

The Anacoluthon in *Le Rouge et le noir*: Cutting Cords and Tying Knots

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Abstract In *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830), the protagonist Julien Sorel's quest for upward social mobility is facilitated by father figures and romantic partners. Abandoned by his abusive father, Julien is inspired by Napoleon and the surgeon-major, and aided by several other father figures: the priests Chélan and Pirard, M. de Rênal, and marquis de La Mole. Further, his own paternity is a predominant theme in the novel. His relationship with Mme de Rênal disrupts both her conjugal relationship, and her husband's relationship with his children. While Mathilde struggles with her decision to marry Julien, her relationship with her father is strained. Using Miller, Derrida, and Enqvist, this essay proposes to show that the paternal and conjugal relationships, which involve two (in)fidelities, are governed by a chain of anacoluthons. Further, a nuanced definition of the trope will provide insights into Mathilde's attempt to bridge the gap between the nobility and the working class. The essay concludes that Julien Sorel's death leaves many loose ends, and that his character is an embodiment of the ambiguity in the anacoluthon.

Keywords Stendhal · *Le Rouge et le noir* · Paternal and conjugal relationships · Anacoluthon · Miller · Derrida · Enqvist

In *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830), as the protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*, Julien Sorel embarks on a quest for upward social mobility. The ties with his abusive father severed, Julien is in search of a father figure and a romantic partner. Besides his cousin, the surgeon-major, and Napoleon, who serve as paternal role models, Julien is aided by several father figures: the abbés Chélan and Pirard, M. de Rênal, and

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marquis de La Mole. At the de Rênals' household and the hôtel de La Mole, the two places where Julien undertakes his quest, he stirs up paternal and conjugal relationships. Julien's relationship with Mme de Rênal, and the marquis's daughter, Mathilde are based on promises and perjuries. The relationships are marked by a back and forth movement for they involve two (in)fidelties. In this essay, I propose to show that the paternal and the conjugal relationships in the novel are governed by the anacoluthon. While Miller's and Derrida's studies show the anacoluthon as a critical device for understanding lies and marital infidelities, Wood and Dillon have used the trope to examine fidelity and betrayal in general.¹ Further, using a nuanced linguistic definition of the trope (Enkvist 1988), I examine the phenomenon of bridging the gap between classes in Mathilde's relationship with Julien.

The Anacoluthon and Its Functions

Anacoluthon is a Greek word whose meaning is derived from the prefix *an* (not) and *akoluthos* (following). While the trope retains its basic meaning, its definitions and interpretations are variegated.² The different definitions illuminate the trope's nuances, and serve as critical tools for literary applications. Dupriez defines the anacoluthon as "a breakdown in the syntactic construction of a sentence" (1991: 34). Marked by a change in the subject, it indicates inconsistency and incoherence (35–36). In this sense, the anacoluthon manifests itself in lies and prevarications.³ Miller affirms: "The anacoluthon [. . .] brings into the open, by existing as a piece of language that must have two minds at least as its sources, the way the assumption of a single generating mind for any given text may be more than a convention" (1998: 152). The anacoluthon may occur in a word, a sentence, or long non sequiturs (152) rendering the narrative incoherent.

More than a trope, the anacoluthon is a concept that can be used to understand human relationships. Fontanier evokes the idea of companionship when he writes that, the anacoluthon

[est une figure qui] consiste à sous-entendre, et toujours conformément à l'usage ou sans le blesser, le corrélatif, le compagnon d'un mot exprimé; elle consiste [. . .] à laisser seul un mot qui en réclame un autre pour compagnon. Ce compagnon qui manque n'est plus compagnon. (1968: 315)

Wood observes that, in Fontanier's definition,

¹ Miller (1998) examines Albertine's lies in her relationship with Marcel in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Derrida's essay (2002) is about lies and bigamy in Henri Thomas's novel *Le Parjure*. Wood (2014) uses the trope to study fidelity between friends in Elizabeth Brown's novel *The Little Girls*, and Dillon (2006) studies the (re)use of critical concepts, that is, fidelity and betrayal in literary interpretations.

