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His mistress' voice: Language and desire in Benjamin constant's "Adolphe"

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Rice University, 1989

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HIS MISTRESS' VOICE: LANGUAGE AND DESIRE
IN BENJAMIN CONSTANT'S ADOLPHE

by

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ABSTRACT

His Mistress' Voice: Language and Desire in Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*

Chris Moore De Ville

Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* chronicles the unhappy love affair between the title character and his mistress, Ellénore. The aspect of the liaison which receives most of the narrator's attention is the conversations and letters, between him and his lover. These communicative exchanges constitute the most important feature of the novel because they betray the narrator's overwhelming concern with language. Although recent criticism has begun to examine this facet of the work, it has not articulated a theme which completely integrates the question of language with Adolphe and Ellénore's actions.

*Adolphe* presents a theme of linguistic domination and the conflict between two individuals involved in an effort to gain communicative mastery. The protagonist aspires to attain such control and his relationship with Ellénore represents to him the means to achieve his desire. He experiences a mediated desire, as described by René Girard. Adolphe's inability to terminate the affair, his insincere communication, and the stormy conflicts between the lovers all result from the influence of this triangular desire.

In fighting their linguistic battle Adolphe and Ellénore use as their weapons different forms of abnormal
communication. Elléenore's frequent silences cause Adolphe to make impetuous declarations of love, while Adolphe's complicated substitution of words of friendship for words of love and vague language for specific gives Elléenore a constantly shifting message. The communication psychology of Paul Watzlawick explains the processes involved in this distortion of language and the effects on those who engage in it.

Together the theories of Girard and Watzlawick give a new reading of Adolphe. The protagonist's inability to end his affair, the lovers' conflict, and the tragic outcome no longer puzzle the reader. All of these apparent mysteries find explanation when analyzed in the context of the theme of linguistic conflict and domination.
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INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a central role in the love relationship portrayed in Benjamin Constant's Adolphe. The entire affair, as the reader experiences it, consists of conversations and letters between the lovers. Pierre Delbouille reports that throughout the novel there are six true dialogues (i.e., transcribed in direct discourse by the narrator), and twenty-two conversations reported in indirect discourse.¹ In other words, the narrator reports a conversation every three and a half pages. In addition, characters send at least thirty-one letters or messages (on three occasions the narrator uses the words "letters" without specifying the number), so that characters are exchanging either verbal or written messages every one and one half pages. Further emphasis on communication results on those occasions when the narrator presents his thoughts in terms of a monologue, or interior conversation, by introducing his musing with verbs such as s'écrire or se dire.

From these facts one can conclude that large numbers of the events of the story take the form of communicative

exchanges, but even the words that comprise the plot reveal the importance of communication. Marian Hobson points out the great number of verbs of reported speech in the work.\(^2\) Pierre Delbouille gives a list of some of the frequently used words. Of these, *lettre* is ninth on the list of nouns, appearing 36 times; *mot* appears 28 times; among verbs, *dire* is the third most frequent verb and appears 120 times; *parler* is tenth on the verb list, appearing 49 times.\(^3\)

An even more impressive computation of the words used in *Adolphe* appears in Robert Allen's *Stylo-statistical Study of "Adolphe"*. Allen shows that there are 2605 different words used a total of 29,180 times in the novel. Seven hundred thirty-four of these words are verbs; eighty-six verbs represent communicative acts (*parler*, *dire*, *écrire*, *répondre*, *interroger*, etc.) or actions that occur by speech or writing (*maudire*, *prier*, *jurer*, *féliciter*, *avouer*, etc.) Similarly, nouns describing communication or aspects of it (*parole*, *mot*, *langage*, *louange*, *éloge*, *protestation*, etc.) occur with a high frequency: fifty-five out of 524. Allen also presents a mathematical formula for determining the author's deviation from the


\(^3\) Delbouille, p. 272-273, note.
standard frequency of use by other authors of the period. The calculations using this formula emphasize the importance of language and communication. Verbs such as parler, lire, annoncer, prononcer, and causer, and nouns such as conversation, parole, lettre and silence do in fact occur more frequently in Adolphe than in other nineteenth-century novels.4

Such significance granted to the exchange of messages in the intrigue and the use of communicative vocabulary must influence analysis of the novel. As of the late 1960's, the 1970's and 1980's critics have begun to examine the linguistic activity of the characters, but very few have formulated their entire analysis of the novel around this motif. Those who do perform such an examination base their conclusions on the superficial facts of the story; as a consequence they tend to summarize the success of the characters' communication in the work. However, Adolphe contains a more complex linguistic theme which not only embraces the facts of the plot but also explains the stormy, on-again off-again relationship between the two protagonists.

The question of the theme of the novel prompts many different answers, both because of the variety of scholars

involved and because many scholars tend to find multiple answers to the question. These themes, however varied, fall into three broad categories: psychological, emotional, or metaphysical. In other words, critics consider Adolphe a character study, a discussion of the nature of love, or the illumination of broader questions of concern to all humans.

In their discussion of the psychological themes scholars concentrate on diverse aspects of the character of Adolphe himself. In this way, the novel becomes the story of "an obsessive indecision," the analysis of "a wasted life," or a "study of a man unable to find a meaningful role in life." Hans Verhoeff, who maintains that the psychological aspects of the novel are the most significant, states that the novel is the story of a man who wants to love but who is afraid. The central theme


of the work, according to Verhoeff, is the abandonment of Ellénore by Adolphe.⁹

Some critics present character themes that do not concentrate on Adolphe. Only one critic, Grahame C. Jones, proposes a theme which encompasses a study of Ellénore's character as well as Adolphe's. He posits that Adolphe presents a theme of domination, especially found in Ellénore's efforts to dominate Adolphe, but Jones sees this idea as one of many in the work.¹⁰ Andrew Oliver also finds many themes present in the work, but he proposes as the central theme a generalization drawn from a character study. The story of the young man Adolphe illuminates the tragedy of "l'individu écrasé par la société."¹¹

The emotional aspect of the novel, the theme of love, prevails in some scholars' perception of the work. Sainte-Beuve discussed this motif and described the novel as "l'expression de 'tout ce qu'il y a de faux, de pénible, de douloureux dans certaines liaisons engagées à la légère."¹²

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¹² Cited by Delbouille, p. 527.
More general variations on the emotional facets of the work have appeared, however. Oliver finds that the effort to define the nature of love is one of the peripheral themes.\textsuperscript{13} To Pierre Delboville, Adolphe's story serves as a trial of love, returning a verdict of \textit{non-lieu}.\textsuperscript{14}

To some critics, broader questions of man's place in the universe find expression in \textit{Adolphe}. The work verbalizes basic human concerns such as man's responsibility for his actions or guilt over them\textsuperscript{15}, or man's relationship with Being.\textsuperscript{16} Oliver suggests that religion figures as a minor theme\textsuperscript{17}, but John Murray ascribes considerable importance to religion. To him, the novel reveals anew the eternal truths of Christianity. In Murray's theory, the two protagonists symbolize two stages of Christianity: Ellénore represents pure religion, that is, redemptive love, while Adolphe symbolizes religion which has suffered the corrupting effects of intellectual ideas, specifically that of death. The tempestuous

\textsuperscript{13} Oliver, p. 257.

\textsuperscript{14} Delboille, p. 526.


\textsuperscript{17} Oliver, p. 257.
relationship between the two characters symbolizes the conflict of these two Christian essences. Despite Ellénore's death, her Christian love prevails because Adolphe recognizes his need for it after it is gone.\textsuperscript{18}

The few communicative themes proposed by critics also fall into the metaphysical category. Verhoeff sees the notions of language and communication serving as a backdrop to the drama, but definitely of lesser importance than the psychological questions.\textsuperscript{19} However, to Ian Alexander communication is the central theme of the work; he defines the novel as an illustration of "non-communication characterized by misunderstandings, quarrels and the conflict of two egos. This theme is repeated and varied throughout."\textsuperscript{20} Alexander's analysis is only a surface interpretation of the communicative meaning of the work. It reports the facts but does not attempt to explain them; there are reasons for the "misunderstandings" and "quarrels" which are the manifestations of the conflict. This struggle demands a definition of the combatants and an explanation of their motivation. Adolphe and Ellénore or, more generally, man and woman, are fighting for control of


\textsuperscript{19} Verhoeff, "\textit{Adolphe en parole}\textquotedblright, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{20} Alexander, p. 17.
language and, with that power, of the communication within their relationship.

Existing analysis of the question of language in Adolphe addresses three different aspects: its power, the relationship between language and feelings, and the role of the written word. Alison Fairlie, Marian Hobson, and I. W. Alexander concentrate on the first two of these themes. Godelieve Mercken-Spaas and David Baguley address the third. Tzvetan Todorov examines all three facets of the question of language.

