
Searching for Sources: Stendhal's *Pilotis* and Literary Criticism's Unstable Foundations

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Introduction

In the first volume of the manuscripts of Lucien Leuwen is a short essay entitled *Pilotis ou vrai[e]s raisons*. This was written in Rome on February 9 and 10, 1835, and is housed in the Fonds Stendhal of Grenoble Municipal Library, (R301 Volume 1, folio 439 verso-442 recto). In this essay, Stendhal wrote a critique of the language employed by many of his contemporaries. He condemned what he saw as decadence in language, as reflecting the moral and political climate at the time of the July Monarchy. The language used by much of high society was pompous, affected and frequently rhetorically ambiguous and sometimes even empty. Literature in fashion at the time reflected this linguistic decadence, and Stendhal's literary aesthetic was defined in diametric opposition to these trends.

Stendhal's writing is characterized by a directness and a simplicity that won few admirers during his lifetime and that was rooted in political ideology. If language is power then it follows that the abuse of language is an abuse of power, and in the climate of political repression and censorship at the time, Stendhal's style represented a statement in opposition to the regime.

To ensure that he met his own stringent requirements of realistic content and appropriate style, Stendhal employed a method of self-questioning through a series of notes within the context of composition with which he constantly asks himself to justify the editorial decisions made within the fictional work. These notes included 'modèles', 'plans', 'style' and the more specific architectural term 'pilotis'(pile), and it is this last appellation that this article addresses.

Problematic

Literary critics and academics who write on Stendhal seem to have agreed on a definition of the term 'pilotis' that broadly means foundation or inspiration for the work. However, given the content of *Pilotis ou vrai[e]s raisons*, which criticizes those who use words without considering their meaning, it would run contrary to Stendhal's ideas on language if the term *pilotis* were to be used as a synonym for foundation whereas in fact there is a specific role attached to *pilotis*. They are a type of foundation only used in certain circumstances and, in the context of Stendhal's manuscripts, it is a term employed rarely. The failure to provide a less ambiguous definition effectively denies that there is a function attached to these notes.

This paper will argue that critical works in reference to Stendhal have neglected to define the 'pilotis' beyond that of 'foundation' or 'source'. This has led to the appellation being used to describe everything that could be classified as inspiration for his novels as *pilotis*, from personal experience to other written texts. Conversations, letters, events, affairs, and people have been labelled *pilotis* and this ambiguity has created a term that is in effect meaningless. What is more, the appropriation and the adaptation of the of the

noun means that critics who use the appellation imply that their theories are implicitly supported by Stendhal. In an attempt to redress this situation, this article will try and establish what Stendhal meant by the *pilotis* and what function, if any, was attached to these marginal notes, so as to provide a definition of the term in recognition of this function.

By comparing and contrasting what has become the definition of the *pilotis* accepted by literary critics writing on Stendhal, with what Stendhal meant by the term himself, as well as highlighting the discrepancies, this article calls for a reappraisal of the term and its purpose.

Composition

In order to understand the relevance of the *pilotis* to Stendhal's compositional practice, it is necessary to study what has already been written concerning the *pilotis* and its function. This article will provide a critical overview of studies where explicit reference is made to the term and argue that, while remaining central to the critical lexis in reference to Stendhal, the function of this key element of Stendhal's composition has never been fully explored.

Stendhal used the term in his original manuscripts as part of the compositional processes, but there are also notes marked *pilotis* on Stendhal's personal copy of the published *Armance* (often referred to as '*Armance Bucci*', Urbain-Canel, Paris 1827). However, there is much conjecture as to what role these *pilotis* notes perform, and Stendhal's only essay in which the word *pilotis* is used in the title has not been analysed.

'*Pilotis*' is an architectural term that can be translated by 'pile(s)' in English although the word '*pilotis*' is now widely used in the architectural lexis in Britain too. These foundational piles are used to support a raised structure, most commonly on unstable ground or water. As with many architectural expressions, such as plan, blueprint, etc., this metaphor found its way into standard French vocabulary and as such, is usually synonymous with '*fondation*'.

Stendhal may not have been the first to suggest that his plot must be founded upon a solid inspirational base but he appears to have been the first person to use the term '*pilotis*' to describe these foundations. In *Stendhal's Violin*, Roger Pearson underlines Stendhal's aesthetic in his writing: '[...] it was of paramount importance to be "*vrai pour tout artifice*" (*Lucien Leuwen* 1981 vol.2, 468), and hence all the '*modèles*' and '*pilotis*' which fill the margins of his text. Every character, every event, every stylistic register, even a marble table Mme de Chasteller leans on, (See *Lucien Leuwen* 1981 vol.2, note 399 in reference to p.284) has to have a real-life counterpart so that the fiction will ring true.' (Pearson 1988, 169)

However, the *pilotis* is no longer confined to the critical lexis directly relating to Stendhal, and is widely used in French literary circles, thanks to two other writers, André Gide and Louis Aragon, both '*Stendhaliens*', who used the term '*pilotis*' to describe their own foundations. The problem with this designation is that it is now effectively in the public domain and has consequently been subject to various different interpretations to the point that it has lost any connection to Stendhal. It can now be used as a synonym for anything upon which a work is based, from 'foundation' to 'inspiration'. For example, Henri Mitterrand, in *La Semaine sainte: La chevauchée du peintre*, writes about Louis Aragon and employs a generic use of the term: '*Aragon se sert volontiers de l'image du pilotis, pour désigner le point d'appui, le support que l'histoire offre à son roman. Théodore Géricault, le peintre-mousquetaire tel que le dépeignent les biographies, est ainsi le pilotis de La Semaine sainte.*'¹ Here, Mitterrand uses *pilotis* where Stendhal would have used '*modèle*' and although we cannot criticise his use of the metaphor as he is not writing about Stendhal (Aragon actually preferred to use the term *pilotis* to describe his models), there is a process of literary cross-pollination that sees terms used by one author and applied to another. This has also affected the

use of the appellation in literary criticism directly related to Stendhal so that the term is often lexicalised and adapted to suit individual critics' theories.

