



The Red and the Black

Stendhal, Roger Gard (Translator)

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Handsome, ambitious Julien Sorel is determined to rise above his humble provincial origins. Soon realizing that success can only be achieved by adopting the subtle code of hypocrisy by which society operates, he begins to achieve advancement through deceit and self-interest. His triumphant career takes him into the heart of glamorous Parisian society, along the way conquering the gentle, married Madame de Rênal, and the haughty Mathilde. But then Julien commits an unexpected, devastating crime - and brings about his own downfall. The Red and the Black is a lively, satirical portrayal of French society after Waterloo, riddled with corruption, greed and ennui, and Julien - the cold exploiter whose Machiavellian campaign is undercut by his own emotions - is one of the most intriguing characters in European literature.

The Red and the Black Details

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From Reader Review *The Red and the Black* for online ebook

Chuck LoPresti says

It's fairly easy to see why this book isn't more well-known as it was ahead of its time in 1830 and overshadowed by Flaubert, Balzac, and Hugo. And despite the fact that some consider it among the first "modern" novels it is probably a bit too dated to appeal to a more modern-focused crowd. I think I've come to a perfect period in my reading where this makes perfect sense. After Proust, *Banffy* and *Zilahy* - another read about courtly high society was a tough sell but I persevered a bit exhausted but wiser for my efforts. Like *Banffy* and *Zilahy* - Stendhal's work is predominately concerned with the psychological lives of socially engaged thinker/outsideers. Like *Witkacy* - this means infinitely more interesting and prone to emotional swings that are sometimes deadly and often sexy. I imagine this was pretty racy stuff in the 1830's as characters brush elbows as gently as the petals in the ornate gardens and meet their deaths with profoundly less subtlety. The range of human feeling is rendered with a wide palette of interactions that are executed with a fine intelligence that never condescends and tells you exactly how to feel. Who are the pious? The justified? The likeable? You'll decide but only the most overtly hapless bores are worthy of disregard. No sharp mind will be too bored - but no dullard will be engaged.

As much as I enjoyed this - it was work. The prose isn't anything so difficult - but it's all very contemplative and dense. There's little alacrity in general but Stendhal has a subtle sense of humor that works much like *Zilahy's Angry Angel* - nothing base or cheap. *The Red and the Black* is like a field-guide to exploiting rich women who are so bored that they are happy to be dragged to hell just to have someone do something exciting to them. Social climbing is seen as the worst sin that only results in calunmy and humiliation. As in other similar dramas - the victims are educated just enough to enter society and love-sick enough to attract rogue genius up their ladders for a dangerous liaison. This invariably leads to non-marital impregnation, social downfall and subsequently death. A scoundrel and the child of a scoundrel never occupy life together for long. Pay close attention and you will learn fairly time-tested formulas for attracting, conquering and devouring your prey if such things appeal to you. But woe to thee that doesn't have the heart and mind to benefit from their advantages - because like *Witkacy* made clear - it's insatiability that invites *Mephistopheles*. I just may never willingly read another French/Hungarian/Austrian 19-th century court drama again - and there's free beer tomorrow. Unlike *Banffy* and *Zilahy* - Stendhal rarely shares a meal or several glasses of wine with the reader. So the next time I won't not read a courtly screw and stew - I think it will be set about 900 miles to the east of Paris and people will at least dance a czardas.

Dolors says

The Red and the Black draws a colorful mosaic about the required hypocrisy to climb the ladder of social status in the France of the July Revolution.

Chronicled by an omniscient narrator, who meets every requisite to be Stendhal himself, the reader follows the story of Julien Sorel, a young man of humble origins whose only ambition is to ascend in the social hierarchy in a world still dominated by the Machiavellian politicking of the clergy and the nobility after the downfall of the Emperor.

Despised by his family because of his "extravagant" taste for reading, Julien makes of Napoleon his surrogate father and plans his future with militaristic, almost obsessive precision. The army (The Red) is no longer in fashion and so he chooses his career among the pious men of faith (The Black). First as a seminarist and then as a tutor of Latin, Julien will learn the bearing, the deferential poise and the

conversational skills to achieve his so much desired goal that will lead him to Paris, the capital of sophisticated *Savoir-Faire*.

Straddling literary naturalism and romanticism, a tragicomedy of the most entertaining nature unfolds in a quick paced prose not short of acerbic satire and wry humor, where all sort of characters are presented as caricatures of the motley social strata of the convoluted era. Liberals and monarchists, Jansenists and Jesuits, aristocrats and peasants, radicals and conservatives; with all their disparate positions and beliefs, all the characters have the common traits of nepotism and debauchery that acquire allegorical connotations in the development of Julien's personality, which evolves ceaselessly in the course of the story.

Half romantic hero, half despicable villain, Stendhal's protagonist becomes an emblem of the author's contempt for the gullible disposition of men. Julien's actions in society don't correspond to his personal views and so he passes through life in a constant performance. He treats his masters with proud dignity to hide his sense of inferiority, he falls in love with the idea of seducing women of noble descent to cover his need for validation, he conceals his vulnerabilities and cheats himself with delusions of grandeur, and so his moods fluctuate between his artificial objectives and his true feelings, cleaving him in two.

Is Julien a victim or the outrageous product of his time?

He certainly falls prey to the false morality that Stendhal's denounces openly with disarming jocularly. But there is much more than that in this uncategorizable book, because underneath the superficial parody, there is a philosophical undercurrent that grows more evident in the last chapters, which appear untitled, maybe as a symbol to represent Julien's progressive unveiling, for his fate seems to be determined by birth and not by his honest resolutions.

