

Physiognomy in Stendhal's Novels: "La Science de Lavater" or "Croyez après cela aux physionomies"?

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The article that follows is a study of Stendhal's manifold reaction to the theory of physiognomy propounded by Jean-Gaspard Lavater which was widely spread during the period of realism and found many echoes in the 19th century novel. The author compares Stendhal's ideas with Lavater's and analyzes the way in which he presents the external features, particularly faces, and their sometimes paradoxical correlation with the psyche and character of the fictional personages. He pays particular attention to the manner in which characters experience their perception of other characters and points to the importance of such subjective interrelationships for Stendhal's narrative technique.

Like many nineteenth-century French writers, Stendhal was for a time much preoccupied with the science of physiognomy, having in early manhood fallen quite heavily under the spell of Lavater's famous *Essai sur la physionomie*, that is, the French version of the *Physiognomische Fragmente*, which had been first published in Switzerland between 1775 and 1778.¹ Stendhal's preoccupation with physiognomy is attested by a number of comments to be found on the subject in his secondary writings, some of which include references to Lavater, especially in discussions on paintings and sculptures, whereby it is interesting to note that Stendhal wanted to elaborate on the theory of the traditional four temperaments, and even intended to write his own *Traité*

¹ Of several critics who have noted Stendhal's familiarity with Lavater may be mentioned M. Bardèche, *Stendhal Romancier* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1947): 101f; Robert Bachet, "Stendhal et les Arts Plastiques", *La Revue des Deux Mondes* (1 August, 1967): 384; Carlo Cordié, *Ricerche Stendhaliane* (Naples: Morance, 1967): 361f, 400; Jean Théodoridès, *Stendhal du Côté de la Science* (Aran: Éditions du Grand Chêne, 1972): 105, 115; Madeleine Anjubault Simons, *Sémiotisme de Stendhal* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980): 82-89, 113, 128. For a bibliography of French editions of Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, see John Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy. A Study in the History of Ideas* (Bern, Frankfurt am Main & Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1979): 91-94.

de la science des physionomies as part of a projected study on the Venetian school.² Significant, too, in this connection is the intense interest that Stendhal took in theories concerned with the relationship between body and mind, as expounded in the anthropological, physiological, psychological and aesthetic writings of Blumenbach, Cabanis, Bichat, Magendie, Bell, Edwardes, Pinel, Crichton, Stekel, Broussais, Gall, and so on.³ In view of all this, it might, therefore, seem curious that hardly any critic should have undertaken to investigate whether Stendhal was *qua* novelist influenced by physiognomy in much the same way as some of his contemporaries and successors are already shown to have been.⁴

The idea of going in quest of physiognomy in Stendhal's fiction may, however, seem an invidious enterprise at the outset, if we already share the view more or less held over the past few decades, namely, that Stendhal takes minimal interest in the outward appearance of his fictional characters.⁵ It is true that Stendhal is, unlike Balzac, Flaubert, Hugo, Sue, Champfleury, and so on, very sparing of concrete detail in his physical descriptions; that there are long stretches in his novels, notably *Lucien Leuwen*, *La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Lamiel*, where there are no portraits to speak of; that very many descriptions are too brief, not to say too perfunctory, to claim the reader's serious attention.⁶ One might be further deterred from the enterprise by the knowledge that

² For references to Lavater or physiognomy in Stendhal's secondary writings, see Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. V. Del Litto, E. Abravanel, et al. (Geneva: Editio Serva, S. A., [1968] – 1974): VIII, 218; XIII, 46, 48f; XIV, 178f, 198, 287, 334; XV, ¶77; XXX, 214, 267; XXXIV, 260; XXXV, 151. See also Stendhal, *Voyage dans le Midi de la France* (Paris: Le Divan, 1930): 139. For Stendhal's division of the human temperaments into six categories, see Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: II, 324–31. For discussions on the temperaments, see Jean-Gaspard Lavater, *Essai sur la physionomie* (Paris & The Hague, 1781–1803): I, 262; III, 85–117.

³ For details, see Jules C. Alciatore, "Stendhal et Pinel", *Modern Philology* 45 (1947): 118–33; Jean Théodoridès, "Le physiologiste Magendie jugé par Stendhal", *Stendhal Club* 7 (1960): 228–34; idem, *Stendhal du Côté de la Science*; Gérard Milhaud, "Le Visage scientifique de Stendhal", *Europa* 50 (1972): 97–112; Simons, *Sémiotisme*: 91; Michel Crouzet, *Raison et Dérison chez Stendhal. De l'idéologie à l'esthétique* (Berne, Frankfurt am Main, Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1983): 606. It is noteworthy that Stendhal reviewed Gall's *Histoire des fonctions du cerveau*, though he seems to have had an ambivalent attitude toward the science. See Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: VIII, 270; XVI, 71f; XXVII, 64; XXXVI, 114. Despite Gall's repudiation of Lavater, phrenology became so closely linked with physiognomy as to be widely regarded as a kind of physiognomy. See especially Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces & Fortunes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982): 87–98, 352f.

⁴ To my knowledge, the only texts that have hitherto discussed Lavater's influence on Stendhal's fiction are Tytler, "Character Description and Physiognomy in the European Novel (1800–1860) in Relation to J.-C. Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*" (Diss. University of Illinois, Urbana, 1970): 144f, 165–74, 185–207, 238–52, 287–90; idem, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 205–86; Graham, *Lavater's Essays*: 117f; and Simons, *Sémiotisme*.

⁵ See, for example, Zaverio Clivio, *Bewegung und Distanz bei Stendhal* (Zurich: Buchdruckerei Uehlin Schopfheim, 1955): 36f; Pierre-Georges Castex, *Le Rouge et le Noir de Stendhal* (Paris: Société d'éditions d'enseignement supérieur, 1967): 172–75; Philippe Berthier, "Balzac et *la Chartreuse de Parme*, roman corrigé", *Stendhal et Balzac, Actes du VII^e Congrès International Stendhalien*, Tours, 26–29 September, 1969 (Aran: Éditions du Grand Chêne, 1972): 168–73; John Mitchell, *Stendhal and Le Rouge et le Noir* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973): 37; David Wakefield, "Le Rôle du Portrait dans les Romans de Stendhal", in Victor Del Litto, ed., *Stendhal-Balzac, Réalisme et Cinéma, Actes du XI^e Congrès International Stendhalien*, Auxerre 1976 (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1978): 141–43; Grazia Merler, "Description et espace dans *la Chartreuse de Parme*", *Stendhal Club* 23 (1980): 28–32; Madeleine Velguth, "Le regard amoureux dans *Lucien Leuwen*", *Stendhal Club* 27 (1984–85): 320.

⁶ Merler, "Description et espace", remarks on Stendhal's lacking "une physiognomonie particulière" (p. 28). For a comparison between Stendhal and Balzac as to methods of character description,

Stendhal strongly objected to the detailed descriptions of human physical features, clothes, houses, house interiors and landscapes in the novels of Walter Scott, a writer whom he otherwise much admired and was indebted to for his own fictional art; and deterred further still by the realization that there are studies on Stendhal's use of physical portraiture in which no mention whatever is made of physiognomy.⁷ Nor is one much encouraged, it seems, by the fact that Stendhal's characters are each based usually on one or several real people, or even that, as Henri Martineau puts it, he "voyait bien ses personnages."⁸ On the other hand, once we set about reading Stendhal's novels in the light of Lavater's *Essai sur la physionomie*, and with some awareness of its publication history, it becomes easier for us to see not only that the novels unmistakably reflect the physiognomic climate of early nineteenth-century France, but also that Stendhal gave more serious attention to the outward man than has been commonly supposed.⁹

If the study of physiognomy in nineteenth-century fiction has tended, rightly or wrongly, to entail the drawing of parallels between one or several novels and Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* in respect of particular physiognomic ideas, then it would seem that a comparison of this kind between Stendhal and Lavater was eminently promising.¹⁰ The problem with such comparisons, however, is that they may easily tempt one into attributing Lavater with having exerted an influence well beyond acceptable

see Joseph-Marc Bailbé, "Le portrait féminin chez Stendhal: Rhétorique et illusion", *Stendhal Club* 27 (1985): 151.

