constructs. Like Mathilde de la Mole's reaction of *n'est-ce que ça ?* after her first sexual encounter, Stendhal glimpses authenticity in Italy only to snub it; in both cases, desire is shown to be better fulfilled not in the real but in the imaginary—specifically, that particular imaginary of literature. If there is one conclusion to draw from

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 55.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

³¹¹ Ibid., 77.

³¹² This dissatisfaction may be used to explain Stendhal's early attempts at being a playwright, which brought to fruition not a single decent play, but much theatrical criticism. As pure and natural as he would have liked to experience his artistic urge, he could not dissociate it from the intellectual. "Il ne se contente cependant pas de faire intuitivement du théâtre de caractère, mais se veut théoricien." [Cécile Meynard, "Le théâtre stendhalien et la notion de caractère," in *L'Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* ed. Agathe Novak-Lechevalier Lucy Garnier, Myriam Sfar (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012).]

these nonfictional works, it is this: between an authentic real and authentic literature, there is a choice, for it is not possible to have both.

CHAPTER THREE:
NOT REPETITION, BUT REDUNDANCY: ECHO AND TAUTOLOGY IN
STENDHAL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND PRIVATE JOURNALS

“Un homme qui s'écoute parler, écoute toujours un sot.”
Charles-Joseph de Ligne³¹³

In the social performance of authenticity, the self-spectator reigns over the present, playing an inhibitive role as the actor-self attempts spontaneity in the presence of others. In the private performance, the self-spectator inhabits the past, whispering bygone humiliations into the ear of the solitary self who turns inward in self-reflection. As the written performance of authenticity, in autobiography, deals with the textual construction of a self that straddles past, present, and future, the self-spectator in this domain also casts its gaze in all three directions.

In *Vie de Henry Brulard*, Stendhal focuses the primordial autobiographical commandment—*nosce te ipsum*—onto the past, and in the form of a question: “Qu'ai-je donc été ? Je ne le saurais. [...] Ai-je été un homme d'esprit ? Ai-je eu du talent pour quelque chose ?”³¹⁴ In *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*, Stendhal's self-spectator instead interrogates in the present: “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.”³¹⁵ Meanwhile, Stendhal's attempt to know his future self is continually rooted within the context of his literary posterity, from his references to his *lecteurs de 1880* to his likening of an even more distant future readership—

³¹³ Charles-Joseph de Ligne, *Oeuvres choisies: littéraires, historiques et militaires du Maréchal Prince de Ligne, Tome Second* (Genève et Paris: J.J. Paschoud et F. Buisson, 1809), 104.

³¹⁴ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 532-33.

³¹⁵ *Souvenirs d'égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, II, 429-30.

“être lu en 1935”—to winning the lottery.³¹⁶ Of course, the autobiographical act is aimed implicitly at posterity, through its creation of a material source from which the future-self’s spirit might continue to spring; as such, its self-spectator asks not only *Who was I?*, and *Who am I?*, but also *Who will I be?*

As the literary genre which most explicitly calls upon all three roles of the Stendhalian self—actor, spectator, and narrator—autobiography is perhaps the most intrinsically bound to the idea of authenticity as a performance. These three personas are embedded within the word itself: in *auto*, the self-spectator upon whose gaze the text depends; in *bio*, the actor whose life is examined; in *graphy*, the narrator who undertakes the writing. Yet traditionally, the authenticity of only two of these three roles comes under consideration: questions of *truthfulness*, *sincerity*, and *authenticity* are inevitably directed towards the life, *bio* (is this actor who he says he is?), and the writing, *graphy* (does the narrator’s writing reflect the truth of this actor?) while the function of the self-spectator, the *auto*, goes relatively unchallenged. This is evidenced by Lejeune’s definition of the genre: “l’autobiographie est la biographie d’un individu écrite par lui-même.”³¹⁷ It is the *lui-même* that in most autobiography is immune to interrogation—while we question the sincerity of the actor and the narrator, that of the self-spectator’s gaze inward is not generally contested. Moreover, any failures of sincerity—lies, fictionalizations, biases, and naiveté—on the part of the actor or the narrator will be for the most part excused by us as readers, provided that we feel capable of *seeing beyond* these instances of insincerity in order to comprehend the actor or narrator behind them. We recognize the pitfalls of the self-spectator’s gesture, we

³¹⁶ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 745. In fact, as we know now, Stendhal’s estimate was quite prescient. For a history of his critical reception, see Philippe Berthier, *Stendhal en miroir: Histoire du stendhalisme en France (1842-2004)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).

³¹⁷ Philippe Lejeune, “Stendhal et les problèmes de l’autobiographie,” in *Actes du colloque interuniversitaire*, ed. Victor Del Litto (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1976), 22.

understand that no one can objectively see himself, yet we are confident in our own capacity to recognize these failures: *He flatters himself, but I see that he does so*. Through the reader's perceived ability to understand the motivations, neuroses, and instances of blindness through which these flubs may be explained, they are forgiven—the *auto* in autobiography remains intact, the self-spectator's role remains a trusted one. In *Les Confessions*, for example, the fact that Rousseau leaves out unflattering details of his own life, in spite of their being well-known by the public at the time of his memoir's publication, does not lead to his reader's questioning the sincerity of his own gaze inward; rather, the reader's own talents as a spectator of Rousseau are called upon to *see and understand* that which Rousseau's own self-spectator could not. More simply: while we may doubt the autobiographer's *ability* to inhabit the role of self-spectator, we do not generally distrust the sincerity of his *effort*. This trust in the *auto* that accompanies the interrogation of the *biography* is underscored again in Lejeune's notion of the *pacte autobiographique*, which puts forth a process of authentication pertaining only to the life and writing, the story and the signature, of the author.

When Doubrovsky first used the term *autofiction* in reference to his 1977 autobiographical novel, *Fils*, his accompanying explanation reveals that the neologism might be understood as an effort to undermine the reader's trust in the work's *auto*.³¹⁸ "Tout se passe come si *Fils* avait été écrit pour remplir cette case aveugle."³¹⁹ This *case aveugle*, in other words, is an autobiography in which the *auto* becomes subject to the same scrutiny as the *bio/graphy*, through the subtitled designation of *Fils* as a *roman*. This gesture not only subverts Lejeune's notion of the *pacte autobiographique*, it also forces the reader to question the skill that she takes for granted in reading an autobiography: that ability to *see through* the

³¹⁸ Serge Doubrovsky, *Fils* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1977).

³¹⁹ "Autobiographie/Vérité/Psychanalyse," in *Autobiographiques de Corneille à Sartre*, Perspectives critiques (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 68.

discrepancy between *bio* and *graphy*, thanks to an unflagging trust in the sincerity of the author's gaze inwards. Doubrovksy's definition of autofiction is essentially the poeticization of scrupulously reproduced "reality," or the writing of reality as if it were a novel. Vincent Colonna went on to criticize this understanding of the term by arguing that autofiction entails not only poeticization, but also outright fabulation; it is "une pratique qui utilise le dispositif de la fictionnalisation auctoriale pour des raisons qui ne sont pas autobiographiques."³²⁰ By distancing the autofictional work's aims from those of autobiography through his redefining the genre as the projection of an autobiographical self into a fictional setting, Colonna thus reinstates the *auto* as an entity immune to interrogation. The same might be said for many of the genre's subsequent definitions: Genette's suggestion that autofiction is the combination of a "personnalité authentique" and a "destin fictionnel";³²¹ Jacques Lecarme's insight that the power of genre-determination lies in the reader's hands, regardless of how it has been marked by the author or published by the editor;³²² Stéphanie Michineau's insistence that autofiction's "mélange savamment orchestré de fiction et de réalité" nevertheless maintains "un but autobiographique."³²³ All of these variations keep the sincerity of the *auto* intact. Only Gasparini's identification of autofiction as texts which develop "la tendance naturelle du récit de soi à se fictionnaliser" can be understood to undo the myth of the intact *auto*,

³²⁰ Vincent Colonna, "L'autofiction, Essai sur la fictionalisation de soi en Littérature" (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), 1989), 260.

³²¹ Gérard Genette, *Fiction et diction* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 87.

³²² Jacques Lecarme, "L'autofiction : un mauvais genre ?" (paper presented at the Autofictions & Cie Colloque de Nanterre, Nanterre, 1992).

³²³ Stéphanie Michineau, "L'autofiction dans l'œuvre de Colette" (Université du Maine, 2007).

provided we understand this *tendance* to be driven by insincerity, as opposed to purely poetic or aesthetic motivations.³²⁴

Before the advent of autofiction, the integrity of the *auto* in autobiography remained unthreatened—until Stendhal. He was perhaps the first to demonstrate that it is not only the *bio* and the *graphy*, the actor and the narrator, which demand authentication, but the *auto* as well.³²⁵ His autobiographies demand this authentication of the self-spectator by laying out the problems this role encounters during the autobiographical act. These are the problems that arise during the attempt to look inward, which reveal there to be more than one self-spectator at work.

We have seen in previous chapters possible methods for dealing with the self-spectator in order to perform authentically: from evasion to unification, from distraction to appeasement. In all of these cases, the self-spectator remains a predominantly singular entity. In the case of autobiography, however, its role becomes blurred and pluralized, requiring a few distinctions to be made. First of all, autobiography obscures the division between the narrator-self and the self-spectator. Take, for example, the aforementioned questions posed in both *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*: though it is ostensibly the self-spectator who poses the question, *Who am I?*, it is necessarily voiced, in the text, through the narrator-self.

³²⁴ Philippe Gasparini, "De quoi l'autofiction est-elle le nom?" (paper presented at the De quoi l'autofiction est-elle le nom?, L'université de Lausanne, 2009). Regardless of whether these various definitions dispute the sincerity of the *auto* or not, the continuing discourse on autofiction is relevant to this study of authenticity as it relates to the genealogy of the genre. Gasparini and Colonna have recently contended that both the autobiographical impulse, and autofiction itself, can be traced back to Antiquity. My suggestion that authenticity, too, dates back to this era, aligns thus with a broader critical movement of recontextualizing literary and philosophical developments long understood to be emblems of "modernity" in terms of ancient culture. See Gasparini, *La Tentation autobiographique de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2013). And Vincent Colonna, *Autofiction et autres mythomanies littéraires* (Auch: Tristram, 2004).

³²⁵ It should be noted, as Lejeune has already done, that Stendhal does not use the word "autobiography" anywhere in his work, but rather « un vocabulaire classique des 'mémoires' ». [Lejeune, "Stendhal et les problèmes de l'autobiographie," 23.]

Throughout any autobiographical text, in fact, all of the self-spectator's introspection is dubbed, so that this figure becomes almost caricatured—a dummy sitting on the narrator-self's knee. The problem is this: the self-spectator who “sees” *inside* the text, the dummy whose words are filtered through the narrator-self, is not the same entity as the self-spectator who sees *outside* the text. This second incarnation inhabits a different temporality—not that of the narrative but that of the act of narration. It lives in the room with the narrator-self who writes, rather than with the one whose voice is written in the text. It is not a dummy, but a devil. It sits not on the narrator-self's knee, but on its shoulder—ready to cast aspersions, judgments, and inhibitions onto the act of writing. For the sake of clarity, this second incarnation of the self-spectator, the one who plagues not the autobiographical text but the autobiographical process, will be called the *echo*. This is the innovative method through which Stendhal manages to demand authentication not only of his *bio/graphy* but of his *auto* as well: by writing into his texts both the self-spectator and the echo. While the former plays a sanctioned role, inscribed into the autobiographical gesture itself, the latter is, until Stendhal, kept from readers' view. That which until Stendhal remained private, a duel between the autobiographer and himself, now enters the page as its own kind of performance.

Echo and Narcissus

As the aural specter of the self-spectator, the echo's function is rooted in narcissism. We have seen how, in Stendhal's conception of narcissism, an overidentification with the *image* is replaced by an overidentification with the *word*; the echo, as an aural phenomenon, reflects this replacement through its diversification of sensory receptors, for while the self's

relation to the image is limited, sensually, to the visual, its relation to the word operates not only through the eye but through the ear as well. This link between echo and narcissism goes back to Greek mythology: Echo is the wood nymph who, spurned by Narcissus and his all-encompassing self-love, dies of grief, her body merged with the mountain to which she fled while her voice is doomed to live on forever, thanks to Juno's curse, repeating the words of others instead of speaking her own.

Stendhal's fear of narcissism is not merely a fear of saying *I*, but a fear of *hearing* himself say it, for in this echo, that omnipresent auditory hallucination, reside his own self-doubts and the judgments of others, both repeated ad infinitum, like Echo's voice reverberating through the mountains. In the myth Narcissus endows Echo with shame, shunning her advances and worse, ridiculing the repetitions she is doomed to articulate. For Stendhal, too, it is narcissism, as an overidentification with the word, which triggers the self-conscious crisis of the echo. The act of storytelling, then, is threatened by this overidentification, as Stendhal illustrates in his commentary on the relationship between *le rire* (that which frees the self from the self-spectator) and *l'égotisme*:

[B]eaucoup de choses font rire, quand nous les voyons, qui, contées, ne nous arracheraient que cette exclamation : 'Cela ne valait pas la peine d'être dit' ; par exemple, les malheurs communs : les chutes dans la boue, les maris surprenant, pour la première fois, une lettre galante de leur fidèle épouse, notre savonnette qui nous échappe et court sous le lit se garnir de poussière, quand nous nous faisons la barbe. Lorsque quelqu'un nous conte ces petits malheurs-là, nous le taxons d'*égotisme*.³²⁶

The narcissistic risk for the narrator-self is this: even anecdotes which treat subjects unrelated to the self threaten, upon being recounted, to implicate their narrator as egotistical, narcissistic—telling tales for no other reason than to hear himself talk. And it is the narrator-self's echo which alerts him to this possibility. For the author, the curse of the echo also

³²⁶ Stendhal, *Du rire: essai philosophique sur un sujet difficile* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2005), 83-84.

represents the menace of a loss of creative productivity, as Beckett famously portrayed a century after Stendhal with *Krapp's Last Tape*. There, the echo is able to take on a literal form thanks to the invention of voice recording technology. The alienation Krapp experiences at hearing the sound of his own voice is but a more literal exemplification of the same phenomenon Stendhal brings to life across his *œuvre*.

Echo and Narcissus both figure in Louis Marin's study of Stendhal and autobiography, *La Voix excommuniquée*. He introduces the notion of an "original voice" of the true self, its pre-linguistic expression of a primordial identity lost or excommunicated upon the self's entry into "language's symbolic order."³²⁷ This idea takes one step further the notion of authenticity as a crisis of the self-as-letter: for Marin, that which inauthenticates a voice is not just literacy, but language itself.

La Voix excommuniquée calls for the reader of autobiography to put ear to the ground and listen for murmurings of the author's original voice. But Stendhal's autobiography also attempts to do this: by identifying echo in distinction from the other selves at work—actor, spectator, narrator—all of whom must learn to perform without listening to it. This will be the basis for our examination of the performances of authenticity within the autobiographical genre; moreover, the rules and regulations they reveal allow us to understand how Stendhal's personal and private writings break down into comprehensible terms the functions of the self that paved the way to the construction of authenticity as it is depicted in his fiction.

³²⁷ Nigel Saint, "Reading Stendhal's *Vie de Henry Brulard*: Marin and the Limits of Representation," *Dalhousie French Studies* 80 (Fall 2007): 60.

Autobiography, like the philosophy of authenticity, privileges *becoming* over *being*; Germaine Brée defined the genre as “becoming Alive to oneself through writing.”³²⁸ For while on the one hand, the forward-gaze of self-spectator looks towards literary posterity, or the *becoming* of the text, it also focuses on the closer future, on the *becoming* of the author. Specifically: the *becoming* of Stendhal, the novelist.

Given the fact that *Vie de Henry Brulard* begins with Stendhal reflecting on his age (“Ah ! dans trois mois j’aurai cinquante ans, est-il bien possible !”), and openly contemplates death as a not-too-distant future, and given that by the time Beyle was writing his autobiographies, he had already seen the publication of his earliest novels, the question arises: Hasn’t he already, at this point, *become* Stendhal?³²⁹ To an extent. What interests us is how the self-realizing processes at the heart of his autobiographical works, as well as throughout his private journals, reveal this process of becoming a novelist as a continual journey, as ongoing as the lifelong work of refining his *beau littéraire*. In light of Beyle’s struggle, outlined in Chapter Two, to lay claim to his status as an artist, the rigorous self-analysis at work in his autobiographies and journals must be understood to be endowed with a goal greater than that of self-knowledge for the sake of self-knowledge. These are teleological writings—art *towards the end-goal* of art, rather than autonomous works of art themselves.

If autobiography aims to capture the self, to seize what Stendhal called “cette vérité qui me fuit,” this movement is a sort of self-imprisonment, that of the *I* within the *révit*, or at the very least of self-domination—Stendhal standing upon Mount Janicule, ready to

³²⁸ Georges Gusdorf, *Lignes de vie 2: auto-bio-graphie* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1991), 149.

³²⁹ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 531.

conquer-through-telling his own story.³³⁰ But at the heart of this attempt to enclose the *I* in captivity, for the sake of comprehension and enlightenment, exists a simultaneous objective—that of liberation—and within this objective of liberation, resides another: artistic creation. The aim to liberate the self from the “prison of self”—*cette effroyable quantité de Je et de Moi*—is not for the sake of existential authenticity itself, but rather to employ this existential authenticity as the means through which artistic creation becomes possible and authentic.

If for Stendhal, the “prison” of selfhood is metaphysical, that is, metaphorical, as a trope in autobiography it has much more literal self-expiatory roots, from Saint Augustine to Rousseau. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani’s *La Scène judiciaire de l’autobiographie* proposes the autobiographical *raison d’être* to be an author’s preemptive response to the self-spectator who looks to the future and sees, if not prison, at the very least, punishment for his crimes. Autobiography is thus the means through which the author nurses his “besoin de confession,” elicited simultaneously “par un confus sentiment de culpabilité” and by “une insistante revendication d’innocence.”³³¹

While Mathieu-Castellani is among several critics to identify Stendhal as the exception to the rule of autobiography-as-criminal-confession, his work in this genre

³³⁰ It was Gusdorf who identified the Mount Janicule moment as paradigmatic of autobiography’s vertical domination of the self and the space it inhabits: “L’impératif de dominer sa vie s’impose à Stendhal sur le mont Janicule, d’où il domine le panorama de la Ville éternelle ; il lui faut pareillement dominer l’espace du dedans. [...] La découverte de soi, pour Montaigne, Pétrarque, ou Stendhal, est le fruit des grandes révélations, et c’est au sommet des monts que s’impose la résolution d’entreprendre le tour du monde intérieur, aussi décisive que le vœu des explorations historiques ou géographiques.” [Georges Gusdorf, *Lignes de Vie 1: les écritures du moi* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1991), 125.]