In the blink of an eye, Stendhal flips the tone of his narration and the reader finds himself facing the paradox of a protagonist that can be either understood as an arrogant moron or as a valiant idealist.

As the declared romantic I am, I lean towards the second option and choose to see Julien's last acts as a proclamation of his rightful independence. Having dropped the masks, he can see clearly into his heart and avoid "*this desert of selfishness which is called life.*"

Manny says

I was taking the train from Geneva to Grenoble, one of the most beautiful routes in the world, and I was reading *Le Rouge et le Noir* for the second time. I hadn't picked the book because I was visiting Grenoble, it just worked out that way. I was alone in the compartment; it was one of those old-fashioned carriages which still had compartments.

At the fifth or sixth stop, the door opened, and a young woman entered carrying a lot of heavy luggage. She asked me, in French, if I'd mind helping her put it up on the rack, and I did so. She smiled and thanked me, I smiled back. She was small, dark and very pretty in a North African way. We got chatting, and quickly determined that her English was slightly worse than my French; the conversation, which initially had mixed both languages, settled down to being completely francophone. She told me that French was her second language, Berber being the first, but she sounded pretty near perfect to me.

She asked what my book was, and I showed it to her. She'd said she'd never read it. I did my best to explain, while she looked at me with her huge dark eyes. Julien gets involved with two women. Madame de Rênal is kind and gentle, and she truly loves him, but he is forced by circumstances to leave her. He then later falls in love with Mathilde. I remember that I described her as *bizarre et cruelle*, and added that she reminded me of

someone I had once loved. She nodded; she had had a similar experience. I apologised for my very insufficient command of French. *Vous trouvez les mots*, she replied. I have always treasured this compliment. Usually I am inarticulate in French, but just then I was indeed able to find words.

We reached the end shortly before the train got to Grenoble. I helped her take her several suitcases out onto the platform. We said goodbye French style, with a kiss on each cheek. She seemed a little surprised that I made no attempt to get her contact details. We had really got on remarkably well, but it had been so perfect that I was sure anything else would just spoil it.

I never saw her again, but every time I think of *Le Rouge et le Noir* I think of her.

Marcel says

Ultimately, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* almost pissed me off. If I see this book again I'm tempted to say to it, "I'm not rationally sure why you kinda pissed me off. I just know you did!" It really would have if I had cared enough about any of the people in it to be pissed off. I hate that feeling of self persuasion as inevitable, as people being trapped in mind games. It sucks but I cannot swallow the idea that there is no other outcome. I know it's satire. I kinda hate satire. I don't want to read something that the point of it is to point out how something else is wrong if it isn't going to be right itself. They COULD walk away... I had better feel more than surface-y surface if I'm going to believe otherwise.

I think I was bothered because people are not mind readers. Choosing to live as a liar does not make a more honest person out of you, if you are doing so because the claim is that there's no other choice. There was something passive-aggressive about the whole thing: the "love" stories, the ambitions... Something false.

My former friend went on and on about Stendhal's theories on love being a chosen journey, that no one takes that journey unless they choose to. Made me hate Stendhal a little bit more. Something about ending up in Bologne. He referenced a Garfield reference to this idea (with a Bologne joke! Yuck!). I freaking hate Garfield. Anyway, I hate that too much is taken for granted like some sweeping statement about love and honesty and ambition could be swept up in "events". Garfield can have Stendhal and lasagna. I'd rather not have excuses.

Teresa says

Oh, nineteenth century!

Not counting the subtitle—'A Chronicle of the 19th Century' (which I didn't know of until just now: it's not on the cover or the title page of either copy of the book I have on hand)—I count eight mentions of the phrase 'nineteenth century' by the omniscient narrator, of which two are apostrophes, including the quote above, which is from one of the later chapters. Revolution and the turmoil of change in the world has led to this lamentation, in much the same way our generation has lamented and continues to lament the condition of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries: e.g., its treatment of women; the suppression of the spirited by the powerful; the state of marriage; the hypocrisy and lack of empathy at all levels. Once again, there is nothing new in the world.

The prose is engaging and moves quickly (though the typos and formatting mistakes of my almost-free Kindle copy, frustratingly, did get in my way quite a bit). I especially enjoyed the sarcasm of the authorial interludes and the ingenious tying-together of threads and characters as the work reached its end.

The book was nothing like I'd expected. I had a vague notion it would be a dry, perhaps violent, political read. It's neither dry nor violent, except for the main character's violent emotions; and it is intentionally, and entertainingly, farcical at times (i.e., the bedroom scenes). It is political, but its focus is on the personal (including the psychology of those personalities) within that dynamic.

Overall, it's an uneven read; ultimately, it's a fascinating one.

Elizabeth K. says

I read this for two reasons: First, now, when I die, I can say "Why yes, I've read Stendhal." Right, I don't know who at my deathbed is going to be asking me about Stendhal, but it's one more thing to cross off my worry list. Maybe there's some sort of deathbed reckoning for book snobs that involves a Ghost of Literature Past. Then our conversation could go like this:

Ghost of Literature Past: And you've read Stendhal ... ?

Me: Yes, indeedy!

GLP: Hmmm. Yes. Hmmm ... and it was *in translation*, I believe?

Me: Oh. Er. Yes.

GLP: Hmmmmm. *scribbles notes* I see.

The second reason is that it is one of James's favorite books. I don't do very well predicting what he will like in general, let alone what would make his list of favorite books.