² According to Derrida, the anacoluthon "est sans doute plus qu'une figure de rhétorique, malgré l'apparence. En tout cas, elle fait signe vers l'*au-delà* du rhétorique *dans* la rhétorique. Au-delà de la grammaire *dans* la grammaire" (2002: 21; emphasis original).

³ Lies are endemic in *Le Rouge et le noir*. Besides the main characters, the editor, the author/narrator, the priests, and the politicians engage in some form of dissimulation. This essay will focus on the lies concerning paternal and conjugal relationships.

there *is* a break in presence: one part of the anacoluthon is necessarily missing and his description is laden with impersonal pathos. There is a correlation between a word that is present and one that is not that reminds us of human relationships. (2014: 39; emphasis original)

The Chambers Dictionary defines the anacoluthon as “a non-sequential syntactic construction in which the latter part of a sentence does not fit the earlier” (qtd. in Wood 2014: 39). Wood notes that, here, “both parts of an anacoluthic sentence are *present*. The sentence is a metaphorical unity divided by a syntactical disparity” (39; emphasis original).

Derrida expands on the notion of companionship and asserts that the anacoluthon désigne généralement la rupture dans la conséquence, l’interruption dans la séquence même, à l’intérieur d’une syntaxe grammaticale ou dans un ordre général, dans un accord, donc aussi dans un ensemble, quel qu’il soit, disons dans une communauté, un partenariat, une alliance, une amitié, un être-ensemble: une compagnie ou un compagnonnage. (2002: 36)

The anacoluthon, to be sure, describes a break in a relationship, but when it is a question of partnerships, whether in business, marriage or those between lovers, the break is hardly ever abrupt. As Wood says, the anacoluthon “is a way of thinking” about partnerships that involves “a potentially endless series of tries, goes, bashes, cracks and shots” (2014: 26). In fact, breakups and reunions are staples of the *roman d’amour*, the genre to which *Le Rouge et le noir* belongs.

The idea of companionships, that is, being with a second partner while not entirely abandoning the first, is best exemplified by what linguists call the “true anacoluthon.” Enkvist states that “[a] true anacoluthon is definable as a blend of two overlapping structures” (1988: 316), and provides the following example: *I have been (for the last year) I have been doing that thing*. He explains that “a true anacoluthon consists of two parts, each of which is syntactically correct in itself, as far as it goes (though it can be subject to hesitation, correction, and melioration)” (317). In the above example, both the initial structure—*I have been for the last year*—and, the final structure—*for the last year, I have been doing that thing*—are correct. Enkvist, then, defines the center of the true anacoluthon, (*for the last year*), “as the overlap string shared by both constructions, the initial and the final” (317). In this model, the initial and the final structures share the middle structure, and therefore, the anacoluthon functions as a bridge rather than a break (323).

Paternal Relationships

Le Rouge et le noir takes place during a tumultuous period of social and political uncertainty marked by Napoleon’s abdication, his brief return, and his second abdication. The fears of the return of terror haunted the nobility while it attempted to regain its lost status. The Church and the clergy too endured a period of uncertainty. After losing its power during the Revolution, the Church revived but only symbolically (MacCannell 1999: 74). As movements that represent the past

and the future, the Restoration and the Revolution constitute the antithetical elements of the anacoluthon. According to Brooks, “the continuing struggle and restoration played itself out in dramatic political upheavals and reversals throughout the nineteenth century” (1982: 349), and placed the paternity of France in contention (348). Further, Brooks writes that “The nineteenth-century novel [. . .] is inseparable from this struggle, from the issue of authority and the theme of paternity” (349). In Esquier’s view, “Chaque roman de Stendhal conte [. . .] la rupture qui s’est opérée entre les générations sous le choc des événements révolutionnaires. Aucune relation de filiation n’échappe à ce constat” (2016: 81).