⁷ For Stendhal's negative comments on Scott's descriptions, see, for example, Castex, *Le Rouge et le Noir de Stendhal*, 170; H.-F. Imbert, "Les leçons stendhaliennes de Fielding et de Scott" in K. G. McWatters & C. W. Thompson, eds., *Proceedings of the London Colloquium*, French Institute, 13-16 September, 1983 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1987): 17; V. Del Litto, *Essais et Articles Stendhaliens* (Geneva & Paris: Éditions Slatkine, 1989): 313. For studies on Stendhal's methods of physical character description without reference to physiognomy, see especially Clivio, *Bewegung: 28-41* and Ursula Mathis, *Wirklichkeit und Stil in Le Rouge et le Noir* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978): 240-83.

⁸ For details, see Stendhal, *Romans et Nouvelles*, ed. Henri Martineau (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952): I, 14, 736, 1382n; II, 864, 870.

⁹ For an account of the Lavaterian climate in nineteenth-century Europe, see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 82-119.

¹⁰ For studies on physiognomy in fiction, see especially F. Baldensperger, "Les Théories de Lavater dans la littérature française", *Études d'histoire littéraire* 2^e Serie (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1910): 51-91; Gilbert Malcolm Fess, *The Correspondence of Physical and Material Factors with Character in Balzac* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1924); Wilfred M. Senseman, "Charlotte Brontë's Use of Physiognomy and Phrenology", *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters* 38 (1953): 475-83; E. Paul Gauthier, "New Light on Zola and Physiognomy", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 75 (1960): 297-308; Graham, "The Development of the Use of Physiognomy in the Novel" (Diss. Johns Hopkins University, 1960); idem, "Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel", *Studies in Romanticism* 5 (1966): 208-18; idem, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy*; Hans Ludwig Scheel, "Balzac als Physiognomiker", *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* 198 (1961): 227-44; N[ikolaj] K[allinikovic] Gudzig, "Elementy fizionomiki v tvorčestve L'va Tolstogo (Tolstoj i Lavater)", *Problemy Stavitel'noj filologii. Sbornik statej k70-letiju člena korrespondenta A[kademii] N[auk] SSR V[iktor] M[aksimovič] Zirmunskogo* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1964): 354-62; Ian Jack, "Physiognomy, Phrenology and Characterisation in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë", *Brontë Society Transactions*, 15, no. 5 (1970): 377-91; Edmund Heier, "Lavater's System of Physiognomy as a Mode of Characterisation in Lermontov's Prose", *Arcadia* 6(1971): 267-82; idem, "The Literary Portrait as a Device Characterization", *Neophilologus* 60 (1976), 321-31; idem, "Direct and Indirect Literary Portraits in Pushkin's Works", *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 29 (1987): 184-97; Taylor Stoehr, "Physiognomy and Phrenology in Hawthorne", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1974): 355-400; François Jost, "George Sand et les *Physiognomische Fragmente* de Lavater",

limits. This is patently evident when, for example, we consider the presence in Stendhal's fiction of the most fundamental physiognomic premise, namely, that the outward man reflects the inner being. For central as that idea is to the *Physiognomische Fragmente*, it would be idle to trace it merely to Lavater, as anyone may know who possesses some familiarity with the epic genre since the time of Homer, or even a history of Western physiognomy from Aristotle down to the mid-eighteenth century.¹¹ The fact that Stendhal's sympathetic characters are usually pleasant to look at and his unsympathetic ones unprepossessing, is surely part and parcel of the age-old traditions of literary portraiture. And even if there may be something 'Lavaterian' about the unfavorable appearances of, say, père Sorel or Giletti or Mademoiselle Bérard (I, 161, 1118; II, 161), it is certain that the handsomeness of Stendhal's heroes and heroines has very little to do with Lavater's concept of beauty, at least inasmuch as that concept rests on the highest moral virtues.¹²

On the other hand, there are physiognomic elements in Stendhal's novels, as there are in the novels of his contemporaries, that are seldom to be found in fiction before 1800; and though it might be argued that those elements are merely integral to the development of the genre as a whole, it is not unreasonable to postulate that their existence has something to do with the Lavaterian physiognomic climate. This seems true, for example, of Stendhal's treatment of a concept very prominent in Lavater, that is to say, the influence of the moral or psychological life on the outward appearance, especially as it pertains to the moral development of his main characters.¹³ To be sure, Stendhal is somewhat eighteenth-century in his numerous references to blushing, turning pale, trembling, gestures, tone of voice, and so on – elements that belong essentially to the realm of pathognomy, which Lavater defines as the study of facial expressions, as against physiognomy, which, properly speaking, is the study of the permanent features, especially the bone structure.¹⁴ Yet Stendhal sometimes goes well

Arcadia 12 (1977): 65-72; Charles Grivel, "Die Identitätsakte bei Balzac: Prolegomena zu einer allgemeinen Theorie des Gesichts", in Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, ed., Karlheinz Stierle, ed & Rainer Warning, ed., *Honoré de Balzac* (Munich: Fink, 1980): 83-141; Helen Goscilo, "Lermontov's Debt to Lavater and Gall", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 59 (1981): 500-15; Jeanne Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description", *Victorian Studies* 24 (1981): 325-50; Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*; Lee Fontanella, "Physiognomics in Romantic Spain", in Gene H. Bell-Villada, ed., Antonio Gimenez, ed., & George Pistorius, ed., *From Dante to Garcia Marquez* (Williamstown: Williams College, 1987): 110-13; Juliet McMaster, *The Index of the Mind: Physiognomy in the Novel* (Lethbridge, Alberta: University of Lethbridge Press, 1990); Michael Hollington, "Dickens and Cruikshank as Physiognomers in *Oliver Twist*", *Dickens Quarterly* 7 (1990): 243-54; idem, "Monstrous Faces: Physiognomy in *Barnaby Rudge*", *Dickens Quarterly* 8 (1991): 6-15; Doris Alexander, "Benevolent Sage or Blundering Booby?", *Dickens Quarterly* 8 (1991): 120-27.

¹¹ For a compendious history of Western physiognomy, see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 35-48.

¹² For all references given in parentheses, see Stendhal, *Romans et Nouvelles*, ed. Henri Martineau, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952). For Lavater's comments on the effects of virtue and vice on appearance, see Lavater, *Essai*: I, 128-31, 148, 289; IV, 73-82. For Stendhal's treatment of beauty, see especially Boris Reizov, "La définition stendhalienne de la beauté: 'la promesse de bonheur'", *Stendhal Club* 15 (1972-73): 324-28; Wakefield, "Le Rôle du Portrait": 144, 148; Émile Talbot, "Stendhal, le beau et le laid: autour de quelques problèmes esthétiques de l'époque romantique", *Stendhal Club* 20 (1977-78): 205-15; Simons, *Séniotisme*: 100.

¹³ Lavater, *Essai*: I, 19, 124, 132-41, 152-58, 164-66; III, 16, 72-76, 127.