Alison Fairlie was one of the earliest critics to give a place to the importance of communication in her approach to Adolphe. Her series of three articles published in the mid-1960s examine "The Art of Constant's Adolphe" from three different points of view: "Stylization of Experience," "Creation of Character," and "Structure and Style." In the first of these articles, Fairlie states that the goal of her work concerns the notion of language in Adolphe:

I shall hope to show in particular how Constant through his characters probes suggestively into questions of what constitutes authenticity of experience and authenticity of expression, and into the relation between experience and expression.

The critic begins by discussing the novel's presentation of the danger of words: words have the power of hypnosis,
both of self and of others. In addition "words may crystallize a dangerous truth, may destroy what might have persisted, or fix irrevocably one side only of a complex of feelings." Because of these dangers, words function as an unreliable indicator of emotion or experience. Nevertheless, Ms. Fairlie points out, the novel demonstrates a second, paradoxical concern for "precision . . . in expression." Fairlie finds illustration of these conflicting concerns in the character of Adolphe, who expresses scorn for the use of maxims in discussing life, yet frequently sums up his experience in axiomatic manner.21

The article "Structure and Style" examines the movement of the novel and the contribution of Constant's style to this movement. In her discussion, the scholar highlights the role of the characters' conversations and letters. While pointing out the importance of the physical world in the novel, sometimes overlooked because of the prominence of self-analysis, Fairlie mentions the significance of Adolphe's voice to Ellénore. She points out the characters' concern for the use of precise words in their conversations and letters. Finally, the critic returns to her original thesis and concludes that "Mistrust

of words as general terms was one of the origins of Adolphe" and that "[the novel] posits the ineradicable need beneath the complexity of experience and uncertainty of words, for self-knowledge, self-judgment and exact expression."22

Fairlie elaborates on these conclusions in her presentation to the Congrès de Lausanne of 1967. To the dangers of words she has previously established, she adds two more: their destructive nature and their ability to betray in spite of the speaker or writer's concern for precision. She then examines the effects of these dangers on the novel's style and its interpretation. In terms of style, she points out the many words and phrases which place the hero's sincerity in doubt: je crus, de la meilleure foi du monde, etc. Most of these words and phrases in any other context would emphasize the veracity of a statement. Yet, coming from Adolphe, they have the opposite effect. Similarly, the mistrust of words makes doubtful any interpretation of the novel's action. The reader can not effectively judge Adolphe because he lacks precise language in which to express his judgment: "danger

des termes généraux qui serviraient de résumé ou de jugement de la part de l'auteur ou du lecteur.\textsuperscript{23}

Later articles acknowledge Fairlie's contributions, among them Marian Hobson's "Theme and Structure in \textit{Adolphe}." Hobson's goal is "to show that the narrative situation informs and moulds the whole of the book; that the structure which it imposes, and the substance of the analyses reflect each other."\textsuperscript{24} Hobson examines the themes of inevitability of action and insincerity of emotion before turning to "the question of self-analysis and its connection with language." She posits that, because of the great number of verbs of "reported speech and thought" in the analytical parts of the novel, one can conclude that self-analysis is "mediated by language." But, because of the dangers of words, already pointed out by Fairlie, one can not trust the resulting analysis. The narrator finds himself in a paradoxical situation: his examination of his experiences requires recourse to language, yet, because of language, it can not totally succeed.\textsuperscript{25} Hobson's development of language theory in \textit{Adolphe} confines itself

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\textsuperscript{24} Hobson, p. 307.
\textsuperscript{25} Hobson, pp. 312, 313.
\end{quote}
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to a discussion of the narrative process of the novel, and does not apply this theory to the novel's action.

I. W. Alexander aligns himself with Fairlie and Hobson in his recognition of the dangers of language in his elaboration of the topic "The Powers of Language" in his work on Adolphe. Because of "the deceitful power of words," Adolphe and Ellénore's relationship often suffers from non-communication. Alexander, however, disagrees with Fairlie on the question of whether words can be trusted. Rather, he remarks that "[w]here . . . feelings are pure they find their natural and truthful expression."

Consequently, he argues, Adolphe and Ellénore can enjoy moments of harmonious communication.\textsuperscript{26} The existence of this alternating presence and absence of moments of communication between Adolphe and Ellénore and generally between humans comprises the theme of the novel.

The work of Fairlie, Hobson, and Alexander studies language in general. Two critics of the mid-1970s, Godelieve Mercken-Spaas and David Baguley, concentrate on the use of the written language in Adolphe. Mercken-Spaas's 1974 article, "Ecriture in Constant's Adolphe," points out the violence of the written word and the cyclical pattern of communication presented by the novel. Adolphe moves from silence to "parole" to "écriture" back

\textsuperscript{26} Alexander, p. 55.
to silence during the course of the novel. Baguley examines the use of letters in his article "The Role of Letters in Constant's Adolphe." Because of the dangers of words, letters represent an "extreme form of involvement with this alien world" of language. Consequently letters suffer from the same insincerity of expression which plagues conversation. Only Ellénore's final letter remains free of this stigma because the missive is not sent. Yet, whether in spite of their insincerity or because of it, letters prompt every fateful action in the novel.

Whatever their orientation in the discussion of language, most critics cite Tzvetan Todorov's article, "La parole selon Constant," as the definitive study of language in Adolphe. Indeed, he is the first to examine only language in the novel. He begins by pointing out the supreme importance of language in the work: "Tout au long d'Adolphe, ses personnages ne font rien d'autre que proférer des paroles, écrire des lettres ou s'enfermer dans des silences ambigus." In fact, Todorov continues,


29 Tzvetan Todorov, "La parole selon Constant," in Poétique de la prose (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), p. 100. This article also appeared in
language is so important that the novel's characters become identified with their conversation.

In explaining Constant's theory of language, Todorov begins with his own expression of what Fairlie views as the importance of language in *Adolphe*: "Ce à quoi Constant s'oppose est l'idée que les mots désignent les choses d'une manière adéquate. . . .(p. 104)" On the contrary, Todorov argues, in the world of Adolphe, words do not merely designate, but rather affect the things behind them, causing those objects to change. This effect manifests itself in two different ways: "... si une parole se prétend vraie, elle devient fausse" and, conversely, "si une parole se prétend fausse elle devient vraie.p. 106)."

To support his contention Todorov cites passages in the novel in which Adolphe finds his emotions and his written or spoken expression of them to be at odds with each other.

Because of this double effect of words, Todorov is able to conclude that "les paroles ne signifient pas là présence des choses mais leur absence." (p. 112) He then proceeds to establish a theory of desire which corresponds to this theory of language. To Adolphe, the most important part of his desire for Ellénore is not its object, gaining

the love of a woman, but rather the enjoyment of the desire itself. Achieving the object of the desire puts an end to the enjoyment (which explains the power of obstacles to revive Adolphe's flagging interest in his relationship). So, just as words designate not the truth of their content but the opposite of that truth, desire designates an absence of object.

Despite his masterful arguments, Todorov's discussion raises questions to which it offers no answers. Although he declares that language has the power to alter reality, only words spoken by Adolphe carry that effect. Only once does Ellénore appear to provoke such a change, when by her definition of her lover's emotion as pity she transforms love into that emotion. All other incidents of change occur after Adolphe speaks or writes. However, not every act of speech or writing results in an alteration. Adolphe's impassioned speech to Ellénore, begging her to restore him in her favor; his love letter as he seeks consummation of the affair; his expression of discontent after receiving his father's permission to stay, and his expression of love at the beginning of the elopement are just a few of Adolphe's communicative acts that remain exempt from the effect that Todorov postulates for all uses of language. Language does indeed have the power to transform emotions, but not in the simple direction from true to false and vice versa described by Todorov. The
influence of the desire to control language provides the explanation of the nature of the power residing in words.

Martha Noel Evans addresses both the question of the relationship between language and desire and that of communication within the characters' relationship in her 1982 article. Evans asserts that the power of language "to alter and control the feelings of the auditor [and] the speaker as well" results in "a self-enclosed circuitry of meaning which ends up resembling a folie à deux. 30 Later she concludes that "all language is barred from the truth" and then, like Todorov, draws a parallel between language and desire. According to Evans, "the place of our desire is also the place of our impotence. . . ." 31

Jeannine Jallat's article, "Adolphe, la parole et l'autre," adds a new dimension to previous studies of communication in Adolphe. This critic examines the presence of direct and indirect discourse in the novel, finding that the former represents one-fifth of the text and the latter one-fourth. The frequency of occurrence of "la parole directe" or "indirecte" interests Jallat less than the characteristics of each. She finds that indirect discourse shows little concern for content, that it


31 Evans, p. 312.
obscures meaning and, finally, that it represents moments of weakness. On the other hand, "la parole directe" is violent; the characters seize it from one another and dominate while using it. Jallat also analyzes each character's use of "la parole directe," which changes during the novel. Ellénore proceeds from speech in "vous" to "je," while Adolphe, although substituting objective third-person pronouns as much as possible for the subjective ones, remains the center of his own speech.32

The articles of Todorov, Jallat, and Evans suggest themes that demand elaboration. Although Jallat and Evans provide some explanation of the novel's actions, integrating their theories of conflict and folie à deux with the theory of language and desire results in a more comprehensive explanation of Adolphe. A change in perspective leads to this elucidation. These three critics and their colleagues all devote their efforts to the examination of language as a means to an end. However, the power of language and the attitude of the novel's characters towards it suggest the possibility of language being not merely the means but the end itself. The close relationship that Todorov and Evans see between language and desire can be carried one step further and then applied

to the novel. In *Adolphe* desire and language are more than parallel; they are synonymous, for Adolphe's desire is for language.