³³¹ Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La scène judiciaire de l’autobiographie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 8. For more on the link between the theater and the courtroom in Antiquity, see Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*. And in Julien Sorel’s trial in *Le Rouge et le noir*, as a marriage of *la structure judiciaire* and *la scène tragique*, see Xavier Bourdenet, “Ô dix-neuvième siècle! La scène tragique du Rouge,” in *L’Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* ed. Agathe Novak-Lechevalier Lucy Garnier, Myriam Sfar (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012).

nevertheless illuminates another connection referenced by the title of *La Scène judiciaire*, which is the link between the courtroom and the theater.³³² The division of roles; the choreographed sequences incorporating carefully practiced lines; the presence of spectators in the form of audience or jury—the parallels abound.³³³ What does this mean for Stendhal, whose autobiographies stage not courtroom dramas but theaters of authenticity? It is a matter of how Stendhal's *prison of self* is constructed—and deconstructed—in terms of the theater. It is present, as we know, in one of his earliest ambitions—to be a playwright—and is thus bound to the development of this ambition as it suffers the inevitable entry of young Beyle's ego. "Je me croyais du *génie*, —où diable avais-je puisé cette idée ? —Du génie pour le métier de Molière et de Rousseau."³³⁴ In these lines, the theater serves as both the path of entry into artistic creation and the roadblock that will prevent him from pursuing such an endeavor authentically. His career as a writer was first conceived of within the theater and *as* a theater: once the *idea of genius* enters his imaginative conception of artistic creation, his ambition is transformed into a restaging of the narrative of the "genius playwright." Just as Stendhal recognizes himself overcome in Florence by the *idea of being in Florence* rather than the firsthand experience, this moment in *Henry Brulard* recounts a similar disruption of authentic experience, whereby the young Beyle finds his artistic ambition intercepted and distanced—rendered inauthentic, and narcissistic—by its *theatrical* narrative. As Stendhal's narrator-self intimates through the question—*où diable avais-je puisé cette idée ?*—after the initial

³³² Mathieu-Castellani, *La scène judiciaire de l'autobiographie*, 12. For more on the Stendhal exception, see also Jacques Borel, "Rêve et autobiographie (notes)," *La Licorne: le travail de l'autobiographie. Revue de l'université de Poitiers* 14 (1988). And Béatrice Didier, *Stendhal autobiographe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991).

³³³ This link is also explored by Jennifer Wise, who argues that the courtroom in ancient Greece was, like the theater, another direct result of the invention of the alphabet. See Chapter 3, "Courtroom Dramas" in Wise, *Dionysus Writes: the Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*, 119-68.

³³⁴ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 818.

ambition is born, the path to its enactment will depend on overcoming its theatricalization in order to return to a place where the self can relate to this artistic drive primordially, authentically, free from vanity and the glow of narcissistic impulse. Whether such an overcoming is possible, however, or even necessary, for that matter, becomes a central question of Stendhal's autobiographical and private writings.

Stendhal's preoccupation with genius, first funneled through notion of becoming a playwright, is never too far in its articulation from a simultaneous preoccupation with death. As Marin's term "autothanotographies" makes clear, autobiography as a genre not only strives to seize the author's life, but also to write his death. The ghost of death, for Stendhal, takes the form of vanity: it is the grim reaper who comes calling to remind him of his mortal fate, there to recast his true self as but a specter. "Je vois tout le néant de la vanité," he writes in *Henry Brulard*.³³⁵ Meaning: to see death is to see a life lived through vanity. To die "in vain" is to have lived but spectrally, through a distanced image of self, narcissistically. Enmeshed in Stendhal's endeavors to write his own death is both the question of his potential genius, and the manner in which this genius should be represented, when neither of these concepts can be envisioned without vanity.

Consider the tombstone epitaph he envisions for himself in *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*:

Arrigo Beyle
Milanese
*visse, scrisse, amò*³³⁶

Here we encounter several techniques of authenticity: a rewriting of his nationality in a foreign tongue, the reduction of a life into three actions, which paints his life with an almost monastic simplicity, and the passion and unwavering dedication of the artist.

³³⁵ Ibid., 543.

³³⁶ *Souvenirs d'égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, II, 472.

Straightforward, succinct, as if without ego. Its concision seems to perform the sort of authentic relationship to artistic ambition spelled out above; in death, Stendhal wishes to say: *I was an artist, but I wasn't an egomaniac.* That is: *I lived, wrote, and loved, but without thinking about myself as a writer.* That this tombstone is meant to serve as a representation of authenticity, of a life lived without contemplation of representation, is underscored in the remarks that follow: “Si je laisse de quoi faire cette tablette, je prie qu'on la place dans le cimetière d'Andilly, près Montmorency, exposée au levant. Mais, surtout je désire n'avoir pas d'autre monument, rien de parisien, rien de *vaudevillique* ; j'abhorre ce genre.”³³⁷ But above all: nothing vaudevillian, nothing *theatrical*. Of course, the very fact of his planning such an epigraph belies this narrative, as does his continued elaboration of the point, which extends beyond what is cited above. The work of his autobiographies, then, is to present the sincerity of this intention, even while calling attention to the irony with which it is endowed once transformed into a written performance. Vanity, like death, may not be avoided—but that does not mean there are not worthy reasons for trying.

The tombstone passage, like so many others we have examined thus far, paints the phenomenon of authenticity as a sort of “direct” contact with the real, understood in this case to be the real artistic impulse, while simultaneously proving direct contact to be impossible, forever disrupted by the *idea of the real*. A different sort of contact with the real must then be mapped out, and though this alternative method may be traced across Stendhal's autobiographies and private journals, it is first theorized in *De l'Amour* in the form of *cristallisation*.

It is fitting that love should provide the context in which Stendhal proposes this alternative method of accessing the real. As “la plus forte des passions,” love is “comme la

³³⁷ Ibid., 473.

fièvre”; it enacts that tenet of authenticity described in the first chapter, whereby the self relinquishes control to the physiological.³³⁸ Stendhal writes: “Il y a une cause physique, un commencement de folie, une affluence du sang au cerveau, un désordre dans les nerfs et dans le centre cérébral.”³³⁹ It is not an effort, but an obedience—it is the “puppet” acting independently of the “puppeteer,” attaining through this frenzy the idealized *présence-dans-le-moment*. It is, however, the full process of crystallization, rather than just love’s most feverish moments, that will provide an allegorical phenomenology of Stendhal’s alternative to direct contact with the real.

“Crystallisation,” or circular thought

First presented through the image of a salted wintered twig retrieved from the mines of Salzburg to appear as glittering and resplendent as if it were diamond-encrusted, the phenomenon of crystallization is shown immediately to be nothing if not a game of perception. “Ce que j’appelle cristallisation, c’est l’opération de l’esprit, qui tire de tout ce qui se présente la découverte que l’objet aimé a de nouvelles perfections.”³⁴⁰ In this operation, subjective opinion is solidified and authenticated through the appearance of material proof—that is, what is first understood to be subjectively perceived is seen, after crystallization, as objective truth.³⁴¹ This, however, is only the first in a series of steps with

³³⁸ *De l’Amour*, 54, 42.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁴¹ Angela N. Hunter has designated this game of perception to be a question of *literacy*, arguing that “Crystallization structures the examination of love mapped out in *De l’amour*, but Stendhal organizes the lover’s experience of it around a more semiotic problem: that of reading.” The figure of the lover is, in *De l’amour*, first and foremost a *reader*, so that “[c]rystallization becomes the code of the lover’s reading, and as such it is the

which Stendhal outlines the phenomenon of love, for the first crystallization is followed by a subjective about-face, a temporary loss of love caused by the birth of doubt; this in turn is succeeded by a second crystallization, which Stendhal classifies as infinitely stronger, having “tant de supériorité [...] sur la première.”³⁴²

This sequence of love (subjective experience authenticated as objective reality), loss of love, and love renewed, hints at the rounded structure of *circular thought*. The loss is crucial to this process, for it proposes that authenticity, as adherence to an ideal, need not be fixed or static; on the contrary, it is strengthened when reaffirmed with greater devotion following periods of doubt and renunciation.³⁴³ In circular thought, there are traces of Heidegger’s conception of Dasein as authentic existence: “To find my self through the world, I have to stand away (*ex-stare*) from it, but (and this is a crucial ‘but’) I must return to it and accept it as my ‘homeland.’ This is the returning of the *Sein* to *Da* (its world) after it has lost or abandoned it.”³⁴⁴ Also present in circular thought, despite Stendhal’s vehement anticlericalism, are Catholic undertones, in its heralding of the redemptive restoration of faith. Across Stendhal’s oeuvre, this circular structure reverberates through all his fictional portrayals of authentic love, most elaborately that of Lucien Leuwen for Bathilde de

motor of love, and thus names the fact that everything in love is a sign, further designating multiple operations that control the lover’s semiotic system.” [Angela N. Hunter, “Signs of reading and the subject of love in Stendhal’s “De l’amour,”” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 36, no. 3/4 (Spring Summer 2008): 205.] This analysis aligns nicely not only with our conception of authenticity as a problem of literacy, but also to this chapter’s treatment of the private performance of authenticity as a “circular contact with the real,” embarked upon through *la lecture*.

³⁴² Stendhal, *De l’Amour*, 37.

³⁴³ Moreover, this sequence, as it is recounted in *De l’Amour*, is another instance where Stendhal uses Woman as a figure representing Mankind, as a figure of both universal subjective authenticity and of the authentic artist-creator, because of her greater social susceptibility to the *doxa*: “Je croirais donc que la seconde cristallisation est beaucoup plus forte chez les femmes parce que la crainte est plus vive : la vanité, l’honneur sont compromis, du moins les distractions sont-elles plus difficiles.” [ibid., 45.]

³⁴⁴ Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Sartre*, 97.

Chasteller. There, the question is not whether this renewed love-after-doubt is in fact authentic—we are shown that it is—but whether authenticity demands that this momentary loss of love be verbalized in the open. In this matter of what, in love, is speakable or unspeakable, Lucien fares much better than, say, the Princess of Clèves, suggesting perhaps that while love lost may be found again, love redirected elsewhere is doomed. The presence of circular thought throughout Stendhal's autobiographies and journals alters the directional flow generally attributed to this genre—the horizontal linearity of chronology, implicit in the life-story; the vertical linearity of domination, implicit in the act of seizing the self in writing. This roundedness is inherent to the literal phenomenon of crystallization, the encrustation of the cylindrical twig; as Pierre Laszlo has noted, Stendhal's choice of the word *cristallisation* for a process which has been sometimes interpreted as a *sublimation* of the *objet aimé* betrays an implicit rejection, on Stendhal's part, of the verticality implied by this alternative term.³⁴⁵ Crystallization also reveals another instance in which Stendhal undermines the purported primacy-of-authenticity accorded to the *thing* over the *idea of the thing*: "Le désir d'aimer vient en premier, nourri par l'exemple des autres ; l'objet de l'amour arrive en second, et ne fait que s'insérer dans un moule déjà formé."³⁴⁶ When read as an allegory for circular thought in the self's autobiographical search for authenticity, crystallization also, critically, eschews the value of *fixity*. Like the *objet aimé*, the self sought by the autobiographical narrator is found, lost, and found again, ad infinitum.

³⁴⁵ Pierre Laszlo, "Cristallisation et recristallisation," *Science et Littérature: Littérature* 82 (Mai, 1991): 77.

³⁴⁶ Tzvetan Todorov, "Stendhal, amour et égotisme," *Nouvelles études francophones* 22, no. 1 (Printemps, 2007): 118.

The rhetoric of crystallization: circular contact with the real

How does this circularity take shape at the linguistic level? Recurring phrases which have come to characterize Stendhal's autobiographical style—*j'anticipe*, and *je m'égaré*—help to bend the linearity of his narratives into rounded logics, collapsing time and content into a more malleable, more spherical form. At the rhetorical level, there exists an authentic ideal: the perfect sentence, which attains authenticity by performing this process of circular thought in order to overcome the limitations of representation, and to effectuate a new kind of contact—*circular*, rather than *direct* or *linear*—with the real. This rhetorical structure is the *tautology*; the mechanics of its authenticity may be broken down with the help of Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*.

If Stendhal's phenomenon of circular thought is first illustrated as crystallization in *De l'amour*, it is appropriate that it should be theorized at a linguistic and rhetorical level in Barthes' own reflection on love. And beyond their shared subject matter, similarities between the two books abound: their tone and lexicon, their fragmented form, their use of marginalia and footnotes—in Barthes' case, the names of the authors or works which have inspired the idea in question are printed in a parallel column, giving each page the feel of a book from Beyle's personal library, replete with coded notes that testify to the associative wanderings of the reader-self's mind. Furthermore, Barthes' chapters are organized alphabetically by subject, from *S'abîmer* to *Vouloir-saisir*, recalling not only the links between authenticity and the alphabet, but also Stendhal's penchant for enigmatic acronyms such as the word, VAAMMAAAMCGA, constructed from the initials of the women he loved.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ The individual letters of the alphabet, "read" and considered independently of the words they form, is of course the basis for Marin's method of reading *Vie de Henry Brulard*, a method through which he locates the sort of "accident[s] microscopique[s]" that accord meaning to the text as well as to "la texture même du texte écrit." [Louis Marin, "Un événement de lecture: où un texte de Stendhal est pris à la lettre," in *L'écriture de soi: Ignace de Loyola, Montaigne, Stendhal, Roland Barthes*, ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999).]

Lastly, a parallel of content: Barthes' account of the process of falling in love thoroughly resembles Stendhal's crystallization: it is a circular process by which one's love undergoes two *affirmations*, comparable to the two crystallizations, and which are likewise separated by a "un long tunnel" of doubt between.³⁴⁸

But most importantly, *Fragments* offers, through its semantic study of the language of love, a means of applying the phenomenon of circular thought to the notion of authenticity as a crisis of the word, as a problem of subject to language. Take, for example, the chapter dedicated to the word *Adorable*. Barthes demonstrates that the term is simultaneously emptiness, devoid of meaning, and plenitude, designating the "everythingness," the *Tout*, of the *objet aimé*. On the one hand, it is a failure of a referent, an "échec langagier [dont] il ne reste qu'une trace : le mot 'adorable.'"³⁴⁹ On the other hand, it is the plenitude of the referent itself: "dans *Adorable* ! aucune qualité ne vient se loger, mais seulement le *tout* de l'affect."³⁵⁰ Though it is precisely *affect* which is lost, muted, or transfigured through language, *Adorable* is the plenitude of affect itself. Put into the terms of authenticity laid out in the first chapter: *Adorable* is at once a distanced failure, because, as a referent, it is but the actor for the Loved One, and, thanks to the affect imbued in it by the performance of its pronunciation by the Lover, it is a sublimated reference-into-referent, the Loved One itself.

As a term that embodies and defies the limitations of verbal representation, a word that means nothing and everything, *Adorable* is the building block through which the authentic power of the tautology may be explained. The following passage should be read with the problems of authenticity, the letter, and the letter-self in mind:

³⁴⁸ Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 31.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

4. *Adorable* est la trace futile d'une fatigue, qui est la fatigue du langage. De mot en mot, je m'épuise à dire autrement le même de mon Image, improprement le propre de mon désir : voyage au terme duquel ma dernière philosophie ne peut être que de reconnaître—et de pratiquer—la tautologie. *Est adorable ce qui est adorable*. Ou encore : je t'adore, parce que tu es adorable, je t'aime parce que je t'aime. Ce qui clôt ainsi le langage amoureux, c'est cela même qui l'a institué : la fascination. Car décrire la fascination, cela ne peut jamais, *en fin de compte*, excéder cet énoncé : 'je suis fasciné.' Ayant atteint le bout du langage, là où il ne peut que répéter *son dernier mot*, à la façon d'un disque enrayé, je me soule de son affirmation : la tautologie n'est-elle pas cet état inouï, où se retrouvent, toutes valeurs mêlées, la fin glorieuse de l'opération logique, l'obscène de la bêtise et l'explosion du *oui nietzschéen* ?³⁵¹

Indeed, the tautology must be understood as the rhetorical approximation of the perfect ideal of authenticity, through its circular contact with the real: from referent to reference and back again. Like a broken record, the tautological sentence enacts circularity of thought; it does not flee the failure or fatigue of language, but rather comes round to meet it—more than just to face it, to dive headfirst into it. A closed-off circle of logic, of semantics, the tautology creates from its meaninglessness its own autonomy. The tautological phrase is unique in its ability to literally circumvent the problem of distance between referent and reference, between the *thing* and the *idea* or *representation* of the thing, through the circular power of redundancy. *Est adorable ce qui est adorable*. In other words: *The thing is the thing*.

If autobiography as a genre attempts to both establish and break free from the “prison of self,” the tautology undertakes the same task at a semantic level with regards to the crisis of distanced representation. Through the *Je* and *Moi* of the autobiographical narrator, this prison of self, when translated onto the page, becomes a *prison of I*. This *I* itself becomes a tautological unit, a closed-off circle, reverberating with the Stendhalian trope of

³⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

claustration: *I am in a prison*. That is: *I is* a prison. For Stendhal's autobiography, *I* must be, if you will, an *O*: not the vertical linearity of domination, as its English form might suggest, but rather a tautological circle. Any imprisonment of the self, at the level of content, is thus a tautological redundancy of what the *I* already announces, or performs, rhetorically.

But if on the one hand the tautology is a closed-off circle, so too is it an opening, the liberation offered by circular contact with the real, in which the referent and its representation are joined in perfect harmony and authentic unity. Clément Rosset defined two types of contact with the real: rough contact and smooth. While the former "trips over things, getting nothing from them but an awareness of their silent presence," the latter is "polished mirror contact which replaces the presence of things by their appearances in image. Rough contact is contact without doubles; smooth contact exists only with the help of a double."³⁵² These two possibilities, nonetheless, are both linear and thus direct: while rough contact allows the self to meet the real through its lack of consciousness—by sensing this encounter between the self and the real, but without distancing them from each other through *naming* it, or representing their encounter to itself, smooth contact chooses rather to endow the *named double*—the mirror or representation—as the real with which contact must be made.