I'm pretty confident that if I had to read this for a class, I would hate it quite a bit. But as leisure reading, it was solidly enjoyable. The gist is we have this guy, Julien, who is from a working class family but is rather bright and wants to move up in the world. He's got a Napoleon fetish, but unfortunately for Julien, we're already firmly into the Restoration, so his best plan for upward mobility is through the church. He also finds the time to have affairs with two women of the upper class, both of which consist of "I love her! But she despises me! But if she thinks I despise her, she will love me! But if she loves me because I despise her because I love her, I will despise her! Then she will despise me because I despise her because she loves me because I despise her because she despises me because I love her, and I will love her again! Not kidding at all here. James has this great 1950s paperback copy of this book, with an intro by Clifton (Information Please!) Fadiman where he goes to great lengths to explain the significance of Stendhal's work being the first psychological novel, and then adds "no one reads Stendhal for the plot." Are you crazy? The whacked out plot is the BEST PART. It's also my impression that the book has a lot of insights about French politics which were completely wasted on me because my knowledge of this time period is somewhat scant, and I couldn't figure out if the book was taking place before or after the July Revolution. Actually, Julien gets caught up in a bit of political intrigue that very well could have been the July Revolution now that I think about it. My education in French history consisted of lots of info about Charlemagne, then there was the 100 Years War, then there was the Sun King, and then they stormed the Bastille, and then Napoleon, and then Vichy, and then they named the airport after Charles De Gaulle, which shows how history always come full circle because Charles De Gaulle and Charlemagne are both named Charles, more or less.

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K.D. Absolutely says

I just finished watching the latest movie adaptation of *Les Misérables* and there is a song there about Red and Black. I got excited because both *Les Misérables* and this book *Scarlet and Black* also known as *Red and Black* were both written by French novelists and set in the 19th century France. So, when I heard the song being sung by those young actors in *Les Miz* I said so that's the *other* meaning of those colors!

???Red - the blood of angry men!

Black - the dark of ages past!

Red - a world about to dawn!

Black - the night that ends at last!???

???Red... the color of desire, black... the color of despair...???

However, in this Stendhal book, red is the color of the army but the protagonist, the handsome and smart **Julien Sorel** is born too late to join the army because Napoleon is already dead and it is the time of Bourbon Restoration and his only option to be rich and great is to join the church and its color is black.

However, the two novels depict a different period in the 19th century France. *Red and Black* is the period between Napoleonic empire and the 1830 Revolution that led to July Monarchy. On the other hand, that rebellion in *Les Misérables* was called June Rebellion or Paris Uprising in 1832 and was an attempt to reverse the outcome of the 1830 Revolution in *Red and Black*.

I read and enjoyed this book even prior to seeing the movie. I already had a review in my mind for the book but when I saw the movie this evening, I got excited because it reminded me of those colors.

I liked the book because it is easy to read and it has the ability to transport you to the 19th century France. I love everything about France. The book is a *bildungsroman* and at the same time a sociological satire. It exposes the political tension leading to the 1830 revolution particularly depicting a society that was about to change that the dying aristocracy would no longer witness. This reminded me of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* that depicts Russia at its crossroad: whether to stay traditional (monarchy and all) or adapt the western influences (that ultimately paved way to communism). I think countries about to metamorphose into something else have enough drama to serve as a backdrop for a great novel.

Great book. My first Stendhal and I am looking forward to reading his other novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma*.

Quinn Slobodian says

It's a book about the dangers of reading. The novel's characters are seduced by ideas, poetic gestures, tragic endings, narratives they might inhabit and soon find themselves enslaved to them, marching lockstep in the footprints of characters whose stories they've read. Stendhal obviously takes pleasure in his position as most recent seducer of the book's reader and he sugar-coats his narrative pills just enough that it's only later, with the feeling of slight corrosion in your stomach, that you wonder about the wisdom of what you've done.

Which character's glances, turns, heartbeats and feints are you doomed to re-enact now?

peiman-mir5 rezakhani says

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TheSkepticalReader says

What makes this novel a masterpiece is our friend Julien. Not a very likable fellow, I must admit, but a fantastically written one. He's incredibly flawed and that's what makes him so utterly *human*. He constantly makes horrible mistakes, trips over himself, is mostly always way in over his head, but all of that just makes him more complex, and thus more interesting.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

923. Le Rouge et le Noir = The Red and The Black, Stendhal
Le Rouge et le Noir (The Red and the Black) is a historical psychological novel in two volumes by Stendhal, published in 1830. It chronicles the attempts of a provincial young man to rise socially beyond his modest upbringing through a combination of talent, hard work, deception, and hypocrisy. He ultimately allows his passions to betray him.
Book I: Book I presents Julien Sorel, the ambitious son of a carpenter in the fictional village of Verrières, in Franche-Comté, France. He would rather read and daydream about the glory days of Napoleon's long-disbanded army than work his father's timber business with his brothers, who beat him for his intellectual affectations. He becomes an acolyte of the abbé Chélan, the local Catholic prelate, who later secures him a job tutoring the children of Monsieur de Rênal, the mayor of Verrières. Although he appears to be a pious, austere cleric, Julien is uninterested in the Bible beyond its literary value and how he can use memorised passages (learnt in Latin) to impress important people. He enters a love affair with Monsieur de Rênal's wife, which ends when it is revealed to the village by her chambermaid, Elisa, who is also in love with Julien. The abbé Chélan orders Julien to a seminary in Besançon, which he finds intellectually stifling and pervaded with

più imitabile, un contesto sociale ostile, classista e irraggiungibile, fatto di privilegi e di privilegiati. Una Francia all'ombra della seconda Rivoluzione.