In studies of Stendhal, it is rare not to see references to the *pilotis*, most often framed in quotation marks and employed in a general way. Its meaning and connotations are rarely elaborated, implying that it remains a word that one is meant to know, yet one much misunderstood. To quote Armand Hoog: '*Pour séduisante qu'elle soit, cette métaphore architecturale [...] risque d'être périlleuse. Elle a égaré la critique. On accepte le donné de ces pilotis. On ne regarde pas trop le fond de la lagune.*' (*Armance*, 12)

According to Hoog, the first time that Stendhal is drawn to this metaphor is in Venice, when he notices the buildings on piles and comments on how one sees only the structure and ignores the piles that support it, and by which the structure would not and could not exist (*Voyages en Italie*, 128). Yet, paradoxically, Stendhal is able to see into the water and identify these *pilotis*. Armand Hoog's critique of the *pilotis* is as interesting as it is rare (*Armance*, 12). He does not attempt to define the *pilotis* but his attitude is at least questioning. In his preface to *Armance*, Hoog points to the irony in Stendhal's stating that people do not see the *pilotis* in the very same sentence in which he talks about these *pilotis*. Doubtless, Hoog argues, Stendhal is not referring to his own perception, but to the ignorant many who do not see beyond the immediate. Yet the majority of Stendhal scholars have accepted this term without seeking to look under the surface and search for what lies beneath.

The concept of the *pilotis* is problematic and if the critical lexis is to continue using a term that is not properly understood, it is in danger of becoming further distorted. This chapter aims to give a critical overview of how this term has been employed in literary analyses of Stendhal and his works.

The source of the term?

Hoog identifies the source of Stendhal's metaphor as originating from *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*, Stendhal's third published work and the first time in which the pseudonym 'de Stendhal' is used (*Armance*, 12):

'Les yeux ont leurs habitudes, qu'ils prennent de la nature des objets qu'ils voient le plus souvent. Ici, l'œil est toujours à cinq pieds des ondes de la mer, et l'aperçoit sans cesse.' (*Voyages en Italie*, 128)

This passage however was not Stendhal's own but in fact lifted from the pages of the *Edinburgh Review* and translated from the following: 'The eye, he says with truth, is formed by the objects to which it is accustomed.' (*Edinburgh Review*, 93). Del Litto shows that this passage is in fact by Goethe and a translation itself (Del Litto 1959, 560):² '*Es ist offenbar, dass sich das Auge nach den Gegenständen bildet, die es von Jugend auf erblickt*' (Goethe, 131-132).³ However the next sentence is Stendhal's: '*Ici, l'œil est toujours à cinq pieds des ondes de la mer, et l'aperçoit sans cesse.*'

While importance has been given to this passage as being at the origin of the famous '*pilotis*', Hoog neglects to mention that there is no explicit reference to '*pilotis*' at all and he has used the above metaphor to interpret the origin of the term. In trying to look at the 'bottom of the lagoon' Hoog has seen what he has wanted to see in the murky waters and *not* what can be justified by the text. Yet if this is not the origin of the term then what is? Hoog's choice of possible source is the only one that might be plausibly suggested but, importantly, not definitively proven.

The earliest documented use of the word is not in fact from the printed works of Stendhal but rather from two autograph notes written in Stendhal's own copy of *Armance* (Bucci), one dated February 6, 1826,

and the other simply October, 1826.⁴ Both of these notes in fact date from 1828 and look to be copied from the manuscript, as the date of 1826 makes no sense given that they are inserted in a book published in 1827.⁵

The only identified study by Stendhal regarding the role of these *pilotis*, entitled *Pilotis ou vrai[e]s raisons*, is undertaken in the manuscripts of *Lucien Leuwen*, and no reference is made to a source for the denomination in terms of a specific event. It is in the manuscripts of *Lucien Leuwen* where the term occurs repeatedly as a number of Stendhal's marginal notes are explicitly designated *pilotis* by the author's hand.⁶ As yet, no analyses of the role of these *pilotis*, or commentary of '*Pilotis ou vrai[e]s raisons*', have been undertaken.