Circular contact, on the other hand, forces the *unnamed* referent of rough contact to unite with the *named* mirror of its smooth contact double; it creates the real through the marriage of the primordial *thing* and its secondary *representative*. Like the phenomenon of crystallization, it loops together two opposing poles: from love, to loss of love, to a renewed love which has swallowed both its first incarnation and its subsequent annihilation. From

³⁵² Clément Rosset, *Le réel: Traité de l'idiotie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977), 43. Borrowing from Jean-Jacques Hamm's translation of the citation, as it appears in his article: Hamm, "Egotism and Narcissism: Avatars of the Masculine Imagery in Nineteenth-Century French Literature," 82.

referent, to distanced representation, to referent-in-spite-of-representation. In autobiography, this sort of circular thought, which enables circular contact with the real, translates the formula into a self which is born, lost through representation, and then reanimated through the same means.

In *Literature and Sincerity*, Peyre points to the novel's linear temporality as a testament to a modern sense of time as chronological, inching forward on the axis of progress, distinguished from the circular sense of time of pre-modernity and its epic narratives based on inevitability, repetition, and an unchanging human condition. Stendhal's use of circular thought—in terms of both his representations of temporality and as a rhetorical tool of authentic language—adds a curvature, or three-dimensionality, to the normally flat, two-dimensional limitations of verbal representation and chronological narrative.³⁵³ A tautology is, above all, a performance of the problems of performance.

³⁵³ If a two-unit tautology, such as *the thing is the thing*, adds curvature and a certain three-dimensionality to the linearity of text, then Gertrude Stein's well-known formulation takes this notion to a sculptural extreme: *A rose is a rose is a rose*. Each tautological circle (*a rose is a rose*), is enchained to another (*is a rose*), so that the phrase itself takes on the form of the flower it describes. Each tautology is a petal, growing into another, petal after petal, until the language is the thing—the rose—it describes; until, having collapsed the distance between referent and signifier, it is authentic. In this respect, Stein's sentence seems infinitely more successful than other famous attempts to make text *do* what it *says*: William Carlos Williams's *The Red Wheelbarrow* and Mallarmé's *Un coup de dès* only "paint" in two dimensions the shape of their words, while *A rose is a rose is a rose* "builds" them into a three-dimensional sculpture of what they signify.

La fatuité, or the social performance of authenticity:

“Prenant souvent la parole sans savoir comment il finirait sa phrase, [Octave] parlait beaucoup mieux.”³⁵⁴

“—N’étais-je pas beau hier quand j’ai pris la parole ? répondit Julien. J’improvisais, et pour la première fois de ma vie !”³⁵⁵

In Stendhal’s fiction, the self-spectator is best eluded, in the social context, through improvisation: a state of being dependent on speed, to be sure, but more importantly, on a sort of *blindness*—a deliberate lack of forethought, lack of preparation, lack of self-awareness, and, crucially, lack of theoretical intention behind one’s words or actions. Improvisation is a kind of hurtling into the real, like Rosset’s “rough contact” as undertaken by a linebacker on the football field. In this respect, this notion of improvisation as a social performance of authenticity resembles several other idealizations that haunt Stendhal’s conception of authentic artistic creation—the privileging of nonverbal over verbal arts, passion over intellect, the unadulterated expression of *feeling*. Though Romantic in its roots, this model continued to grow and flourish long after Stendhal, and is perhaps best encapsulated by tropes of the twentieth-century artist in its various paradigmatic incarnations: Jackson Pollock splattering paint over a canvas; Miles Davis blowing his horn as a revolt against the classical musicians described in his autobiography as “robots”; the avant-garde theater actor ad-libbing an interactive scene with a member of his audience.³⁵⁶ This idealization of

³⁵⁴ Stendhal, *Armance. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 157.

³⁵⁵ *Le Rouge et le Noir. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 785.

³⁵⁶ Miles Davis, *Miles: the Autobiography*, With Quincy Troupe (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 244. Philippe Lejeune calls this effect of Stendhal’s “une sorte d’écriture automatique avant la lettre,” noting that the author who became famous for employing such a method in his autobiographies—Alain Robbe-Grillet—was in fact enacting solely “la reprise du geste de Stendhal.” [Philippe Lejeune, *Les Brouillons de soi* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 50.]

blindness is especially persistent in contemporary notions of authenticity with regards to novelists, especially since the advent of French Theory. Since the twentieth-century moment when the art of the novel was turned, through linguistics, semantics, and literary theory, into a *science*, a division of roles followed, whereby those who *understood* were suddenly opposed in no uncertain terms to those who *created*. This significantly distinguishes literature from other arts: for even the abstract painter and the jazz musician are permitted theoretical knowledge of their arts, while for the novelist, to create *after understanding* is to be somehow *cheating*—that is, inauthentically, and for the purpose of attaining greater meaning, embedding into the text a metaphorical and metatextual code based not on reality but on *how reality is read*.³⁵⁷

This is the legacy of authenticity as the self's adoption of the “representational anxieties” of the letter: the fear that literacy somehow comes at the expense of true experience, that through rigorous analysis and conceptual abstraction, the self spins out of the orbit of the real. This is also the legacy of Realism, a literary movement which reproduces the same crisis of literacy in its claim to present “narrative” itself as something that can be culled from the real without being transfigured into abstraction: for while pre-Realist literature could openly speak in the mythic language of allegory, Realist novels that are perceived as authentic may lend themselves to metaphor only by accident—and thanks to the reader, not the writer. Once Lukacs identified Balzacian *totality*, such totality could never be *authentically* reproduced again by a novelist, for in instructing the reader in Realism, by turning the act of reading Realism into a science, Lukacs simultaneously slapped an

³⁵⁷ This *understanding* before *creating* is precisely what Prévost identifies as a pitfall in his work on Stendhal: “Il [Stendhal] avait cru se préparer à créer par la critique. Or, en pratiquant la critique, on n’apprend bien qu’à critiquer.” [Jean Prévost, *La création chez Stendhal* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1951).] It is also the reason Ansel employs to explain the failure of Stendhal’s attempts at playwriting. See Yves Ansel, “Pourquoi Stendhal est un si bon lecteur, ou les leçons d’un fiasco,” in *L’Année stendhalienne n° 11: Stendhal / théâtre* ed. Agathe Novak-Lechevalier Lucy Garnier, Myriam Sfar (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012).

expiration date onto Realism, at least in terms of its possibility for achieving the authenticity of “blind” creation.

While this division between the *artist* and the *expert*, between creation and conscious understanding of creation, may have peaked in the twentieth century, it was alive enough in the nineteenth century to cause Beyle a great deal of anxiety. Thus part of Stendhal’s development into a novelist meant overcoming these notions, while at the same time reproducing their glory and appeal in his fictional works. While blindness and improvisation remain at the heart of his heroes’ successes, Stendhal himself had to outgrow their deceptive allure, to accept analysis and premeditation as a crucial part of his artistic creation.³⁵⁸ This process may be traced throughout his autobiographies and private journals, revealing that the (authentic) portrayal of (authentic) human nature was not, for Stendhal, a blind spattering of paint on canvas, but rather the result of careful planning and critical analysis. The works examined in this chapter are those that undertake what must remain invisible in the novel: the science behind human behavior, and the science behind writing about it.

It is primarily in this way that his autobiographies and journals are “proto-fiction,” though of course, this is also true in a much more literal sense, in that the events from his own life recorded in these works often went on to be adapted into scenes in his novels, some destined to be defining moments of Stendhal’s fiction. Beyle’s father’s choice of tutor for his son, the model for M. de Rênal’s in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, was the original case study for mimetic desire: “Quel honneur pour un avocat au parlement de prendre pour son fils le précepteur sortant de chez M. Perier!”³⁵⁹ Julien’s humiliation at spelling *cela* as *cella* was

³⁵⁸ Not to mention a part of his own social performance, as he admits in *Henry Brulard*: “Dans l’excès de ma timidité, de mon angoisse et de mon *désarroi*, comme on dit à Grenoble et comme je disais alors, il me semble que j’écrivis d’avance la conversations que je voulais avoir avec M. Daru.” [Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 899.]

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 599.

inspired by Beyle's own mistake while working for his uncle Daru, a blunder which he later found somewhat charming: "Enfin j'admire ce que j'étais littérairement en février 1800 quand j'écrivais *cella*."³⁶⁰ Mathilde's sexual disillusionment, meanwhile, was modeled after Beyle's own: "Le soir en y réfléchissant je ne revenais pas de mon étonnement : *Quoi ! n'est-ce que ça ?* me disais-je."³⁶¹ The list goes on.³⁶² That his autobiography inspired his fiction is not especially surprising; in fact, given the prevalence of this sort of auto-intertextuality across Stendhal's œuvre, Lejeune has pointed out that the reverse is also true, that his fiction inspired his autobiography.³⁶³ What interests us, however, is not just the fact that moments from Beyle's own life later made their way into Stendhal's fiction, but rather how these defining events served as anecdotes which Beyle clearly broke down and analyzed—scrutinizing the minute-by-minute psychology behind them—before reproducing them throughout his novels. Of course, this sort of theorizing was not limited to his private writings and autobiographies—besides the more famous *Racine et Shakespeare*, his many essays on the subject of comedy and laughter prove this point by their very existence. The fact that Stendhal broke laughter down into a science—many times over—before his first novel was published shatters the myth of fiction as an artistic creation that emanates from an non-

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 914.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 947.

³⁶² See, for example, this helpful list assembled by Genette: "La frontière entre les essais italiens et le Journal de 1811, d'une part, les *Chroniques* et la *Chartreuse* de l'autre, est indiscernable. Les premières pages de la *Chartreuse* viennent des *Mémoires sur Napoléon*. La première idée du *Rouge* est consignée dans les *Promenades*. Et quel lecteur de *Leuwen* n'en retrouve l'essentiel dans ces quelques lignes de *Racine et Shakespeare* : 'C'est ainsi qu'un jeune homme à qui le ciel a donné quelque délicatesse d'âme, si le hasard le fait sous-lieutenant et le jette à sa garnison, dans la société de certaines femmes, croit de bonne foi, en voyant les succès de ses camarades et le genre de leurs plaisirs, être insensible à l'amour. Un jour enfin le hasard le présente à une femme simple, naturelle, honnête, digne d'être aimée, et il se sent qu'il a un cœur.'" [Genette, "Stendhal," 172.]

³⁶³ Lejeune, "Stendhal et les problèmes de l'autobiographie," 29.

analytical place.³⁶⁴ Within his private writings as well, Stendhal examines this myth in order to distance himself from it, even while maintaining its value:

Si je vis, ma conduite démontrera qu'il n'y a pas eu d'homme aussi accessible à la pitié que moi : la moindre chose m'émeut, me fait venir les larmes aux yeux, sans cesse la sensation l'emporte sur la perception, ce qui m'empêche de suivre le moindre projet ; en un mot, qu'il n'y a pas eu d'homme meilleur que moi en dispositions.³⁶⁵

The paradox of the myth of passion over analysis is that while (in a very Rousseauian calibration of his worth) the strength of his emotions renders him *le meilleur* in disposition, it is nevertheless precisely this emotional strength that hinders any attempt to undertake *le moindre projet*. As any youth who came of age during the Restoration knew, nothing incites the self-spectator's hatred so much as failure through inaction. Thus, paradoxically, that which constitutes the self's value, in terms of authentic composition, must be overcome or subordinated for the sake of action, that is, for authentic performance.

Nowhere is this so clear as in the following scenes from Stendhal's 1805 Journal. They are significant not only because their reverberations may be felt across Stendhal's fiction, in the tumultuous back-and-forth of love between his various protagonists, but also for the manner in which the meta-commentary on this sort of back-and-forth, decidedly absent from the novels and short stories, accompanies Beyle's own experiences as they appear in his journals. And what the meta-commentary reveals is the phenomenon laid out at the beginning of this chapter: the notion of tautology as a means of authenticity and of escaping the self-spectator's echo.

³⁶⁴ See, for example: *Traité de l'art de faire des comédies* (1815) ; *Le rire* (1815) ; *De la comédie* (1816) ; *Du comique de Shakespeare* (1816) ; *Du rire : Essai philosophique sur un sujet difficile* (1823) ; *De l'état de la société par rapport à la comédie* (1823) ; *Le Rire* (1823) ; *Du 'Vis Comica'. Scènes peignant les mœurs par des situations fortes* (1823) ; *La comédie est impossible en 1836* (1836).

³⁶⁵ Stendhal, *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 237.

It makes sense that the science of the “theater,” or the social performance of authenticity, is more thoroughly dissected in Stendhal’s private journals than in his published autobiographies. First, because the theater itself constitutes a much larger presence in the former than in the latter. In this way, his private journals resemble his travel writings: here, too, the theater infiltrates their every page. Beyle was an avid theater-goer, as we know, and in his journals spends much time critiquing various productions and the talents of their casts; his love interests were often actresses—he not only courted these ladies by helping them practice their lines, but joined their *répétitions* for the purpose of his own training, as well. Beyond the theater’s literal presence in his journals, the lexicon of these works is moreover much more theatrical than in his autobiographies. Beyle’s social world is continuously described as *theater*: acquaintances make entrances into social gatherings “comme au théâtre” or “avec grand fracas, comme sur le théâtre.”³⁶⁶ Lastly, his journals are more theatrical than his autobiographies in that they are more Romanesque—both Romantic in their vision of the self-as-protagonist, and novel-esque in their structure. They indulge openly in what *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d’Égotisme* avoid—that is, the writing of the self as novelizing (*faire du roman*). In *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d’Égotisme*, everything is fragmented, all discourse digressive; they include very few “scenes” based on dialogue and *didascalies*. Not so for Stendhal’s journals, which read, like so many contemporary novels, more as novelized theater scripts. The distinction is significant in what it reveals about the written performance of authenticity as it relates to the author’s conception of spectatorship: while journals are in general conceived of as the more private iteration of *les écrits intimes*—that is, less “theatrical” than autobiographies because they are not destined for a public—Stendhal reverses the formula. The “readability” of his journals, based on a theatrical narrative formula with actors

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 290-91.

who speak, move, and feel through space, is rejected in his self-writings whose publication invites spectatorship. The performance of *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme* is an anti-performance, which summons the reader not to sit back and enjoy the show, as is the case for his journals, but rather to crawl inside the author's mind.³⁶⁷ The onus to *not* perform thus is not nearly as strong when the performance is primarily meant for oneself. Authenticity itself, then, is more important as a *perceived trait* than as an autonomous one.

The scene in question begins with a journal entry dated 25 février 1805 and entitled, *Maximum of witt[iness] in my life*. The young Beyle is living in Paris, spending most of his evenings *aux Français*, where he has fallen in love with the actress Mélanie Guilbert, whom he refers to in his journal as Louason. Uncertain of her feelings for him, his successes with her thus far are few—that is, until the evening in question, when he succeeds in subordinating his passion to a cold performance of wittiness.

Je sors à trois heures et demie de chez Louason ; j'ai été, pour la première fois de ma vie, brillant avec prudence et non point avec passion. Je me suis toujours vu aller, mais sans gêne pour cela, sans embarras. Je crois que je n'ai jamais été si brillant, ni si bien rempli dans mon rôle. J'étais en gilet, culotte de soie et bas noirs, avec un habit bronze-cannelle, une cravate très bien mise, un jabot superbe.³⁶⁸

Of import in this passage is that Beyle's success does not in fact depend on the annihilation of his self-spectator—he confesses to watching himself the whole time, *but without embarrassment*. Dressed for the part, his brilliance in this role comes to light as he

³⁶⁷ This distinction seems to imbue Stendhal's journals with a certain autonomous purity or refusal of spectatorship, but of course it is not quite so simple as that. While less explicitly written *for* a reader, Stendhal at several points throughout his journal shows himself to be incapable of shaking the ghost of a potential-reader off his shoulder, as he addresses the worst-case scenario of his journal being found and read in passages such as the following: "Je n'ai pas besoin d'avertir que ce cahier, par les puérités qu'il contient, n'est absolument fait que pour moi. Je prie en conséquence celui qui le trouverait de ne pas le lire ; 1^e au nom de l'honneur ; --2^e en celui de l'ennui inévitable qu'il lui procurerait. Pardonnez-moi la pédanterie et la ridicule importance dont je n'ai pu encore me purger entièrement." [ibid., 336.]