It is this linguistic yearning which motivates Adolphe's involvement with Ellénore, and this same desire leads to the many conflicts and difficulties that the couple suffers. The emotions and actions that the narrator reports, that is the surface story of an unhappy love relationship, are a secondary manifestation of the protagonists' main struggle over control of language and, thus, of communication within their relationship. An examination of the mechanics of desire and application of these details to Adolphe's want reveals that the source of these conflicts lies in his desire.

Adolphe manifests a special sort of longing, designated by René Girard as a "désir triangulaire" or "désir par intermédiaire." By triangular desire Girard means that an individual's wish originates not from his own mind but from another person's mediation. The mediator may serve as a model to imitate, as in Don Quixote's patterning of his life after Amadis de Gaulle and as in Emma Bovary's desire for a life like that of the heroines of the novels she reads. When a person imitates another individual he manifests what Girard calls external mediation. Internal mediation occurs when the individual is so close to the
mediator of his desire that the mediator becomes a rival for the desire. 33

The most obvious such longing in the novel occurs in Adolphe's first decision to love, a decision resulting from an acquaintance's report of happiness in love. This evident triangular desire is only the first. Adolphe's continued relationship with Ellénore is based on a subsequent, more subtle mediated wish in which Ellénore inspires in her lover the aspiration to linguistic control. In this case the young man suffers from internal mediation, that is, the subject is so close to the mediator that the latter becomes a rival to the aspirant's hopes.

Besides describing the two types of mediated desire, Girard also investigates the relationship between the subject and his mediator and the complications that can arise once the wish becomes shared by the two. Adolphe and Ellénore's conflicts reflect this relationship. Their quarrels, ostensibly over the emotional aspect of their liaison, represent in reality each character's quest for control of language. These struggles do not end the protagonist's involvement with his mistress because his hopes of achieving the outcome of his search lie only within the relationship. Locked in the unending struggle,

the characters find no relief or resolution until the intrusion of another triangular desire. The baron de T***, through the external mediation of conversation and example, engenders in Adolphe a yearning for a conventional life of marriage and career. Enchanted by his own vision of such an existence the young man renounces for a moment his earlier goal. This decision leads to Ellénore's death and, ultimately, to the satisfaction of his longing. Without the presence of the mediator, Adolphe gains control of language through writing his story. Having attained his goal, he finally renounces his desire completely and then suffers both a spiritual and physical death.

Since the characters are motivated by their desire to control language, it is reasonable to assume that communication provides the key to understanding the behavior of Adolphe and Ellénore. To that end, considering the novel as a series of communicative acts should furnish yet another answer to the questions critics have asked about Adolphe: the true nature of his emotions for Ellénore, the extent of his guilt and Ellénore's.

In terms of communicative acts, the novel divides itself into four sections. The first section (chapters 1 and 2) describes Adolphe's youth and his pre-Ellénore state. The reader learns of the beginning of Adolphe's fascination with communication and of his methods of communicating prior to launching his suit of Ellénore.
Chapters 3 and 4 constitute the second section of the novel. These chapters present the protagonist enjoying the power that communication wields over others and over himself. The enjoyment of this power contributes to Adolphe's happiness in the relationship. He sees how his conversational skill makes Ellénore happy and wins her affection; he learns that his written eloquence persuades her to accept his love. At the same time his communicative skills strengthen his emotions; expressing them makes him feel them all the more. In this section Ellénore also appears in control of language and can control others by her use of communication.

In the third section of the book (chapters 5 through 9) Adolphe's unhappiness begins. This sections presents the characters in a power struggle. Other critics have seen that each of the two attempts to dominate the other. I. W. Alexander has noted the role that language plays in the struggle for dominance:

One sees it [Ellénore's passion] in Ellénore's desire not only to control Adolphe's actions, but to take command of his very thoughts and moods... One may further note that this tyranny is exercised not only through words but also... through 'le regard'.

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34 Alexander, p. 41.
Jallat also points out the correlation between the characters' speech and their strength. These two critics ignore the significant role played by communication in the earlier sections of the novel. The two characters have already demonstrated an ability to dominate each other by language. Their successes and failures reveal that control of the other depends on control of the means of communicating. In this latter section, the struggle becomes more bitter because Adolphe and Ellénore are fighting for power over communication. Adolphe's major weapon is distortion of language; Ellénore's, her effective use of the silent treatment.

Finally, chapter 10, the "Lettre," the "Réponse" and the "Avis de l'éditeur" make up a final section revealing the outcome of the struggle. Ellénore's death seems to demonstrate Adolphe's victory because she can no longer communicate. Yet her demise also represents the "silent treatment" carried to the extreme, so that Adolphe's immediate reaction reflects loss rather than conquest. The letter from an acquaintance indicates that the protagonist continues his quest. It is only "L'Avis de l'éditeur" which discloses Adolphe's final victory over the triangular desire.

Because Adolphe's relationship with Ellénore consists of so many communicative exchanges, a study of communication psychology helps explain the relationship.
Paul Watzlawick's work, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, studies the "rules" governing interpersonal communication. In the course of his study Watzlawick provides examples which, when applied to *Adolphe*, support the linguistic-power-struggle explanation of the relationship between the two protagonists. His proposal of a shared mental illness illuminates the sometimes tricky problem of why Adolphe and Ellénore stay together. This is the "folie à deux" already suggested by Evans. However, departing from the premise that Adolphe and Ellénore are struggling for control of the communication itself rather than each other adds a new dimension to Evan's assertion.

One of the basic principles of Watzlawick's theory states that communication must exist, because all behavior serves to communicate.35 This principle contradicts, then, Alexander's assertion that the theme concerns non-communication. The characters' misunderstandings lead to mismanaged, rather than nonexistent, communication. Adolphe and Ellénore are constantly communicating to each other because all of their actions express something. Since the majority of their actions consist of some form of communicative act—writing, speaking, reading, listening,

being silent—Alexander's statement shows the need for more precision. Application of other aspects of Watzlawick's theory will render explicit the nature of communication within the couple.

The second principle of the pragmatic communication theory proposed by Watzlawick concerns the nature of communication in an interpersonal relationship. Defining any communicative behavior first as a commitment, the psychologist continues to specify the kind of commitment. A person's behavior (synonymous with communication) commits him to a statement of his appraisal of himself and of his interlocutor. "... any communication ... implies commitment and thereby defines the sender's view of his relationship with the receiver. ..."37 Therefore Adolphe's expression of his feelings—both those he considers sincere and those he finds false—conveys his thoughts on his relationship with Ellénore. Similarly, Ellénore's conversational acts reveal her perception of the relationship. This definition of relationship is the second aspect of any communication, the first being the content of the message or "report." In terms of the relationship, though, it is often the "command" (expression of the relationship) aspect which carries more weight: "'Sick' relationships are characterized by a constant

37 Watzlawick, p. 51.
struggle about the nature of the relationship, with the content aspect of communication becoming less and less important." 38 In effect, this statement describes an often-noted phenomenon in Adolphe—the gap between the protagonist's speech and his expressed sentiments. He is acting as Watzlawick predicts, worrying less about the content of his remarks than about the command aspect.

Watzlawick defines relationships according to the type of communication they foster, specifying two categories: symmetrical and complementary. In a symmetrical relationship the individuals mirror each other's behavior: complaint produces complaint, for example. In a complementary relationship, the behavior of one individual creates an opposite but complementary behavior in the other individual (assertive behavior produces submissive behavior). For the most part Adolphe and Ellénore's relationship follows a symmetrical pattern, as each of the two partners answers the other's utterance with one of a similar type. Watzlawick avoids labelling either type of relationship as good or bad because either can become "pathological" by "escalation in symmetry and rigidity in complementarity." 39 Adolphe's relationship attains this unhealthiness, which must continue "unless and until

38 Watzlawick, p. 52.

39 Watzlawick, p. 69.
communication itself becomes the subject of communication."40

Watzlawick illustrates the need for communication about communication by proposing a "Game Without End." A couple decides that everything they say to each other will mean exactly the opposite, thus, "I am not cold" means "I am cold." The game continues with no trouble until one of the two decides that he wants the game to end. This individual is without resources to bring about that conclusion. "I want the game to end" means "I want the game to continue" by the rules of the game. Should the now disinterested player express his desire by the rules of the game, thus "I want the game to continue," he is himself perpetuating the rules of the game. In addition, the message is

"undecidable. . . . For the rules of the game simply do not make allowance for metamessages and a message proposing the end of the game is of necessity a metamessage. By the rules of the game every message is part of the game, no message is exempt from it."41

Planning before the game begins to conduct it in one language and talk about it in another would prevent the

40 Watzlawick, p. 95.

41 Watzlawick, p. 233.
impasse, as would setting a time limit to the game. Both of these solutions involve prior awareness of the danger of the game, which does not occur in actual, similar situations. The only method of stopping the game after it has begun is to consult a "third person with whom they have both maintained their normal modes of communication and have him rule that the game is over."\footnote{42 Watzlawick, p. 235.}

Again, the psychologist has provided an accurate description of Adolphe's relationship with Ellénore. The couple falls into a similar situation as Adolphe's concern with the content of his message decreases. His attempts to end the relationship are as futile as those of the disinterested player. Even the only practical solution of consulting a third party yields no result, because the couple's communication with others does not remain normal. For Adolphe and Ellénore, death is the only possible end to the endless game.