The paternity of the protagonist is a predominant theme in *Le Rouge et le noir*. Despised and abused by his father, as Julien Sorel leaves the *foyer paternel*, he vows to rise socially at all costs. But, as he aspires for a better future, he is constantly reminded of his past for he cannot erase his origin as a member of the peasant class. As Brooks observes, “Julien must unceasingly write and rewrite the narrative of a self defined in the dialectic of its past actions and its prospective fictions” (1982: 352). Underlying Julien’s pursuit, is his quest for a father figure. While still living with his father, he is inspired by his cousin, the surgeon-major who fought under Napoleon, and after the cousin’s death, by the Emperor’s books he inherited from him. Julien considers Napoleon as a role model, a father figure, but refrains from talking about him in public because of his unpopularity. However, when he unconsciously speaks about him, he must retract his words. The break or the interruption, characteristic of the anacoluthon, is symbolically represented when, after extolling Napoleon at a dinner with priests, “[Julien] se lia le bras droit contre la poitrine, prétendit s’être disloqué le bras en remuant un tronc de sapin, et le porta pendant deux mois dans cette position gênante.”⁴ He punishes himself for breaching a self-imposed censure, but the punishment itself is based on a lie, the dislocated or broken arm.⁵ On another occasion, unmindful of the dreadful effect that his words might have on Mme de Rênal, he tells her that “Napoléon était bien l’homme envoyé de Dieu” (116), and wonders who would replace him. But, upon seeing Mme de Rênal “froncer le sourcil,” “[Julien] eut assez d’esprit pour arranger sa phrase et faire entendre à [Mme de Rênal] [. . .] que les mots qu’il venait de répéter, il les avait entendus pendant son voyage chez son ami le marchand de bois [Fouqué]” (116–117). Julien renounces responsibility for his words by attributing them to (an) anonymous person or persons. Sensing that any sign of Napoleon would be anathema to M. de Rênal, Julien retrieves and burns the Emperor’s portrait (85–86). However, Julien remains loyal to Napoleon’s ideology and continues to draw inspiration from his writings throughout his life. Julian’s anachronistic dreams of being in Napoleon’s army and his hypocritical pursuit of priesthood as a career betray his anacoluthonic character.⁶

⁴ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir* (Garnier-Flammarion, 1964) 53. All future references are to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in parenthesis in the text.

⁵ In another instance symbolic of the interruption, immersed in thoughts about revolutionaries, a subject that is taboo at the hôtel de La Mole, Julien unconsciously breaks a windowpane at the library (306).

⁶ The duality is exemplified during the king’s visit to Verrières when he partakes in ceremonies of the Army and the Church (124, 128).

Julien's arrival at the de Rênals' household affects both paternal and conjugal relationships (I discuss the latter in the next section). Although, as *patron*, M. de Rênal exercises his authority over Julien, Julien's Œdipal relationship with Mme de Rênal puts M. de Rênal's function as father in question. At times, in order to overcome the guilt of her adulterous relationship, Mme de Rênal considers Julien as her son, and at others, her paramour. Julien's quest for a father figure mutates into a learning process in which the protagonist himself is called upon to assume the role of the (surrogate) father. Derrida writes that the anacoluthon makes instantaneous substitutions possible (2002: 38). While Mme de Rênal wishes Julien were the father of her children (136), M. de Rênal cannot help observing that "il lui [à Julien] est bien aisé d'être pour eux [les enfants de M. de Rênal] cent fois plus aimable que moi qui, au fond, suis le maître" (164), and that "Je suis de trop dans la famille" (166). The paternal relationship assumes the structure of the true anacoluthon: M. de Rênal (de Rênals' children) Julien. In fact, Mme de Rênal entrusts Julien with her children's future in case she dies (176).

Julien leaves the de Rênals' household to study at the seminary to become a priest, that is, a spiritual father. But, the time he spends at the seminary, which, in his view, is "[un] enfer sur la terre" (186), represents an interruption in his plans to rise socially, and the narrative of that period is a long non sequitur, an anacoluthon.⁷ When he moves to the hôtel de La Mole, Julien is roiled by his incongruity as a peasant in an aristocratic milieu. The question of his paternity takes an unexpected turn when he engages and loses in a duel with a nobleman, M. de Beauvoisis (281). Upon discovering that he has just fought with the marquis's secretary, to redeem himself, M. de Beauvoisis spreads a rumor that Julien is "un fils naturel d'un ami intime du marquis de La Mole" (282). To give credence to the claim, the marquis declares Julien the son of the duke of Chaulnes (284), and the marquis himself treats Julien like his son (285). Yet, his status as commoner is not completely erased, and he has a dual, schizophrenic identity marked by the color of his clothes: When he is in blue, he is the duke's son, in black, the marquis's secretary (284). While Julien's paternity is never clearly resolved, the marquis's relationship with his daughter is strained when she declares that she is pregnant with Julien's child. When the marquis disapproves of his daughter's marriage to Julien, and abandons him (438), Mathilde declares her intention to leave "la maison paternelle" in order to marry Julien (439). Eventually, the marquis reconciles with his daughter, but the marriage never takes place.