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 237-38.

makes use of several of the rules laid out in previous chapters. Just as the theatrical setting of La Scala elicits the most authentic performances from the Italian aristocrats there as spectators, here, too, Beyle takes advantage of the theatricality of the scene at hand—he is helping Louason practice her lines for an upcoming performance: “Je l’ai très peu regardée en la faisant répéter. Voilà la seule chose qui ait pu paraître affectée (à elle seule ; les autres ne sont aperçus que d’un peu de relâche dans ma manière d’être enflammée ordinaire), et elle était parfaitement dans mon rôle.”³⁶⁹ What this choice of possessive pronoun illustrates (she was perfect in *his* role rather than her own), is how throughout the scene Stendhal makes use of the tenet outlined in the first chapter, whereby the actor-self quells his own performance anxiety by arousing the self-consciousness—that is, the self-spectator—of his interlocutor, effectively turning Louason into the actress and himself into the all-powerful spectator: “Je lui ai appris que j’étais hier aux Français, où elle était ; cela a paru l’étonner. Dès ce moment, la passion a été réveillée en elle, elle a commencé à faire attention à ce qu’elle faisait.”³⁷⁰

Then, in a power play recalling—but in reverse—Julien’s famous squeezing of Mme de Rênal’s hand, Beyle describes the dominance attained in refusing to reciprocate physical contact. Louason, for her part, sounds suddenly like the poor Prince in *La Chartreuse* who cannot mask his true love for Gina while reciting his lines in the role of *l’amoureux*: “En disant son rôle (le deuxième acte d’*Ariane*), elle m’a souvent pris la main avec toute la tendresse du rôle ; elle l’a même, ce me semble, serrée trois ou quatre fois. J’étais extrêmement poli, mai je ne l’ai pas serrée.”³⁷¹ The scene continues to lay the foundation for what would later become pivotal plot points in Stendhal’s novels; indeed, all the rules of the

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 238.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

game of love seem to be worked out in this short journal entry. Like Lucien Leuwen's ploy to incite the jealousy of Mme de Chasteller by pouring his attention onto her rival, Mme d'Hocquincourt, whose name is a pun belying her own nobility, Beyle's next move is to triangulate his affections by chatting up another actress present, "la petite" Félipe. It is a tactic which proves extraordinarily successful, as Louason responds by inviting him up to her apartment, where he had been refused entry for several days prior. That which elevates this narrative sequence of events from the realm of instinct to that of analysis, from a bag of tricks any *amoureux* might deploy to a more conscious, careful experiment in role-play, is Stendhal's commentary on the delicate balance effectuated throughout his success—a balance between passion and reason, sentiment and perception:

Voilà sans doute la plus belle journée de ma vie. Je puis avoir de plus grands succès, jamais je ne déploierai plus de talents. La perception n'était que juste ce qu'il fallait pour guider la sensation ; un peu plus, et je laissais entraîner par la dernière. La perception me donnait assez de politique pour sentir qu'il fallait dire un *couplet*, et, le premier mot lâché, je sentais ce que je disais ; il est impossible de mieux jouer la passion, puisque je la sentais en effet. J'étais amoureux de Félipe lorsque je lui ai dit : 'Divine Félipe, venez répéter avec moi.' Voilà ce qui me manquera à l'avenir : la perception ; je jouerai la passion avec plus de facilité, mais mois bien, mois à s'y méprendre. Voilà, je crois, ce que fait Parcé [Daru].³⁷²

We recognize a sentence from this quotation—*il est impossible de mieux jouer la passion, puisque je la sentais en effet*—which in Chapter One was demonstrated to testify to the performative self-consciousness of sentiment rather than its inherent "fakeness" while being performed. Read now within its original context of the self-spectator, here referred to in true positivist fashion as *la perception*, new rules emerge. Rather than annihilation, the self should instead aim for a simple *reduction* of self-spectatorship, the ideal level being just low enough to override one's primary sentiment (love for Louason), so as to re-filter it through a

³⁷² Ibid., 244-45.

secondary sentiment (a slightly sincere admiration for Félipe, which becomes authenticated—that is, experienced as real—through the politics behind it, because it contains within it the primary love for Louason, while simultaneously succeeding in inciting her jealousy). Dimmed to the lowest possible volume, the self-spectator goes from passive role of judgment to an active role of redirecting passion, and in so doing, provides a bridge of authentic unity between simultaneous conflicting desires (Louason and Félipe), and between the actor-self and the narrator-self, as Stendhal recognizes a few lines down: “Pour exprimer la perfection du genre dans lequel j’ai excellé, je pourrais dire que j’ai joué, comme Molé, un rôle tel que Molière aurait pu l’écrire, en étant en même temps auteur et acteur.”³⁷³

This restoration of the value of reason—of conscious, calculated, rational behavior—in the name of capitalizing on passion, is part of an identifiable movement, in Stendhal’s *Journal*, of redefining spontaneity. As he would later learn at la Scala, spontaneity is not limitless; it can only authentically exist within certain boundaries of role-play. While passion authenticates the self, it is reason which authenticates the self’s performance. Nothing incorporates this paradox like the social value of *l’esprit*: on the one hand, it embodies the ultimate display of authentic improvisation; at the same time, it is pure theater, and a performance that may only be learned through imitation:

Le charmant (d’esprit) M. de Baure est même dans ce cas, à la longue ; rien d’agréable au fond, à mes yeux, que l’esprit *naturel*, celui qui est inventé à chaque instant par un caractère aimable sur toutes les circonstances de la conversation. La raison en est simple : il donne une comédie de caractère dont le protagoniste est aimable. Voulez-vous donc avoir de l’esprit (apprenez tous les esprits appris, pratiquez-les pour avoir le droit de les mépriser), travaillez votre caractère et dites, dans chaque occasion, ce que vous penserez. Voilà le véritable esprit...³⁷⁴

³⁷³ Ibid., 246.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 257-58.

The performance of wittiness succeeds insofar as it is enacted with explicit reference to its theatricality. This is a premise we have now encountered in several forms throughout Stendhal's œuvre, yet it is important to note that this realization, for Beyle himself, takes place in this sequence of journal entries in 1805. Always one for laying down the markings of pivotal shifts in personality or consciousness, what Trousson calls a "forme de ponctuation dramatique" ("Là commence ma vie morale"; "Ici commencent mes malheurs"; etc.), this particular journal is divided by a similar milestone: Beyle's acquisition of *esprit*.³⁷⁵ Following the initial success that evening with Louason and Félipe, Stendhal recognizes the dawn of a new era. This is the letting go of Rousseauian idealization of passion and renunciation of public opinion; it is Stendhal recognizing that his pre-*esprit* days, ruled by emotion, were advancing him nowhere, socially or romantically. His decision to become *witty* was an intentional calculation: "Je commence à sortir de mon *génie de passions* et à sentir l'*esprit*. Puisqu'il est si utile, j'en aurai, cela n'est pas plus difficile qu'autre chose."³⁷⁶ And: "Dès que j'aurai corrigé mon caractère mélancolique par mauvaise habitude et par engouement de Rousseau, j'en aurai, j'espère, un très aimable : la gaieté de meilleur goût sur un fond très tendre."³⁷⁷

Wittiness is the representation of the self's consciousness that he is performing for others. It is a gesture that says: *Since we are all doomed to perform, I will perform my best for you*. It transforms what Rousseau refused to recognize—the inevitable social teleology of action—into a *gift*, in all of that term's Maussian, Potlachian implications. But while *l'esprit* is necessary for social advancement, unchecked, it garners resentment, for it resembles vanity. Perform

³⁷⁵ Trousson, "Rousseau, Stendhal, et l'autobiographie." See Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 556, 55.

³⁷⁶ *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 303.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 315.

too much wittiness and public opinion will shift from celebration to condemnation, stemming from the resentment aroused by the spectator's not being able to reciprocate this gift of wittiness at the same level with which it was given. Of one such interlocutor for whom Stendhal performed too much *esprit*, he writes: "Il faudrait que je fusse six ans humilié à ses yeux et aux miens, sous ses yeux, pour pouvoir redevenir aimable à ses yeux."³⁷⁸

The method Stendhal lays out for circumventing this problem reveals another instance of a linear action achieving authentication through its being rounded into a circle, this time with regards to the intended recipient, or spectator, of this performance of wittiness. That is, the linear social gesture of the performance must be bent backwards, redirected towards itself, to give the impression of autonomy. It will be useful to review the logical path to this conclusion:

- 1) To overcome the failures resulting from being ruled by passion, the self must make a conscious and rational decision to perform his *esprit*.
- 2) To overcome the representational self-consciousness of this performance, the self must recognize it as a social gesture—a *gift* to the spectator(s).
- 3) But if the self makes too grand a gift—one that surpasses what his spectator is capable of reciprocating—he will incite resentment for having revealed his own *esprit* to be greater than his spectator's.
- 4) Thus to avoid resentment, the performance-gift, which has been initially presented as a social gesture, must appear to reverse the direction of its intention in order to remove the obligation of reciprocity from the spectator; it must demonstrate autonomy, as if it is being enacted for the self-spectator alone.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 259.

As the tautology expands, it spirals further and further inward, spinning its own orbit of autonomy: from the first tautological unit of wittiness, *I perform* (the letter-self *P*'s performativity already implicit), laden with self-consciousness and anxiety; to the second level of the social gesture, which helps shed the letter-self's self-consciousness, *I perform that I perform*; to the rival-renouncing third level, which announces the self-spectator's presence, and thus proclaims the autonomous teleology of the tautology, *I perform that I perform—as you can see that I see for myself*.

Stendhal distinguishes this alternative to the simpler *esprit* by referring to it as *fatuité*, though the word itself seems to imply more insidiousness than “wittiness,” its effects upon spectators far exceed those garnered through wittiness alone, because it presents itself as a flaw rather than an asset, inviting *correction* rather than *rivalry*.³⁷⁹ This works not only in a platonic context, but in a romantic one as well, as Stendhal acknowledges while commenting on Louason's reactions to his fatuity: “J’ai eu une fatuité charmante qui ne l’a pas offensée, qui lui a montré que je n’étais pas pour elle un homme à dédaigner et qui, en même temps, lui a offert l’espérance de me corriger.”³⁸⁰ The word is used several more times as Stendhal dissects his newfound success in the social realm. He soon realizes, moreover, that this success is not the product of blind improvisation, guided by passion alone—the accidental stumbling into a performance that *dazzles*. On the contrary, it has resulted from a careful subordination of this blindness—and the idealization he formerly harbored for it—to the analytical reflection that takes place in his nightly journal writing sessions. “Voilà bien comment la sagesse donne le bonheur. Chercher à devenir encore plus savant dans la

³⁷⁹ It should be noted that I use the word fatuity here as a literal translation from the French *fatuité*, to imply conceitedness, or arrogance, more than silliness or stupidity, as its English usage suggests.

³⁸⁰ Stendhal, *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 277.

manière de tirer parti des circonstances,” he notes to himself, before adding—and not without *fatuité*, for that matter: “Tout ce que j’ai écrit dans ces deux pages sent trop le génie.”³⁸¹ The lessons gleaned from the journal entries recounting his recent successful social performances of authenticity may be applied to his approach to Realism, and to the written performance as well. Indeed, this performance method starts to infiltrate the very sentences filling his journal. For example, in the following anecdote:

Ce qu’il y a d’excellent, c’est que j’avais prévenu L[ouason] que nous pourrions rencontrer une petite fille de la société, à qui je faisais la cour. Je lui dis que c’était là elle dès que la voiture fut passée.
Voilà une des plus vives jouissances de la vanité que je puisse avoir. Je me dis : ‘C’est là une grande jouissance de vanité.’³⁸²

The performance takes place in the last two sentences: first, the expression of *fatuité*, in the form of openly indulging in one’s success: *Voilà une des plus vives jouissances de la vanité que je puisse avoir*. Then the designation of the self as the spectator enjoying it—which is redundant, as any sort of indulgence in vanity already inherently implies the presence of the self-spectator: *Je me dis*. Lastly, the repetition of the initial thought, signaling the distance between referent (the emotion itself) and its representation (its transposition into language) at the same time that it collapses this distance through the almost verbatim reproduction of this thought—a closing-off of the referent-to-representation line into a circle: ‘*C’est là une grande jouissance de vanité*.’ Other, more literal tautologies pop up as well, such as the enigmatic: “Je mystifie Miaille. J’écris ceci.”³⁸³ *I write this*: a performative subject pronoun; a performative verb; a deictic that seems to point to nothing in particular (*this* then becoming nothing but the word *this* itself—an instance of circular contact with the real, as the referent

³⁸¹ Ibid., 278.

³⁸² Ibid., 273-74.

³⁸³ Ibid., 340.

meets its representation), except perhaps for the previous sentence (*I mystify Miaille*), in which case *this* encompasses another performative tautology (the written words *I mystify Miaille* signaling their own written status—*I have written that I mystify Miaille. I perform that I perform—and I am watching.*

The exhilaration Stendhal experiences from these revelations, from this cracking of the code of the social performance of authenticity, is palpable; he calls it “ce plan de beau idéal *for my conduct*,” and recognizes its roots not only *in* the theater, but as the result of his careful analysis *of* the theater, writing that this plan of conduct “n’est qu’une suite des principes de l’art comique.”³⁸⁴ And within this joyous discovery, as Stendhal recounts it, we see not only the renunciation of false ideals of authenticity—the privileging of sentiment over analysis, the notion that creation must come about blindly—but also a distinct movement towards planning his own future as a creator:

Je voyais ce soir *all the theory of the best conduct in world ; to wright [sic] that*. Il faut convenir que je sors d’un étrange état de folie ; les moments d’exaltation de Rousseau étaient devenus ma manière d’être habituelle. Je prenais ça pour du génie, je le cultivais avec complaisance et regardais en pitié ceux qui ne l’avaient pas. La réserver pour le cabinet, autrement je serais à jamais malheureux dans le monde.

*To wraight [sic] the plan of conduct, and say that to nobody but Pauline.*³⁸⁵

To take the social performance of authenticity, or *all the theory of the best conduct in world*, to the next step—Stendhal says it plainly—is *to write that*. In other words, to turn his analytical understanding of the social performance into a written performance: to become an author.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 327.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 325.

“Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis, et comme je sais quelle réputation a ce grand homme, j’ai une grande jouissance. Je crois que c’est celui de tous les écrivains à qui je ressemble le plus par l’âme.”³⁸⁶

The echo that haunts the self’s private performance of authenticity is a recurring trope throughout Stendhal’s fiction: already in *Armance*, Octave has several encounters with the rumbling voice—sometimes monophonic, sometimes polyphonic—of this aural specter. In the private performance, the echo is distinguished from the self-spectator primarily through the manner in which it acts *upon* the self as opposed to *interacting* with it. For while the self-spectator may be engaged, and thus appeased, through entertainment—as we have seen through *les grimaces*, which turn the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*—the echo is experienced as a much more external phenomenon. This distinction is clear throughout *Armance*. Consider Octave’s encounter with his self-spectator, whom he invites into play by mimicking its voice, to their mutual delight and curiosity: “Octave se disait à haute voix des choses folles et de mauvais goût, dont il observait curieusement le mauvais goût et la folie.”³⁸⁷ This engagement is contrasted with Octave’s confrontations with his echo, whose voice is less distinct, more jumbled, and thus impossible to engage and appease through mimicry. The echo is a voice which resembles, rather, “le bourdonnement confus de paroles humaines” and which is experienced—twice, Stendhal insists—as a voice whispered directly into the ear—“tout près de son oreille,” and “qu’il lui semblait entendre auprès de son oreille.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ *Journal littéraire*, vol. II (Cercle du Bibliophile, 1970), 172.

³⁸⁷ *Armance. Œuvres romanesques complètes*, I, 172.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 183, 84.

The purpose of the *rire sur soi* is to pause the inhibitive function of the self-spectator through transforming its mask-like expression from a scornful frown into a smile. In his autobiographical works, Stendhal also lays out a different method for escaping the echo. While the self-spectator may be engaged in order to be actively manipulated into complaisance, the echo must be blocked out through distraction. This distraction is undertaken primarily through reading: the art of focusing the self's conscious attention onto the voice of another, so as to allow its own unconscious voices—that of the actor-self, playing out fantasies, or that of the narrator-self, making sense of reality through analysis, summary, and reconstitution—to run freely without being drowned out by the unwelcome intrusion of the echo. Marin called the phenomenon of reading “[l]e plus étrange des monstres, celui qui porterait une bouche-oreille dans son œil.”³⁸⁹ To which we might suggest a small *détournement*: reading is a monster who wears not only *une bouche-oreille dans son œil*, but also a *bouchon d'oreille*—the plug which deafens him to the echo.

The act of reading, after all, plays a starring role in *Henry Brulard, Souvenirs d'égotisme*, as well as in Stendhal's private journals. Never one to underplay the impact of his favorite authors on the development of his self, Stendhal is generous in his attributions of influence: “La lecture de *la Nouvelle Héloïse* et les scrupules de S[ain]t-Preux me formèrent profondément honnête homme.”³⁹⁰ Also: “Arioste forma mon caractère.”³⁹¹ Other inspirations to whom Stendhal nods include La Bruyère, Cervantes, Montaigne, Alfieri, Cabanis, Tracy, J.B. Say, Helvétius, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and his beloved Shakespeare. And then of course there is Pascal: *Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis*. The very

³⁸⁹ Marin, “Un événement de lecture: où un texte de Stendhal est pris à la lettre,” 110.

³⁹⁰ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 716.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 619.

notion that escape from the echo in the private context is effectuated primarily through the distraction of reading puts us in decidedly Pascalian territory: “[Les hommes] ont un instinct secret qui les porte à chercher le divertissement de leurs misères continuelles.”³⁹² For Stendhal the *divertissement* of reading may be understood in the sense of entertainment, as is the case for his childhood experience of Cervantes (“*Don Quichotte* me fit mourir de rire”), or, more simply, as a displacement of attention, a more literal dis-traction, the undoing of the attachment to one’s conscious thoughts and their echo.³⁹³

This is the state of reverie prompted by reading, which is described throughout Stendhal’s autobiographies and journals as an infinitely sensual pleasure: locked up alone in his room, *en secret* as Pascal prescribes, the young Beyle preferred the cocoon of his bed to fully indulge in his favorite pastime: “L’odeur excellente, c’était de l’ambre ou de musc [...] un tas de livres brochés [...] de mauvais romans non reliés [...] Cette découverte fut décisive pour mon caractère.”³⁹⁴ The quality of the book, as he notes, is subordinate to the state of reverie achieved by its reader; distracted from the inhibitions of the self-spectator’s echo, the literary experience provides the context in which the fantasy of the future-self may be explored in freedom (“dans des transports de bonheur et de volupté impossibles à décrire”).³⁹⁵ This voluptuousness—or roundness, if you will—of the sensual experience of reading results from multi-directionality of the feeling of love it inspires; it is at once mimetic admiration and *amour de soi*, the desire to simultaneously be the author and be oneself:

Je ne saurais exprimer la passion avec laquelle je lisais ces livres[...] Je devins fou absolument, la possession d’une maîtresse réelle, alors l’objet de tous mes

³⁹² Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 126.