Both Girard's theory and that of Watzlawick are necessary to an analysis of Adolphe as the story of a conflict over control of language and communication. The two theories provide insight into the separate aspects of such a theme: Girard illuminates the nature of the protagonist's desires and their effect on his relationship with Ellénore. The attempts to achieve his goal and their
effect on Ellénore find elucidation in the application of Watzlawick's pragmatics of communication. When combined, the two theories explain Adolphe, his desires, and his relationship with his mistress and give new meaning to this enigmatic novel.
Chapter 2: Adolphe and the Externally Mediated Desire

Adolphe's early pursuit of Ellénore and his subsequent disenchantment are significant because they provide explanation for his behavior in the latter and more lengthy part of the liaison. Adolphe's motivation for continuing an obviously moribund love affair lies in his wish at the beginning of that affair. René Girard's theory of desire, presented in *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, illuminates the process of desire by mediation, and, when applied to the novel, discloses reasons for Adolphe's actions. Adolphe experiences three of these so-called mediated desires. While all three variants of Adolphe's metaphysical aspirations are important, the first, which surfaces at the beginning of his relationship with Ellénore, pre-figures and foreshadows the development of the other two.

Critical discussion of the early part of the affair and the nature of Adolphe's initial desire revolves around whether or not the protagonist truly loves Ellénore. Once critics decide on this point, they can explain the young man's transition from love to indifference and then his feelings as he tries to extricate himself from the relationship. Hans Verhoeoff confesses his own confusion at this transformation in feeling:

ce qui frappe aussi le lecteur, c'est le passage brusque de l'amour à la désaffection. Ainsi,
Other critics do not admit to similar bewilderment but resolve the question based on their opinions as to the nature of Adolphe's feeling for Ellénore.

Most critics maintain that the young man never loves his mistress. In this event the transformation of Ellénore from but to lien results from the hero's realization that he does not love her. Scholars base this theory on the narrator's frank admission that he begins his pursuit of Ellénore out of less than pure motives. They argue that a calculated decision to enter a love relationship can not, by the very nature of human emotions, lead to true affection: "... it is this deliberate entry into the love relationship ... which contains the seed of future discord ... ."

Although they deny that Adolphe truly loves Ellénore, theorists recognize that the young man begins to experience some real emotions which give him the illusion of love. Shyness, the personality trait hindering his efforts to declare his love, contributes to Adolphe's impression of loving:

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Il suffit qu'il soit interdit en présence d'Ellénore, que devant elle il rougisse et se trouve incapable de parler, pour qu'il croie l'aimer, car c'est par une telle conduite que se distingue le véritable amant.  

Outside obstacles which threaten his pursuit of his love, Ellénore's sense of propriety, and her consequent rejection of his overtures further delude the young man as to his emotional state. This frustrated anguish before the barriers to his relationship arouses a deceptive emotion which Adolphe interprets as love. Having overcome the hindrances to what he perceives as his goal, Adolphe manages to sustain for a while his illusion of love. Emphasizing that Adolphe expresses as his wish "je veux être aimé," Robert J. Niess and Lois Hyslop find that Adolphe's joy in being loved results in an illusory affection toward Ellénore, which he is able to convince himself is love.

Since Adolphe never truly loves, the event which prompts his abrupt transition from affection for to irritation with Ellénore is his realization that he does not love her. The

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young man's "self-love" or "self-interest" proves to be stronger than his fleeting sentiments toward Ellénore. Personal interest figures as well in the explanations of Adolphe's emotional transition advanced by critics who believe that Adolphe does experience love temporarily. John Middleton Murray finds a "fatal element of vanity" in the hero's character which dooms the liaison from the outset. This trace of selfishness triumphs over Adolphe's sincere, though weak, affection for Ellénore. Pierre Delbouille states that Adolphe loves Ellénore, or believes he does, "ce qui est en somme la même chose." However, because of the young man's "amour propre," love quickly degenerates into two lesser emotions: enjoyment of the gratification of self-interest and a concern for the happiness of his mistress.

Not all scholars assign responsibility for the decline of Adolphe's happiness to his personality but see the work of external forces as well. Alison Fairlie, for example, diminishes the role of self-interest when she distributes blame for love's end evenly between the two protagonists and society:


7 Delbouille, p. 326.
. . . for Adolphe and Ellénore love implies the all-consuming ecstasy; when inevitably the demands of time, society, and self-examination move back into consciousness, the décristallisation begins. 8

Other critics direct their full attention to one of these external forces, notably that of time. Oliver points out that Adolphe views love as having two different temporal dimensions and that this view contributes to his quick emotional change after winning Ellénore. First Adolphe imagines love as a temporary state which, naturally, dooms any relationship that he undertakes to an abrupt ending. 9 Secondly, the young man considers love to be a state which can transcend time and create the illusion of permanance. 10 Once the imaginary transcendance ceases, and measured time intrudes on the affair, love diminishes and dies. Georges Poulet also demonstrates how Adolphe's conception of time destroys his love. For Adolphe the present exists only fleetingly, so he quickly loses that affection for Ellénore. However, love is able to create a past which binds the two together. 11 W. Holdheim also grants a significant role to


9 Oliver, p. 33.

10 Oliver, p. 37.

11 Georges Poulet, Études sur le temps humain (Paris: Librairie Klon, 1953), pp. 230–235. See also, by the same
time in Adolphe's loss of love, but sees the hero's concern with time as the effect rather than the cause of this phenomenon. 12

In the midst of her own discussion of the protagonist's love for Ellénore, Godelieve Mercken-Spaas remarks, without further elaboration, that Adolphe's entrance into romantic life results from what René Girard describes as a désir triangulaire. 13 Elaboration of the theory of triangular desire reveals the otherwise inexplicable motivation for the end of Adolphe's enchantment with Ellénore. Such a desire is, by its nature, short-lived, especially if satisfied. Adolphe's longing for Ellénore cannot last, then, but his first experience with a mediated desire leaves the young man vulnerable to a subsequent, similar wish.

Adolphe freely admits that his quest for love comes not from within but from an outside stimulus. His acquaintance's confidences concerning his efforts to win a certain lady at first do not involve Adolphe: "j'étais le confident très

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12 Holdheim, p. 63.

désintéressé de son entreprise."14 After hearing a recital of the friend's joy in success, Adolphe begins to aspire to love. This is not a "désir linéaire" according to Girard, by which a subject sees an object and wants on the basis of the object's value:

\[ \text{-----sees------} \]
\[ \text{Subject (S)} \quad \text{_____wants______} \quad \text{Object (O)} \]

Rather, it is a "désir triangulaire" or désir par médiateur": the subject sees another person wanting or pursuing an object and also desires on the basis of the value that the other person, the mediator (M), attributes to the object.

\[ \text{M} \]
\[ \text{sees} \quad \text{wants} \]
\[ \text{S } \text{_____wants______} \quad \text{O} \]

Because the two men are not pursuing exactly the same object, i.e., the same woman, Adolphe's desire is a case of external mediation. Girard predicts the behavior of the subject desiring by external mediation: "[l]e héros de la médiation externe proclame bien haut la vraie nature de son désir. Il vénère ouvertement son modèle et s'en déclare le disciple."15

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15 Girard, p. 18.
Adolphe's willing revelation of his aspiration to imitate his friend confirms that he is under the effects of external mediation.

Although this begins as an externally mediated desire, it does not remain one. In such a circumstance Adolphe would proceed towards his goal and, once achieving it, would seek to imitate his friend in another area. Almost from the inception of Adolphe's longing, it becomes corrupt and begins to resemble an internally mediated desire, one in which the subject sees the mediator as a rival for the object of longing. This tendency toward internal mediation intensifies later in the novel and marks the relationship of Adolphe and Ellénore.