In *Le Rouge et le noir*, the narrator also functions as a paternal figure: "The relation of the narrator to Julien [. . .] is patently paternalistic, a mixture of censure and indulgence" (Brooks 1982: 353). The narrator of *Le Rouge et le noir*, to use Derrida's words, is both an acolyte, the one who accompanies the protagonist, and an anacoluthic figure, the one who leaves him (2002: 36). While the narrator closely follows Julien (the focalization is predominantly on him), and seems to support him most of the time, he distances himself from him on several occasions. For example, when Julien imagines what he would do if he were the mayor of Verrières, the

⁷ The narrator's reluctance to provide clear details of the time Julien spends at the seminary shows that it is of little relevance to the main story (202).

narrator criticizes his lack of sincerity and courage (117). He is also critical of Julien's inexperience as compared to a Parisian (66, 98). The most striking example of the narrator-father abandoning his creation occurs toward the end of the novel when he gives a pithy description of Julien's execution as one event among many, rather as a non-event: "Tout se passa simplement, convenablement, et de sa part [de Julien] sans aucune affectation" (499).

Conjugal Relationships

In *Le Rouge et le noir*, the marriage of the de Rênals is a *mariage de convenance* based on M. de Rênal's noble birth and his power as mayor, and Louise de Rênal's dowry and the inheritance from her wealthy aunt. While M. de Rênal is preoccupied with money, reputation, and his rivalry with M. Valenod and others, Mme de Rênal "[a]près de longues années, [. . .] n'était pas encore accoutumée à ces gens à argent au milieu desquels il fallait vivre" (65). Mme de Rênal lacks a true companion like the word left alone in Fontanier's definition of the *anacoluthon*. Julien assumes the role of Mme de Rênal's "missing" companion.⁸ In the final construction of the true *anacoluthon*—M. de Rênal (Mme de Rênal) Julien Sorel—the person in the middle, like the Roman god, Janus, looks forward and backward, showing fidelity to the two companions.

As in any love triangle, the relationship between Mme de Rênal and Julien involves perjuries,⁹ betrayals, and confessions. According to Enqvist, *anacoluthons* "are one way in which a speaker can change his mind and shift structures more often subconsciously or unconsciously than consciously" (1988: 323).¹⁰ Initially, Mme de Rênal, a pious woman educated in a convent, is oblivious of her adulterous relationship. "[E]lle était loin de se faire le plus petit reproche" (71), because of her ignorance in such matters. When she realizes that she may be in love with Julien, she resorts to self-deception (91–92) which "constitutes a complex form of lying" (Arndt 1998: 4): "[I]t implies that on one level I know the truth about which, on another level, I allow myself deceived" (4).

The clash of the two fidelities involves promises, perjuries, and confessions. Believing that her son's illness is a sign of divine punishment for her adultery, Mme de Rênal wants to confess to her husband in Julien's presence. But, when her apathetic husband dismisses what she says as "[i]dées romanesques" (134)¹¹ and

⁸ Schad writes: "There is more to *anacoluthon* than simply lack, and this secret is buried in the very word 'companion', the word on which both Fontanier and Derrida insist and which, if broken open, reveals 'companis' meaning 'with-bread'—a companion is, literally, one with whom you share bread" (2003: 178). This is true in Julien's case for, besides a salary, the de Rênals provide him boarding and lodging.

⁹ Unlike the English words *perjure* and *perjury*, which are used in legal parlance, in French, the verb *parjurer* means to break any promise or contract, a betrayal. Derrida asserts: "Tout mensonge est un parjure, tout parjure implique un mensonge. L'un et l'autre trahissent une promesse, c'est-à-dire un serment au moins implicite" (2002: 20–21).