¹⁴ Lavater, *Essai*: I, 26f.

beyond his eighteenth-century predecessors in the detail with which he describes a facial expression (I, 36, 282f, 364, 949, 1170; II, 104, 457, 990); indeed, in some contexts he reads quite like a physiognomic theorist, as, for example, in this account of the physical effects of Madame Grandet's indifference to the thought of love: "C'était peut-être à cette tranquillité d'âme qu'elle devait son étonnante fraîcheur, ce teint admirable qui la mettait en état de lutter avec les plus belles Allemandes" (I, 1149); or, again, in this detail about Madame de Rênal's serene beauty: "La pureté de l'âme, l'absence de toute émotion haineuse prolongent sans doute la durée de la jeunesse. C'est la physionomie qui vieillit la première chez la plupart des jolies femmes" (I, 290). Such thinking is also the basis for the presentation of Madame de Chasteller in *Lucien Leuwen*, the sense of whose special physical beauty is conveyed to the reader by sundry references to the purity and innocence of her mind (I, 992, 997, 1087).

It is very likely that Stendhal's reading of Lavater stimulated him to make use of national physiognomies, a concept which the latter designates as "une des premières et des principales bases de la Physiognomie", and which, incidentally, seems to have become a fashionable topos only after the publication of the *Physiognomische Fragmente*.¹⁵ Stendhal's interest in this idea is suggested by his references to German, English, Dutch, Egyptian and Kalmuck physiognomies, and even to French regional physiognomies; and amid several such references in the novels, perhaps the two most memorable examples of the treatment of the concept are to be found in Fabrice's awareness on the plains of Waterloo of the difference between northern and Italianate physiognomies, and in the description of the heroine of *Armance* as a young woman of Russian or Circassian, even Asiatic, beauty (I, 57f, 73, 152, 229, 231, 770, 785f, 816, 869, 1149; II, 62f, 76, 156, 199, 265f, 271f, 439, 492, 596).¹⁶ Mention might also be made of Stendhal's use of likenesses between human beings and animals, a subject to which Lavater gives prominent attention, at the same time as he reasserts man's divine nature and, hence, his physiognomic superiority to the animal kingdom.¹⁷ For Stendhal, as for contemporaries like Balzac, a comparison between man and animal is essentially aesthetic, as we see from his references to the cat, the tiger, the bulldog, the lion, the wolf, and so on, in descriptions of facial structure or expression, or general bearing; whereby it is amusing to note in *Lucien Leuwen*, for, example, that the political fanatic Du Poirier is likened in one context successively to a fox, a hyena and a boar (I, 378, 491, 509, 572, 848f; II, 1013).¹⁸ Not without significance either is the fact that Stendhal uses the term 'physionomie' at least two hundred times in his five novels, and that both in the pre-1800 sense of 'face' or 'facial expression' and in a sense wide enough to include the appearances of landscapes, buildings, house interiors, as well as abstract ideas, a striking instance of which last is this detail about Julien Sorel's love-affair with Madame de Rênal: "Leur bonheur avait quelquefois la physionomie du crime" (I, 326).¹⁹

¹⁵ Lavater, *Essai*: IV, 164. See also III, 226; IV, 128-63. On this topic, see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 234-38, 370n.

¹⁶ For references to national physiognomies in Stendhal's secondary writings, see Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: VIII, 218; XIV, 179, 198, 334; XV, 177; XXX, 214, and Stendhal, *Voyage*: 55, 139.

¹⁷ Lavater, *Essai*: II, 88-128.

¹⁸ See Pierre Abraham, *Créatures chez Balzac* (Paris: Gallimard, 1931): 241-68.

¹⁹ Such uses of 'physionomie' are also noticeable in Stendhal's secondary writings. See Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: VI, 57; XIII, 43; XV, 191, 311, 368f; XVI, 118, 194; XXIX, 36; XXX, 203, 307. On the expanded meaning of 'physionomie', see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 117f, 364fn.

More problematic, however, is the matter of comparing Stendhal's treatment of the facial and bodily features with Lavater's theories, not least because the literary portrait seems always to have been implicitly physiognomic in such details. It is, of course, interesting to link Stendhal's emphasis on the importance of the hand (I, 185, 279, 281, 288, 918; II, 363) with Lavater's recognition of that feature as being very much "un objet de la Physiognomonie"; to note his comments on someone's youthfulness of gait, regality of bearing or gaucheness of posture (I, 299, 1016; II 125) in the light of Lavater's advice to the physiognomist not to ignore bodily movements when judging character; or to compare the sensitivity of Stendhal's narrators and characters to the human voice with Lavater's detailed instructions on determining the nature of that very physiognomic organ.²⁰ There are, no doubt, analogies also to be drawn between Stendhal and Lavater as to the eyes, the hair, clothes and the like; and though the business of relating facial and bodily features, whether taken individually or in combination with one another, to their possessor's personality and behavior may often seem scientifically questionable, it is none the less certain that Stendhal was, as we shall see later, aware of the apparent connection between outward appearance and moral nature.²¹ Yet however much he seems to be a sort of disciple of Lavater, it is evident that certain aspects of Lavaterian physiognomy were of no more use to Stendhal than they were to other contemporary novelists, notably the assertions about the divinity of the human face, the significance of the bone structure, the geometrical analyses of skulls and foreheads, and so on.²² Furthermore, Stendhal was astute enough to recognize that, as one critic has put it, "certaines physionomies sont trompeuses."²³ Thus, we see Théodelinde de Sepierre of *Lucien Leuwen*, probably the best-natured of all Stendhal's characters, presented as "bien laide" and Julien Sorel's sympathetic friend Fouqué hiding "beaucoup de bonhomie, ... sous cet air repoussant", just as we find bad or unpleasant characters with good physiognomic features, such as Rassi, who has "de beaux yeux intelligents"; the vicious marquise Balbi with "les plus belles dents du monde"; and the boorish Monsieur Rênal with facial features of "une certaine régularité" (I, 220, 285; II, 129, 359). And though Lavater is quick to allow for exceptions to the physiognomic rules, and is well aware of the deceptiveness of the face, all these details in Stendhal's fiction would seem

²⁰ For Lavater's discussion on the hand, see Lavater, *Essai*: III, 43-60, 340, 342-46; on bodily movements, II, 377; III, 180-82, 227; and on the voice, II, 375; III, 212; IV, 303. The importance of the voice for Stendhal has been acknowledged by Simons, *Sémiotisme*: 152, and Bailbé, "Valeur symbolique de la voix dans le texte stendhalien" in Jean-Claude Rioux, ed., *Le Symbolisme Stendhalien. Actes du colloque universitaire de Nantes, 21-22 Octobre, 1983* (Nantes: Éditions ACL, 1986): 97-107.

²¹ For Lavater's comments on the eyes, see *Essai*: III, 280-93; and on clothes, I, 27; III, 229f. The importance of the eyes in Stendhal's portraiture has been acknowledged by several critics, notably Klaus Engelhardt, "Le langage des yeux dans *la Chartreuse de Parme*", *Stendhal Club* 14 (1972): 153-59; Nancy E. Rogers, "The Use of Eye Language in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*", *Romance Notes* 20 (1980): 339-43; Velguth, "Le Regard amoureux": 320-28; Phillip A. Duncan, "The Eyes of Julien Sorel and Stendhal's Title *Le Rouge et le Noir*", *Romance Notes* 29 (1988): 45-47. For a discussion on Stendhal's use of the hair for characterization see Simons, *Sémiotisme*: 140, and for Stendhal's use of clothes for characterization, see Grahame Jones, "Le Thème du Vêtement dans *le Rouge et le Noir*", *Stendhal Club* 15 (1972-73): 30, and Simons, *Sémiotisme*: 10.

²² For details, see Lavater, *Essai*: I, 6, 272-75; III, 29, 54- 58, 237-43, 266-79.