Defining the *pilotis*

The concept of the *pilotis* is difficult to comprehend in terms of function and few studies give coherent explications of what they are and what they do. As an example, Roger Pearson, in his otherwise excellent study, *Stendhal's Violin*, uses the term but gives no real definition. The same can be said of Renée Dénier who, in *Stendhal: Paris - Londres*, neglects to substantiate what she has understood by '*pilotis*' or what Stendhal means by the term, qualifying *all* his articles written for the British press as: '*touches qui deviendront bientôt les pilotis pour Le Rouge et le Noir.*' (Stendhal 1997, 299) Similarly, Brigitte Diaz, in *Stendhal en sa correspondance*, does not define the *pilotis* but qualifies it as follows: '*Parmi, donc, les échafaudages de la bâtisse stendhalienne, la lettre est un "pilotis" important.*' (Diaz 2003, 155) Others, when treating the subject of the *Leuwen* manuscripts, are hardly more explicit, and, like Pearson and Dénier, merely indicate their existence. In the chapter dedicated to *Lucien Leuwen* in *Stendhal*, Béatrice Didier writes: '*Il y a aussi ce que Stendhal nomme "Pilotis" et qui porte sur des ensembles moins vastes que le "plan".*' (Didier 2000, 63) She admits to being baffled by many of these marginal notes: '*Ces notes explicatives, ces justifications sont assez curieuses: expliquer, justifier pour qui? Pour soi-même, pour le lecteur, pour une future édition avec notes? Aimable attention à l'endroit des exégètes futures?*' (Didier 2000, 64) These questions are left unanswered. Most common found are definitions that are simply truisms supported by clichés, such as the following by Josiane Attuel: '*L' échafaudage du talent, pour reprendre une expression chère à Stendhal, se construit par degrés, parallèlement à l'étude des passions, à la lente élaboration de la science des "philosophes". Lorsque ces "pilotis" sont assurés, l'œuvre proprement dite du poète, du re-créateur peut commencer.*' (Attuel 1980, 357)

A Chronological Survey

In 1926-7, Henri Debraye was the first person to establish what can be considered to be a complete version of *Lucien Leuwen*, yet one that was arguably less coherent than the Martineau Divan edition of 1929. However, the Martineau text's readability was often gained at the expense of heavy editing. The current fashion leans towards Debraye's edition as being the most true. Debraye reproduced the marginalia as notes and subsequent editions have also done this, most importantly the GF Debraye-Crouzet edition of 1982 (Stendhal 1982) and the Meininger *Imprimerie Nationale* edition of the following year (Stendhal 1983).⁷ Debraye is the first to have mentioned the *pilotis* and their role:

'Dans l'ensemble comme dans le plus petit détail, tout est profondément réfléchi, le livre entier est le résultat de notations dont la variété et le nombre confondent, et qui vont de l'esprit de gén-

érialisation le plus large à l'esprit d'observation le plus menu.

Les plus nombreuses de ces notations, cela va sans dire, ont rapport avec le roman lui-même. Non seulement le plan préoccupe Stendhal, mais les points d'appui sur lesquels l'édifice sera construit, ce qu'il appelle les pilotis. Ces pilotis sont semés en grand nombre au hasard des pages,⁸ ils nous montrent pourquoi un roman d'Henri Beyle est une construction si solidement fondée. Mais ne nous y trompons pas: les pilotis ne sont pas un ensemble de règles a priori; ils sont la résultante mathématique du développement de la pensée de Stendhal; ils répondent au reproche d'obscurité adressé si souvent au maître par ses contemporains, et, dans une certaine manière, ils justifient ce reproche: quand nous les connaissons, ils forment des transitions faciles à comprendre; mais le lecteur moyen, s'il ne les a pas lus, trouvera la transition obscure.' (Lucien Leuwen, 1967, vol.1, LXXI-LXXII)

Debraye was the first Stendhal scholar (but not the last) to adopt the writer's building metaphor in his definition and interestingly introduces the role of the *pilotis* as notes that might help the "happy few" to understand the novel.⁹

Martineau, in his preface to the Pléiade edition of *Lucien Leuwen*, identified *pilotis* as all of the marginal notes, including the plans, models and any other marginalia (*Romans* vol.1).¹⁰ While critical thought has evolved as to what might be considered a *pilotis* to date this idea, Martineau's definition is still pertinent although he makes no reference to '*Pilotis ou vrai[e]s raisons*':

'Ces petites notes, il les appelle des pilotis, elles servent de soubassements cachés à son œuvre, il pourra construire solidement sur elles sans craindre de s'égarer, ce sont de sortes d'échafaudages pour lui-même, "pour éviter quelque contradiction dans les petits mots de descriptions de saisons et autrement".' (Romans vol.1, 743)

In the early half of the twentieth century, there seems to have been some ambiguity concerning the function of the *pilotis*, seeing all marginalia as fulfilling the same role, an ambiguity that is still very prevalent. Jean Prévost's *La Création chez Stendhal* is a fascinating study of Stendhal's composition, and the first serious attempt at such a study, yet it is indicative of the generic treatment of marginal notes before textual genetics became a more widely accepted literary approach:¹¹

'Les plans refaits dans les marges marquent des hésitations sur tels chapitres, sur l'ampleur à donner à tel épisode. Parfois ce sont des recherches de calendrier, pour voir si la vraisemblance des faits matériels est inattaquable. Mais ce ne sont pas ces plans ou pilotis qui guident l'auteur.' (Prévost 1996, 396)

Indeed in this period, study of the marginal notes was undertaken as a means to identify the given source of an idea and distinction between forms of marginal notes was often clumsily made and has been the cause of mockery by later critics influenced by Structuralism and other schools that rejected the *hors texte*.