La storia di una scalata sociale? La storia di un fallimento? L'emblema di un'epoca? Chi è Julien Sorel? L'ideale che si scontra con il reale? L'ipocrisia fatta persona? Uno squarcio anacronistico nella storia? Difficile rispondere. Basti questo: un personaggio memorabile che si imprime nell'immaginario del lettore a dispetto di qualche sgambetto sornione che gli tende il suo autore. La materia di un romanzo complesso che tra il serio e il faceto restituisce un'epoca ai suoi contemporanei, in tempi non facilissimi.

Un universo complesso e mutevole, difficile da decifrare ma che Stendhal ha riproposto con realismo disarmante, con gradevole ironia, attingendo da diversi moduli narrativi: romanzo politico, romanzo storico, romanzo psicologico con a capo un plebeo ribelle, un fallito dongiovanni, lo specchio dei tempi che vive come il romanzo che lo rappresenta: "Eh, signori, un romanzo è uno specchio che viene trasportato lungo una strada maestra. Ora vi rimanda l'azzurro del cielo, ora il fango dei pantani..."

Infine, la storia di una vita, eroica e disperata, ricca e vacua, un'eterna dicotomia, un oscillare opportunistico tra il rosso e il nero in un esempio perfetto di mirabile trasformismo che si risolve nell'autodistruzione.

Un libro sempre attuale. Da leggere.

Carmo says

Julien Sorel tanto nos pode irritar como comover. É inteligente mas vive constantemente desconfiado, sabe manipular a seu bel prazer mas alimenta um ressentimento que o envenena. Contudo, dá-nos a volta pela sua ingenuidade e por aquele permanente complexo de inferioridade que faz dele um ser indefeso e humilhado.

Na França vive-se o período da Restauração após a queda de Napoleão. O país encontra-se dividido entre Realistas, defensores da monarquia absoluta, e Liberais, partidários de uma França mais democrática onde o Rei se submetesse a um Congresso. Esta realidade histórica não será a mais apelativa na leitura, mas o conhecimento das tensões políticas e dos conflitos sociais são fundamentais para montar o quadro narrativo. Podem bocejar, mas leiam.

Julien professa uma secreta admiração por **Napoleão** e, à sua semelhança, quer ascender socialmente de modo a contribuir para a mudança da dominante sociedade burguesa, hipócrita e mesquinha. Para isso tem duas vias; ou a carreira militar – pouco provável – ou a Igreja.

O percurso é longo e emaranhado, repleto de acidentes, amores clandestinos e peripécias absurdas.

Julien triunfa mais rápido que o previsto e da forma mais inesperada. Cúmulo da ironia, quando atinge o cobiçado topo rende-se às oportunidades do burguesismo e as grandes intenções de revolta e mudança ficam pelo caminho.

Mas **Stendal** continua a puxar-nos o tapete e numa rápida reviravolta todo o itinerário da personagem é alterado rumo a um final surpreendente.

Não é leitura das mais fáceis, mas é um romance que fica a moer na cabeça, e quanto mais penso nele mais percebo a complexidade psicológica das personagens, e quanto mais me debruço sobre as suas posturas e intuítos, mais me capacito da profundidade do enredo e do muito que deve ter ficado por entender.

Jeffrey Keeten says

”Nothing can distinguish a man as a death sentence,” thought Mathilde. “It’s the only thing one can’t buy.”

Julien Sorel was a young man with an audacious intellect. Such a gift can be a great resource that can be exploited for financial gain or it can be a burden that keeps a person in perpetual misery. Sorel, the hero of our story, experiences both the wonders and the loneliness that sometimes goes hand in hand with being too aware to accept fate without attempting to manipulate a better future. He is handsome, witty, and when money is plentiful dresses in such a way as to enhance his best features. He is prideful of his talents and humbled by his modest beginnings in equal measure like two halves of the same tarnished coin. Because he comes from the lower class of French society his opportunities for advancement are limited to the church or the military. Even though he shows few signs of or inclinations towards pious behavior Julien is sent to the church.

Julien is placed as a tutor in the household of Monsieur de Rênal, the mayor of Verrières. He isn’t a particularly good teacher. He’d rather be spending his time reading and daydreaming, but through guile and an exaggerated appearance of discipline he wins over the children and the parents. On a whim he decides that he must seduce the pretty Madame de Rênal as in his mind that is what a man of his nature is supposed to do. He is calculating, manipulative, hostile, and seductive and each of those characteristics are hampered by his own naiveness producing comedic results and embarrassing moments that left this reader squirming in his seat with personal memories of being equally stupid in moments of social ineptness. Those characteristics that we like the least in Julien are also the characteristics that we like the least in ourselves and leads us to identify so closely with Sorel that his triumphs and his setbacks create diverse reactions from a sheepish grin to burning shame.

Madame de Rênal and her husband

Madame de Rênal is swept up in the attentions of our hero and soon finds herself in circumstances she never would have expected to experience.

*”Suddenly, a word frightened her: **adulteress**. She could see it. The worst things that the vilest debauchery could stamp on the notion of sensual love swarmed into her mind. These ideas were trying to stain the glow of the tender, divine image she had constructed, both of Julien himself and the happiness of loving him. The future was painted in ghastly colors, She saw herself as contemptible.”*

Julien is sent back to the seminary where he fits in about as well as a swan among ducks. *”Julien had tried in vain to make himself small and stupid, he could not be liked; he was far too different.”* Luckily he comes to the attention of Father Pirard who realizes he is intelligent enough to have better uses. As enemies of both Father Pirard and Julien attempt to destroy them Stendhal, as he does through the whole book, shows that pettiness, hypocrisy, wealth, and social standing are to be found in equal measure among people of influence. Poor people are not let off the hook either as greed turns out to be such an unsavory aspect of Julien’s own father. The father that beat him and ridiculed him is quick to want to benefit from his son’s advancement. Honor is discussed in great detail throughout the book, but is revealed as a chimera when pride or money are being threatened.