The first step in the corruption of desire comes from Adolphe's confusion over the object of his wishes: he assumes that he wants love. Niess and Hyslop point out that, more precisely, the young man expresses a wish to be loved. However, Adolphe (and consequently the critics) is already suffering from ignorance of the real goal of his desire. What inspires him is the friend's talking about his love. "[i]l se crut obligé de me communiquer ses succès: rien n'égalait ses transports et l'excès de sa joie. Le spectacle d'un tel bonheur me fit regretter de n'en avoir pas essayé encore (p. 29)." Adolphe wants to have access to this type

16 Niess, p. 19-20; and Hyslop, p. 572.
of communication. He, too, wishes to recount his joy at finding success in love.

Since, in order to achieve this goal, Adolphe must involve himself in a romantic relationship, he mistakes this for his wish. "un nouveau besoin se fit sentir au fond de mon coeur... Tourmenté d'une émotion vague, je veux être aimé, me disais-je... (pp. 31-31)." It is only the fact that he must find a partner for his endeavors which leads him to look outward for the means to reach his goal. After some consideration he chooses Ellénore because she "parut une conquête digne de moi (p. 36)." Having made this choice, Adolphe admits that he doesn't love Ellénore, but he does feel affection toward her. "[J]e ne croyais point aimer Ellénore; mais déjà je n'aurais pu me résigner à ne pas lui plaire (p. 37)." This wish to please Ellénore, which in turn could bring him love, begins his progress away from his earlier longing. He no longer seeks love, but a specific love, that of Ellénore.

In this further corruption of his desire, Adolphe suffers the emotional effects of encountering several obstacles. In rapid succession Adolphe's extreme timidity, Ellénore's refusal to see him and her departure from the village threaten the chances for a successful outcome of his quest. The more difficult it becomes to win Ellénore, the more worthy she becomes in his eyes and Adolphe suffers from the "métamorphose de l'objet désiré." Girard finds this
phenomenon mainly in internally mediated desires: "Le prestige du médiateur se communique à l'objet désiré et confie à ce dernier une valeur illusoire."¹⁷ In Adolphe's case it is not the mediator, who has disappeared from the reader's and, presumably, Adolphe's view, but the presence of obstacles which increase the object's value. After each pause to confront an obstacle, Adolphe experiences a resurgence of emotion.

Adolphe's encounters with obstacles take place on a linguistic and communicative level as well as an emotional one. First the barriers are hindrances to communication from Adolphe to Ellénore. Second, Adolphe deals with them by using language. On the emotional level the obstacles make Ellénore more desirable; they also work on the linguistic level, stimulating Adolphe's original and forgotten desire to have recourse to the language of fulfilled love. His confrontation with hindrances to the attainment of Ellénore's love enable him to present, to an extent, his own "spectacle," similar to that of his friend. He is not able to tell of his joy in receiving love, but he is able to use the language of love, which would certainly be part of the recital of a happy lover. These excursions into this previously unknown area of language excite Adolphe and intensify his feelings.

¹⁷ Girard, p. 25.
Adolphe first finds himself hampered by his own
timidity, or, by his own definition, a lack of communicative
ability. Having decided to woo Ellénore, he is confident
that he needs only to tell her of his love: "Il me tardait
daïvor parler, car il me semblait que je n'avais qu'à parler
pour réussir (p.36)." However, he experiences moments of
linguistic weakness, which defer the possibility of
gratification of his desire: "... tous mes discours
expiraient sur mes lèvres, ou se terminaient autrement que je
ne l'avais projeté (p. 38)." The speechless condition
continues for days, despite Adolphe's attempt to calm himself
and plan a strategy for speaking. Finally, a series of
failures to declare his love prompts the young man to employ
written communication for his avowal. Here he finds success;
not only does he proclaim his love to Ellénore, he also
manages to work on his emotions and to create the feelings he
was writing about. "Echauffé d'ailleurs que j'étais par mon
propre style, je ressentais, en finissant d'écrire, un peu de
la passion que j'avais cherché à exprimer avec toute la force
possible (p. 39)."

The next obstacles that Adolphe encounters spring from
Ellénore's sense of morality, but they are communicative
hindrances as well, in that she repels Adolphe's efforts to
communicate. First she refuses to receive the young man in
her home; the protagonist attempts a linguistic attack upon
this first barrier and again resorts to writing. This letter
fails and further such attacks are thwarted by the second obstacle, Ellénone's departure for an unknown destination. These setbacks prove to be minor and temporary, for Ellénone eventually returns home. At the occasion of his next meeting with his potential mistress, Adolphe finds opportunity for renewed communicative attacks upon the lady's stubborn moral sense. This time Adolphe employs the spoken word both directly on Ellénone and on others in her presence; he directs the conversation onto subjects of interest to his hostess and contributes to the discussion on those topics. This successful use of conversation affects Adolphe as much as his earlier written eloquence: he becomes convinced of the nature of his emotions: "Il n'était plus question dans mon âme ni de calculs ni de projets; je me sentais, de la meilleure foi du monde, véritablement amoureux (p. 46)."

Other critics cite these two passages as evidence of Adolphe's susceptibility to the deceptive power of words and to the use of insincerity. Fairlie points to the love letter as an example of the hypnotic effect of words. David Baguley calls this epistle "the instrument of his fall from a state of moral integrity." Finally, Todorov cites this letter to support his contention that "si une parole se

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prétend fausse, elle devient vraie." These critics' remarks imply that love did not inspire Adolphe, that what he wrote was totally false, and that his post-epistle feeling was illusory. Although the question of whether or not Adolphe truly loves Ellénore remains peripheral to the discussion of triangular desire, the nature of the hero's emotions before and after the acts of writing and speaking figure importantly in that discussion. To reject these assumptions brings more significance to the power of the letter and the later conversation, because in that case Adolphe succeeds in creating an emotion by expressing it.

Since Adolphe is most like a true lover in Ellénore's presence, "un amant novice, interdit et passionné (p. 38)," one can assume that writing a letter, an activity undertaken when away from Ellénore, is part of the cold calculation involved in Adolphe's courtship. Absent from Ellénore, Adolphe tells us, he is "un séducteur froid et peu sensible (p. 38)." Yet Adolphe does not sit down to write in a cold, calculating state of mind; rather he is feeling the effects of "une agitation" which resembles love. That feeling is the result of "Les combats que j'avais livrés à mon caractère, l'impatience que j'éprouvais de n'avoir pu surmonté, mon incertitude sur le succès de ma tentative... (p. 39)." The process of giving written expression to this emotion

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20 Todorov, "La Parole selon Constant," p. 106.
transforms it from an imitation of love to a real, although small, amount of that sentiment.

Ellénore's absence is not the only aspect of letter writing that influences Adolphe. The protagonist's previous experience with epistles involves correspondence with his father. The letters Adolphe receives are "affectueuse, pleines de conseils, raisonnables et sensibles (p. 20)" and stand in marked contrast to the father's spoken communication. Despite the contrast the narrator does not imply that his younger self believes the letters to be pure fabrication. Rather, they are a more eloquent expression of the father's thoughts. Similarly, Adolphe's letter to Ellénore is not manufactured out of nothing; the young man experiences some sort of emotion for Ellénore, even if it is not pure love inspired only by her quality. The writing process causes Adolphe to discover the eloquence of writing, which heretofore he knew only from the recipient's point of view. The eloquence affects his emotions to the point that rather than false words creating truth, as Todorov holds, slightly true words create even more truth.

Todorov's opinion contradicts other widely accepted linguistic and psychoanalytic theory. Roland Barthes, in *Sur Racine*, for example, contends that Phèdre's love for Hippolyte remains of no danger as long as she keeps it to herself. The minute she confesses the love to Oenone, it takes its criminal form and leads Phèdre inexorably to
further wrongdoing. Verbalizing that confession does not falsify the content but rather intensifies her feelings and her guilt. Similarly, M. Guy Thompson, a psychologist of desire, finds an intensifying effect in language, concluding that "the object of [man's] desire must be uttered in order to be realized." Again, the verbal expression of the desire does not negate its existence; indeed, expression makes the subject conscious of that existence and causes him to embark on his quest.

From these two theories, one originating from a linguistic and literary study, the other from a psychoanalytic discussion, comes the conclusion that Adolphe's writing and speaking about love stimulate his feelings. The love which results from his epistolic declaration exists in a very weak form before the writing and gains strength from the writing process. This small amount of love receives more stimulation from a conversational attempt to inspire Ellénore with love and becomes, at least in Adolphe's view, the real thing. Fairlie remarks that the addition of the phrase "de la meilleure foi du monde" weakens the conviction of Adolphe's statement: "je me

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sentaïs, de la meilleure foi du monde, véritablement amoureux (p. 46).”

Yet, it is likely that the narrator adds this phrase in retrospect. The younger Adolphe firmly believes in his love for Ellénore because it is a new sentiment for him; it is the older man who wishes to cast doubt on the nature of that affection.