¹⁰ This idea is illustrated by Mme de Rênal and Julien when they repeatedly hold and withdraw each other's hand (68, 78–82, 91, 92, 102, 103, 104). For more on this subject, see Rangarajan (2017).

¹¹ It is ironic that he calls truth "idée romanesque," that is, a fiction, a lie.

leaves, her promise to tell the whole truth remains suspended. This scene shows the companion literally abandoning his partner as in the anacoluthon.

Julien, for his part, is willing to go away, but he asks Mme de Rênal to promise not to confess to her husband during his absence, or else, he says, he won't be able to return (136). In a certain sense, he asks her to promise to betray her husband. But, Mme de Rênal recalls Julien from his self-imposed exile after two days, because: "Il m'est impossible sans toi de tenir mon serment. Je parlerai à mon mari, si tu n'es pas là constamment pour m'ordonner par tes regards de me taire" (136–137). While the co-presence of her two companions restores the structure of the true anacoluthon, Mme de Rênal's irreconcilable feelings (138) exemplify the hesitation that is characteristic of the trope.¹²

Her fidelities are further tested when M. de Rênal receives an anonymous letter denouncing her affair with Julien (138–139). Suspecting that it must be from M. Valenod, who had unsuccessfully courted her in the past, Mme de Rênal orchestrates a plan replete with perjuries, betrayals, but also confessions. In the episode, which resembles a trial, Mme de Rênal, as *meneuse de jeu*, assumes the conflicting roles of the prosecutor, the plaintiff, the defense attorney, and the judge to mislead her husband and protect her relationship with Julien. As Derrida writes, "[d]ès qu'il y a plus d'une voix dans une voix, la trace du parjure commence à se perdre ou à nous égarer" (2002: 21).

Mme de Rênal writes a forged anonymous letter, in the manner and style of M. Valenod, addressed to herself. Her plan is to divert her husband's attention and anger toward M. Valenod with whom he has a long-standing rivalry. Therefore, she wants to make her husband think that M. Valenod is the author of both the letter he received and the letter she forged (141). If, as Miller affirms, a lie is like a work of fiction with multiple sources as its generators (1998: 151–152), the forged anonymous letter constitutes both an act of perjury and a piece of fiction. As the author of the letter, Mme de Rênal creates a narrative voice, and implies that it is M. Valenod's. In a way, the letter is a veiled confession for, through M. Valenod's voice, Mme de Rênal reveals her affair with Julien. It's as if she can tell the truth only by assuming someone else's identity, that is, by lying.

Handing the letter to her husband, Mme de Rênal tells him in the manner of a prosecutor: "J'exige une chose de vous, c'est que vous renvoyiez à ses parents, et sans délai, ce M. Julien" (149). Asking him to fire Julien amounts to an admission of guilt—the affair is consensual, so both Julien and Mme de Rênal are guilty—but her aim is to simply "guider la colère de son mari" (150). She knows that, more than a tutor, Julien represents for M. de Rênal the difference in prestige between him and his rivals in the community (42, 142). So, as she had expected, M. de Rênal vehemently rejects the idea (150).

Further, in her role as the plaintiff, Mme de Rênal says that her honor has been violated (150). But, she obfuscates the issue to mitigate the blame on Julien: "Ce petit paysan [Julien] peut être innocent [. . .] mais il n'en est pas moins l'occasion du premier affront que je reçois" (150). Her characterization of Julien lacks credibility,

¹² Till the end she fails to resolve the conflict between her religious beliefs and her immoral conduct (484–485).

because the affair concerns her (had the affair not occurred, she would have categorically said that he is totally innocent). She, then, indirectly shares the guilt: “Monsieur! quand j’ai lu ce papier abominable, je me suis promis que lui [Julien] ou moi sortirions de votre maison” (150). While she knows that neither option would be acceptable to M. de Rênal, in her role as the defense attorney, Mme de Rênal, then, tries to broker a deal in what looks like a plea bargain. She offers to have Julien ask for a month’s leave of absence, a compromise between firing him and retaining him, yet another example of the hesitation in the anacoluthon.