³⁹³ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 616.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 699.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 701.

vœux, ne m'eût pas plongé dans un tel torrent de volupté. Dès ce moment ma vocation fut décidée : vivre à Paris en faisant des comédies comme Molière.³⁹⁶

The declaration that a “real” mistress could not compare to the joys of the reading hints at another component of Stendhal’s conception of the private performance of authenticity, which is his insistence that the literary experience is, in many ways, realer than the real. This is first established through his account of his childhood disillusionment with reality as resulting directly from the discovery that real people, in general, are nowhere near as witty and amusing as characters in novels: “Je trouvai la réalité fort au-dessous des folles images de mon imagination. Ces camarades n’étaient pas assez gais, pas assez fous, et ils avaient des façons bien ignobles. [...] Ce désappointement, je l’ai eu à peu près dans tout le courant de ma vie.”³⁹⁷ It is only thanks to reading that his own inner life might approach something closer to the excitement of the literary: “Je vivais solitaire et fou comme un Espagnol, à mille lieues de la vie réelle...”³⁹⁸ This blurring between the literary and the real is at the heart of one of Beyle’s warmest memories of his grandfather, who tells the story of his friend M. le baron des Adrets, the year that *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was published, appearing late for dinner, and in tears. “Qu’avez-vous donc, mon ami ?,” asked his wife. “Ah ! Madame, Julie est morte !”³⁹⁹

This state of reverie, the access to the real or to authenticity initially provided by the literary experience, once found, may then be channeled in the non-literary context of

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 699.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 745-46.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 538.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 702. For a genealogy of this phenomenon which would come to be known as *Bovarysme*, see Andrew Piper, *Dreaming in Books: the Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See also Marielle Macé, *Façons de lire, manières d'être*, NRF Essais (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).

everyday life. If Stendhal's very fetishization of reverie may be traced to his reading of *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, his real-life method for channeling it also resounds with the lessons learned from Rousseau's tome. In both *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*, he identifies walking as the best approximation of reading in its power of inspiring reverie; like the eyes that skim a text, the continual motion of walking creates the ideal rhythm for authentic mental absorption in the geography of the real. It is the physical and physiological alternative to reading—but only insofar as he knows this from reading Rousseau. In the same way that Stendhal describes his horror at being interrupted while reading, he writes of disruptions to his *flânerie*: “Une rêverie tendre en 1821 et plus tard philosophique et mélancolique [...] est devenue un si grand plaisir pour moi que, quand un ami m'aborde dans la rue, je donnerais un paule pour qu'il ne m'adressât la parole.”⁴⁰⁰ The state of reverie is so great as to eclipse the real as perceived by the wandering Beyle: “Quand les idées m'arrivent au milieu de la rue je suis toujours sur le point de donner contre un passant, de tomber ou de me faire écraser par les voitures.”⁴⁰¹

The privileging of literature as realer than reality is, once again, an issue of acknowledging artifice rather than hiding it; of accepting a premise of fiction in order to find truth; of embracing a theatrical starting point in order to get beyond theater. For literature more openly confesses to what real life conceals: that originality is a combination of spontaneity and imitation, of autonomy and interdependence. The reader's relationship to the admired author navigates a path from mimesis to autonomy. This is a lesson later articulated by Nietzsche, who wrote that our “educators can be only our liberators.”⁴⁰² At

⁴⁰⁰ Stendhal, *Souvenirs d'Égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, II, 452.

⁴⁰¹ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 809.

⁴⁰² Friedrich Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 129.

once mimetic model and harbinger of the reader's own originality, the author-educator-as-liberator precipitates the reader's own self-realization by distraction from the echo and its inhibitions, and by a process through which the author/reader identities are simultaneously distinguished from each other and melded into one. Reading thus provides the phenomenon through which the private performance of authenticity can be effectuated. To become one's authentic self through reading another: *Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis.*

The phenomenology at work proceeds as follows: If the narcissism Stendhal fears is a narcissism of the word rather than simply of the image (the textual *Je* and *Moi* rather than the purely visual *image* of the self), reading effectuates an important *détournement* of this word's provenance. The reader-self's own word-image, or *I*, is replaced by the author's *I*; the reader then is permitted to privilege the *récit* over the *real*, but without the risk of narcissism posed by preferring his own *story-of-I* over the referent this *I* stands for. This is why, particularly in autobiography—that is, the written performance of the self—*writing about reading* is a negation of this kind of word-narcissism, inherent to the genre. It is a displacement of the *I* by an *other*, by *another's I*, to acknowledge that in spite of the autobiographical claim to selfhood, *Je est un autre*.

It is Rimbaud's phrase, after all, around which Georges Poulet constructed his 1969 "Phenomenology of Reading," an essay whose main points may be useful in breaking down the inner workings of Stendhal's line: *Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis*. Poulet's Phenomenology first dissects the birth of self that results from reading, which is simultaneously a loss of self: "It all happens, then, as though reading were the act by which a thought managed to bestow itself within me with a subject not myself. Whenever I read, I

mentally pronounce an I, and yet the I which I pronounce is not myself.”⁴⁰³ Moreover, the phenomenon of reading allows for a union of consciousness between the author and the reader, as the reader experiences the author’s thoughts as his/her own: “They are the thoughts of another, and yet it is I who am their subject.”⁴⁰⁴ This reader-I within the author-I allows for both to “start having a common consciousness.”⁴⁰⁵ This common consciousness might be understood through a line from Victor Hugo’s preface to *Les Contemplations*: “Ah ! insensé, qui croit que je ne suis pas toi !”⁴⁰⁶ But the inverse is also at work, the author-I within the reader-I: “I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me... When I am absorbed in reading, a second self takes over, a self which thinks and feels for me.”⁴⁰⁷ Poulet insists that the reader experiences the author’s work *not* as a linguistic representation of the author’s innermost self—distanced through the treachery of translation and transliteration—but rather as its own object of consciousness: the book is sublimated into its own subjectivity. The phenomenology of reading thus proves that literacy is the solution to overcoming literacy, as the primary problem of authenticity; it also performs the rules of authenticity just as Stendhal has defined them. The reader experiences the text not a representation, but a presentation pure and simple: a performance through which it becomes possible to inhabit the plenitude of all three subjective roles at once—actor, author, and spectator of the author’s *I*.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Georges Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary History: New and Old History* 1, no. 1 (October 1969): 56.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁰⁶ Victor Hugo, "Préface," in *Les Contemplations* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943), 28.

⁴⁰⁷ Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," 57.

⁴⁰⁸ A path to existential plenitude, as Kittler reminds us, that has been articulated since antiquity within the terms of a reproductive “birth” of self via the seeds of reading: “When Zeno asked the delphic oracle what was

Because this subjective plenitude-by-proxy also guarantees distraction from one's echo, the aural dimensions and/or voices at work in the act of reading should be further broken down. For it is not exactly that the reader-self's echo is usurped by the text's voice; only the quasi-illiterate *hear* the words of a text while reading. On the contrary, the text-voice is silently transmitted and silently comprehended, while what we might call the reader's inner-voice makes use of this silence to wander freely. The inner-voice is distinguished from the echo in that it is fantastical rather than inhibitive; creative rather than destructive; analytical and introspective but without the reverberations of the echo—that repetition of a wandering thought which renders it unworthy according to the rules of conscious self-regard. This escape is due primarily to the fact that the inner-voice liberated by the text-voice need not be—and in fact, often isn't—a linguistic voice; that is, the wanderings of the mind allowed by reading others' words need not take the form of words themselves. It is as if these trance-like thoughts make do with the simultaneous articulations of the text-voice; the words of the latter are enough to make *sense*—both in terms of *meaning* and *feeling*—of the inner-voice, but without the necessity of articulation. The text-voice is a silent drumbeat that creates the rhythmic, meditative conditions in which the inner-voice(s) can exist and explore free from the echo—because an echo can only mimic what has been clearly, linguistically, articulated.⁴⁰⁹ Reading is thus its own polyphonic symphony, the state of complete

the best way to live, the answer he was given was: "To mate with the dead." Which he understood as the equivalent of to *read the ancients*." [Friedrich Kittler, "Preface to *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*," in *Literature, Media, Information Systems* (Amsterdam: OPA, 1997), 37.]

⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, there is a temporal loop at work here, as Stendhal suggests through his choice of verb—Pascal's words are experienced as a sort of *déjà-vu*: not as if he is reading himself, but re-reading. The silent rhythm of the text-voice not only allows the inner-voice to surge forward but also backward, to experience the text-voice as a sort of skin, containing the subcutaneous muscles of the past self which flexes underneath this text-voice's words, while retaining the corporeal "shape" of the body of its own past self. A circular contact with the *past* real.

absorption in two stories at once—that of the text and that of the self’s innermost life.⁴¹⁰ The ideal of authentic illiteracy is both reinforced and shattered by this phenomenon: the subjective authenticity of reading stems from the pre-linguistic state of the inner-voice’s musings, but these thoughts-which-are-not-yet-words may only be released into consciousness via the proxy of the reader-self’s literacy.

A final word on Rimbaud’s formulation as it relates to Stendhal’s conception of authenticity, language, and reading. *Je est un Autre*. First, because of what Chapter One has demonstrated about the representational limitations and distancing of the linguistic sign, the self-conscious gulf between the performing *Je* and the self it represents.⁴¹¹ Second, also linguistically, because of the relativity of *Je*—*Je* is everyone, and thus no one, not *me*.⁴¹² Third, because of Poulet’s notion of the union of consciousness enacted through reading. Finally, the value of *Je est un autre* for this study of Stendhal’s conception of authenticity lies in its being read as a tautology, as the linguistic formulation of subjective redundancy and thus the self’s very own circular contact with the real. Within the context of the phenomenology of reading, this tautology is quite literal: *Je*—already an “*autre*”—*est un autre*. *Un autre est un autre*. This same subjective redundancy is also at the heart of the epigraph to this section on the

⁴¹⁰ For Kristeva, as for Marin, this sort of pre-linguistic language is eminently musical: “echolalic, vocalizing, lilting, gestural, muscular, rhythmical.” [Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 126.]

⁴¹¹ We recall that Narcissus, for Kristeva, “spells our entry into language, the world of signs.” [Schultz, “In Defense of Narcissus: Lou Andreas-Salomé and Julia Kristeva,” 185.] Thus the process of reading can transform the ensuing distanced and spectral subjectivity into a state of plenitude by sealing off this “world of signs” from the real; as such, when all is *sign*, nothing is *sign*—the sign becomes substantiated into an autonomous being, as its subordination to the real cannot persist once the real is shut out.

⁴¹² Benveniste’s analysis of the subjective relativity of personal pronouns, at the dawn of the study of linguistics, construes *Je* as necessarily *un autre* because subjectivity itself depends on linguistic differentiation: “Consciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be a *you* in my address. [...] Nevertheless, neither of the terms [I or you] can be conceived of without the other; they are complementary, although according to an ‘interior/exterior’ opposition, and, at the same time, they are reversible.” [Émile Benveniste, “Subjectivity in Language,” in *Problems in General Linguistics* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1958), 224-25.]

private performance of authenticity, and indeed we should read those lines, too, as a perfect expression, at the linguistic, rhetorical, and existential levels, of tautological authenticity:

Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis.

The métier of being a genius, or the written performance of authenticity

In the private performance of authenticity, the reader becomes his/her own self through a union of consciousness with the author's *Je*. Stendhal's autobiographies not only record and scrutinize this phenomenon as it occurs for Beyle the actor-character, but also attempt to reproduce it for their own readership. This is the written performance of authenticity as it takes shape in this genre: geared explicitly towards the spectator/reader, who will interiorize Stendhal's experience as a reader as his/her own: *Quand je lis Stendhal, il me semble que je me relis.*⁴¹³ Recalling De Man's image of autobiography's specular author/reader structure being "swallowed up," or placed inside itself, in autobiography, Stendhal establishes a *mise en abîme* of author/reader relationships in these works in order to trace the genealogy of his lessons in authenticity through his own reading, and to pass these lessons on to his own reader.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Stendhal's rants against the "egotism" of writers like Chateaubriand may be understood along these lines: their works are "egotistical" in that they are sealed so that only the author lives within them, autistically; they refuse to invite the reader to inhabit them. They are the *poupée de cire, poupée de son* of Serge Gainsbourg's song: insincere ("without wax"), and echo-inciting rather than echo-silencing. They perform what the song's singer egotistically taunts and flaunts: *Mes disques sont un miroir, dans lequel chacun peut me voir*. This is the narcissistic version of autobiography and/or artistic production, whereby the specular structure reflects only the *me* of the artist. The mirror must instead be two-directional, as it becomes in some versions of Gainsbourg's song when the line is changed to: *Mes disques sont un miroir, dans lequel chacun peut se voir*.

⁴¹⁴ Marie Parmentier's recent book argues that, in spite of Stendhal's distinction between novels intended for *les femmes de chambre* and those destined for literary salons, and in spite of the exclusivity of his imagined readership of the *happy few*, his novels nevertheless invite a "participatory" activity of the reader. See Marie Parmentier, *Stendhal stratège: pour une poétique de la lecture*, Collection Stendhal (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2007).

If this process is uniquely articulated by Stendhal, it nevertheless also resounds with a nineteenth-century interpretation of sincerity in art as the perfect transmission of the artist's soul.⁴¹⁵ Stendhal's reader ingests this parable of authenticity-found-through-reading, self-realizing, and at the same time *becoming Stendhal*. Nowhere is this shared *Je* more strongly felt than in those extradiegetic commentaries so adored by Stendhal, especially those that comment on his relationship to the temporality and narrative geography of the written performance. Having swallowed the specular structure, having "become" Stendhal, the reader does what Stendhal's narrator-self is forever confessing to doing—*j'anticipe ; je m'égare*. These verbs should be read not purely as commentaries, but as speech-acts through which the author and the reader are joined not only in consciousness, but more literally in action. The reader, simultaneously with Stendhal, anticipates and gets lost through his/her inner-voice wanderings.

This is the recreation of the phenomenon that shaped the self who now writes; it is Stendhal saying to his reader: *You do as I do—Je est un autre—You are me*. Stendhal becomes puppeteer to his reader and to himself, as this self is occupied temporarily by the reader.⁴¹⁶ Furthermore, both *j'anticipe* and *je m'égare* punctuate Stendhal's autobiographies with a certain rhythm of circularity, or roundedness, in that they repeatedly announce a change in direction—either temporal or narrative—only to return to the subject at hand.

These circular strokes create a temporal tension when they come up against the linearity of the narrative. Of course, this tension is inherent to autobiography, as a linear *récit*

⁴¹⁵ See the chapter "Romanticism and Sincerity" in Peyre, *Literature and Sincerity*.

⁴¹⁶ For Marin, "the reading process at work in *La Voix excommuniquée* is presented as a transformative and confessional experience, dealing the issue of both Stendhal's and Marin's narcissism" and phenomenologized through the critic's "reading" of both *Henry Brulard* and Raphael's *Transfiguration*. [Saint, "Reading Stendhal's *Vie de Henry Brulard*: Marin and the Limits of Representation," 64.]

whose retrospective gaze loops a chronology into its own ring. Nevertheless what is normally understood to be the end-point of the autobiographical line, or the place where it turns into a ring inside the narrative (the moment the author's gaze returns to the present of the act of writing, at the conclusion of the narrative; the moment where the actor becomes the narrator), should for Stendhal be read as a beginning outside the narrative as well—the birth of a novelist.

For though by 1835, the year Stendhal began writing *Henry Brulard*, he had already seen the publication of *Armance* (1827), *Vanina Vanini* (1829, in *la Revue de Paris*), and *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), and had already written *Lucien Leuwen* (in 1834, though it would not be published until 1894), a significant amount of his fiction came afterwards. Most was left unfinished before his death, but the fact that *La Chartreuse de Parme* was written after *Vie de Henry Brulard* is not negligible. Lejeune defined the three temporal stages of the autobiographer's life in the following order: the first being the period without writing; the second coinciding with *l'écriture première*, a time of projection, or fictional creation, whereby the author constructs his systems of values and elaborates his vision of the world; the third covering *l'écriture seconde*, a time not only of retrospection but of *synthesis* (not “le passé-en-soi, mais le passé tel qu'il existe dans le présent”) and *totalisation*.⁴¹⁷ But is there any more *totalizing* work from Stendhal's œuvre than *La Chartreuse*? True, *Lucien Leuwen* may be a step in this direction when compared with *Le Rouge et le Noir*, for example, thanks to its forays into *la Bourse*; the folkloric forests surrounding Nancy; its much more explicitly theatrical plot devices; and its essentialization of a Julien-like protagonist, but who hails from the other, wealthier, side of the tracks. But *La Chartreuse* takes all these aspects—all the facets of both reality and fantasy—one step further towards effectuating the rules laid out in his

⁴¹⁷ Lejeune, "Stendhal et les problèmes de l'autobiographie," 24-25.

autobiographical works. Neither is it negligible that *Lucien Leuwen* was left unfinished, for it suggests that Stendhal felt he had more “work” to do—which would be undertaken the very next year while writing *Henry Brulard*—before he could create a novel of perfect authenticity. For Stendhal, then, the second and third periods sketched by Lejeune are reversed: autobiography is the time of projection, the projection of the rules of authenticity he would recreate in his fictional worlds; his later fiction is the time of *totalisation*.⁴¹⁸ This view is further justified by the fact that, as Lejeune himself points out, Stendhal’s first “retour à l’enfance” took place well before his first novel, in 1822, with his “notice nécrologique”: (“Henri Beyle, né à Grenoble en 1783, vient de mourir à...”).⁴¹⁹ Stendhal’s initial gesture of autobiographical circularity, of returning to childhood while creating a linear narrative (or at least, the death-punctuation at the end of the life-sentence), thus predates his fiction, just as this *retour*’s most significant incarnation, *Henry Brulard*, predates the fictional work generally understood to best encapsulate his essence, *La Chartreuse*.

It has been held that although the tension between the circularity of retrospection and the linearity of narrative is intrinsic to autobiography, Stendhal was one of the first to call the reader’s attention to it, by embedding the commentary on his relation to it into the text itself.⁴²⁰ The quotes are by now well-known and oft-cited: “En moins d’une heure, je viens d’écrire ces douze pages...”; “Me voici à la page 501 et je ne suis pas encore sorti de

⁴¹⁸ While Lejeune acknowledges that Stendhal’s autobiographies were not his “last” writings, he maintains that they succeed a definitive act of self-realization-through-fiction: “L’autobiographie n’est pas forcément l’acte ultime de l’écrivain : l’exemple de Stendhal, de Gide, de Green et de bien d’autres le prouve. Mais elle vient toujours après une première et plus indirecte ou plus impersonnelle réalisation de soi.” [ibid., 24.]

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁴²⁰ “One” of the first, as Lejeune notes, for in this effort to “mettre en scène le temps de l’écriture,” Stendhal was beaten to the punch by his arch-nemesis, Chateaubriand. [ibid., 32.]