The distinction between Todorov's theory of language resulting in a complete change in reality and that supported by Barthes and Thompson of verbal expression leading to an intensification of reality is important because it explains the pattern shown by the novel. Todorov's theory offers no elucidation as to why Adolphe speaks the truth sometimes, thus undoing reality, and at others utters falsehoods and thereby creates truth. The intensifying effect of language on emotions represents a different phenomenon from the falsifying effect of words. The former, occurring while Adolphe is free from internally mediated desire, serves to stimulate his yearning for communicative mastery. In the early incidents of the letter and the dinner conversation, Adolphe discovers the power of language, which will later become the object of his desire. The next incident of linguistic stimulation of feelings occurs after Adolphe, under the tutelage of the baron de T*, leaves the realm of internally mediated desire for the externally inspired...

23 Fairlie, "Constant romancier; problèmes d'expression," p. 165.
longing for a career. The change in desire effects a change in the young man's relationship with his mistress, which prompts Ellénore to ask her friend to talk to Adolphe. Now free from his unhealthy yearning for language control, Adolphe once again enjoys the thrill of masterful communication. At the end of the discussion, he tells the friend that he does not love Ellénore and this admission once again intensifies his feelings.

Cette vérité, jusqu'alors renfermée dans mon cœur, et quelquefois seulement révélée à Ellénore au milieu du trouble et de la colère, prit à mes propres yeux plus de réalité et de force par cela seul qu'un autre en était devenu dépositaire (p. 112).

In reality, it is not the presence of an outsider that produces the intensifying effect, but Adolphe's freedom from internal mediation. Control of words is no longer both the goal at stake and the way to achieve it, so Adolphe is able to engage in a discussion and to realize once again the power of language. Adolphe resists for a time the mighty attraction of that power, but eventually, after renewed reminders of the joy of linguistic strength, he will again seek to gain that strength.

When Adolphe is deeply involved in his mediated desire, language does not have this same effect of intensifying his emotions. Rather, the narrator indicates that his words falsify reality. This phenomenon results from the influence
of the triangular longing, which causes Adolphe to develop a complicated system of dissimulation in order to conceal his yearning from the mediator. With the dissembling comes a corruption of language, so that, indeed, language has no relationship to reality.

However, this early letter and conversation occur before Adolphe embarks on his internally mediated longing; at the moment he is still pursuing the object of external mediation. From the protagonist's point of view, his communicative attacks on hindrances to that pursuit are important because of their success at getting him past the obstacles. His letter of declaration to Ellénore puts an end to the linguistic barrier of his timidity. His conversational exploits at the party help him weaken her moral objections to receiving him. One short sentence threatening his abandonment of family, future and life itself suffices to obtain Ellénore's reluctant consent to see him the next day (pp. 43-44). His dinner table conversation animates not only the guests seated near him but also his hostess. Her earlier silence and distraction give way to smiles and attention to her surroundings. By the end of the meal, Adolphe has engineered the restoration of their pre-courtship friendship: "quand nous sortîmes de table, nos coeurs étaient d'intelligence comme si nous n'avions jamais été séparés" (p. 45).
Having won two important victories through his linguistic attacks, Adolphe does not hesitate to take advantage of his next opportunity to confront the ever-present obstacle of Ellénore's rigid moral sense. From the first moment of the promised interview, the young man begins his work: "Elle voulait parler: je lui demander de m'écouter (p. 46)." In a lengthy address, the young lover pleads with Ellénore for a continued friendship, in which Adolphe's love would remain a secret and private pleasure. By virtue of his argumentative skill ("levant toutes les objections, retournant de mille manières tous les raisonnements qui plaident en ma faveur [p. 48]"") and of his dramatic ability ("j'étais si soumis, si résigné . . . j'aurais été si malheureux d'un refus [p. 48]"), Adolphe puts another hurdle behind him as he wins the right to more frequent visits.

Yet even in granting her would-be lover a victory, Ellénore prescribes conditions which constitute more barriers to communication. She limits the opportunities for conversation: "elle ne consentit à me recevoir que rarement;" and she puts constraints on the intimacy of conversation: "au milieu d'une société nombreuse." Finally, she regulates the choice of topic: "avec l'engagement que je ne lui parlerais jamais d'amour (p. 49)." Such restrictions prompt yet another confrontation with an obstacle and again Adolphe relies on a communicative attack. By first accusing Ellénore of indulging in indiscriminate social conversation,
which she had previously avoided, and then pleading for special treatment by rights of friendship, Adolphe manages to put an end to her enforcement of the rules of their relationship. The abandonment of those rules represents Adolphe's major achievement in his encounters with obstacles to a love affair with Ellénore. In just a short time, he reports, "bientôt elle m'avoua qu'elle m'aimait (p. 51)."

Adolphe's successful skirmishes with obstacles finally end as Ellénore confesses her love to him. With her avowal all of Adolphe's wishes, real and imagined, are granted: he has begun a relationship with his chosen woman and he now knows the feeling of being loved. He has also won the right to talk about love and present his own show of happiness. Yet, perhaps because of the influence of the imaginary wish for love, Adolphe chooses to employ the language of love within the relationship. Rather than find an audience for his new-found topic of conversation the young man chooses to direct his love-talk toward Ellénore and to be the recipient of hers.

Je passai quelques heures à ses pieds, me proclamant le plus heureux des hommes. Lui prodiguant mille assurances de tendresse, de dévouement et de respect éternel. Elle me raconta ce qu'elle avait souffert en essayant de s'éloigner de moi (p.51).
These discussions of the early days of Adolphe's courtship constitute the only happy moments of the affair. Even the once-again firm barrier presented by Ellénore's morals cannot completely destroy the protagonist's enjoyment of the fulfillment of his longing. Instead he finds another opportunity to mount a linguistic attack against an obstacle when he begins to long for consummation of the relationship. His first steps in the assault, his "supplications, désaveux, et pleurs (p. 52)," yield no effect; so he reverts to an even stronger use of language, the written word. In a long, persuasive letter Adolphe assures Ellénore of his love for her, but he also manages to betray some of his linguistic concerns. He despairs at having to deal with other people because they make demands on the powers of speech that he would prefer to devote to Ellénore: "ces hommes qui osent me parler d'autre chose que de vous, portent dans mon sein une douleur mortelle (p. 53)." When he may re-establish communication with Ellénore, he experiences fear of the world outside their relationship. The fear is prompted by sounds which intrude on his concentration toward the relationship: "Le moindre son m'effraie, le moindre mouvement autour de moi m'émouvante, le bruit même de mes pas me fait reculer" (p. 54). The threat of exterior forces presenting themselves as "quelque obstacle qui se place soudain entre vous et moi" (p. 54), and thus prohibiting any conversation between the two lovers, also concerns Adolphe.
The letter's successful result—"Elle se donna enfin tout entière (p. 56)"—also marks the end of Adolphe's happiness in his affair. The abrupt transition to indifference and irritation soon follows the consummation of the relationship. This transition is, according to Girard, a natural outcome of a satisfied mediated desire: "Le sujet constate que la possession de l'objet n'a pas changé son être; la métamorphose attendue ne s'est pas réalisée."24 The narrator explains his loss of love as a result of Ellénore's constant monitoring of the time he spends away from her. Despite his irritation at accounting for his movements, Adolphe retains a desire to please his mistress: "je n'étais à mon aise que lorsqu'elle était contente de moi (p. 59)."

This double attitude of both irritation and affection is common to a mediated desire: "Il ne peut pas nier l'échec de son désir, mais il peut en limiter les conséquences à l'objet maintenant possédé . . . . Le héros reconnaît qu'il s'est trompé. L'objet n'a jamais eu la valeur initiatique qu'il lui attribuait."25 Adolphe's first desire, to win the right to speak about his love, became lost in his quest for the love of Ellénore. Having achieved what he thought was his goal, he turns his disappointment to Ellénore. She suffers

24 Girard, p. 94.
25 Girard, p. 94.
from devaluation as Adolphe seeks to rectify the error of his first mediated desire: no longer a but she becomes a lien.

Adolphe's disappointment, however, soon gives way to a more active emotion, that is the beginning of a new search for satisfaction. Girard describes the possible tendencies for the disillusioned hero of a triangular desire:

[là] valeur [de l'objet atteint], il la reporte ailleurs, dans un second objet, dans un nouveau désir ... Le héros déçu peut se faire désigner un nouvel objet par un ancien médiateur; il peut aussi changer de médiateur. La décision ... dépend ... de la distance qui sépare le héros de ce médiateur.26

Adolphe has long lost sight of his original mediator; indeed his pursuit of and relationship with Ellénore cause him to isolate himself from the rest of society. It is a natural step, then, for Adolphe to turn to Ellénore as a mediator and to be inspired by her in his desires. With a new mediator, there must also be a new object of desire, something prized by that individual either as a goal or as a possession. In the case of Adolphe control of language assumes this role, and the protagonist's relationship with his mistress changes from strict emotional involvement to that of the subject of a mediated desire and his mediator.