Julien rises with the help of Father Pirard to private secretary for Marquis de la Mole. His office is to be the library. *”A few minutes later, Julien found himself alone in a magnificent library; it was a delightful moment. So no one would come to him, excited as he was, he hid himself in a dark corner. From there, he looked out*

at the books' glittering spines. 'I could read every one of them,' he told himself."

Whenever I walk into my own personal library, unfortunately not as grand as the Marquis's library, I still feel the flutter in my stomach that one might experience catching a glimpse of an old lover in a train station. The books speak to me stirring up fond memories of when words become images, scents become detectable, and fictional characters become flesh and bone. I don't foresee a tablet with a digital bookshelf eliciting the same flutter in my stomach.

The tactile feeling of individual books, unique in typeface, paper, and design are an important part of the reading experience for me. Books are more than just words to me, but a form of art. Running your eye over the hills and dales of Van Gogh's brushstrokes while looking at the actual painting is such a larger sensory experience than looking at a picture of the painting in an art book; the two experiences are incomparable. I'm afraid as tech savvy as I am in all other phases of my life I'm a Luddite when it comes to books. I love the idea that more people are reading books because of the evolution of ereaders, but for me the experience that Julien has in that library is what I want.

"He turned his lips to hers, and with his hand
Called back the tangles of her wandering hair."
Bryon, Don Juan

Julien meets Mademoiselle Mathilde de La Mole. He isn't impressed. In fact he finds her annoying in so many ways. *"She's even paler than before she went on the trip...Her hair is absolutely colorless, it's so blonde! You could say the daylight goes right through it!...And what arrogance, when she greets people, when she just looks at them! She holds herself, she moves, like a queen!"* Like a lot of things in Sorel's life he is motivated by a grander vision than what he is capable. He has unsustainable ideas of honor ruled more by passion than any real sense of established decorum. He even defends immorality with affectionate intensity.

*Altamira answered. "We no longer have genuine passions, in the nineteenth century. That's why there's so much boredom, here in France. We do the most incredibly cruel things, but without cruelty."
"So much the worse!" said Julien. "At the very least, crimes ought to be committed with pleasure. That's the only good about them: How can we even begin to justify them for any other reason?"*

Mathilde is Julien's ticket to finally achieve the impossible. He can bound out of the chains of his birth and achieve a social position that would be talked about for generations. The game of love that plays out is almost as comical and ridiculous as his seduction of Madame de Rênal. His present and his past collide with devastating effects that will leave you flipping the final pages as fast as your eyes and mind can comprehend the sentences.

Marie-Henri Beyle AKA Stendhal

I noticed with interest that there is a turning point in the book when I could tell that Stendhal began to like his own greatest creation. He lent more sympathy to the plight of Julien Sorel. He started softening the edges

and letting the reader know that even when Sorel is an ass he is still a well meaning ass. Julien was certainly more innocent than those that were trying to manipulate him. It was as if in creating this character Stendhal started to understand himself through the character and maybe even started to tolerate those aspects of himself that had given him trouble throughout his life or at least look on them as youthful fallacies.

Intelligence does not come wrapped with discretion or for that matter wisdom. Time is the only device that allows us to grow into our intelligence and hopefully use it to better ourselves and strengthen our communities. I came away from the novel knowing more about myself and wishing that I could meet the youthful Julien Sorel when he has some gray at his temples and a more docile tongue, but then maybe I just need to go look in the mirror. Highly recommended for all reformed smarty pants.

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I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Το ?σχημο Ρ?ζι Καρολ?να says

Π?σο με μπ?ρδεψε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο! Χωρ?ς αμφιβολ?α το βρ?κα αριστουρηματικ?, αλλ? αναρωτι?μαι, αν πρ?κειται για σ?τιρα των ηθ?ν του 19ου αι?να και δη της εποχ?ς της Παλιν?ρθωσης των Βουρβ?νων (1814 – 1830) ? αν ε?ναι μια αλληγορ?α για τους Ναπολε?ντιους χρ?νους που προηγ?θηκαν, αν ε?ναι ?να ρομαντικ? ? κοινωνικ? - ρεαλιστικ? μυθιστ?ρημα, δεν κατ?λαβα καν ποια ε?ναι η αληθιν? κοσμοθεωρ?α του συγγραφ?α. Ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο που πολ? ε?κολα μπορε? να παγιδ?ψει τον αναγν?στη σε λανθασμ?να συμπερ?σματα. Ακ?μα και τα επιγρ?μματα στην αρχ? του κ?θε κεφαλα?ου, τα περισσ?τερα απ? αυτ? φα?νεται πως ε?ναι πλαστ?, κατασκευασμ?να απ? τον ?διο τον συγγραφ?α. Γιατ? ?λο αυτ? το μασκ?ρεμα; Δεν ?χω την παραμικρ? ιδ?α. Ο Σταντ?λ για εμ?να ε?ναι ?να α?νιγμα και αυτ? ε?ναι το πρ?το βιβλ?ο του που διαβ?ζω.