Grenoble !,” et cetera.⁴²¹ This inscription of writing-time into a text anticipates what would become a recurring trope of twentieth-century, most famously associated with Proust, and what today has undeniably become part and parcel to the genre of autobiography and autofiction.⁴²²

Our primary interest in this temporal tension is how it relates to the phenomenon of the echo throughout the written performance of authenticity. For as the strokes of circularity are rounded not only by retrospection but by the anticipation of “future retrospection,” the problem of the echo, in the written performance, is thus temporally more layered and complicated than it is for the other performances.⁴²³ And even a written performance in which the narrator-self successfully deafens its ears to the echo, the specter of the future-echo lingers, waiting for the moment when the self *re-reads* a written performance and subsequently dispenses its misery and shame. Stendhal describes several times the wincing reaction that accompanies reading his old writing—whether it is his published novels (“J’ai un profond sentiment de tristesse quand, faute d’autre livre, je les relis”) or casual letters home:⁴²⁴

Un des malheurs de mon caractère est d’oublier le succès et de me rappeler profondément de mes sottises. J’écrivis vers février 1800 à ma famille : ‘Mme

⁴²¹ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 732, 833.

⁴²² See, for example, Karl Ove Knausgaard’s *My Struggle*, which, with a tone of distinctly Rousseauian naturalism, and all the certainty in his own originality that such a naturalism implies, begins with a recording of its writing-time and –place; Knausgaard updates these figures repeatedly, almost obsessively, throughout the narrative—and as if he were the first, after Proust, to do so. His frequent referencing of Proust is a good reminder of why the “educators” a writer is willing to name can at times be less important and less informative than those they refuse to mention; though Knausgaard may strive to be Proustian, he, like Stendhal before him, is an *honnête homme* à la Rousseau—though unlike Stendhal, he never quite overcomes the naïve limitations of this kind of naturalism; his conception of authenticity remains woefully sincere. See Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle: Book I*, trans. Don Bartlett (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2013).

⁴²³ Lejeune, “Stendhal et les problèmes de l’autobiographie,” 26.

⁴²⁴ Stendhal, *Souvenirs d’égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, II, 430.

Cambon exerce l'empire de l'esprit et Mme Rebuffel celui des sens.' Quinze jours après j'eus une honte profonde de mon style et de la chose.⁴²⁵

The ghost of the future-self, for Stendhal, is limited to neither his literary posterity, nor his corporeal death, nor even the total inhabiting of the role of novelist towards which these autobiographical works are leading him; the ghost of the future-self is also the future-echo. The written performance of authenticity must constantly battle with the knowledge that today's sincerity is tomorrow's humiliation. This is where a fundamental difference emerges between *le regard d'autrui* and *le regard sur soi*. The former requires little more than pugnacious bravura to be overcome: "Je ne suis ni timide ni mélancolique en écrivant et m'exposant au risque d'être sifflé ; je me sens plein de courage et de fierté quand j'écris une phrase qui serait repoussée par l'un de ces deux géants (de 1835), MM. Chateaubriand ou Villemain."⁴²⁶

All you need, in order to overcome the threat of the spectator, is *passion*, flavored with a little truculence. But to overcome the self-spectator, or more specifically in this case, the future-echo, this method cannot be simply turned around onto oneself—one does not "beat" the self-spectator by proverbially (that is, verbally) punching oneself in the face. Instead, the practice Stendhal proposes is, again, circular in its logic. To write is to invite the future shame of the self-spectator, but the only way to best the shame brought on by the self-spectator is to write: "J'ai besoin de méditer un peu sur ma conduite. Je le fais la plume à la main, c'est diminuer l'influence des passions sur les jugements qu'on porte sur soi."⁴²⁷ The result of writing is the unleashing of the self-spectator's ridicule; the answer to self-ridicule is self-understanding; the best method of self-understanding is writing. Furthermore, this

⁴²⁵ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 907.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 767.

⁴²⁷ *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 288.

seemingly modest assessment is yet another of Stendhal's reversals of passion's hierarchy over reason: unlike with the spectator-other, passion is not necessarily a means of triumphing over the self-spectator, but at times can be rather its greatest fuel. Also at work in the above citation is the postulation that the act of writing, or self-reflective meditation with *plume à la main*, is a means of bridging the temporal distance between the self and the self-spectator, for it is precisely from within these distances between the self's action and the self-spectator's reaction that shame and inhibitions germinate and begin to swell. The *everydayness* of journal-writing, then, aims to create temporal and narrative unity between the self-spectator and the self, who is stuck in an ad infinitum routine of: action; shameful reaction to action; unhappy consciousness of discord between action and reaction (consciousness of a discordant self).

It is important to remember this function when considering the notions that have come to characterize our understanding of Stendhal's relationship to writing: that happiness cannot be written; that analysis and analytical writing destroy any lived passion; et cetera. Comments such as the last line of *Henry Brulard*, "On gâte des sentiments si tendres à les raconter en détail," abound.⁴²⁸ But the problem, it should be concluded, is not so much that the memory of happiness is destroyed through its verbalization and recording, but rather that the passion with which it is recorded makes it vulnerable to the future shame of retrospection. The self-spectator of the future cringes at the sight of passionate writing; and yet, to prevail over this humiliation, the self-narrator must *keep writing*. Like the tautology, this sort of logic, generally called the *fallacy* of circular reasoning, might be better termed here the *fatuité* of circular reasoning—arrogantly illogical, but also a form of circular contact with the real, the sacred shape of authenticity.

⁴²⁸ *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 959.

En attendant le génie...

Continuity of selfhood depends thus on a writing habit that is regular, continuous, and prolific; hence Stendhal's self-imposed writing quotas—"à 20 pages par séance, comme une lettre"; "comme une lettre, à 30 pages par séance"—which are referenced throughout his autobiographies.⁴²⁹ An interesting distinction turns up in some of these recordings of his writing process, which is that this method of continuous writing, successful and successfully authenticating as it might be in the realm of journaling, is not (yet) feasible for Beyle when it comes to working on fiction. On the 30th of June, 1832, he notes: "*written* douze pages dans un bout de soirée, après avoir fait ma besogne officielle. Je n'aurais pu travailler ainsi à une œuvre d'imagination."⁴³⁰ And just days later, again: "*Made* 14 pages le 2 juillet de 5 à 7. Je n'aurais pas pu travailler ainsi à un ouvrage d'imagination comme *le Rouge et le Noir*."⁴³¹ Though written after the publication of his first two novels, this commentary on his own writing habits makes clear that Stendhal's conception of himself as a novelist is one of *becoming* rather than *already being*. Like the actor in rehearsal, like the singer practicing scales, the fact that Stendhal's writing quotas are imposed throughout both his journals and his published autobiographies further underscores their function as belonging to an *atelier du roman*: it is in these works he is deciphering the problems of how to write authentically—both in terms of the words written and the habits required to write them.

The imposition of writing quotas is also a response to the destructively naive ideas harbored by a young Beyle of how one might go about trying to be a writer. This practice of waiting for "genius" inspiration to write is later woefully regretted by Stendhal:

⁴²⁹ *Souvenirs d'égotisme. Œuvres intimes*, II, 466.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 491.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 506.

Pour écrire j'attendais toujours le moment du génie. Je n'ai été corrigé de cette manie que bien tard. Si je l'eusse chassée plutôt j'aurais fini ma comédie de *Letellier et Saint-Bernard* que j'ai portée à Moscou et, qui plus est, rapportée (et qui est dans mes papiers, à Paris). Cette sottise a nui beaucoup à la quantité de mes travaux. Encore en 1806, j'attendais le moment du génie pour écrire. Pendant tout le cours de ma vie, je n'ai jamais parlé de la chose pour laquelle j'étais passionné, la moindre objection m'eût percé le cœur. Aussi je n'ai jamais parlé littérature. Mon ami alors intime M. Adolphe de Mareste (né à Grenoble vers 1782) m'écrivit à Milan pour me donner son avis sur la *Vie de Haydn, Mozart et Métastase*. Il ne se doutait nullement que j'en fusse *the author*.

Si j'eusse parlé vers 1795 de mon projet d'écrire, quelque homme sensé m'eût dit : 'Écrivez tous les jours pendant deux heures, génie ou non.' Ce mot m'eût fait employer dix ans de ma vie dépensés niaisement à attendre le *génie*.⁴³²

Much of the work of *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*, written in 1832, and *Henry Brulard*, written in 1835, is the *undoing* of faulty notions of authentic poesis: from the jettisoning of a Rousseauian sincerity-based naturalism, to the shedding of habits built around this fetishization of passion-driven behavior and artistic creation. This is the unromantic work necessitated by a work of Romanticism, the reality of labor—studious, passionless, analytical—behind a work of Realism. Though the first step towards becoming an author might be precipitated by the myth of genius and its fleeting frenzy, this must be followed by the grasping that such an ambition is only reached through a certain redundancy of thought and habit. It is the tortoise, not the hare; the ellipsis, not the exclamation point. These quotations represent a crucial step towards debunking—and in doing so, rejecting—the myth of the *blind* genius as the most authentic creator. Moreover, that Stendhal felt this realization to be somewhat delayed is attributed to his refusal to ever speak of his own ambitions; his fear of saying, *I, the artist*, thus deferred the habits that would have constructed this proclamation as a practiced truth rather than an egotistical declaration. But this revelation hardly marks the end of Stendhal's journey towards becoming *I, the artist*, for we

⁴³² *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 715.

learn in his autobiographies that as soon as it is debunked, the myth of the blind genius is replaced with another—the myth of the *métier*.

The myth of the métier

The myth of the *métier* constitutes a surprising choice of creation myth for Stendhal, given its somewhat bourgeois undertones of commerce and a Protestant work ethic. It is a vision of the artist-genius who creates not in flashes of divine inspiration, but methodically, consistently, without stopping, without distraction—as if to stretch the frenzied state of creation, once viewed as sporadic, into the quotidian norm. But perhaps the *métier* is just another instance of Stendhal’s being ahead of his time: for though Balzac incarnated this legend with his constant feverish productivity, as did Dostoyevsky later, with his graphomania verging on neurosis, the myth of the *métier* is much more at home in the twentieth century. From its proponents in Gertrude Stein’s Paris salon to the speed-addled Beats, the myth of the *métier* insists first and foremost that the way to practice an art authentically is to do it all the time, and at the exclusion of all others. It is Stendhal’s envisioned tombstone: he lived, he wrote, he loved. The evolution of Stendhal’s conception of genius from the myth of blindness to the myth of the *métier*, moreover, parallels the historical transformation of the concept:

- 1) From the external inspiration of the muse: (“Je travaillais peu parce que j’attendais le moment du génie, c’est-à-dire cet état d’exaltation qui alors me prenait peut-être deux fois par mois”)⁴³³

⁴³³ Ibid., 636.

- 2) to the eighteenth-century *mauvais génie* (“Mais sentir les défauts d’un autre, est-ce avoir du talent ?”)⁴³⁴
- 3) to the internally enlightened genius of Romanticism (Beyle’s youthful Rousseauian assumption that genius would result naturally from the sincere faith and adherence to passion)
- 4) and on finally to the donkey-like determination of the *artiste de métier*.

Above all this evolution is a movement away from passion and towards productivity.⁴³⁵ The *métier* is discussed at length in *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, where Stein writes of herself, in the voice of Alice: “[Gertrude] is passionately addicted to what the french call *métier* and she contends that one can only have one *métier* as one can only have one language. Her *métier* is writing and her language is english [sic].”⁴³⁶ And later, of Matisse: “Matisse worked every day and every day and every day and he worked terribly hard.”⁴³⁷ Though Hemingway makes several appearances in the work, Stein herself does not comment on his writing habits; he would later mythologize them on his own in *A Moveable Feast*, tainting the imaginations for generations of writers to come, much as Molière did for

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 535.

⁴³⁵ Stendhal’s pegging of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the periods best suited to his sensibilities is once again shown to be startlingly accurate, for this shift towards the *métier*-genius and his accompanying productivity resounds with the early modernist ideal of the man-as-machine. The myth of the *métier*, moreover, continues to thrive in an even more exaggerated incarnation today: for example, the sheer excess of detail found in contemporary “hyperrealist” fiction authors, like Zadie Smith et Al., and their penchant for describing *everything*, just because they can, almost as if the *métier* of the novelist were to be a nonstop-describing-machine. This style, if we may venture to presume, would have been repellent to Stendhal, though hyperrealism in itself is a sort of steroidal birth-child of Realism and the myth of the *métier*. Another example would be Knausgaard, whose sheer volume of detail and productivity is *My Struggle*’s most striking quality; as if at a certain point quantity overrides quality in the determination of a work’s literary value, which given the popularity and critical acclaim of his work, is undeniably true. And as the ultimate incarnation of the man-as-machine *métier* novelist, there is of course Haruki Murakami, whose famously monastic lifestyle and productivity might be best condensed into a Stendhalian tombstone: *lived, wrote, ran*.

⁴³⁶ Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 76.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 39.

Stendhal, by suggesting that the *everydayness* of heavy drinking was as compulsory to the *métier* as the *everydayness* of writing itself.

The myth of the *métier* fetishizes the *process* of the creation as much as it does the *product*. In his autobiographies, Stendhal shows acute anxiety about this concept of everydayness, and other questions surrounding creative habits, as he reflects on his own. Many of these anxieties are rooted in the intrinsic differences between literature and other arts, the majority of which adhere more easily to the myth of the *métier*—not only in terms of *everydayness*, but also in terms of stamina, the ideal of *all-day-everydayness*. The painter who never leaves the studio; the pianist whose fingers continue to practice on the dining room table; the method actor who refuses to leave character. The myth of the *métier* is rooted in monophonic fixity; it is an ideal of authenticity in which one becomes an artist by shedding every part of oneself not related to that art, a vision of life where *everydayness* refers to the sublime, to artistic creation, rather than to the mundane, the prosaic fight against entropy, death, and decay. It is a sublimation of everydayness itself.

The problem, then, as Stendhal notes, is that when it comes to writing, it is somewhat more difficult to achieve that all-day-everydayness. Stendhal's solution, apart from setting himself quotas to fill, is to make his autobiographical writing not only about the act of writing, but also the act of *not* writing. He recounts not only the periods of action but those of inaction as well. In the same way that Stendhal's nonfictional works read as deferrals of the act of writing—notes to himself for later—so, too, is his autobiographical work peppered with deferrals, sometimes referred to explicitly, sometimes evident only by the lapsed time between dated entries. One of the largest time lapses, such as the one spanning October 16 1832 to November 23 1835 in *Henry Brulard*, serves as the example through which Marin illustrates what he calls Stendhal's "suture-couture" effect, the cutting

and sewing of disparate temporalities into one narrative, “a sort of rhythmic syncopation, also the disappearance of the singular event into the enormity of discourse.”⁴³⁸

On the one hand, anticipation, on the other hand, deferral. While *j’anticipe* and *je m’égare* jump forward and sideways, these lapses between writing dig their heels into the ground. They lean backwards, marking through dates a deferral otherwise lost in the uninterrupted page-after-page continuity of the printed book.⁴³⁹ In fact, *Henry Brulard* allows us to trace the very birth of Stendhal as a writer to the theme of deferral; the narrative of his childhood is, above all, the story of both the anticipation and the deferral of the plume:

Oserai-je le dire ? Mais peut-être c’est faux, *j’étais un poète...* comme le Tasse, comme un centième du Tasse, excusez l’orgueil. Je n’avais pas cet orgueil en 1799, je ne savais pas faire un vers. Il n’y a pas quatre ans que je me dis qu’en 1799 j’étais bien près d’être un poète. Il ne me manquait que l’audace d’écrire, qu’une *cheminée* par laquelle le *génie* pût s’échapper. Après *poète* voici le *génie*, excusez du peu...⁴⁴⁰

With regards to inception as with regards to everydayness, literature differs from most other arts. The painter draws and paints because he enjoys drawing and painting, and has done since before he can remember, long before any theoretical ambition to create art. The musician learns her instrument as a child, long before she harbors ideas of “creating” music. Not so for the writer, as Stendhal shows, for there it begins with a feeling, which slowly swells over time until it cannot be contained and the realization comes that it must be written. In visual arts and music, the results are often incidental to the practice; in writing,

⁴³⁸ Louis Marin, *La voix excommuniée: Essais de mémoire* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), 80.

⁴³⁹ This rhythmic syncopation, this forward-and-back, as we have already seen, adds a roundedness or circularity to the linear temporality of the narrative, but it also adds a certain three-dimensionality. Wherein another Modernist undertone: in this respect, Stendhal’s autobiography parallels not traditional painting, which as a finished product displays only a linear temporality—layer of paint upon layer of paint, one stroke after the other. Rather, it resembles the early- and mid-twentieth-century cut-outs and collages of Matisse et Al., works whose own suture-couture effects more directly reference and make explicit for the viewer the temporal ruptures of the artist’s process.

⁴⁴⁰ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 877.

the idea of the result is what initiates the practice. The life of the writer begins, necessarily, with a deferral, for the decision to write precedes the writing; the poet precedes the poetry, often looking elsewhere before settling on writing. Stendhal depicts the anxiety leading up to this point as extraordinary, verging on manic: it is young Beyle flitting from one art to the other, desperate to find one that fits—the chimney through which his genius might escape—only to anxiously discover his own mediocrity over and over again. So it was for Rousseau, too. The writer-genius is a particularly anxious-making kind in its relation to time, as well as in its relation to authenticity, which proclaims the primacy of the *thing* over the *idea of the thing*, for here that primacy—at least in terms of chronology—is flipped and awarded to the *idea*.