Georges Blin studied Stendhal's compositional processes in *Stendhal et les problèmes du roman* and approached what might be considered a definition of the *pilotis* and its possible function:

'En effet, quand Stendhal parle d'idéal, il ne s'agit pas pour lui d'ordinaire de reconstituer un système de rapports stables ou de mettre à contribution un arsenal d'archétypes universels, mais

de ressaisir la nature à travers un certain travail de cristallisation, telle qu'elle se réfracte dans l'âme lyrique, aux moments où elle se trouve hyperboliquement affectée d'un indice tant individuel d'illusion ou d'enthousiasme. Quand il recommande d'ennoblir le modèle, il n'aspire donc pas à le voir "noblifie" à froid par l'application de recettes mais interprété suivant les impératifs ou contresens du bonheur' (Blin 1954, 29)

This passage is useful as a reference because Blin is outlining what I would consider a distinction between the 'modèle' and the 'pilotis'. Blin's approach is psychoanalytical and while this is valuable as an interpretation, he does not specifically name the *pilotis* and there is no substantiation of this argument with explicit allusion to the *pilotis*.

V. Del Litto compiled an edition of *Lucien Leuwen* in 1973 (Livre de Poche) and in his short but dense preface highlights the importance of autobiography in the work. The parallels between Lucien and Stendhal are well documented and the three volumes that were intended to form *Lucien Leuwen* take inspiration from Stendhal's own life. In his introduction, Del Litto highlights the chronological importance of *Lucien Leuwen*, written between the autobiographical writings of *Souvenirs d'égotisme* and *La Vie de Henry Brulard*, but makes no reference to the term 'pilotis': 'Si des réminiscences autobiographiques sont perceptibles dans les autres romans, elles foisonnent dans *Lucien Leuwen*, dont la date de composition se situe, chronologiquement, entre deux autobiographies: les *Souvenirs d'égotisme* (1832) et la *Vie de Henry Brulard* (1835). On peut même avancer, sans crainte d'être démenti, que, loin d'être occasionnelles, elles constituent la toile de fond de l'ouvrage.' (Lucien Leuwen 1973, 12)

While neither Blin nor Del Litto mentions the term 'pilotis' in their passages, their references to the way in which Stendhal's experiences serve as models in his writing has evidently contributed to the subsequent assimilation of the concepts of models and *pilotis* by Michel Crouzet, Roger Pearson and much of 'la critique stendhalienne'.

In the words of Roger Pearson, 'Michel Crouzet's edition (a reference to *Lucien Leuwen* 1982) shows how solidly the 'pilotis' are sunk into the ground, not just of Stendhal's personal experience but also of contemporary government, electioneering, banking and even the royal abuse of power for financial gain.' (Pearson, 169) Crouzet, in his introduction, follows the Martineau line and states that the marginal notes are *pilotis*, which he defines as 'substructures' and qualifies these as 'en général autobiographiques' (*Lucien Leuwen* 1982 vol.1, 27).¹² However his analysis goes much further than Martineau's and, albeit briefly, talks of the function of the *pilotis*:

'[...] le travail d'invention y est sans cesse contrôlé et nourri par l'autobiographie. Les notes sont bien des "pilotis" du texte, et ces substructures sont en général autobiographiques: soit que Stendhal à l'imitation du peintre, tienne à faire conserver mentalement "la pose" à son modèle, le temps de l'évoquer sous l'aspect précis qu'il a choisi pour constituer le personnage, en tout ou en partie, mais évidemment surtout en partie, car les personnages sont des composés de plusieurs modèles, ou des greffes d'imaginaire sur de la réalité, celle-ci ayant la valeur d'un point fixe, d'un ancrage qui soutient et encourage l'invention: mais il arrive aussi comme dans le cas de Mme de Constantin, que Stendhal inquiet d'imaginer à vide, à l'état pur, se réfugie dans l'extrême inverse, et accorde au modèle un rôle contraignant: il est mécontent de ce qui fait le personnage, mais il s'en accommode dès lors que le modèle vrai est bien tel. Soit que aussi le souvenir joue le rôle de caution: ce qui a eu lieu confirme que ce qui est inventé est bien inventé, le réel vient appuyer le possible de l'art, et de la mimesis de son autorité de précédent, et le réel vécu est moins un modèle au sens strict qu'une sorte de preuve indirecte, de pièce à conviction qui garantit le bien fondé de la fiction. Autrement dit loin de répéter le vécu, le romanesque s'en

sert pour affirmer sa possibilité, affirmer qu'il en est le possible. Autrement dit encore, Stendhal ne copie pas le vécu, il le découvre à partir de ce qu'il a inventé.' (Lucien Leuwen 1982 vol.1, 27)

Crouzet's analysis is typically compelling, yet frequently based on personal interpretations and conjecture that digress from what Stendhal denotes explicitly as the *pilotis*, to Crouzet's own use of the appellation. His definition of the *pilotis* ('ces substructures [...] en général autobiographiques'), makes no distinction between the marginal denominations and what can broadly be said to be the central, and in general autobiographical, themes of the book. This example is demonstrative of the generic treatment of the term that this article hopes to highlight.

Anne-Marie Meininger was the first to stray from the more traditional concept of the *pilotis* as an architectural metaphor and consider the notion beyond the idea of the truism 'foundation' by emphasising the fact that the term is often confused, misused and abused. This is an important advance. She says: 'un "pilotis" est une idée force. Ainsi, ayant décrit l'ennui de la vie de Leuwen arrivant à Montvallier, Stendhal note : "Pilotis: excellente terre pour faire germer La mour [sic]." (Meininger 1983, 11)¹³ But Meininger does return to the metaphor by continuing: 'il construira là-dessus.' She signals the existence of Stendhal's study: 'Plus largement, il écrit aussi un long examen de son travail qu'il intitule "Pilotis ou vraies raisons", le 10 février 1835.', yet shies away from any sort of analysis (as does Crouzet). Meininger's definition of an 'idée force' is the first that effectively recognises the marginalia as practical indications for Stendhal in the editing process as well as the *pilotis* as more abstract notions of the inspiration behind the novel. As such, her argument is the most perceptive we have and Meininger makes an important advance in accentuating the distinction between the role of the 'modèles' and the 'pilotis' and how these terms are much misunderstood: 'les "pilotis" et les "modèles", notions souvent confondues [...] le modèle c'est le "songez toujours à quelqu'un, à quelque chose de réel" recommandé à Mme Jules.' (Lucien Leuwen 2002, 782).¹⁴ The relationship between *modèles* and *pilotis* is certainly something that needs to be explored, and despite Meininger's correct assertion that these are different, the distinction continues to be blurred.