Η υπ?θεση ε?ναι φαινομενικ? απλ?. Ο νεαρ?ς Ζυλι?ν Σορ?λ ?χει μια σπ?νια ικαν?τητα φωτογραφικ?ς μν?μης. Χ?ρη σε αυτ? το τάλ?ντο και στην αγ?πη του για τα βιβλ?α, καταλ?γει να προσληφθε? ως παιδαγωγ?ς στην οικογ?νεια εν?ς επαρχι?τη ευγενο?ς, του δημ?ρχου ντε Ρεν?λ της μικρ?ς π?λης Βερι?ρ, η οπο?α βρ?σκεται στην ανατολικ? Γαλλ?α, κοντ? στη Μπεζανσ?ν. Απ? εκε? και π?ρα και ως το τ?λος του βιβλ?ου αναπτ?σσεται η εξ?λιξη του Ζυλι?ν που ε?ναι ?μορφος και εντελ?ς αλλοπρ?σαλλος τ?σο στην σκ?ψη, ?σο και στην συμπεριφορ? και στις πρ?ξεις. Το βασικ? πρ?βλημα ?λων των κεντρικ?ν ηρ?ων της ιστορ?ας αυτ?ς ε?ναι που δεν σου επιτρ?πουν να προβλ?ψεις σε τ? εν?ργεια θα προχωρ?σουν μετ?. Ως το τ?λος του βιβλ?ου θα ορκιζ?μουν πως η υπ?θεση θα ε?χε την ακριβ?ς αντ?θετη εξ?λιξη. Για ψυχολογικ? μυθιστ?ρημα, το βρ?κα εντελ?ς «αψυχολ?γητο».

Οι χαρακτ?ρες αποτυπ?νονται ρεαλιστικ? και λεπτομερ?ς. ?λες οι εκφ?νσεις του ψυχισμο? τους, ?λες οι αντιφατικ?ς πλευρ?ς του χαρακτ?ρα τους σκιαγραφο?νται με απαρ?μιλλη τεχνικ?. Ο Σταντ?λ ε?ναι στυλ?στας απ? τους πλ?ον σπ?νιους. Αλλ? ε?ναι τ?σοι οι ελιγμο? της σκ?ψης και τ?σες πολλ?ς οι ψυχολογικ?ς μεταπτ?σεις των ηρ?ων, που αισθ?νθηκα χαμ?νη σε ?ναν λαβ?ρινθο δ?χως τ?λος. Υπ?ρχει ?να απ?σπασμα που, ?χω την εντ?πωση, πως κ?πως αχν? φωτ?ζει λ?γο, τη φιλοσοφ?α με την οπο?α ?χει γραφτε? αυτ? το ?ργο:

«?νας ?γγλος ταξιδι?της διηγεται πως ζο?σε, με πολλ? οικει?τητα, μαζ? με μια τ?γρη. Την ε?χε μεγαλ?σει και την χ?ιδευε, μα π?ντα στο τραπ?ζι του βρισκ?ταν ?να πιστ?λι γεμ?το». (σελ.506)

Η ζω? που περιγρ?φει η παραπ?νω πρ?ταση ε?ναι ?να αλλ?κοτο κρ?μα ηδον?ς και π?νου. Ε?ναι μια σχ?ση που πα?ζει με τον θ?νατο, ακροβατε? αν?μεσα στην τρυφερ?τητα και το δ?σιμο και στην πιο σκληρ? αμυντικ? στ?ση, ε?ναι κ?τι εξαιρετικ? επικ?νδυνο και ενδιαφ?ρον, ?ρωστο και γοητευτικ?, ε?ναι αντιφατικ? και σε τελικ? αν?λυση αυτ? που περιγρ?φει ε?ναι η αλληγορικ? εικ?να μιας εξαρτητικ?ς σχ?σης. Το να γοητε?εσαι απ? αυτ? που μπορε? να σε βλ?ψει, και να ε?ναι αυτ? ακριβ?ς που νοηματοδοτε? τη ζω? σου, ε?ναι ?νας εθισμ?ς που μπορε? να ?χει πολ? κακ? αποτελ?σματα. Πραγματικ? μ?νο ?τσι μπορ? κ?πως να αρχ?σω να ξετυλ?ξω αυτ? το μπερδεμ?νο κουβ?ρι, ετο?της της ιστορ?ας ποια μοι?ζει τ?σο παλι? και αρχ?γονη, ?σο και το προπατορικ? αμ?ρημα.

Ο Ζυλι?ν δεν φα?νεται να ?χει αυταπ?τες για το θε? του χριστιανισμο?. Θεωρε? πως η εκκλησ?α ε?ναι μια κερδοφ?ρα επιχε?ρηση για ?σους καταφ?ρουν να εγκολπωθο?ν μ?σα της, και οι τυχερ?τεροι, δεν εξασφαλ?ζουν, μ?σω αυτ?ς, μ?νο τον επιο?σιο, αλλ? και την εξουσ?α. Και δεν ε?ναι τ?σο το χρ?μα και η κοσμικ? δ?ναμη, ε?ναι κ?τι ?λλο που ο ?ρωας το εντοπ?ζει στην ?ννοια της αλ?θειας ? μ?λλον στην παντελ? απουσ?α της ?ννοιας αυτ?ς:

«Μα ποιον Θε?; ?χι τον Θε? της Β?βλου, τυρανν?σκο σκληρ? που διψ?ει για εκδ?κηση... μα το Θε? του Βολτα?ρου, δ?καιο, καλ?, ?πειρο...»

?λες οι μν?μες της Β?βλου που ?ξερε απ?ξω τον τ?ραζαν...