And though Stendhal announces a quite early start to forcing the poet into an act of poiesis—“A dix ans je fis en grande cachette une comédie en prose, ou plutôt un premier acte”—he is adamant in his dismissal of this instance as a juvenile folly rather than any sort of authentic proof of his destiny.⁴⁴¹ In fact, he goes on to state quite clearly his opinion of such “proofs”:

Je n’ai aucune foi dans l’esprit des enfants annonçant un homme supérieur. Dans un genre moins sujet à illusions, car enfin les monuments restent, tous les mauvais peintres que j’ai connus ont fait des choses étonnantes vers huit à dix ans et *annonçant le génie*. Hélas ! rien n’annonce le génie, peut-être l’opiniâtreté serait un signe.⁴⁴²

This is typical of the game of authenticity: to establish a connection to a conception or institution that one simultaneously claims to regard with skepticism. To be *in* it but not *of* it; to belong almost by accident through action but not through belief—that is, through practice and not through the idea of practice; in spite of oneself, in spite of any intention or

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 636.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 564.

effort. Beyle started writing early—not that he believes in the portentousness of early starts. In this case, it is also perhaps Stendhal attempting to build a narrative bridge between the natural contradictions of life-stories, contradictions whose oppositions only emerge through the life-story’s articulation, and especially through the articulation of the evolution of ambitions throughout a lifetime. The relevant facts, let us recall, are these:

- 1) Stendhal claims that well into his early adulthood, he felt acute anxiety about the “chimney” through which his artistic inclinations and “genius” might be funneled—that is, though he felt early on that he might be a poet, the idea to start writing came later on.
- 2) Stendhal mentions that in fact he began writing plays as early as ten years old.
- 3) Stendhal dismisses the notion that genius can be spotted early on, noting that it is in general the biggest mediocrities who are most adamant about attributing themselves an early start to their “art.”

What these contradictions demonstrate, above all, is that the most difficult task in autobiography lies in the portrayal of inevitability; much trickier than showing how well one knows or doesn’t know the self, is showing (and figuring out in the first place) how much one *used* to know or not know the self. The work of retrospective writing is to quantify and qualify one’s youthful foresight—as either veritable foresight or woeful folly. *But did you always know you would be who you are?* This is the fundamental question not just in autobiography, but in any biography, from the most respected tomes on historical figures to the most frivolous tabloid celebrity interview.

Stendhal’s contradictory answer—*he knew, no, he didn’t know, or maybe he did know, but knowing doesn’t even matter*—reveals the self-spectator’s fluctuating relationship to ambition, that which he has always believed, in the name of authenticity and *le naturel*, should remain

unspoken. Genius? Narcissist? Mediocrity? The truth about youthful ambition cannot be learned until the very end of a life narrative. The question of how to portray ambition, and whether ambition—even when later realized—actually *meant* anything, whether it actually played a role in how a life-story took shape, is a crucial problem in (auto-)biography.

But it is also a crucial problem in fiction—specifically, Romantic and then Realist fiction, which replaced *birthright* with *ambition* as the primary justification for a life's story being told. Compare the two Luciens of nineteenth-century French fiction; they illustrate two methods of portraying a protagonist's relationship to his own ambition: while Balzac's Lucien, in *Illusions perdues*, represents an ambition corrupted, Stendhal's Lucien enacts the story, rather, of an ambition renounced. But what matters is that both Luciens *are* what they are—protagonists—because of their ambitions. If Romanticism was first to proclaim a protagonist to be worthy of a novel based on the spiritual composition of his *Moi*, this qualification is calculated by weighing his ambition and vision-of-self, along with his passion or capacity for feeling deeply. Realism continued this justification of a novel's protagonist on the basis of his ambition, but with less emphasis on sentiment; it was a more democratic qualification of character—the everyman instead of the original. Between Romanticism and Realism, then, is a universalization of *ambition* as the determining factor of each individual's story-worth; it is that which decides whether he is a protagonist worthy of a novel. Enter the question of how to portray ambition in the Romantic/Realist protagonist: *Did he always know he would be who he is?* The protagonist's sense and consciousness of his own ambition determines the degree of inevitability or predestination with which the novel is told; this inevitability, or *totality*, as we have already seen, is an issue of authenticity. Its overemphasis

risks creating the impression of what Genette called teleological causality, where narrative concomitance feels forced and metaphors faked.⁴⁴³

In *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*, Stendhal refers this sort of teleological causality as *novelizing*, or *faire du roman*—a pitfall of autobiography to be avoided at all costs. In some cases, *faire du roman* is more explicitly defined as the overinvestment in or overvaluation of a past belief, which, like a youthful belief in the destiny of one's ambition, goes on to be mercilessly downsized, tempered, and otherwise adjusted according to the disillusionments of reality. Of his first impressions of Paris, Stendhal writes: “Je ferais du roman si je voulais noter ici l'impression que me firent les choses de Paris, impression si fort modifiée depuis.”⁴⁴⁴ His methods for outmaneuvering the narrative hazard of *faire du roman* are formal as well as stylistic: the “unfinished” fragmentation of both works; their refusal of “theatrical” tropes such as back-and-forth dialogue, description of the physical movements and miens of his characters, and plot-driven “scenes” that unfold without extradiegetical narration.⁴⁴⁵ And yet, somehow the refusal to novelize, in autobiography, is that which paved the way for Stendhal to novelize, properly speaking, to *faire du roman* in the form of his post-autobiography novels. This is thanks to the lessons worked out in *Henry Brulard* and *Souvenirs d'Égotisme*, the establishment of rules regarding the self's presentation and development of ambition as it intersects with the unfolding of a life-story.

⁴⁴³ Gérard Genette, *Figures*, vol. III (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 50.

⁴⁴⁴ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 926.

⁴⁴⁵ Richard Coe has argued that because it includes the “endpoint” of Stendhal's childhood, *Henry Brulard* cannot be considered “unfinished,” citing further evidence in the fact that the letter calling Beyle back to work, and away from *Henry Brulard* was not really that which interrupted the completion of the autobiography, as he had by that point already stopped writing. Moreover, the “unfinished” appearance of *Henry Brulard* is belied by the time we know now that Stendhal spent revising and correcting the manuscript. [Coe, “Stendhal, Rousseau and the Search for Self,” 30-31.] For a study of the phenomenon of “unfinishedness” in autobiography, including Stendhal's, see Béatrice Didier, “Inachèvement, interruptions et modernité dans l'autobiographie,” *Europe* 61 (1983).

The presentation of ambition in everyday life

The first rule comes, somewhat ironically, from the continuation of the passage which signaled the conflict previously examined, where Stendhal recounts in *Henry Brulard* his foray as a ten year-old into writing. Though his opinion fluctuates on whether such precociousness is auspicious or irrelevant, his explanation for why this endeavor was enacted *en cachette* remains consistent throughout his life: there is nothing so embarrassing (nor so inauthentic and affected) as *speaking* about one's ambition—whether with regards to future projects or past: “Ce travail était un grand secret, mes compositions m’ont toujours inspiré la même pudeur que mes amours. Rien ne m’eût été plus pénible que d’en entendre parler. J’ai encore éprouvé vivement ce sentiment en 1830, quand Mme Victor de Tracy m’a parlé de *Le Rouge et le Noir* (roman en 2 volumes).”⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, the commandment seems to be that ambition should never be spoken; it is at once the *raison d’être* and the *indicible* of the *récit de vie*. Yet even this comes with a small caveat, not necessarily contradictory, but based on an opposition elsewhere collapsible, which however with regards to ambition remains necessarily intact: between speech and text, between the oral and the written. This caveat is found at the end of the last sentence, tucked away between parentheses, following Stendhal’s mention of the work that had already made him famous: *Le Rouge et le Noir* (roman en 2 volumes). Given that this is not the first mention of the novel in *Henry Brulard*, given also that *Henry Brulard*’s readership has presumably chosen to read this work because they have read Stendhal’s novels, what is the purpose of this parenthetical qualification, the sort of subtitled tag line slapped on a book cover that seems almost to revel in its own commodification? This sort of self-advertising, it goes without saying, is hardly Stendhal’s style. Rather, it is his way of subtly establishing how that which is *unspeakable*, as speech,

⁴⁴⁶ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 636-37.

becomes much more *speakeable* in text. What the actor-self is shown earlier to be incapable of doing, the narrator-self does with ease, here and throughout *Henry Brulard*: to “speak” about his creative endeavors—to reflect on them, to characterize them, even just to simply *define* them. A novel in two volumes: Stendhal’s willingness to “say” this simple phrase in writing is another reversal of the assumed primacy-of-authenticity usually awarded to speech over text. This reversal may be explained by the written word’s possibility of being encoded and obfuscated—a possibility not nearly as assured in oral speech, which calls for clarity because the interlocutor’s very presence is liable to demand it. The unspeakability of ambition is spoken, in Stendhal’s autobiography, through text both clear and encoded. While Stendhal intermittently addresses past creative endeavors with clarity, such as his designation of *Le Rouge et le Noir*’s prose as being “d’un style trop haché,” he at other times favors encoding, in the name of employing *la même pudeur* that characterizes his writing about his romantic life.⁴⁴⁷ In love: the tracing of the initials of the women he has loved, or the acronym VAAMMAAAMCGA.⁴⁴⁸ In life: the engraving on the back of his belt, and reproduced in the text of *Henry Brulard*, “J. Vaisa voirla5,” or “Je vais avoir la cinquantaine,” an example which straddles the anxiety-provoking cross-section of unspeakable ambition and the fear of mortality.⁴⁴⁹

The sketches scattered throughout *Henry Brulard* have been understood primarily as part of Stendhal’s method of refusing to novelize. Lejeune notes that “le dessin permet

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 745.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 543. In this acronym, Marin finds traces not only of Stendhal’s *voix originelle*, but proof that this original voice is linked to the pre-symbolic (both pre-linguistic and pre-patriarchal), to the corporeal real of the infant’s connection to the Mother. It is “une cryptographie brouillée du nom de la mère MAMA devenue émission de voix à la limite de l’articulable.” [Marin, “Dessins et gravures dans les manuscrits de la *Vie de Henry Brulard*,” 111.]

⁴⁴⁹ Stendhal, *Vie de Henry Brulard. Œuvres intimes*, II, 533.

d'éviter de faire de la 'littérature,'" likening *les croquis* to Stendhal's use of foreign languages, but attributing to them greater authenticity than verbal description because they are "dans un langage qui soit le plus fidèle possible au 'point de vue.'"⁴⁵⁰ For Genette, too, they are a means of avoiding the "theater" of language: "La présence du croquis tord le cou à toute tentation d'éloquence, et exerce parfois d'étranges effets sur le langage."⁴⁵¹ Lejeune's comment that the reader is sensitive "au geste du croquis, plus qu'au croquis lui-même" is a somewhat euphemistic way of making a point that is not negligible, which is that Stendhal's drawings are terrible—so poorly executed and illegible as to make the reader wish he had used language instead. *Les croquis* are thus enactments of the sort of worst-case nightmare of artistic ambition: they are not only incomprehensible, but entirely uncommunicative, with neither aesthetic nor metaphysical value. This of course does not suggest that they enact literally any failed ambition of Stendhal's to actually *draw*, only that they perform the humiliation of the failed artistic endeavor, almost as a way of exorcising this fear of humiliating failure from the text itself. They are not a subordination of the word to the image, as has been suggested, and as Stendhal enacts elsewhere through writing, but the recuperation of both the word and of Stendhal's literary ambition; they elicit from the reader, in their refusal of comprehensibility, a frenzied curiosity: *Tell me more! But use words!* The

⁴⁵⁰ Lejeune, "Stendhal et les problèmes de l'autobiographie," 31.

⁴⁵¹ Genette, "Stendhal," 168. Apart from Lejeune and Genette's consideration of the *croquis* in terms of theatricality, criticism has often focused on their relationship to memory in Stendhal's calling forth of his life-story. Marin argues that Stendhal's sketches both re-call or re-produce (through the "dessin-image") and construct or produce (through the "dessin-schème"), constituting an effort involving both "l'imagination reproductrice" and "l'imagination productrice," (borrowing Kant's terms). [Marin, "Dessins et gravures dans les manuscrits de la *Vie de Henry Brulard*," 100.] As such, the *croquis* (like, as we have seen, Stendhal's *beau littéraire*) allegorize an ideal of authenticity, or of authentic autobiography, as at once mimetic and autonomous. Michael Sheringham contends that "the diagrams enable Stendhal to avoid fixation on the visual by, on the one hand, retaining the power of images while, on the other hand, also demonstrating some understanding of the perspectives offered by memory. Sheringham sees representation as a very specific production of personal history, recognition and introspection" [Saint, "Reading Stendhal's *Vie de Henry Brulard*: Marin and the Limits of Representation," 63.] See Michael Sheringham, *French Autobiography: Devices and Desires: Rousseau to Perec* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

answer to the failure of the *croquis* is the success of the word. And somewhere within this process, ambition is justified. No longer unspeakable, but rather spoken by the reader, who sees the grandeur of Stendhal's literary talent all the greater next to the paucity of his pictorial lines. No longer unspeakable, but rather *necessarily spoken*. Just as Benveniste proposed that the relationship between signifier and signified was not, as Saussure had suggested, arbitrary, but rather *necessary*, thus granting all language a sort of reinstated authenticity of which early linguistics had seemingly stripped it, Stendhal's relationship between *ambition* to *representation of ambition* is authenticated by its being presented, thanks to the charming failure of his sketches—as not the arbitrary estimation of an overinflated ego, but *necessary*.⁴⁵²

Stendhal's own articulation of this sentiment may be found in an October 1, 1805 entry from his *Journal*—still coded, but unequivocal: “I believe that my talent is perhaps for be the bard.”⁴⁵³ The most obvious feature of this line has by this point been thoroughly examined: its use of a more-authentic foreign tongue, through which he bypasses the crisis of saying *I*, especially in reference to his own ambition. The faulty grammar, moreover—*for be* instead of *to be*—imbues the declaration with a greater sense of urgency, a greater existential causality that is at stake. But it also performs the speech/text distinction while breaking it down at the same time. De Man wrote “the identity of autobiography is not only representational and cognitive but contractual, grounded not in tropes but in speech acts.”⁴⁵⁴

Let us return to the notion that the unspeakable (ambition) becomes speakable through writing, such as was the case of *roman en 2 volumes*. That short qualification, casually tacked on

⁴⁵² See Benveniste, “Subjectivity in Language.” And Ferdinand de Saussure, “La valeur linguistique,” in *Cours de linguistique générale*, ed. Bally and Sechehaye (Paris: Payot, 1971).

⁴⁵³ Stendhal, *Journal. Œuvres intimes*, I, 344.

⁴⁵⁴ Paul De Man, “Autobiography as De-facement,” *Modern Language Notes* 94, no. 5 (December, 1979): 922.

to a mention of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, upholds an easy distinction between speech and text: what would have been embarrassing for Stendhal to pronounce out loud in a social context is put into writing without problem. But this is only insofar as it was an objective qualification, devoid of any sort of entry of Stendhal's own *Je*. For the entry of the written *Je*, as we know so well by now, is even more problematic than the qualification-through-writing of this *Je*'s ambition. Therefore, unspeakable ambition does not become so easily speakable through writing when the text includes the entry of *Je*—unless, that is, it involves a veritable speech-act: in this case, *I believe*. The speech-act, when written, says silently what self-consciousness and fear of narcissism prevent from being said out loud, at the same time collapsing the distinction between speech and text, as the speech-act is a performative whose very sense (its belief) is contingent upon its speech or performance, without which it is devoid of referent. The written speech-act is thus both speech and text.

Furthermore, there are tautological undercurrents running through this pronouncement: *I believe that my talent is perhaps for be the bard. I*: already a performative, the sublimated letter-self. *Believe*: a performative speech-act that is speech without being “said.” *I believe. I perform my belief through my written words*. And this belief—*that my talent is perhaps for be the bard*—is thus already “performed” before the sentence concludes. That is: the word-performer, the *bard*, has already come into being, from the written speech-act alone, through its enunciation of Stendhal's ambition, rendering the rest of the sentence tautological. The speech-act has already anticipated, or done, in form what its content proclaims it will do at a later time; it is the poet before the poetry, and also both at the same time.

The written speech-act is a way of saying without saying. Through his refusal in *Henry Brulard* to *faire du roman*, Stendhal unlocks the secret to realizing his ambition, to *faire des romans*. From *I believe* to *he believes*—that perfect portrayal of a character's belief system

otherwise known as Stendhal's psychological Realism. But the switch from *I* to *he* is not simply the channeling of the self through the sieve of a protagonist, but rather the problems of the self's relation to ambition, theorized to the point of liberation, whence creation becomes possible.

*“Le vrai métier de l'animal est d'écrire des romans dans un grenier.”*⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁵ Stendhal, "Lettre à M. di Fiore, à Paris," in *Correspondance* (Paris; Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Le Divan; Kraus Reprint, 1934; 1968), 37.

CONCLUSION:

First pronounced in a letter written in 1832, Stendhal's formula for the animal's novel-writing *métier* was repeated in another missive dated 1835. In other words, it is a prescription bookending his autobiographical work, from 1832's *Souvenirs d'égotisme* to 1835's *Vie de Henry Brulard*. But however much these texts advanced his progress in the existential process of "becoming" Stendhal, however much they functioned as his *atelier du romancier*,⁴⁵⁶ it was, for Beyle, not quite so simple as running off to the attic to write novels. Since the 1830 July Revolution, he had been posted in Civita Vecchia, an appointment from which he was not granted reprieve until May 1836, when he finally returned to Paris. There, Beyle immersed himself in social life, the boredom of his years in Civita Vecchia allowing him to see Parisian society through a softer lens: by most accounts he was in these later years "a greatly mellowed man."⁴⁵⁷ He was also very productive. The question of creating more novels was, however, not purely a matter of existential turmoil and the anxiety of authenticity; it was also a political issue on which Beyle's livelihood depended: he was paranoid about risking his official post with the publication of a work that might be seen as threatening or "embarrassing" to the government.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, the first book he completed during his three-year leave was not a piece of fiction, but another travelogue, *Mémoires d'un touriste*, in which the revived figure of the tourist-narrator casts his eyes on France, based on Beyle's extensive 1837 travels in the wake of two more romantic "defeats."⁴⁵⁹ It was in November of the following year that he finally managed to crawl up into the proverbial attic:

⁴⁵⁶ It was during these years, too, that Stendhal completed most of *Lucien Leuwen*.

⁴⁵⁷ Josephson, *Stendhal*, 402.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 407.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the 4th of that month was the day Stendhal embarked on his seven-week dictation of the entirety of *La Chartreuse*.⁴⁶⁰ Forced to return to Civita Vecchia in June 1839, Stendhal began soon after outlining what would become *Lamiel*, completing three hundred pages that fall.⁴⁶¹ The last manuscript version of this final work of fiction dates from March 1841, exactly one year prior to his death on March 23, 1842, following a stroke suffered while strolling on the Boulevard des Capucines.