However, Meininger's definition of the *pilotis* is not developed (it is rather elucidated only as an effect of her exploration of Stendhal's models) and, to show the extent to which even the most respected academics are wary of the term, in her revised folio 2002 edition of *Lucien Leuwen*, Meininger forsakes her elucidation of an 'idée-force' for that of 'une assise': 'Bien nommé, le pilotis est une assise. Ainsi l'ennui de Leuwen arrivant à Nancy: "Pilotis : excellente terre pour faire germer la mour [sic]" Il construira là-dessus.' (Lucien Leuwen 2002, 782) This is unfortunate, because in stating that the *pilotis* are well-named, Meininger has discouragingly retreated from her earlier classification of conceptualising the *pilotis* as an 'idée-force', to the architectural metaphorical platitude of 'assise'.

Crouzet developed his analysis of the *pilotis* in *Le Rouge et le Noir: Essai sur le romanesque stendhalien* by furthering the assertion made by Debraye that the *pilotis* may serve some purpose for the reader (Crouzet 1995, 22-35). Crouzet argues that the *pilotis* can be categorised as 'soubassements' for the text, as references to temporality, and for the reader with the idea of an 'épisode ancré dans la réalité.' (1995, 23) He advances the argument that whether or not Stendhal is writing about a real or imagined event, the allusion gives the reader a sense of reality and therefore, as such, is a *pilotis* (1995, 32).¹⁵ However, his concept is not 'ancré dans la réalité' in so far as he does not refer back to Stendhal as an authority. Crouzet's idea is engaging and convincing, but is demonstrative of the lexicalisation of the term as it is used to suit his argument. He also uses the *pilotis* in reference to the episode of the ball of the Duke of Retz. This is indicative of how the term *pilotis* is now widely used in reference to episodes without any reference to the author's use.¹⁶ The concepts of *pilotis* and *modèles* are also mixed here as Crouzet uses the appellation *pilotis* to describe two real-life models, one for Monsieur de la Mole and the other for la maréchale de Ferva-

ques, further evidence of the confusion identified by Meininger as evidenced by this citation: ‘*Aussi jeune mais plus belle que son “pilotis”, moins noble aussi [...]*.’ (1995, 32-33)

Yves Ansel, in chapter two of *Stendhal, le temps et l’histoire*, looks at the question of chronology in Stendhal’s works (Ansel 2000, 23-95).¹⁷ Ansel argues that Stendhal uses what he terms “*pilotis temporels*” and “*pilotis chronologiques*” to structure the temporality of the narrative. An example he gives is the battle of Waterloo in *La Chartreuse de Parme* as he explains that “*les ‘pilotis’, en nombre suffisant, et concordants, balisent ‘correctement’ la durée de ‘l’escapade’.*” (Ansel 2000, 31) Again, Ansel, like Crouzet, uses the *pilotis* to suit his argument and does not refer back to Stendhal’s use of the appellation. In short, Ansel has adopted and adapted the term and then used this as an authority for seeing *pilotis* within the text: he alludes to Stendhal’s term as an authority for applying his theory to what happens within the novel. While his ideas may be justified, concerning *La Chartreuse de Parme* these are based on conjecture, as the original manuscripts of the novel have been lost. Therefore no autograph references to the *pilotis* can confirm or deny his argument.

In late 2003, *Le Dictionnaire de Stendhal* was published by Honoré-Champion and included contributions from leading academics, including Ansel, who indeed is the author for the *pilotis* entry. He begins with a definition from *Le Petit Robert* that situates the *pilotis* in the context of the realism of Stendhal’s work, before continuing:¹⁸

‘*Désireux de dédouaner la fiction - étymologiquement coupable de n’être qu’un “beau mensonge”, de n’être que du vent sans fondement -, S.[tendhal] a expressément voulu écrire des histoires qui soient aussi des “chroniques” historiques, des fables qui réfléchissent la société de son temps. Et c’est cette intention fondamentale qu’il consigne, sous couvert d’un alibi nommé Saint-Réal (un nom tout à fait de circonstance pour signer la volonté réaliste de l’auteur), dans la célèbre formule : “Un roman : c’est un miroir qu’on promène le long du chemin”. Concrètement, pour éviter que le roman ne soit que romance, ne soit que romanesque, “l’animal” S [tendhal]., quoique tenté de détourner les yeux du laid, du “réel plat et fangeux” (R II, 168), va néanmoins s’efforcer de représenter le monde tel qu’il est, et mobiliser à cet effet toute la manne et la masse d’informations, de documents, d’anecdotes, de rumeurs, d’idées, etc., qu’il a pu voir, lire, entendre, collecter.*’ (Ansel et al. 2003, 535)