26 Girard, p. 95.
Girard's theory permits an explanation of Adolphe's change of emotion, brusque as it may be, because of the disappointment at realizing a triangular desire. The contradictory opinions as to the nature of Adolphe's sentiment find reconciliation in the concept of a true desire inspired by an external mediator. At the same time Girard's theory accounts for Adolphe's reaction to obstacles along his path. During his encounters with the obstacles Adolphe discovers for himself the eloquence of written and spoken expression and the power that these wield over himself and others. Although his quest ends in disappointment, pursuit of Ellénore provides the prototype and engenders the protagonist's effort to achieve a more metaphysical desire: the control of language.
Chapter 3: Adolphe and Internal Mediation

Adolphe's pursuit of Ellénore reveals his vulnerability to a mediated desire; it is no surprise, then, that the protagonist suffers yet another such longing. The second wish, to gain control of the spoken word and communication, differs from the first one in that Adolphe is the victim of an internally rather than externally mediated triangular desire. Internal mediation, according to Girard, involves the desiring subject and his mediator in such a close relationship that the mediator becomes a rival to the subject. The rivalry between Adolphe and Ellénore over the control of language both poisons their relationship and maintains it. The brief happiness that Adolphe feels at having obtained his first desire gives way to the longing for language control. At the same time he has no way to end his unhappiness because it is only through his relationship with Ellénore that the young man can achieve his wish. He must endure these conflicting emotions because they are the result of mediated desire.

Scholars have considered the limbo-like relationship of Adolphe and Ellénore as a result of Adolphe's conflicting desires. The emotional ties to his mistress weaken when confronted with another wish. The goal may be mundane or highly abstract, depending on the interpreter. Greshoff and Oliver, for example, state that Adolphe seeks a career and
the fame that it could bring. Although he temporarily departs from that search to pursue Ellénore, the successful outcome of the courtship renews his former aspiration. Adolphe's irregular liaison stands in the way of fulfillment of his wish for glory and, thus, must end. However, he does feel ties with Ellénore which prevent him from realizing his goal. Béatrice Didier finds that Adolphe's great desire is to inflict pain and that this ambition conflicts with his natural pity for Ellénore. Lois B. Hyslop and John Murray believe that Adolphe's great desire is to love, but that this desire, which should find fulfillment with Ellénore, creates the young man's unhappiness. According to Hyslop, although Adolphe longs for someone's love, his "equally strong desire to be free and independent" ruins his relationship with his mistress. Murray, however, stresses that Adolphe's desire to love conflicts with his inability to do so and it is that conflict which characterizes the relationship.

In other critical views, Adolphe's true longing lies in opposition to his attraction for Ellénore because his love

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1 Oliver, p. 116 and C. J. Greshoff, p. 36.


3 Hyslop, p. 578.

4 Murray, p. 196.
serves as a symbol of a deeper yearning. Corrado Rosso
posits that Adolphe has a clear idea of what he wants: he
seeks happiness, the route to which lies in the love of an
ideal woman. Even after gaining a woman's love, the
protagonist continues the search for that ideal all through
the novel. 5 According to Paul Bénichou love signifies the
desire of a person and thus represents "un contact avec
autrui." This link with an other is accompanied by a fear of
abandonment, but at the same time Adolphe suffers from "la
peur de la sujétion" and the two fears engender his
vaccillating emotions toward Ellénore. 6 Godelieve Mercken-
Spaas deftly sums up both Rosso and Bénichou, for she
theorizes that Adolphe embarks on a "search to affirm his own
existence." 7

Another tendency of thought names no object of desire
for the protagonist, declaring instead that Adolphe's
aspiration is for further desire. Mercedès Wégiment remarks:
"Il ne sait pas ce qu'il veut et il finit . . . par faire le
contraire de ce qu'il ne veut pas" and attributes the young
man's unfulfilled longing to his rejection of reality for an

5 Corrado Rosso, p. 118-119.

6 Paul Bénichou, "La genèse d'Adolphe," in L'écrivain et

7 Godelieve Mercken-Spaas, Alienation in Constant's
Adolphe: An Exercise in Structural Thematics (Bern;
Frankfurt am Main; Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1977), p. 117.
illusion of love. Fascination with desire motivates Adolphe, according to other scholars holding this opinion. "[S]on vrai désir est d'avoir une âme toujours inoccupée ou convoitant toujours ce qu'elle ne peut atteindre." Tzvetan Todorov and Martha Noel Evans, drawing from their observations on language in the novel, conclude that, for the protagonist, desire exists only as long as it is unsatisfied. Attainment of its object nullifies the wish. "Les paroles impliquent l'absence des choses, de même que le désir implique l'absence de son objet. . . ." states Todorov, and Evans echoes the statement. "Adolphe functions . . . as the symbol of destiny of desire. His attempts to feel love, to possess his passion, will always be a belated grasping at what is no longer there."

Adolphe's actions within his relationship with Ellénore reveal nothing concerning the object of his desire; in fact his reluctance to break with Ellénore or to encourage her point to a lack of any guiding emotion. However, in his recounting of the affair, Adolphe betrays the nature of his

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quest. Girard explains that the art of creating reveals the object: "l'art proustien culmine dans la création des métaphores. C'est donc la métaphore qui devrait révéler le sens métaphysique du désir." In Adolphe the art of the narrator resides in his skillful reporting of communication and it is that preoccupation which exposes his desire: to control language and, with it, himself, Ellénore, and the world.

Before falling victim to the mediated desire Adolphe demonstrates a fascination with language. Certainly the circumstances of his early childhood contribute to this interest. Linguistic theorists contend that the mother exercises a profound effect on a child's linguistic development because his earliest communication is with her. M. Guy Thompson, in his psychological work on desire, discusses the importance of the family in a child's learning to speak. "This ordering of linguistic symbols is ... specifically 'familial' in that it is from the child's own family that he is indoctrinated into his mother tongue." The 'mother tongue' consists of more than just words, according to Thompson, because the words "indicate the context of meanings, including rules, values and prohibitions" by which the child will direct his life. The language, then will exert further influence on the child: "The child's exposure

\[\text{12Girard, p. 83.}\]
to words occasions the way he will learn to experience his reality, which, in turn will serve to both articulate and structure his desire."13 Adolphe never mentions his mother; the reader assumes (not without help from general knowledge of the author's life) that she is dead and has been for quite some time. Having missed the early language training from his mother, Adolphe must suffer the result, especially if no other source for such initiation can be found.

Certainly the young man's father does not fill the void as a model of linguistic training for the two do not enjoy a close bond, either emotionally or linguistically. At first Adolphe describes his father and their strained relationship in terms of personality differences. "Il avait dans l'esprit je ne sais quoi d'ironique qui convenait mal à mon caractère (p. 20)." However, Adolphe concentrates on depicting the constrained communication which exists between father and son. The young man's youthful disposition tends away from the mundane toward the profound, yet the older man responds to these tendencies with a smile of pity and then "finissait bientôt la conversation avec impatience (p. 20)."

Consequently Adolphe remembers that "aucune confiance n'avait existé jamais entre nous" and that their communication was limited: "Je ne me souviens pas, pendant mes dix-huit

premières années, d'avoir eu jamais un entretien d'une heure avec lui (p. 20)." The younger Adolphe, then, sees his father as "un observateur froid et caustique" and the great silence which exists between him and his father causes him pain.

The narrator, with the advantages of maturity and hindsight, proves to be more understanding of his father. He attributes the awkwardness between parent and child to timidity, an emotion which severely restricts conversation, "qui glace nos paroles, qui dénature dans notre bouche tout ce que nous essayons de dire... (p. 21)." But at the same time he recognizes that he suffers and will always suffer the consequences of that shyness:

Je m'accoutumai à renfermer en moi-même tout ce que j'éprouvais, à ne former que des plans solitaires, à ne compter que sur moi pour leur exécution... Je contractai l'habitude de ne jamais parler de ce qui m'occupait... (p. 21).

These traits manifest themselves later in the novel and play an important role in the development of the love relationship, but they are mere symptoms of a larger effect. What Adolphe learns from his father's restraint is the great significance of language and communication in human relationships. Controlling the means of communication is a way to control others, as the young man knows from his own reactions to his father's manner of interaction.
At the same time Adolphe learns that the written word need not submit to the same rules that govern conversation. His father writes letters to him that are "affectueuses, pleines de conseils, raisonnables et sensibles (p. 20)."

Such a stark contrast between the effects of speaking and writing leaves its impression on the young man. Whether as a result of that impression or of heredity, he, too, displays a difference in his level of oral and written skills, but that difference does not worry him, as it fits in with his early linguistic development.