This study of Stendhal's para-fictional œuvre has attempted to challenge the monolithic modern—and moralistic— notions of authenticity as a channeling of a “true” (Rousseauian) self, in order to resuscitate the validity of authenticity as a philosophical subject, a validity dismantled by the last century's annihilation of this idea of the self. This dismantling, however, began during the decades leading up to that fabled year, 1880, which Stendhal famously imagined would inaugurate his posthumous success.⁴⁶² It started not with Nietzsche, whom we generally credit, but with Dostoyevsky: specifically, his 1864 *Notes from Underground*. Between Rousseau's “*l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*”—sincere and searching, and Dostoyevsky's “*l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*”—caustic and self-annihilating, there is Stendhal. He initiated the passage from Romantic certainty of self and of nature to what would become twentieth-century anti-humanism—both its distrust in the entity of the self and its lamentation of a life no longer lived “directly,” as Debord would later put it.⁴⁶³ Stendhal's “staging” of the process through which the seed of self-awareness is sowed into

⁴⁶⁰ Though as we know, his preparation for this frenzied dictation can be traced back at least six years, to 1832. [ibid., 418.]

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 444.

⁴⁶² The 1880s did indeed launch a publication revival of many of his works, including many which had never been seen by the public. These include his *Journal* in 1888; *Lamiel* in 1889; *Vie de Henry Brulard* in 1890; *Souvenirs d'égotisme* in 1892; *Lucien Leuwen* in 1894; “and a mass of unpublished letters and miscellanies.” [ibid., 462.]

⁴⁶³ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1992).

the anxiety of authenticity is that which designates authenticity as an impossible ideal while simultaneously insisting on the value of its pursuit. As the cognizance of distance between referent and representation, Stendhal's authenticity fetishizes the illiterate—but through literature; it mourns intellectualism—but through a rigorous process of intellectualization.

Yet an important distinction must be made between philosophical discourse and the evolution of the novel: for the idea of the self that was effectively dismantled in philosophy persisted, albeit at times “insincerely,” in the realm of fiction. To be sure, after Stendhal, authenticity went on to become the definitive preoccupation of the novel, whether it searches for a “true” self or investigates various “false self solutions.”⁴⁶⁴ The novel's persistent interest in authenticity, moreover, may often be categorized according to the three performances laid out in this study: the social performance perpetually enacted by the protagonist as anti-hero, authentic insofar as he distinguishes himself from the “phonies” who surround him; the private performance epitomized by the existential novel and the Nouveau Roman's subjectivity of self-consciousness; the written performance traced through the methodological evolution of writing the real—from Proust's inscription of the temporality of writing, to Céline's breathless ellipses-riddled rambling, to those like William Burroughs, who tried to collapse all divisions between inner- and outer- voices, between the conscious and the unconscious,⁴⁶⁵ to any technical “innovation” attempted by each new generation of authors. The novel is, by nature, a genre of authenticity.

Authenticity continues to reign, moreover, as the defining preoccupation of popular culture. Its current iteration underscores our central argument—that it is above all a crisis of

⁴⁶⁴ To borrow a term from David Holbrook, *The Novel and Authenticity* (London and Totowa, New Jersey: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1987), 18.

⁴⁶⁵ Especially: William Burroughs, *Dead Fingers Talk* (London: John Calder, Olympia Press, 1963).

representation—but within the context of late capitalism, technology, and neoliberalism, which have effectively decided that representation *is* essence, and that this essence is first and foremost performed through the act of consumption. If the French Revolution brought to the world the notion of self-as-citizen, this figure has been transformed into an idea of self-as-consumer. Our conception of authenticity has followed suit. Though it may have started, as Marshall Berman argued, as a “radically” anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist pursuit, it was inevitably subsumed into capitalist ideology.⁴⁶⁶ This may be understood through the terms put forth by this dissertation: the letter-self’s concern with *fixity*, *originality*, and *comparison*. Fixity has been transfigured into what we now call “branding.” In a culture where corporate brands are “people” and individual people delight in presenting themselves as “brands,” the self’s “authenticity” is the calculation of its capital according a market value (its *comparative* or exchange value) based on the *originality* of its essentialized form. If Stendhal understood the risk of narcissism as an overidentification with the self-as-word, it is today, rather, an over-identification with the self-as-product.

Stendhal’s theater of authenticity: a summary

This dissertation has undertaken to provide a new interpretation of Stendhal’s naturalism. It has considered his para-fictional writings in order to designate his conception of *le naturel* as a “theater of authenticity.” This theater is not unintentionally histrionic, but deliberately so, consisting of three carefully choreographed performances: the social, the private, and the written. Each performance corresponds to one of three roles concurrently played by the trisected Stendhalian self: actor, spectator, and narrator. These performances

⁴⁶⁶ Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society*.

do not redeem authenticity of artifice, but rather suggest that in spite of the phenomenological impossibility of the ideal of authenticity, certain ways of *being*, *consuming*, *representing*, and *writing* are nevertheless more “authentic” than others. That which has been understood as the “paradox” of Stendhal’s conception of authenticity, that his revulsion towards the affected personality is accompanied by a decidedly theatrical narrative performance and incontestably histrionic fictional characters, is not a lapse into hypocrisy, but rather an allegory of the problem of authenticity itself. I have argued that before the three performances of authenticity were staged in his fiction, they were broken down, analyzed, and theorized by Stendhal in his nonfiction, autobiographies, and private journals. This process of theorization has been shown to dispel many longstanding Shibboleths of the author’s relationship to authenticity, as well as of the historical understanding of the concept, most significantly that it results only from “blind” passion or the suspension of intellectual faculties. As such, I have contended that through reading these para-fictional works as an *atelier du roman*, a parallel narrative of the *atelier du romancier* may be unearthed: this is the story of how Beyle himself undertook to learn and enact these rules of authentic performance in order to become Stendhal, the novelist.

In the introduction, I proposed new definitions for the terminology of authenticity. While the *natural* has been traditionally conceived as that which remains after the shedding of all artifice, for Stendhal, nature does not preclude artifice but absorbs it: it is the layering of the self’s contradictions and conflicting desires. While *sincerity* has been identified as a social gesture in contrast to *authenticity*’s private or independent aim, these definitions hold only insofar as the possibility of an autonomous self is uncontested. Because twentieth-century criticism effectively overturned our belief in such an entity, the pursuit of the authentic self may not be theorized past this semantic roadblock. As such, my dissertation has advanced

according to definitions of sincerity and authenticity that do not depend on the distinction between social and private, or between mimetic and autonomous. I have understood sincerity as faithfulness to a sentiment or an emotion, and authenticity as faithfulness to an ideal. Through these new interpretations of the concepts, I constructed a reading of Beyle's relationship to the "father" of sincerity, suggesting that sincerity is to Rousseau as authenticity is to Stendhal. The story of Beyle's "overcoming" of his literary predecessor is the process of replacing the ideal of sincerity with that of authenticity. It is a replacement which takes place through Stendhal's realization that the "lost self" that Rousseau's sincerity aims to recover is but an *idea* or *representation* of the self, and that only this representation, rather than the primordial entity, of the self may be reclaimed. Finally, I argued that the main difference between Rousseau's naturalism and Stendhal's is located in their divergent conceptions of that which impedes the search for self: for the former, it is the spectator-other, *le regard d'autrui*, while for the latter, it is the self-spectator, *le regard sur soi*.

In my first chapter, I investigated the relationship between the philosophical concept of authenticity and the lexicon of the theater. I explained why the "inauthentic" persona is associated with the actor by identifying the three main crimes committed by this figure. The first was *imitation*. Through Stendhal, we understood that imitation is not a crime in and of itself, nor does it depend on the moral value of the mimetic source. Rather, it was shown to become "sinful" only when executed in the wrong way, for witnessing an actor perform a reality that does not correspond to the spectator's own forces this spectator to confront the relativity of his own subjectivity—the fact that it does not reign supreme. For Stendhal, the "wrong" reality that the "bad" actor imitates is, more specifically, anachronistic and nostalgic; it aims to reproduce the codes and mores of an era which has been overturned by historical changes, as demonstrated through the Restoration salon's delusional reenactment

of the Ancien Régime. This is the source of inspiration for Stendhal's designation of the term "romantic" as depending on a faithfulness to the specific conditions, or modernity, of one's socio-political context. The second crime of the actor was defined as *overdetermination*, the overwrought representation of a supposed submission to the physical or physiological. While sincerity demands the self's surrender to emotion, and privileges subjective truth over objective reality, the representation of this surrender risks appearing inauthentic if it is overly recognizable. The third crime of the actor, *playing to the crowd*, was shown to further undermine the ideal of autonomy by divulging that which must be fixed as fluid, and by unveiling a social causality of action-reaction in that which is meant to be autistically determined. These three crimes, I argued, point to the ultimate tenet of the ideal of authenticity, whereby the self must appear to be externalized without effort or intention—a "puppet" acting independently of its "puppeteer." Stendhal was shown to alternatively adhere to this tenet and reject it through conceding its utter impossibility.

My first chapter also proposed a new genealogy of authenticity, which contests the notion of the concept as being simply a product of modern subjectivity, and shows it instead to be first and foremost a problem of the self's relationship to (specifically, written) language—a crisis of literacy dating back to the invention of the alphabet in ancient Greece. I contended that if the dramatic genre was a direct result of the invention of the phonetic alphabet, authenticity is the particular preoccupation that arises from this association. It is a phenomenon in which the self adopts the "representational anxieties" imposed on the letter or the written word: *fixity*, *novelty*, and *comparison*. I argued that this identification explains why the discussion of authenticity is mired in the lexicon of the theater, and that Stendhal is the first author to bring this letter-self to light, above all through his famous horror at literally becoming a word—*l'embarras du Je*, or the fear that undertaking the artist's *representational*

endeavor is little more than narcissism. Finally, I sketched out the rudimentary guidelines of the three performances of authenticity, which aim to circumvent the problem of authenticity as that of a self doomed to *perform* what it yearns to experience primordially, and to self-consciously suffer from this semantic and ontological distance between referent and representation. The methods of the social performance of authenticity included retreat, sublimation, the creation of an authentic “micro” world inside the larger context of inauthenticity, and the aggressive reversal of roles between actor and spectator. The private performance outlined a means of appeasing the self-spectator by turning the *regard sur soi* into a *rire sur soi*. Alternatively, it put forth a method based on distraction, through the use of external stimuli such as art, music, and literature. The written performance differentiated between *writing the authentic* and *writing authentically* in order to examine the literary contexts of Stendhal’s historical moment—Romanticism and Realism—and hinted at the various techniques that would be explored in subsequent chapters. All three performances were shown to hinge on the self’s incorporation of its spectators, rather than relying on the Rousseauian notion of renouncing one’s audience.

My second chapter concentrated on Stendhal’s early nonfictional works, those published before or alongside his inaugural success as a novelist: the three editions of *Rome, Naples et Florence*, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, *Vie de Rossini*, *Salon de 1824*, and *Promenades dans Rome*. The chapter began by interrogating the validity of the formal designation of these works as nonfiction, and advocated for their being read as proto-fiction, or the laboratory in which Beyle first tried his hand at techniques later used in his novels. It demonstrated how in these works Stendhal first calibrated his approach to the divine role of Realist narrator, in what was characterized as a gesture of authorial totality based on submission rather than domination. Part-god, part-human, this narrative voice accepts the duty of omnipotent

expertise, but is subjectivized through the figure of the tourist-narrator, whose foreignness and “presence-within-absence” allow him to be an interpreter of reality, but without the responsibility for having determined the conditions of this reality. I diagnosed three types of fictionalizations at work in these texts, in order to demonstrate how Stendhal addresses various tenets of authenticity. The fabulations of these *révits*, especially the pluralization of Stendhal’s solitary travels into voyages undertaken by multiple fictional characters, were shown to be a means of rejecting the illusion of singular affect—the Rousseauian notion that the sincerity involves channeling a single, “true” emotion at the exclusion of all others—in favor of *polyphony*, a variation of authenticity based on the model of the true self consisting of several simultaneous (and often contradictory) voices. The question of Stendhal’s plagiarism throughout his early nonfiction revealed the author’s distinction between *fact* and *affect*: his process of “translating” anecdotes through the emotional filters of his own subjectivity was used as the basis for what I called *affective positivism*. The third sort of fabulation at play in these nonfictional works, I claimed, is the mask of mistitling, whereby the formal and substantive aims of a text’s title are at odds with its actual content; through this intentional mislabeling of his own work, Stendhal navigates his fear of saying *I, the artist*, which reveals his conception of narcissism to be predicated on an overidentification with the *word* (the letter-self) rather than the *image* (of self).

Next, I addressed the three performances of authenticity as they are choreographed in Stendhal’s “nonfiction.” I urged that all of these performances should be colored by his renunciation of nostalgia in the *Salon de 1824*, where he proclaims the ideal model of authenticity not to be the “naked” figure of Greek statues, but rather the “clothed” being of modern times. The social performance was theorized within the physical setting of the theater or opera house; it was allegorized through the Stendhal’s contrasting of two methods

of consuming the theatrical arts—the (inauthentic) exterior *jouissance* of the *connaisseur* versus the (authentic) interior *jouissance* of the *dilettante*. The strictly regulated social choreography of the Italian nobility at the opera house served as the basis for a crucial principle of authentic performance: the more theatrical the social structure, the less histrionic the individual. This precept was further premised on the understanding of the past as theater, as opposed to a prelapsarian, primordial era; likewise, I demonstrated that this premise is at the heart of Stendhal’s “feminism.” The private performance considered the self’s consumption of fine arts, interpreting the decidedly histrionic display of “Stendhal Syndrome” as the definitive conundrum of authenticity, whereby the *thing* can only be experienced as or through *the idea of the thing*. I explored how Stendhal’s rules for authentic performance differ throughout his treatments of fine arts, music, and literature, in terms of how (or whether) the audience must be acknowledged by the actor. Lastly, the figure of *l’homme-orchestre* enacted a version of polyphonic authenticity, and led to an interpretation of Stendhal’s portrayal of music as the ultimate authentic “memory trigger” through which the *image*, or *idea of the thing*, works as a unifying force rather than a distancing one. Stendhal’s curious “letter” falsely announcing the publication of his not-yet-completed manuscript of *Histoire de la peinture en Italie* discredited, through its exemplification of Stendhal’s written projection of his ideal future-self, the notion of authentic writing as either autonomously-directed or hostile to revision. Stendhal’s so-called refusal to edit was proven to be a carefully engineered illusion. Finally, I compared Stendhal’s relationship to the Italian language, alongside his views of various European cultures and their literatures, to refute the notion of Italy embodying *le naturel*: for while Italian authenticity may embody Stendhal’s idealization of the illiterate, as such it is eminently unsatisfying. The poverty of Italy’s intellectual culture, and its failure to reproduce

itself in the form of great literature, forces Stendhal to confront that he cannot completely renounce his own “literacy” or intellectualism, nor can his conception of authenticity.

My treatment of Stendhal’s autobiographies and private journals in Chapter Three commenced with the introduction of the figure of the echo. The aural specter of Narcissus, distinct from the self-spectator who exists inside the text, the echo is a phenomenon of self-inhibition which plagues the narrator-self *outside* the text, during the act of writing. The echo embodies not only the author’s fear of saying *I*, but of *bearing himself say it*. I argued that Stendhal is the first to animate this figure on the page in the genre of autobiography; as such, he was first to interrogate all three roles alluded to by this term, demanding authentication not only of the *bio/graphy* but of the *auto* as well. This echo is experienced by Stendhal as a “prison of self,” whose workings I broke down through depictions of Beyle’s early relationship to the theater. It was in his youthful resolve to be a playwright that Stendhal first experienced a crisis of authenticity as a problem of how to relate to ambition *primordially* rather than *narcissistically*—how to go about the act of artistic creation without being disrupted by the idea of “genius.” Examining the phenomenon of crystallization in *De l’amour*, I outlined a system of *circular thought* which, when considered alongside Barthes’ commentary on tautological language in *Fragments d’un discours amoureux*, became a method of *circular contact with the real*. The tautology enacts rhetorically what the self must perform to achieve authenticity: it circles from referent to representation and back again, collapsing the distanciation which caused the anxiety of (in)authenticity in the first place. The choreography of the social performance of authenticity was theorized using a sequence of diary entries from Beyle’s 1805 journal, during which, as a young man in Paris, he first acquires *esprit* through a meticulous calculation of performed *fatuité*: in other words, it is the story of the letter-self putting into action the logic of the tautology. This performance is predicated on

the overcoming of what Beyle previously understood to be the root of authenticity—total surrender to passion. Instead, he realizes, he must rationally and intentionally make an offering of wittiness to his interlocutor—but this gift must simultaneously appear to be enacted for his own self-spectator, and, in order to avoid arousing resentment, must not exceed the *esprit* of said interlocutor. I concluded this section by proving that Stendhal’s intellectual grasping of this performance was crucial to the articulation of his ambition to become a novelist; that the theater of authenticity in his later novels was indeed first theorized in his journal. The private performance in Stendhal’s autobiographical and private writings was interpreted through his treatment of *la lecture*. I drafted a phenomenology of reading through which the self simultaneously attains plenitude, through the union of consciousness with the author being read, and diversion from the echo, as the text-voice provides the distraction necessary to permit the self’s inner-voice(s) to run free, projecting ambitions and ideals into consciousness but without self-consciousness—without the fear of narcissism. This formula, captured by the line, *Quand je lis Pascal, il me semble que je me relis*, is then reproduced by Stendhal for his own reader in the written performance of authenticity. This final performance, I contended, hinges primarily on the question of how, in autobiography, to (re)present one’s ambition as it has waxed and waned throughout one’s life. Stendhal’s discourse on the *métier* of being a writer offered a means of relating to his ambition authentically while simultaneously outpacing the shame-inducing echo. By tracing the evolution of his conception of genius to its final iteration, which fetishizes the “everydayness” of the *métier* as a method of escaping narcissism, Stendhal attempted to regain a primordial relationship to authorship by privileging the *process* over the *product*, thereby returning from the disruptive *idea of being a writer* to the more immediate (and, ideally, perpetual) state of *being* one. This, again, was shown to be a tautological performance, as well

as a strategy for *speaking* (in writing), that which had been hitherto required to remain unspeakable—his ambition. Through this written performance, Stendhal unlocked the key to authenticity and overcame his fear of narcissism, in order to finally pronounce those dreaded words—*I, the artist*—and to complete the transformation of Beyle into Stendhal.

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