²³ Simons, *Sémiotisme*: 99.

to point up the realism of his treatment of the outward man rather than to suggest any specific indebtedness as his part to Lavaterian physiognomy.²⁴

The fact that the study of physiognomy in the novel has usually meant analyzing methods of physical character description and looking for links between moral nature and facial or bodily features, may, then, explain why Stendhal's use of physiognomy, cautious, and even casual, as it often seems to be, as well as limited in concrete detail, has aroused so little critical interest. At the same time it would appear that, in their tendency to examine the treatment of the outward man in fiction, critics have focussed too much attention on the *observed* at the expense of the *observer*. That the study of physiognomy in the novel should, in fact, entail due consideration of the viewpoints of observers whether narrators or characters, is, however, an idea that might not so readily occur to one until one had read, say, Lavater's *Essai sur la physionomie*, and then to an extent that might even prompt one to speculate whether Lavater, influential as he is shown to have been on European novelists, had not indirectly affected the development of narrative art through his discussions on the nature of the physiognomist and the art of physiognomic observation. Thus, whereas before 1790 the physical appearance of characters is normally described from the viewpoint of a first-person or third-person narrator – albeit sometimes in remarkable physiognomic detail, as in the novels of Marivaux and Diderot – after 1790 we find increasing use being made of multiple viewpoints on particular characters, as if to enhance the importance of the observer.²⁵ One aspect of Stendhal's treatment of observation that springs to mind is the way in which his heroes and heroines are so often physically presented from one another's viewpoint, and that to a degree seldom, if ever, matched in nineteenth-century fiction. Although this aspect is not altogether without precedent in narrative art before 1790 (one thinks of Henry Fielding, for example), it would appear that the model for this technique lies essentially in the novels of Ann Radcliffe, especially *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), in that, for example, Emily St. Aubert and Valancourt's constant awareness of one another's facial expressions and changes in physical appearance is practically an innovation in the modern European fictional treatment of love relationships, occurring as it does, interestingly enough, in the very decade when Lavater's physiognomic theories were first becoming known in Britain.²⁶ Mutual awareness of personal appearance is, of course, a prominent element in Julien Sorel's relations with Madame de Rênal and Mathilde de La Mole, as it is in Lucien Leuwen's with Madame de Chasteller, Madame d'Hocquincourt and Madame Grandet, Fabrice

²⁴ See, for example, Lavater, *Essai*: I, 99f, 283; III, 334.

²⁵ For discussions on Marivaux's and Diderot's physiognomic narrators and the uses of observation in the nineteenth-century novel, see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 133-35, 166-207, 260-315. In this connection, Bailbé makes an important point about Stendhal's use of different observers for purposes of characterization: "Il ne s'agit pas d'immobiliser, de figer un personnage dans le temps d'une observation, d'une contemplation. En revanche le portrait progressif fragmenté par les points de vue divers offre des enrichissements poétiques et une plus grande vraisemblance." "Le Portrait féminin": 157.

²⁶ See Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, introd. Bonamy Dobrée & ed. Frederick Garber (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 42, 49, 104, 502. For details about the vogue of Lavaterian physiognomy in Britain from the 1790s onwards, see especially Graham, *Lavater's Essays*: 61-74, 103-08. Stendhal mentions Ann Radcliffe in *Lamiel* (*Romans*: II, 85).

del Dongo's with Gina Sanseverina and Clélia Conti, and Octave Malivert's with Armance.

Although it might be thought mistaken to ascribe Stendhal's use of observation in the treatment of love offhand to his interest in physiognomy, it might also be just as mistaken to dissociate it entirely from the physiognomic climate of his day, all the more as it represents but one of a wide variety of functions that observation fulfils in the novels. Consider, first of all, the way in which, unlike most of his eighteenth-century predecessors, Stendhal makes ironic use of anonymous observers – “le voyageur Parisien”, “un Parisien”, “un observateur attentif”, “un grand philosophe”, “l'indifférence observatrice”, “les coeurs distingués”, etc. (I, 40, 48, 97, 111, 172, 484, 489, 494, 549, 554, 1017, 1170, 1320; II, 146, 276, 457, 462) – to draw attention to the appearances of his characters, whereby the sophisticated Parisian observer is now and again contrasted with the provincial observer. Stendhal also uses phrases such as “on trouvait” and “on eût dit” to suggest that his characters have been observed by people more or less familiar with them, as is evident, for example, from the last part of a very physiognomic description of the général comte N... in *Lucien Leuwen*: “Cette tête plaisait moins au second regard et semblait presque commune, au troisième; on y entrevoyait comme une nuage de fausseté. On voyait que l'Empire et sa servilité avaient passé par là” (I, 785). Stendhal also makes use of collective attitudes – of a group of women, of young people, of a particular social circle, even of an entire populace – to reinforce the idea of the beauty and distinction of a hero or heroine, or even the peculiarity of someone's appearance, a notable example being the way in which, in *Armance*, Madame Bonnavet's women friends show their jealousy of the heroine by criticizing her prominent forehead and her other facial features and by declaring her “regard singulier” to be out of place in high society (I, 57f). The viewpoints of individual minor characters play a similar function in the characterization of heroes and heroines, though one cannot help thinking that there is, otherwise, something quite gratuitous about some of the physiognomic comments and reactions to be found in the novels. Thus we may refer to that moment when, as he prepares his son for a meeting with a Monsieur N..., Leuwen-père remarks that, though the latter is not much of an administrator, he can, nevertheless, “deviner ou lire sur les physionomies” (I, 1114); or even to a later occasion when, in a diplomatic interview with Louis-Philippe on behalf of the hero, Leuwen-père betrays a facial expression that does not escape the king's notice: “Il reconnut chez M. Leuwen cette physionomie ironique dont les rapports de son général Rumigny lui avaient parlé si souvent” (I, 1307). Another striking example is the following judgment made by Don Diego Bustos of Madame Fervaques, reminding us as it does of Stendhal's own preoccupation with the temperaments: “Je ne lui trouve pas ce tempérament bilieux qui est celui du génie, et jette sur toutes les actions comme un vernis de passion. C'est au contraire à la façon d'être flegmatique et tranquille des Hollandais qu'elle doit sa rare beauté et ses couleurs si fraîches” (I, 596). A similar gratuitousness may also be sensed in the physiognomic judgments made, for example, by the abbé Frilair in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Coffe and Dévelroy in *Lucien Leuwen*, the chanoine Borda in *La Chartreuse de Parme*, and Clément in *Lamiel* (I, 672, 770f, 1223f; II, 269, 924f, 937).

If a number of such physiognomic judgments and comments sometimes seem to possess a documentary or historical interest rather than a specifically literary one, it is