In the course of the conversation, Mme de Rênal reveals “un amour tout platonique” between M. Valenod and herself, and confesses that she received letters from him, provoking her husband’s anger toward him. Although Mme de Rênal betrays herself, she successfully deflects her husband’s attention away from Julien and her relationship with him. There is an aporetic relationship between fidelity and betrayal, between acoluthon (following) and anacoluthon (not following) (Derrida 2003: 7).

In *Le Rouge et le noir*, lies and truths are interchangeable. After misleading M. de Rênal, she prevents him from confronting M. Valenod. In the end, Mme de Rênal delivers the “sentence,” preemptively telling Julien that M. de Rênal has agreed to give him time off as he had requested (155). In the entire episode, M. de Rênal fails to notice the contradictions in his wife’s arguments. Besides Mme de Rênal’s arguments admitting guilt and pleading innocence discussed above, her statement “[Julien] m’a toujours parlé de la vocation qui l’appelle au saint ministère” (151) contradicts her accusation that “[Julien] m’adresse des compliments grossiers” (152). According to Miller, because the anacoluthon has at least two minds, it is difficult to identify its self-contradiction (1998: 152). The narrator of *Le Rouge et le noir* says: “La faiblesse naturelle de l’héritage de Besançon [de la tante de Mme de Rênal] l’avait décidé [M. de Rênal] à la considérer [sa femme] comme parfaitement innocente” (175). M. de Rênal’s belief that his wife is innocent is a type of falsehood that falls in a gray area like the untruths that Arndt describes:

These untruths are not lies, since those who [tell] them sincerely believe in the truth of what they say. Yet neither are they simply mistakes, since they are not based on any responsible effort to ascertain what is true. Nor are they self-deceptions, since they do not even seem to mask a suppressed contact with reality. Instead, they constitute a strange, unclassifiable discourse, neither true nor mendacious, grounded on nothing, answerable to no one, sincerely presented as true and yet bearing no relation to reality. (Arndt 1998: 4)

Julien would return to Verrières to see Mme de Rênal before going to Paris. In another illustration of the partner leaving his companion, Julien flees as the suspicious M. de Rênal knocks on the door (240).

Bridging the Gap Between Classes

Julien's relationship with the marquis's daughter, Mathilde, represents the final construction in a true anacoluthon with Julien at the center: Mme de Rênal (Julien) Mathilde de la Mole. According to Stendhal, Mme de Rênal's "l'amour de cœur" is in contrast with Mathilde's "l'amour de tête" (1952: 712–713). Julien, who is both emotional and calculating, incarnates both types of love. Pertinently, when he is with Mathilde, he constantly recalls Mme de Rênal. As for Mathilde, her relationship with Julien means breaking up with her fiancé, M. de Croisenois in the triadic structure of the true anacoluthon: Croisenois (Mathilde) Julien. In the initial construction Croisenois–Mathilde, the second element is incongruous with the first for, in Mathilde's view, noblemen are perfect and predictable, but lack character (317, 318, 333). So, she concludes: "J'ai beau faire, je n'aurai jamais d'amour pour [eux]" (317). By breaking her engagement with a nobleman to profess her love for a commoner, Mathilde also breaks with the prevalent social convention, and commits a double betrayal. As the narrator says, "ce personnage [Mathilde] fait exception aux mœurs du siècle" (316). Interestingly, as the central element of the anacoluthon, Mathilde also acts as a bridge between the nobility and the working class.

Julien, who is always conscious of his class and critical of the aristocracy, believes that Mathilde's letter declaring her love elevates him to the level of Croisenois (329). However, Mathilde regrets her decision, and when she meets with Julien in her room, she speaks to him perfunctorily, "pour accomplir un devoir" (347). The episode reveals that her thoughts and feelings are at odds with her words (347–348). According to Derrida, "mentir ou parjurer ne [signifie] pas dire le faux ou le non-vrai, mais dire autre chose que ce qu'on pense, non pas en se trompant, mais en trompant délibérément l'autre" (2002: 27). Further, he writes, "On peut parjurer [. . .] après avoir juré, mais on peut [aussi] parjurer *en jurant*" (27–28; emphasis original). While the promise and the perjury concern one and the same person, they belong to two different times, to two different selves (Derrida 2002: 28). Mathilde openly commits perjury, whose signs were already present in her interior monologue during her meeting with Julien, when she tells him: "Je ne vous aime plus, Monsieur, mon imagination folle m'a trompée" (369). The Mathilde who promised is different from the Mathilde who reneges. The temporal difference between the two Is causes the discontinuity and the interruption in the anacoluthon (Derrida 2002: 28).