The entry continues and makes the same error that Meininger highlighted twenty years earlier in naming ‘Dominique’ (a pseudonym Stendhal used to refer to himself) a *pilotis*: ‘*Dominique est, sinon le meilleur, du moins le plus fidèle des “pilotis” de Stendhal.*’ Meininger would argue that Dominique may be a model, but he is not a *pilotis*, a point with which I agree. The incontrovertible fact that Stendhal used his own life and experience, including his reading, as foundations for his work is also highlighted here: ‘*tout profite au romancier, La Princesse de Clèves aussi bien qu’un fait divers consigné dans La Gazette des tribunaux.*’ Ansel underlines how Stendhal’s career also provides him with an important contribution, reiterating the significance of autobiographical elements in his writing:

‘*Beyle a accompagné l’armée napoléonienne, et l’a vue du côté de l’intendance, des chiffres, et c’est une vision qui n’a pas peu compté dans sa perception désacralisante de la “légende” de la Grande Armée, ou encore dans le décompte exact des voix électorales dans Lucien Leuwen, son expérience de journaliste (comme rédacteur de chroniques destinées aux revues anglaises, S. [tendhal] fut à l’affût de toutes les nouvelles, de tous les scandales, de tous “les faits de société” qui ont agité la Restauration), ses voyages, ses amours, etc., ont imprimé dans sa mémoire, S. [tendhal] va s’en servir comme “banque de données”, comme matériaux pour assurer les fonda-*

tions de ses fictions.' (Ansel et al. 2003, 535)

At this juncture, Ansel confidently outlines what scholars of Stendhal have generally come to refer to as the '*pilotis*': the foundations of the work, albeit incorrectly, as this article argues. These broad general ideas are well known for *Lucien Leuwen* and include politics, the role of the state, vanity, contemporary society and the church. Yet these themes are not reserved for one book. To return to Venice in 1817, many of the same arguments reflecting the opinions and aesthetic of Stendhal are apparent in this purported travel book (more political polemic than travel guide) as well as in *Armance*, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Lamiel*. Indeed the themes are omnipresent in all Stendhal's other writings including his journalistic essays for the English reviews, his novellas, novels and more overt autobiographical writings such as his *Souvenirs d'égotisme* and, of course, *La Vie de Henry Brulard*. To quote Josiane Attuel, "*L'âme sensible*' crée le beylisme, sur lequel se fonde l'originale substance du romanesque stendhalien." (Attuel 1980, 351)

However, Ansel next refers to the use of the term within the manuscripts, a use which, he admits "*n'apparaît pas des plus cohérents*". He outlines some of these 'incoherent' uses of the autographed references to *pilotis* within *Lucien Leuwen*:

'Le vocable en effet peut "chapeauter" des vérités morales statistiques ("Pilotis: - Quand la société vous a humilié, on humilie son aide de camp ou sa dame de compagnie", ibid., 969, n.1), des constats ("Pilotis: second effet physique de l'amour", R I, 913, n.1) cautionnant la vraisemblance de la fiction, des commentaires plus ou moins ironiques ("Pilotis. - S'il eût enfilée, il eût bien vu qu'elle n'était pas grosse. Alors, plus de brouille par l'enfant supposé", ibid., 1039, n. 2), ou encore (et c'est le cas le plus fréquent) des notes de fabrique, des réflexions de "professionnel", for le romancier himself: "Pilotis. - Oubli, caractère du talent de Dominique. Chronologie: jeudi, chasseur vert; vendredi, visite et vue de Mlle Bérard; samedi, seconde visite de Mme de Chasteller aux Serpierre" (ibid. 979, n. 2); "Pilotis. Extase [la réflexion commente et justifie la justesse d'une expression du texte: "Il la serrait avec extase et..."], car il s'apercevait qu'elle ne le fuyait point, qu'elle s'abandonnait. 3 octobre. Vrai, mais trop fort. Mme Sand dit plus, et est à la mode" (ibid. 1037, n. 3); "Pilotis.- Lucien juge qu'il faut, coûte que coûte ôter l'idée d'empoisonnement" (ibid. 1130, n. 2)...En fait, dans le détail de la distribution des occurrences, on voit très mal ce qui distingue la mention "Pilotis" d'autres remarques simplement en marge, ou précédées du célèbre "For me".' (Ansel et al. 2003, 275)

It is surely an irony worthy of Stendhal that a dictionary dedicated to him and his world should exhibit the indefinable as a definition. Ansel admits to being confused not only as to its role but also as to its exalted status. He continues:

'Or il se trouve que la postérité a fait un sort particulier à ce mot "pilotis". La raison? Lanson. La quête des "sources" ayant longtemps marqué et aveuglé la lecture universitaire, la critique stendhalienne a spontanément et indûment amalgamé "pilotis", "modèles", "petits faits vrais", "choses vues", "amours vécues", etc.' (275)

Here Ansel alludes to the ideas of Gustave Lanson (1857-1934), author of *Histoire de la littérature française*, who adopted what he saw as a 'scientific' literary approach by looking at the historical sources on which a work was based. His method has been much criticised, notably by Charles Péguy, as academic fashion veered away from this search for sources and became heavily influenced by the arguments of

Barthes and Structuralism in a backlash that saw anything outside the finished text as irrelevant. However, Géraldine Leroy of the University of Orléans suggests “*Plutôt que d’incriminer chez Lanson une critique à courte vue, il convient de souligner qu’il a suggéré des perspectives de recherche si neuves qu’elles n’ont pas encore été complètement explorées.*” (Leroy online, ¶4) Textual genetics is one such area of research where these new perspectives might be found and Ansel is perhaps guilty of this very amalgamation of marginalia that he criticises in others.¹⁹