none the less evident that a 'physiognomic' eye is an essential attribute of Stendhal's main characters. This is as true of the female characters as it is of the male ones. Thus Gina Sanseverina's exceptional mind, which is already partly hinted at in her perceptive physiognomic judgments of people in the court of Parma, is especially underlined on the occasion when she shows herself willing to put up with Ferrante Palla's eccentric talk and behavior partly because she can see "une âme ardente et bonne" in his face and partly because she "ne haïssait pas les physionomies extraordinaires" (II, 363f). Similarly, the intelligence of the heroine of *Lamiel* is manifest both in her physiognomic readings of the people in the duchesse de Miossens' household and in her shrewd physiognomic judgments of the various young men she encounters – judgments through which she will quickly realize their unsuitability for her as lovers.²⁷ Mathilde de La Mole, too, shows a similar perspicacity in her analyses of faces, though her physiognomic eye is perhaps most conspicuous for us in that comical moment when, having drawn a profile or a remarkable likeness to Julien, she exclaims to herself: "C'est la voix du ciel! Voilà un des miracles de l'amour"; and, again, in a later moment, hardly less comical, when, having failed shortly afterwards to draw a good portrait of him, she becomes pleased enough with the profile to consider it "une preuve évidente de grande passion" (I, 555). Such physiognomic sensitivity is, to be sure, also conspicuous in Stendhal's heroes, not least when they are observing their beloved women or comparing them with one another. Both Octave Malivert and Fabrice del Dongo, for example, show a sort of connoisseur's understanding and appreciation of the beauty of their respective loved ones – an appreciation which, in Fabrice's case, is enhanced, it seems, by a corresponding distaste for ugly or low-class appearances, whether it be the thought of seeing "la grosse figure de quelque femme de chambre commune" (II, 313) in his prison cell instead of Clélia, or the actual experience of being confronted in the same place by the "physionomies basses" (II, 322) of three judges. Yet commensurate as a physiognomic eye is with these two heroes as intelligent, sensitive outsiders, their observations often seem perfunctory, not to say predictable. What is interesting about their fastidious attitude to appearances, however, is that they remind us of Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen, the difference being that, in his presentation of the latter figures as observers, Stendhal's treatment of physiognomy is to be seen, aesthetically speaking, at perhaps its most significant level.

Since it is a commonplace among critics that Stendhal has put something of himself in all his heroes, it is, therefore, hardly surprising that Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen should both possess an interest in and a knowledge of physiognomy.²⁸ Like Stendhal, Lucien is, as will be shown later, familiar with Lavater's theories, while Julien makes an allusion to the science in the context of a physiognomic judgment of the abbé Pirard, aware as he surely is of Lavater, if only by virtue of Napoleon's negative comment on the latter in *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*.²⁹ It is, moreover, noteworthy that a good many

²⁷ In this connection, it is interesting to be reminded by Martineau that *Lamiel* was modelled on the heroine of Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, herself a very physiognomic observer. See Stendhal, *Romans*: II, 870. For a discussion on the ideal man Stendhal had in mind for the heroine of this unfinished novel, see Dennis Porter, "Lamiel: The Wild Child and the Ugly Men", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 12 (1988): 21-32.

²⁸ See Martineau in Stendhal, *Romans*: I, 15, 202 and F. W. J. Hemmings, *Stendhal. A Study of his Novels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964): 206.

²⁹ See Comte A. E. D. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, ed. Jean Prévost (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961): 57f.

of the portraits in *Le Rouge et le Noir* are presented from Julien's viewpoint and show him to be a sensitive and perceptive observer of his fellow creatures. We see instances of this in his relations with Madame de Rênal; and though he is described as being already an expert in feminine beauty (I, 244), he is observant enough to realize that her beauty, which is not to be found "dans les classes inférieures", has revealed to him "une faculté de son âme qu'il n'avait jamais sentie" (I, 282). This is particularly suggested in his appreciation of Madame de Rênal's arms and hands, and when he thinks about these and other physical charms of hers while he is absent from her (I, 281f, 288).³⁰ Sensitive, too, are Julien's analyses of Mathilde de La Mole; indeed, even his instant dislike of her at first sight does not prevent his admitting to himself that her eyes are beautiful in a way to deserve the epithet "scintillants" (I, 450). Ironically, it is through his constant awareness of various aspects of her appearance that he later comes to realize why he has fallen in love with her: "C'était après s'être perdu en rêveries sur l'élégance de la taille de mademoiselle de La Mole, sur l'excellent goût de sa toilette, sur la blancheur de sa main, sur la beauté de son bras, sur la *disinvoltura* de tous ses mouvements, qu'il se trouvait amoureux" (I, 520). One signal aspect of Julien's observational skills is his tendency to compare his women physiognomically, whether it be spotting an unpleasantly close resemblance between Mathilde and her mother, or finding Mathilde's eyes less appealing than Madame de Rênal's, or discovering that Madame de Fervaques "avait les yeux et le regard de Madame de Rênal" (I, 451, 620). Julien is also very sensitive to voices, to an extent that, like Madame de Rênal, Lucien Leuwen and Fabrice, he is easily put out by a crass or harsh voice, thereby reminding us of the importance that Lavater attaches to that feature (I, 229, 232, 243, 262, 329, 1181, 1241; II, 188, 227). Julien's physiognomic sensitivity is further hinted at when, no less than Stendhal's other heroes and heroines, he shows a Rousseauesque awareness of the beauty of a landscape, a piece of architecture, or even a clump of trees (I, 379, 481, 650). Nor should we omit to mention how much Julien's intelligence is suggested by the perspicacity with which he analyzes the faces and general appearance of Monsieur de Rênal, Valenod and the abbé Frilair (I, 343, 347, 353, 410). To that extent, he is very much in line with the highly observant heroes and heroines of the novels of Marivaux and Diderot.

The physiognomic disposition we have noted in Julien Sorel is just as conspicuous in the hero of *Lucien Leuwen*. Like Julien, Lucien is presented as being especially sensitive to feminine beauty, which, as he discovers through his observations of and reflections on sundry aspects of Madame de Chasteller's appearance, is as unprecedented an experience for him as Madame de Rênal's beauty is for Julien (I, 918). But though Madame de Chasteller's beauty, as it were, liberates Lucien from the banalities of social gatherings in Nancy (I, 923), it can also be physically overpowering, as, for example, when he finds her eyes so daunting that he turns his attention away from them to her hand, a physiognomic feature that he values quite as much as Julien does: "Madame de Chasteller avait la main fort bien. Comme ses yeux faisaient peur à Lucien,

³⁰ In this connection, Martineau remarks: "Il faut reconnaître avec M. Raymond Lebègue et M. Georges Blin que les héros de Stendhal sont aisément troublés par les bras de leurs maîtresses." Stendhal, *Romans*: I, 1449.

les yeux de notre héros s'attachaient à cette main, qu'il suivait constamment" (I, 918f). Yet aware as he is of that beauty and its possessor's various facial expressions, Lucien can also be objective about his beloved's looks, as, for example, when, in order to distract himself in company, he says this to himself: "... le nez aquilin aspirant à la tombe, comme dit l'emphatique Chactas, donne trop de sérieux à une tête" (I, 977). Noteworthy, too, is Lucien's physiognomic awareness of Madame Grandet, whose "vraie beauté *sterling* et pittoresque" he has a perfect opportunity of admiring as she lies in his arms in a faint (I, 1375). Lucien is also observant enough to discover something new about Madame Grandet's appearance. Thus, having already grown tired of her, yet touched by the feigned weeping with which she has virtually declared her love for him, he notices an unwonted expression on her face just after she has removed something she has been holding in front of her eyes: "... Lucien fut frappé d'un des plus grands changements de physionomie qu'il eût jamais vus. Pour la première fois de sa vie, du moins aux yeux de Lucien, cette physionomie avait une expression féminine" (I, 1371f).