«Μα π?ς, μ?λις βρεθο?με τρεις μαζ?, να πιστ?ψουμε στο μεγ?λο ?νομα του ΘΕΟΥ, ?στερα απ? τη φοβερ? κατ?χρηση που του κ?νουν οι παπ?δες μας; Να ζεις ξεμοναχιασμ?νος!... Τ? μαρτ?ριο!...» (σελ.584)

Ωστ?σο η ιδ?α πως με το ρ?σο μπορε? να εξασφαλ?σει μια υπ?ροχη ζω? απολα?σεων δεν ε?ναι κ?τι που τον ενοχλε? δι?λου, αντ?θετα αποτελε? μια απ? τις φιλοδοξ?ες του. Τ?ση αντ?φαση και τ?σες μεταπτ?σεις μ?σα σε ?να τ?σο νεαρ? και ντελικ?το πλ?σμα! Ο Ζυλι?ν ε?ναι λ?τρης του Μ?γα Ναπολ?οντα τον οπο?ο ταυτ?χρονα φροντ?ζει να αποκηρ?σσει μετ? βδελυγμ?ας – ?χετε αρχ?σει να πι?νετε κ?πως την αντιφατικ?τητ? του; - και πιστε?ω πως σε ?λο το ?ργο μιμε?ται σε επ?πεδο κοινωνικ?, τις στρατηγικ?ς τακτικ?ς που εφ?ρμοσε ο σπουδα?ος αυτ?ς στρατηλ?της στα πεδ?α των μαχ?ν αλλ? και στην σφά?ρα της πολιτικ?ς. Μια σειρ? απ? αδι?κοπες επιθ?σεις, υπαναχωρ?σεις, διαπραγματε?σεις, συμβιβασμο?ς και αδιαλλαξ?ες, ?τσι ακριβ?ς κουμαντ?ρει τη ζω? του αυτ? το αλλ?κοτο πλ?σμα. Για παρ?δειγμα το παρακ?τω απ?σπασμα αναφ?ρεται στον τρ?πο που σκ?φτεται να δρ?σει ο ?ρωας σχετικ? με μια ερωτικ? πολιορκ?α:

«Στη μ?χη που ετοιμ?ζεται, συν?χισε, η ?παρση της καταγωγ?ς θα ε?ναι ?να ε?δος ψηλο? λ?φου σε στρατηγικ? θ?ση αν?μεσα σ' εκε?νη και σ' εμ?να. Εκε? π?νω πρ?πει να ελιχθ?. ?κανα π?ρα πολ? ?σημα που ?μεινα στο Παρ?σι. Η αναβολ? του ταξιδιο? μου με ταπειν?νει και μ' εκθ?τει, αν ?λα αυτ? ε?ναι σκ?το παιχν?δι. Τ? κινδυνος υπ?ρχε αν ?φευγα; Τους κορ?ιδεua αν με κορ?ιδεuαν.Αν το ενδιαφ?ρον της για μ?να ?ταν κ?πως πραγματικ?, τ?τε θα εκατονταπλασ?αζα αυτ? το ενδιαφ?ρον». (σελ. 397)

Σε καθαρ? πολιτικ? επ?πεδο στην ιστορ?α αυτ?ν υπ?ρχουν οι φιλελε?θεροι μεγαλοαστο? που ?χουν το χρ?μα αλλ? ?χι τους τ?τλους ευγενε?ας, οι τρομοκατημ?νοι ευγενε?ς που μετ? απ? την περ?οδο της εξορ?ας τους, μετ? την Γαλλικ? Επαν?σταση, θ?λουν, αλλ? δεν μπορο?ν, να επαναφ?ρουν τα μεσαιωνικ? μοναρχικ? ιδε?δη, η Εκκλησ?α διαιρεμ?νη αν?μεσα στους φιλοσοφο?ντες γιανσενιστ?ς και τους πολιτικ?ντηδες ιησου?τες και ο λα?ς, μια μ?ζα γκρ?ζα και εξαρτημ?νη απ? ?λους τους προηγ?μενους, για την επιβ?ωσ? της.

Ο συγγραφ?ας συχν? πυκν? υποστηρ?ζει πως ?σα γρ?φει, ε?ναι αποτ?λεσμα της εξουχιστικ?ς

ρευνας που προκ?πτει απ? την ενδελεχ? παρατ?ρησηση της κοινων?ας, την οπο?α απεικον?ζει πιστ?. Ε?ναι λοιπ?ν ο κ?σμος που ζο?με τ?σο κυνικ?ς, τ?σο αλλοπρ?σαλλος και αντιφατικ?ς; Ας αναλογιστο?με για μια στιγμ?, τις ζω?ς μας, τα ?σα μας επιβ?λλονται ?ξωθεν και ?νωθεν. Τ? υπ?ρχει λοιπ?ν να πιαστο?με για να επιβι?σουμε μ?σα σε αυτ?ν την παρ?νοια; Μ?πως ε?ναι ?λα μ?ταια; Αν το κ?κκινο αναμιχθε? με το μα?ρο, γ?νεται μα?ρο. Το μα?ρο ε?ναι η απουσ?α του φωτ?ς που καταπ?νει τα π?ντα. Κι η αλ?θεια, την οπο?α αναζητε? μ?ταια ο Ζυλι?ν φα?νεται πως μπορε? να αποκαλυφθε? ?σως εν εσ?πτρω και εν αιν?γματι μ?σα απ? τον καθρ?φτη της Τ?χνης και της Λογοτεχν?ας:

«Μ?λιστα, κ?ριε, το μυθιστ?ρημα ε?ναι ?νας καθρ?φτης που τον περιφ?ρουν σε ?ναν μεγ?λο δρ?μο. ?λλοτε αντανακλ? στα μ?τια σας το γαλ?ζιο τ' ουρανο?, ?λλοτε το βο?ρκο απ?τις λασπολακκο?βες του δρ?μου. Και τ?τε τον ?νθρωπο που κουβαλ?ει τον καθρ?φτη μ' ?να κοφ?νι στη ρ?χη του, θα τον κατηγορ?σετε γι' αν?θικο! Ο καθρ?φτης του δε?χνει το βο?ρκο κι εσε?ς κατηγορε?τε τον καθρ?φτη! Θα πρ?πει να κατηγορ?σετε τον μεγ?λο δρ?μο ?που ε?ναι ο β?ρβορος, κι ακ?μα πιο πολ? τον επ?πτη του οδικο? δικτ?ου που αφ?νει το νερ? να λιμν?ζει και να κ?νει λασπολακκο?βες». (σελ. 427)

Update Ξημ?ρωμα 4ης Αυγο?στου (μα να μη μπορ? να κλε?σω μ?τι)

Ανακ?λυψα πως το συγκεκριμ?νο μυθιστ?ρημα βασ?ζεται σε αληθιν? ιστορ?α. Και συγκεκριμ?να στην ιστορ?α του **Antoine Berthet**, γιου σιδερ? ο οπο?ος εργ?στηκε στην υπηρεσ?α εν?ς αξιωματο?χου της Γκρεν?μπλ, ον?ματι **Michoud**. Η ιστορ?α του, πανομοι?τυπη με αυτ? του Ζυλι?ν δημοσιε?τηκε στην εφημερ?δα **la Gazette des tribunaux** στα **1828**. (βλ?πε: **Harold Bloom, Stendhal (Bloom's Major Novelists: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide), Chelsea House Pub, Langhorne, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., 2001** και επ?σης **D. L. Gobert, Cliffs Notes on The Red and The Black, 1967**)

Τ?ρα ?λα μου φα?νονται πιο ξεκ?θαρα. Β?βαια α?ριο στη δουλει? θα κουτουλ?ω αλλ? χαλ?λι. Αυτ? που με ξ?νιζε σε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο και με ?κανε να φαντ?ζομαι δι?φορα, ?ταν ακριβ?ς το γεγον?ς ?τι ο συγγραφ?ας χρησιμοποιε? ?ναν ?τοιμο σκελετ?. Η ιστορ?α – αρχ?, μ?ση και τ?λος – ε?ναι ?δη προκαθορισμ?νη. Αλλ? η σ?ρκα της, η επ?νδυση του σκελετο? ?χει τελεω?ς διαφορετικ? χαρακτ?ρα, γιατ? εκε? επ?νω ο Σταντ?λ ασκε? την κριτικ? του και εκφρ?ζει την δυσαρ?σκει? του για την γαλλικ? κοινων?α του 1830. Κ?που λοιπ?ν αυτ? το δ?σιμο εμφαν?ζει ρωγμ?ς. Μ?σα απ? αυτ?ς ξεδιπλ?νεται το ταλ?ντο του συγγραφ?α, αλλ? η σκ?ψη και η κοσμοθεωρ?α του δεν ε?ναι συμβατ? με την αρχικ? ιστορ?α οπο?α θα απαιτο?σε μια απλο?στερη δομ? και πιο συμβατικο?ς χαρακτ?ρες. ?τσι προκ?πτει αυτ? το αινιγματικ? αμ?λγαμα, απ? ?να λογοτεχνικ? «ατ?χημα» φα?νεται πως γρ?φτηκε ?να αριστο?ρημα της παγκ?σμιας λογοτεχν?ας. Δεν ξ?ρω κατ? π?σο στ?κει ?λο αυτ? αλλ? εμ?να με ικανοποιε?, π?ω να ξεραθ? ευτυχισμ?νη.

David Agraz says

If nothing else, read Moncrieff's translation to seep yourself in the highly latinate, generally overeducated and comfortably contorted prose ('But the adroitness with the want of which we are reproaching him would have debarred the sublime impulse of seizing the sword which, at that moment, made him appear so handsome in the eyes of Mademoiselle de La Mole') -- it will do wonders for the style of your work emails. Trust me on this one.

What to say about Stendhal? I think he exists halfway between Austen and Dostoevsky. The Red and the

Black is fundamentally a novel of manners concerned with class mobility and lack thereof, as with Austen, but with a healthy dose of bombast that Dostoevsky so enjoys. A great bulk of action occurs in drawing rooms and such, though not all. Stendhal lacks Austen's narrow provincialism, and the characters certainly lack the British reserve. Where Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy may achieve their final unbridled passionate consummation by holding hands, Stendhal's lovers will fornicate wildly under the cover of night with the aid of purloined ladders, sometimes each desperately trying to believe they feel what they think they should feel while their primary concern is really with who gets the better of whom. Or sometimes the love is impossibly sweet and self sacrificing, unyielding and frightfully destructive.

Some time ago I heard the sixteen year old girl next door have a clandestine, tearful conversation with someone much quieter in front of our houses at two in the morning on a weekday. Overheard in brief moments of wakefulness -- 'Don't run away from me -- I'll chase you.' -- a bit of quaver in the voice, it's taking some bravery, so aware of how she's exposing herself yet finding herself proud of how the words sound. Like she's trying on a daring dress, looking at herself in the mirror, both scandalized and seduced by the effect. That's what Stendhal is all about -- that moment of discovery.