It must be noted that while the *Dictionnaire de Stendhal* has a lengthy entry for *pilotis*, the editors have decided against the inclusion of an entry for ‘*modèles*’, providing further weight to Anne-Marie Meininger’s assertion: ‘*les “pilotis” et les “modèles”, notions souvent confondues.*’ (Lucien Leuwen, 2002, 782) Indeed, in the entry for ‘*Réalisme*’, written by Xavier Bourdenet, this confusion is underlined as he attempts to define one term (*pilotis*) with another that the same dictionary neglects to define: ‘[in the margins of Lucien Leuwen] *Il y indique souvent ce qu’il nomme les “pilotis” (R I, 1388), c’est-à-dire les “modèles” ou les anecdotes réelles qu’il a “copié d’après nature” pour échafauder son roman.*’ (Ansel et al. 2003, 583).

In the entry for ‘*Pilotis*’ Ansel continues: ‘*Partant, elle [la lecture universitaire] a privilégié les “pilotis - soubassements” dans la mesure même où la traque des “modèles” (quel fut “l’original” de Valenod, de Julien Sorel, de Mathilde, de Mosca, de la Sanseverina?), des influences, des réalités de l’époque “sous” la fiction, a porté à voir dans le “pilotis” uniquement le référent, l’ancrage réel de la fiction. Raison pour laquelle la chasse aux “pilotis” a interdit de voir que, chez S., le mot renvoyait très fréquemment à de strictes considérations “de métier”.*’ (535) However, Ansel does not develop this important argument.

Stendhal has indeed used other metaphors too numerous to mention here, to describe the creative and compositional process and he wrote exhaustively and throughout his life concerning his compositional technique, leaving behind many truisms and clichés that have been quickly adopted, including the famous: ‘*Un roman: c’est un miroir qu’on promène le long d’un chemin.*’ (*Romans* vol.1, 288)²⁰ However, the ‘*critique stendhalienne*’ has prioritised the notes marked ‘*pilotis*’ precisely because it has recognised that there is a function attached to these notes, and for the reason that they do relate to ‘*de strictes considérations de métier*’, even if their role has yet to be documented and explored. For Ansel to suggest that there is no clear function to Stendhal’s notes marked ‘*pilotis*’ is to attribute randomness to a writer who was a highly trained and skilled administrator and diplomat.²¹ Stendhal developed these literary skills throughout his time as an administrator and the same processes of writing, correcting editing and dictating that were used in his administrative work were also then used in his fictional compositions. These marginal notes, as this thesis hopes to prove, are anything but arbitrary.

Hélène de Jacquolot, in *Stendhal: marginalia e scrittura* studies various marginal notes, of which the *pilotis* is one, and situates these in the context of composition, looking at the role the note plays in these ‘*considérations de métier*’:

‘Per orientarsi meglio in tutto questo groviglio, l’autore isola commento e annotazioni personali dentro costruzioni immaginarie [...] Vi sono d’altronde in Stendhal un’ansia e una tensione di chiarezza, di ordine e quindi di classificazione: infatti, queste note così incorniciate si sviluppano sotto titoli generici come “on me”, “for me”, “climat”, “D[ominique]”, “stile”, “plan”, “pilotis”, “art”, “chronologie”, “modèle”, “à placer”, “jugement”, “remarques”, “thoughts” ecc. Nell’eventualità di una rilettura, l’autore predispone una serie di segnali di lavoro da poter poi facilmente individuare in mezzo alla congerie delle annotazioni più personali.’ (De Jacquolot 1991, 120)

De Jacquolot underlines the importance of these notes in Stendhal’s compositional processes and un-

derlines the significance of the *pilotis*. Her work is an important advance as she makes an explicit reference to Stendhal's '*Pilotis ou vraies raisons*' in relation to these processes:

'Per evitare una ricezione sbagliata della sua opera, l'autore la correda di informazioni sul contesto storico, filosofico e linguistico. Colpisce l'immagine utilizzata per nominare queste note illustrative: egli parla di "pilotis", di palafitte ben ancorate nel terreno mobile del testo in cantiere, e che possano reggerne la messa in opera. In anticipo con i tempi e con grande acutezza, prevedendone la pubblicazione differita, Stendhal intuisce il profondo interesse che presenta questo materiale paratestuale.' (De Jacquélet 1991, 120-121)

However, while her work is excellent in so far as it categorises the marginalia used in Stendhal's works, it does not go as far as to study the precise functions of these individual appellations in any depth. This is the next obvious step.

Conclusion

To conclude what emerges as the fundamental problem is that different readers of Stendhal have puzzled over a definiendum that has become a literary term, and is now used outside of studies of Stendhal including literary and other artistic criticism. There has also been a lexicalisation of the word that has led to its use and misuse and its adoption and adaptation in many studies where the term 'foundation', 'inspiration', 'guide' or 'model' would be more appropriate.

It is perhaps telling that those academics with a psychoanalytical approach to literary criticism (such as Ansel and Crouzet) overuse the appellation and those who have a more consistent background in manuscript research are more reluctant to employ it. Del Litto rarely uses the term and Rannaud, in his preface to *La Vie de Henry Brulard*, prefers to use '*points d'appui*' (*Vie de Henry Brulard* 1996, XXII), where one might rather expect the use of Stendhal's denomination. This would suggest a disinclination to use '*pilotis*', rightly in my opinion, for anything other than what Stendhal has explicitly labelled or designated. However, the ambiguity that was dominant at the time of Prévost is still rife as is evidenced by the recent *Dictionnaire Stendhal* entry, and for all the advances in genetic criticism, there has been no full exploration of the *pilotis* in terms of its role in the compositional process, or to study what Stendhal meant by the *pilotis* and how he used the term.