Aside from his tendency to compare his women physiognomically and to be put out by an unpleasant tone of voice, Lucien also reminds us of Julien Sorel through his perceptive judgments of people encountered in everyday life, at work or on social occasions. As a young Parisian who feels uncomfortable or bored or out of place in Nancy society, Lucien is much given to observing all sorts of people, as is suggested at one social evening when, as the narrator remarks, Lucien "se réduisit volontiers au rôle d'observateur" (I, 834). Sometimes, too, he can become so absorbed in observing a face as to cause embarrassment, especially on the occasion he studies the face of the préfet Fléron, from whom he hopes to buy a horse: "Lucien était tellement absorbé dans la contemplation qu'il y eut un silence" (I, 797). In his propensity for observation, which is suggested by his being the subject of such verbs as 'examiner', 'lire', 'observer', etc., Lucien tends to make physiognomic judgments of several men he meets shortly after his arrival in Nancy and, later, in the course of administrative duties – men such as Séranville, Desbacs, Kortis, and, most particularly, Du Poirier, in whose face he notes "l'air sombre d'un énergumène" (I, 846) on one occasion, and, on a later one, "la finesse cauteleuse d'un procureur bas-normand" (I, 1012). The idea that Lucien's physiognomic bent is, like Julien's, but an expression of Stendhal's own observant disposition is especially confirmed by the hero's practice of comparing people with well-known paintings and statuary, the interest of such comparisons deriving for us from the knowledge that Stendhal's aesthetic thinking was to some extent shaped by Lavater, who postulates a strong link between physiognomy and the fine arts.³¹ And just as Stendhal's aesthetic eye seems to lie behind those passages in *La Chartreuse de Parme* where, in their observations of Fabrice and other characters, Gina Sanseverina and the chanoine Borda, as well as the narrators themselves, are reminded of Veronese, Guido Reni, Leonardo, Palladio and Corregio, so it seems to lie behind those contexts where Lucien is deeming Fléron's hand to be "une copie du Christ de Lucas Cranach"; or likening the very bourgeois Sylviane Berchu to "une statue de Junon, copiée de l'antique

³¹ According to Simons, *Sémiosisme*, Stendhal's art criticism is intelligible only if one is "instruit des préceptes lavatériennes": 82. In this connection, see Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: IV, 126, 140; XIII, 46, 488; XXXV, 151, 154, 181; XXXIX, 354. See also Lavater, *Essai*: I, 181, 260-68; II, 214-31, 322-46; III, 146.

par un artiste moderne”; or judging Madame Grandet’s head an ideal model for Veronese to have used; or admiring Madame de Chasteller’s splendid blonde hair in a way that prompts him to think: “Ce ne sont point ces cheveux couleur d’or vantés par Ovide, ni ces cheveux couleur d’acajou que Raphaël et Carlo Dolci ont donnés à leurs plus belles têtes” (I, 797, 817, 977, 1149, 1371f; II, 106, 271f).

What has hitherto been seen of Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen as observers might, then, be thought sufficient to justify their being placed among the most intelligent of nineteenth-century fictional characters. That Stendhal’s intentions by his two heroes were, however, not quite so straightforward is already evident from the ambivalent, not to say critical, attitude of their narrators toward them. It is true that the narrators are very similar to Julien and Lucien as observers, that there is even a sort of complicity between hero and narrator whenever someone is described from the viewpoint of both; indeed, many a character description given only from the narrator’s viewpoint might just as well have been given from the viewpoint of the heroes. Nevertheless, the fact that several characters are described only from the third-person angle points up the independence of the narrators and hence their freedom to distance themselves from their heroes enough to belittle them or to be ironically patronizing toward them for their nonsensical ideas, or even to suggest what they ought to do or how they might have acted. (In this connection, it would be interesting to speculate how far Stendhal was actually in sympathy with his narrators and, *per impossibile*, how the heroes themselves might judge their respective narrators.)

Typical of this distancing is the tendency to remark on a facial expression the hero has failed to notice; or to draw attention to an unprepossessing look in the hero’s face, one example being the following detail given just after the narrator has spoken of Lucien’s determination to put Madame Grandet’s love to the test: “Il faut avouer que la physionomie de Lucien n’était point du tout celle d’un héros de roman, pendant qu’il se livrait à ces sages raisonnements. Il avait plutôt l’air d’un banquier qui pèse la convenance d’une grande spéculation” (I, 1373). Moreover, for all that Lucien appears handsome to others or, as Madame de Commercay remarks, “n’a point l’air commun” (I, 811) or, as Madame de Chasteller has noticed, “sa physionomie annonçait tant de finesse et de naturel” (I, 921), the narrator’s reference to Lucien’s “figure assez irrégulière” with its “traits trop grands” (I, 770) may well be intended to suggest that, at least in the eyes of a physiognomist such as Lavater, the hero falls short of moral perfection. For however much Lucien may be considered a self-projection of his creator, it is undeniable that he has his character defects, and that they are not unconnected with his marked predilection for observation.

It is perhaps not at once obvious that in presenting Lucien as an astute observer of his fellow men, Stendhal also created a young man of an unduly sensitive, even squeamish, physiognomic disposition. We see this in the almost pathological nature or his reactions to the unpleasant appearance of women such as Madame de Serpierre or Mademoiselle Bérard, no less than to the resplendent beauty of Madame de Chasteller. One aspect of Lucien’s physiognomic disposition is his ability to tell social class from appearance – an ability he happens to share with other Stendhalian heroes, as well as with Stendhalian narrators, who, incidentally, come across to the reader as curiously

reactionary in the way they equate a facial appearance with a particular profession as well as particular social class (I, 153f, 532, 785, 1154).³² Whatever Stendhal may have thought of his narrators as physiognomists in those respects, he must have been aware that few fictional heroes could be more snobbish in their physiognomic judgments than Lucien Leuwen. Lucien's snobbery is, to be sure, characteristic of the upstart, of the "plébéien libéral", as he sees himself, and it is manifest in the way he discovers in the faces and general appearance of a wide variety of men and women in Nancy a "noblesse vulgaire", "des façons basses", "l'air valet de chambre", "l'air un peu paysan", "des gestes de laquais", and so on, and sometimes resorts to the epithet 'commun' (I, 817, 829, 902, 1093, 1099, 1105, 1155, 1172, 1225). The trouble with Lucien is that his privileged and sheltered life in Paris has made him too fastidious to accept the faces of people outside his normal experience. And since he has long been "accoutumé à ces figures brillantes de civilité et d'envie de plaire" (I, 780) in the salons of Paris, it is not surprising that he should be so easily distressed by the faces of his fellow officers in Nancy; which, in turn, helps to explain why he antagonizes those officers, fails to get on with his military superiors, and can only find kindness "dans les yeux de quelques sous-officiers" (I, 828). Underlying Lucien's physiognomic reactions is a considerable streak of misanthropy, which patently manifests itself whenever he is confronted by unfamiliar people and places. A typical instance is to be seen on the occasion when, having returned to Paris from his two-week political mission in Normandy, he manages to find comfort even in Madame Vaize's ordinary face because "depuis quinze jours, il n'avait pas vu beaucoup de visages amis", or, as we learn later, because he, in fact, "n'avait vu que des figures haineuses" (I, 1271). A similar misanthropy seems to color Lucien's detailed analyses of Nancy, a town whose grimness for him derives in part from the fact that "les physionomies des habitants répondaient parfaitement à la tristesse des bâtiments" (I, 793). All these examples, and many more besides, amply confirm for us the narrator's understanding of his hero as "un coeur naïf" who all too readily "détournait les yeux de tout ce qui lui semblait trop laid" (I, 924), and who in the light of some of the foregoing, may be thought anything but a true disciple of Lavater, for whom physiognomy was first and foremost "destiné à faire connoître l'homme et à le faire aimer."³³

No, doubt, the narrator of *Lucien Leuwen*, and Stendhal himself, would readily concur in some of these physiognomic attitudes, especially as regards beauty and ugliness, just as they would probably acknowledge a certain heroism in Lucien, if only through the courage and endurance he sometimes displays in his brief military and political careers. Yet thrown as he is into a world in which, whether by force of circumstance or mere inertia, he is unable to find self-fulfilment through his own initiative, Lucien remains, at least within the confines of the unfinished novel, too much a spectator of life, and a misanthropic one at that; and, since his observations of other people, however sensitive or perceptive, are often the expression of an egregious sense of superiority, they are to that extent the mark of a callow youth, who, as the narrator

³² Similar references are to be found in Stendhal's secondary writings. See Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: XVIII, 115; XXXIX, 159.