Following the advice of the Russian prince, Korasoff, Julien enters into a farcical relationship with Mme de Fervaques with the intention of making Mathilde jealous. The letters he writes to Mme de Fervaques are copies of the love letters (originally written by a young Russian to a Quakeress of Richmond) he got from Korasoff. The letters they exchange are non sequiturs as is the entire episode of their affair. Julien betrays both Mme de Fervaques and Mathilde since neither of them knows his true intention. The affair shows that fidelity and betrayal go together, because it restores the relationship between Julien and Mathilde.

Enqvist writes that, in the true anacoluthon, the initial structure may be modified and reused as the word “them” in the following example: *for some of them (we didn't have to tell) them* (1988: 322). In this paradigm, fidelity resides in the fact that “[the final construction] says at least *something* new” (Dillon 2006: 110; emphasis original). When Mathilde becomes pregnant with Julien’s child, she says that it’s a sign of guarantee that “Je suis votre épouse à jamais” (428). The breakup and the reunion can be represented as: Mathilde [pre-pregnancy] (Julien) Mathilde [post-pregnancy]. However, in a confessional letter to her father, Mathilde writes that “Ma faute est irréparable” (430), and points to another “error” in the anacoluthon, the loss of her status as a noblewoman (430), because of her marriage to a commoner. In an attempt to correct the “mistake,” the marquis confers the title “chevalier de La Varnaye” on Julien (441). But, the plans for their marriage are interrupted by Mme de Rênal’s letter to the marquis denouncing Julien.

Julien’s attempt to murder Mme de Rênal, his motive for the crime, his confession, and his address to the jury show the incoherence of his character. His true motive for the attempted murder is as unclear as his address to the jury is incoherent. He tells Mathilde that it was an act of revenge (450), but later, in an interior monologue, he reveals that “j’ai voulu la tuer [Mme de Rênal] par ambition ou par amour pour Mathilde” (478). In his address to the jury, on the one hand, he says his crime was premeditated and he deserves to die. On the other hand, he argues that the jury, consisting exclusively of members from the rich bourgeoisie, wants to punish him because he is well-educated despite being poor. The two arguments, while independently valid, do not follow each other, and constitute an anacoluthon. Julien says of his address to the jury: “J’improvisais, et pour la première fois de ma vie” (480). “Improviser” means both to speak impromptu and to make up, to fictionalize.¹³

Julien’s death, as the ultimate interruption, leaves many loose ends in the anacoluthonic chain. First, his mistresses are without a companion. Mme de Rênal dies soon after Julien’s death leaving her children (and her husband) without a companion. She also betrays Julien for she had promised to take care of his child (499). Mathilde, too, is without a companion after Crisenois’s death. Derrida says that Fontanier’s definition of the anacoluthon expresses “le deuil du langage” (2002: 36). Although Julien is her “amant infidèle” (496), Mathilde mourns his death in the same way she commemorates her ancestor Boniface de La Mole who was executed in 1574 (310, 499–500), and expresses her fidelity to the former and her betrayal of the latter. Significantly, Julien leaves behind his child just as his father cut the cord and disowned him. However, the child’s hybrid identity as a noble peasant, one that Julien tried to forge in vain, represents the bridge in the true anacoluthon.

In prison, Julien says “Moi seul, je sais ce que j’aurais pu faire... Pour les autres, je ne suis tout au plus qu’un PEUT-ÊTRE” (480). According to Crouzet, in *Le Rouge et le noir*, there is a “paradoxe du héros aux exploits presque invisibles sinon pour lui-même” (2012: 65), and “le Julien réel est doublé d’un Julien possible” (66). Derrida associates the hesitation in Miller’s definition of the anacoluthon as a

¹³ Pertinently, Julien refers to his quest as “mon roman” (442).

lie or a fiction with the word *perhaps* (2002: 23). Julien's life, summed up as "un peut-être," is the embodiment of the anacoluthon's inherent ambiguity.

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