Stendhal valued clarity and concision, and for the writer to have used a word in his compositional processes that was rhetorically ambiguous or even empty would be in direct opposition to his oft-stated preference for substance over style. This article has favoured a manuscript-based approach that relies more on rigorous method through study of Stendhal's works rather than theory based on different textual or psychoanalytical approaches so that, in homage to Stendhal, there might be no more '*cime indéterminée des pilotis*'.²²

Endnotes

¹ Mitterrand mixes his metaphors by lexically manipulating the term in the same article: '*Mais on pourrait bien distinguer du pilotis le pilote*'.

² Del Litto demonstrates the important contribution of the *Edinburgh Review* to Stendhal's literary aesthetic (503-543) and to the composition of *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817* (543-562), but does not comment

on this passage as the origin of the *pilotis* (560). Indeed in *Voyages en Italie*, compiled and edited by Del Litto for *La Pléiade*, there is no footnote to this passage.

³ *The Edinburgh Review* translates this as ‘to which it is accustomed’ but a more accurate translation would include ‘*von Jugend auf erblickt*’ or ‘from a young age’.

⁴ Del Litto mistakenly identifies the October 1826 *pilotis* as the first time Stendhal has written the word, in the *Œuvres intimes* (Stendhal 1981, 1055, note 6 in reference to 85). The problem of dating seems to have been overlooked too as this is not identified as the transcription of an earlier note. The omission of the earlier February note is surprising as Del Litto was aware of this, even transcribing it for an article in 1976 (*Stendhal Club*, No.72, 279), five years before the publication of the *Œuvres intimes* (the February note is not included in this).

⁵ Hoog correctly identifies this note as a copy in the Bucci edition (Stendhal 1987, 294, note 5 in reference to 126) but does not identify it as the first *pilotis*.

⁶ There are sporadic notes marked *pilotis* in other manuscripts, but *Lucien Leuwen* accounts for 38 of a total corpus of 47 autographic occurrences (See Haldane, 382).

⁷ The transcriptions are Debraye’s (reproduced from the 1927 edition) and the historical notes are those of Michel Crouzet. Debraye’s transcription is remarkably accurate and comprehensive.

⁸ While the *pilotis* seem to be spread out in a fairly random fashion, this is arguably not random in relation to the plot, as Haldane (2007) argues.

⁹ This idea is later appropriated and developed by Michel Crouzet, and is discussed presently.

¹⁰ Published in 1952, this is an updated version of his preface to the Divan edition of 1929.

¹¹ Prévost neglects to define the *pilotis*.

¹² Stendhal scholars have all but exhausted synonyms for *pilotis* as an architectural metaphor, from Debraye’s ‘*points d’appui*’ and Martineau’s ‘*soubassements*’ to Crouzet’s “*substructures*”.

¹³ An edited version of this article appears in the prefaces to both the 1982 and 2002 editions of *Lucien Leuwen*.

¹⁴ A reference to Jules Gauthier, the friend of Stendhal who wrote the *Le Lieutenant*, the novel upon which *Lucien Leuwen* was based. Gauthier solicited Stendhal’s advice on correcting her novel and his reply (4 May 1834) is very revealing of his literary aesthetic as he decided subsequently to use her *Lieutenant* to ‘make a novel’. (See *Correspondance*, vol.5, 116-117).

¹⁵ Labelled “*l’évènement-pilotis*” by Crouzet.

¹⁶ The use of *pilotis* to describe episodes is now common. A recent example can be found in an article by Jean Théodoridès: ‘Fabrice meutrier de Giletti – un “pilotis”’ (Théodoridès 2000). In this article Théodoridès argues that two cases of murder inspired the episode of Fabrice: “*En fait il n’est pas impossible de penser que deux épisodes réels aient pu en influencer un troisième purement romanesque ce qui est très fréquent chez Stendhal, grand utilisateur de ‘pilotis’.*”

¹⁷ ‘D’un “échafaudage” postiche : la chronologie dans les romans stendhaliens’, *Stendhal, le temps et l’histoire*.

¹⁸ ‘*Pilotis : ensemble de pieux enfoncés en terre pour asseoir les fondations d’une construction sur l’eau ou en terrain meuble (définition du Petit Robert).*’ (Ansel et al., 2003, 534)

¹⁹ Indeed this did not stop Ansel amalgamating these ideas in his entry for the *Dictionnaire Stendhal*. Ansel also chooses to use the term in *Stendhal, Le temps et l’histoire* and even curiously entitles one half of this work’s critical bibliography ‘*Pilotis*’.

²⁰ Epigraph to chapter 13 of the *Rouge et le Noir* and falsely attributed (to the appropriately-named) Saint Réal.

²¹ As Elaine Williamson has shown in *Stendhal et la Hollande*.

²² Stendhal was contemptuous of Chateaubriand’s Romantic prose, which he saw as prioritizing style over

substance. He was particularly scornful of the rhetorically empty and unintelligible '*cime indéterminée des forêts*' – an attitude that was to almost get him into a duel as a young man (Stendhal in a letter to Balzac of 17-28 October 1840, (Stendhal 1968, 397-400).

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