³³ See also Lavater, *Essai*: I, 239; II, 43-54.

remarks, “croyait tout voir, et n’avait pas encore vu le quart des choses de la vie” (I, 861).³⁴ It is with such words in mind that we realize how far Lucien’s portrayal as an immature, not to say unheroic, hero is unseparable from his presentation as a physiognomic observer.

Stendhal’s treatment of the physiognomic viewpoint as a means of characterization is perhaps even more telling in his equally ambivalent presentation of Julien Sorel. Critics have, to be sure, been generally aware that the characters of *Le Rouge et le Noir* are most often physically described from Julien’s viewpoint³⁵; yet few, if any, have examined the mentality behind that viewpoint, or, rather, the complexity of the hero’s physiognomic disposition. Aside from what has been mentioned above, there is evidence to suggest that Julien is not only familiar with physiognomy, but actually regards himself as a physiognomist, and one who, as a handsome young man of good education, a vivid imagination and an undue fondness for books, might have succumbed quite as readily as any other young Frenchman had done, by 1830, to the fervent optimism, scientific confidence and plausible argumentation of Lavater’s *Essai sur la physiognomie*.³⁶ But for all that Julien’s observations of others seem to reflect his intelligence and perspicacity, not to mention his creator’s, it was inevitable that, physically modelled as he was on the very fragile-looking Anthoine Berthier, Julien should have been portrayed with the weaknesses and failings of an immature young man. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that, although he is handsome in the eyes of women, even “un prince déguisé” (I, 494) in Mathilde’s estimation, Julien’s immaturity is physiognomically suggested through references to his “figure de jeune fille si pâle, et si douce” (I, 235), and, as Madame de Rênal observes, to the “forme presque féminine de ses traits” and, as the narrator confirms later, to his looking like “une jeune fille déguisée” (I, 241), all of which details are significant enough, it seems, to foreshadow the contradictions in his character. Interesting, too, are the narrator’s ironic remarks about Julien’s facial expressions as, for example, on the occasion when, imagining himself fighting a duel with Croisenois, the hero is described as follows: “Il faut en convenir, le regard de Julien était atroce, physionomie hideuse; elle respirait le crime sans alliage. C’était l’homme malheureux en guerre avec toute la société” (I, 526).

Such irony is, of course, eminently appropriate for a young man who takes himself too seriously; indeed, whose earnestness and humorlessness are of a kind to affect even the way he observes other people, or judges them physiognomically. We see two obvious examples of this: first, when he makes careful analyses of Mathilde’s face as well as the faces of the servants in the dining-room in order to ensure that her invitation to him to visit her that night is not a trap (I, 536); and, secondly, when at the secret political meeting he becomes so absorbed in judging the appearances of the participants as to be at one point “vivement interrompu dans ses observations physiognomoniques par la voix de M. de La Mole” (I, 574). Yet for all that Julien may resort to physiognomy to

³⁴ See Hemmings, *Stendhal*: 150-54.

³⁵ See Mitchell, *Le Rouge et le Noir*: 10, 37.

³⁶ See Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 54-74. That Julien and Lucien see the world essentially through the filter of books, and hence largely from an aesthetic rather than a moral viewpoint, has been aptly suggested by James T. Day, *Stendhal's Paper Mirror: Patterns of Self-Consciousness in His Novels* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990): 60, 65, 76, 90.

understand others, his presentation as a “plébéien révolté” (I, 506, 636) with next to no experience of the world – coupled with a misanthropy that seems to intensify as he endeavors to practice what Hemmings describes as “the difficult art of hypocrisy” in both bourgeois and aristocratic society – helps to explain why he is, like Lucien, all too content to sit in malevolent physiognomic judgment on others, whether it be to read in the “oeil morne” of his fellow seminarians nothing but “le besoin physique satisfait après le diner” (I, 384), or to condemn “toutes les femmes de Paris” except Mathilde for their affectation (I, 505), or to dismiss the participants in the secret meeting as “des gens à physionomie assez médiocre” (I, 573).³⁷ Nor does anything better confirm Julien’s ignorance of the world than the way in which he is so easily impressed by certain people’s appearances, say, that of the Bishop of Agde, or Prince Korasoff, or of a group of young men playing billiards in a Besançon café (I, 318, 370, 590). Moreover, since he has practically no knowledge of high society, he stumbles into the error of mistaking the Bishop d’Agde’s lackey for the Bishop himself and challenging the comte de Beauvoisis’ coachman to a duel (on account of an insult) because he has mistaken him for an aristocrat. There is also something quite comical about the earnestness with which Julien registers his first impressions of people, that physiognomic act to which, incidentally, Lavater attaches much importance.³⁸ If Lamiel’s first impressions probably prove helpful to her, Julien’s do not seem to do him much good. Thus aside from having to revise his first negative impression of M. de La Mole, he fails to take guidance from his initial favorable interpretation of Mathilde’s eyes. Moreover, by basing his love for the latter on her “rare beauté, ou plutôt ses façons de reine et sa toilette admirable”, he remains, at least in the eyes of the narrator, none the less a “parvenu” (I, 519).

Although Julien Sorel’s physiognomic disposition may be already considered expressive enough of his presentation as an immature young man, or, as Martineau has aptly described him, “un impulsif”, there are, nevertheless, moments in the novel when the hero’s responses to human appearances are even more indicative of his moral fragility, and which, in their very pathological nature, may have some connection, however indirect, with his ultimate act of folly, namely, his attempted killing of Madame de Rênal.³⁹ For fastidious as we have found Lucien Leuwen in his observations of people, it is only in Julien Sorel that we see physiognomic sensitivity carried to morbid extremes. Thus, foreshadowed early in the novel in the young man’s nervous response to his awesome father’s penetrating small eyes, as if the latter wanted to “lire jusqu’au fond de son âme” (I, 234), is an incident in which Julien’s physiognomic disposition causes him no little trouble just after he has arrived at the Besançon seminary. First of all, having described the seminary porter’s grim face in some detail from the hero’s viewpoint, the narrator goes on to delineate the latter’s reaction as follows: “Le seul sentiment que le regard rapide de Julien put deviner sur cette longue figure dévote fut un mépris profond pour tout ce dont on voudrait lui parler, et qui ne serait pas l’intérêt du ciel” (I, 376). The next stage of the comedy occurs when, having spoken of “l’émotion et la terreur de Julien” as the latter wonders when the abbé Pirard will stop writing to acknowledge his presence, the narrator continues: “Un philosophe eût dit, peut-être en se trompant:

³⁷ Hemmings, *Stendhal*: 117.

³⁸ Lavater, *Essai*: I, 83f, 180; II, 376; III, 65, 237–44; IV, 235.

³⁹ See Martineau in Stendhal, *Romans*: I, 205.

C'est la violente impression du laid sur une âme faite pour aimer ce qui est beau" (I, 377). With that characteristically ironic aside, Stendhal prepares the reader for one of the most amusing episodes in all literature; for no sooner has Julien gained a general impression of Pirard's facial features – only to be overwhelmed presently by the latter's "oeil terrible" at the moment he is being reproached for his tardiness – than he falls headlong on the floor in a faint.⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards, when Julien has come round and had his knowledge of theology tested, (whereby, noticing a softer expression in the abbé's eyes, he regains enough self-assurance to think: "Que je suis faible de m'en laisser imposer par ces apparences de vertu! Cet homme sera tout simplement un fripon comme M. Maslon; ..." (I, 379)), Pirard suddenly breaks from Latin into French to ask Julien about his fainting fit, only to be told that the hero had been "glacé par la figure du portier"; to which the abbé almost smilingly rejoins with these words: "Voilà l'effet des vaines pompes du monde; vous êtes accoutumé apparemment à des visages riants, véritables théâtres de mensonge... Il faudra veiller à ce que votre conscience se tienne en garde contre cette faiblesse: *Trop de sensibilité aux vaines grâces de l'extérieur*" (I, 380)

Those sentiments seem to adumbrate the occasion when Julien will compare Pirard's appearance with that of various guests at the Hôtel de La Mole. Irritated by Mathilde's remark about the abbé's ugliness, even though he cannot disagree with her judgment, and despite having already dismissed the abbé's virtuous appearance at their first meeting as fraudulent, Julien is, nevertheless, convinced that Pirard is "le plus honnête homme du salon", a conviction which then prompts him to question the validity of physiognomy: "Croyez après cela aux physionomies ... c'est dans le moment où la délicatesse de l'abbé Pirard se reproche quelque peccadille, qu'il a l'air atroce; tandis que sur la figure de ce Napier, espion connu de tous, on lit un bonheur pur et tranquille" (I, 463f). Interestingly enough, we see a similarly arrogant dismissal of physiognomy in Lucien when, at once anxious that his lowly military rank may fail to impress Madame de Chasteller, and confident that "des pensées basses ne sauraient exister avec une physionomie si noble", because they are, after all, merely the ideas of her social caste; and aware that he must put up with nonsensical talk in the salons of Nancy if he is to enjoy her company for an hour or two each day, he reflects: "Il serait même curieux d'observer philosophiquement comment des pensées ridicules ou basses peuvent ne pas gêner une telle physionomie. C'est qu'au fait rien n'est ridicule comme la science de Lavater" (I, 901f).

It is tempting to regard Lucien and Julien's rejection of physiognomy as being representative of the author's own attitude to the science, all the more because, as we have already seen, physical appearance in the novels is sometimes curiously at odds with moral nature, or perhaps even because Stendhal has instanced the unfriendliness of a handsome librarian he met in the Vatican as a "nouveau démenti de Lavater".⁴¹ It is also tempting to look favorably upon those rejections of physiognomy in so far as they remind

⁴⁰ Referring to this incident, Martineau writes: "Cette singulière défaillance de Julien Sorel ne peut être attribuée qu'à "une sensibilité extrême"... Ne pas oublier aussi que Stendhal avait été un grand lecteur de Pinel et que celui-ci a exposé que l'émotion chez certains nerveux est parfois si forte qu'elle les prive du sentiment et de la parole et les fait tomber." Stendhal, *Romans*: I, 1466nf.

⁴¹ Stendhal, *Oeuvres Complètes*: XIII, 279.

us of contexts in which both heroes display enough good sense to admit to themselves that their observations cannot tell them everything they need to know about their loved ones. One touching example of this can be seen when, speaking of Julien's love for Mathilde as being founded on his physiognomic awareness of her, the narrator remarks: "Il avait assez de sens pour comprendre qu'il ne connaissait point ce caractère. Tout ce qu'il en voyait pouvait n'être qu'une apparence" (I, 519), thereby preparing us for that supreme moment of truth shortly afterwards when, still unable to understand Mathilde's face, the hero says this to himself: "Bah! ... qui suis-je pour juger de toutes ces choses?" (I, 522).⁴² Yet it must have been as obvious to the author as it is to his readers that, since Julien and Lucien each repudiate physiognomy on the basis of a single reading made in a moment of extreme vexation, they do so, therefore, on quite fallacious grounds; indeed, in no way could Stendhal have better symbolized the contradictions in the characters of his two observant young heroes than by showing them summarily dismissing a science of which they have been, and will continue to be, acknowledged practitioners.

We have tried, then, to suggest that the presentation of Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen as physiognomists is crucial to an understanding of the complexity of their characters – a complexity whereby Stendhal shows with remarkable psychological insight and in seeming contradiction with traditional concepts of fictional heroism, that impulsiveness, naïveté, egotism, misanthropy and immaturity may indeed coexist with intelligence, perspicacity and self-awareness, whatever blame for those failings may attach in part to the societies and historical period in which the two heroes find themselves. What has also emerged from our discussion is that, though he is at the very antipodes of novelists such as Balzac in his eschewal of detailed descriptions of facial and bodily features and his occasional indifference to physiognomic correlations, Stendhal, nevertheless, shows much more concern for the outward man than has been hitherto claimed or suggested. To be sure, where physiognomy is concerned, Stendhal seems rather less close to his contemporaries than to, say, Henry Fielding, a novelist whom he much admired and by whom he was not a little influenced.⁴³ For Stendhal, as for Fielding, physiognomy in fiction has to do not so much with physiognomic correlations as with the observer's viewpoint, and what that viewpoint can tell us about human fallibility. Moreover, just as Fielding seemed intent on poking fun at the overweening real-life physiognomists of the mid-eighteenth century, so Stendhal was perhaps to some extent deliberately using his novels as vehicles by which to ridicule those over-enthusiastic partisans of Lavater that existed in fiction as well as in the real world of nineteenth-century France. Certainly, few novelists have better captured the essence of the Lavaterian physiognomic climate or treated it with quite the same high

⁴² A similar reaction is seen in Lucien who, uncertain whether Madame de Chasteller loves him, thinks: "Je vois bien que le ciel ne m'a pas donné le talent de lire dans les coeurs de femme." Stendhal, *Romans*: I, 942f.

⁴³ See Imbert, "Stendhal et *Tom Jones*", *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 30 (1956): 35-70. For a discussion on the use of physiognomy in Fielding's novels, see Tytler, "Letters of Recommendation and False Vizors: Physiognomy in the Novels of Henry Fielding", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1990): 93-111. Stendhal's ambivalent treatment of physiognomy might suggest that he had a certain affinity for Lichtenberg, who, though himself a renowned authority on physiognomy, was much more skeptical about the science than his rival Lavater. See Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*: 76-78, and Henri Baudoin, "Stendhal et Lichtenberg", *Stendhal Club* 57 (1972): 74-77.

comedy as Stendhal has done, especially in *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *Lucien Leuwen*. No doubt, Stendhal also looked upon his fiction as a means of illustrating and even clarifying his own attitudes to physiognomy; but whatever his final judgment on Lavater or the physiognomic culture of his own time, the novels themselves make it abundantly clear, as do Fielding's novels, that, if physiognomic judgments are often questionable, it is usually physiognomists that are at fault, not physiognomy itself.*

FIZIONOMIJA U STENDHALOVIM ROMANIMA: »ZNANOST LAVATERA« ILI »NAKON OVOGA, VJERUJETE LI FIZIONOMIJAMA?«

Članak se bavi načinom na koji je Stendhal u svojim djelima reagirao na teoriju Jean-Gasparda Lavatera o fizionomiji, koja je bila široko rasprostranjena u vrijeme pripovjednog realizma. Autor uspoređuje Stendhalove ideje s Lavaterovima, te analizira način na koji prikazuje spoljašnjost, naročito lica, i njihovu katkad protivrječnu korelaciju s psihičkim i karakternim svojstvima. Osobitu pozornost posvećuje načinu na koji pojedini likovi doživljavaju svoju vlastitu percepciju drugih likova, te pokazuje kako su takvi subjektivni odnosi važni za Stendhalovu pripovjednu tehniku. Većina njegovih primjera dolazi iz romana *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Crveno i crno) i *Lucien Leuwen*.

* *The editors of Studia romanica et anglica zagrabiensia decided last year to open the pages of this journal for invited contributions from outside the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.*

On May 20, 1994 Professor Graeme Tytler of Southeastern Louisiana University delivered a lecture on "Physiognomy in Wuthering Heights" in the English Department and was then asked to submit an article from his area of research for publication in SRAZ