That development continues in another relationship which gives Adolphe new opportunities for communication. At the age of seventeen, the protagonist enjoys the friendship of an older woman. For a year, he experiences an atmosphere quite the opposite from that surrounding his father: rather than silence he enjoys "nos conversations inépuisables" about all aspects of life and death (p. 23). The narrator emphasizes the role of death in that relationship: the two discuss it at length and then he witnesses his companion's demise. He barely acknowledges the communicative effect of the episode, remarking only that his contact with the older woman's mind "avait commencé à développer le mien (p. 23)." Yet, during their discussions, the two friends "av[aient] envisagé la vie sous toutes ses faces et la mort toujours pour terme de tout (p. 23)," that is, engaged in the sort of speculation which Adolphe seeks with his father: abandoning the every-day
sphere of conversation for the profound. Finally, at this late age, Adolphe enjoys the ability to discover the world linguistically, the goal of all childhood communication.\textsuperscript{14}

From the first eighteen years of his life, marked by these major influences, Adolphe emerges a young man with a double attitude about language. On the one hand, he has enjoyed perfect communication with another human being and knows the value of such interaction. On the other hand, he is perfectly aware of the power of imperfect communication to inflict pain on another human, having experienced the discomfort of the weak role and imagined the superiority of the strong one. These tendencies conflict, but have in common the recognition that communication makes or breaks a bond between two people.

Adolphe further discovers for himself the rewards of skillful use of language while acting out his quest to fulfill his first externally mediated desire. He succeeds in conquering every obstacle to attaining Ellénore's love by speaking or writing. He changes Ellénore's moods, overcomes her resistance to love, and creates emotions in himself with his own words. The memories of these triumphs remain with Adolphe even after his relationship with Ellénore occupies

\textsuperscript{14}A variant, which reads, "dans nos conversations inépuisables, elle m'avait présenté la vie sous toutes ses faces...", makes even clearer that the older female is taking the role of mother and teaching the child about life as she teaches the language.
his entire life in D* and isolates him from the rest of society. When disillusionment with the relationship sets in, he reacts predictably in moving under the influence of a new mediator. The only choice for a mediator is Ellénore and the only object in sight must be found within the relationship. His mistress has attracted him by her possession of linguistic power, which she continues to demonstrate. Of equal significance is the very linguistic nature of their affair, as Martha Noel Evans points out:

The whole weight of Adolphe's and Ellénore's love rests on the web of language they have weaved [sic]. It is a web of linguistic gestures and special reference to which their feelings alone give meaning. Their love alone maintains this private and fragile web; it is the network.15

Language, then, becomes the object of his desire, because to control language is to control the relationship.

Even as he pursues further the power over language, Adolphe receives constant reminders of the strength that lies in words, whether spoken or written. Again, as in his courtship of Ellénore, he sees his conversations and letters affecting both his emotions and his mistress's, causing pain and happiness. With such constant reinforcement, his desire

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15 Evans, p. 307.
becomes even more intense and he cannot escape from the context which might lead to achievement of his goal. Language control, then, is the object of Adolphe's mediated desire, as evidenced by the protagonist's experiences with language and the narrator's emphasis of those experiences in the recital of his story. But Girard indicates that the narrative process also reveals the "sens métaphysique" of the character's longing.\textsuperscript{16} The power of language, strong as it is within the context of Adolphe's relationship and in his society, also represents something more profound. Both linguists and philosophers indicate that the control of the word symbolizes an almost divine creative power. Paul Benvéniste, in his \textit{Problèmes de linguistique générale}, points out that

\begin{quote}
... tant de mythologies, ayant à expliquer qu'à l'aube des temps quelque chose ait pu naître de rien, ontposé comme principe créateur du monde cette essence immatérielle et souveraine, la Parole. Il n'est pas en effet de pouvoir plus haut, et tous les pouvoirs de l'homme... découlent de celui-là.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Gilbert Durand also points out the divine power of the word, revealed to the human race not only in Jewish and Christian

\textsuperscript{16} Girard, p. 83.

tradition: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and behold there was light (Genesis 1: 3)" and "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. By Him all things were made . . . . (John 1: 1,3)," but also in other religions.\textsuperscript{18} Adolphe, then, in yearning for communicative control, also longs for the divine creative power that he can gain with that control.

For Girard, however, the presence of the mediator grants a more earthly nature to the divinity which attracts the subject of a triangular desire. Indeed, he says, "C'est l'être du médiateur que vise le désir. . . . Le héros . . . rêve d'absorber, d'assimiler l'être du médiateur."\textsuperscript{19} Although scholars have suggested that Adolphe tries to imitate Ellénore's position on the fringes of society in order to become the romantic hero that he imagines himself\textsuperscript{20} or that he identifies Ellénore as a mother figure and seeks to establish with her the mother-child symbiosis which he never experienced\textsuperscript{21}, Girard defines the hero's identification with his mediator in a more metaphysical way. The mediator


\textsuperscript{19} Girard, pp. 59, 60.

\textsuperscript{20} Greshoff, pp. 31-35.

exemplifies a person who, unlike the subject, "semble jouir de l'héritage divin," that is, he has found, in the absence of God, his own "autonomie métaphysique." Adolphe also seeks such autonomy, even in his first externally mediated desire. After winning Ellénore's love, he performs his own "spectacle" of the joy of a man in love, during the course of which he indicates that love grants its own superiority:

"[j]e marchais avec orgueil au milieu des hommes (p. 56)" and even divinity: "ce jour subit répandu sur la vie, et qui nous semble en expliquer le mystère... ce détachement de tous les soins vulgaires... cette supériorité sur tout ce qui nous entoure... (p. 57)." Once under the influence of the internal mediation, he seeks to gain this autonomy by seizing power over language.

That the chance to attain this "divine heritage" exists only through a mediator results from the subject's negative self image. Girard states that the hero of an internally mediated desire "éprouve pour sa propre substance une répugnance invincible," which stems from an unfulfilled promise. The nature of that promise varies in each individual; for example, in Stendhal's work, the hero has, from childhood, been promised a bright and happy future.

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22 Girard, p. 64.
23 Girard, p. 62.
24 Girard, p. 60.
He might be describing Adolphe; throughout his story, the narrator gives several clues regarding his own superior abilities. He has, because of his performance in school, high expectations of himself: "J'avais obtenu, par un travail assez opiniâtre, ... des succès qui m'avaient distingué de mes compagnons d'étude (p. 19)." These expectations endure throughout his adventures; even after years of involvement with Ellénore, he remembers them.

Adolphe's father also manifests a belief in his son's potential: "des succès qui avaient fait concevoir à mon père sur moi des espérances probablement fort exagérées (p. 19)."

Despite the older man's timidity, he does not hide this confidence from the protagonist: "Votre naissance, vos talents, votre fortune, vous assignaient dans le monde une

25 Girard, p. 70.
autre place que celle d'un compagnon d'une femme sans patrie et sans aven (p. 85)." Finally, the baron de T* sustains this view of his friend's son and uses Adolphe's possible future as his major argument against continuing the affair. "[L]e bien qu'on m'a dit de vous, les talents que vous annoncez, la carrière que vous devriez suivre . . . (p. 98)" "le résultat d'une naissance illustre, d'une fortune brillante, d'un esprit distingué, sera de végéter dans un coin de Pologne . . . (p. 100)" "Toutes les routes vous sont ouvertes . . . ; vous pouvez aspirer aux plus illustres alliances; vous êtes fait pour aller à tout. . . (p. 100)"

Adolphe's self-appraisal could, of course, be inflated, but the fact that the two older men hold a similar opinion supports the narrator. Especially telling is the belief of the baron de T*. He has never met his friend's son, but has heard of the young man's qualities. All three men accept Adolphe's potential as a fact.

However, the narrator does not conceal from the reader that he has always failed to fulfill his potential. For the most part he blames Ellénore for that failure, and in this opinion as well he is seconded by his father and the baron de T. But even before his involvement with love and a woman, he makes no career advances worthy of his abilities as perceived by himself, his father, and the baron. Adolphe travels to D* as part of a longer voyage in order to acquire certain abilities useful for furthering his position; after
this trip he is to return home to prepare to follow in his father's footsteps. Yet his description of his activities in the town and at court reveal no ambitious efforts to groom himself for the diplomatic profession. Rather than profit from the company of "les hommes éclairés qui venaient s'y fixer (p. 24)" to form alliances which could aid him in his career, he watches with disdain the social antics of his neighbors and acquaintances, participates only nominally in society, and neglects serious work for what should be pleasure: "Distrait, inattentif, ennuyé. . . Je partageais mon temps entre des études que j'interrompais souvent, des projets que je n'exécutais pas, des plaisirs qui ne m'intéressaient guère. . . (p. 29)."

The failure that marks his professional development carries over into Adolphe's personal life, negatively impressing those who should provide friendship and distraction. The young man does not choose to make himself a part of the society of the court, but prefers to view that circle, made up of "hommes en grande partie insignifiants et médiocres (p. 24)," with bored disinterest. He appears at social events cloaked in an unwilling silence which strikes his acquaintainces as disdainful. When he finally decides on a more active role, his jokes tend toward ridicule of his society and further blacken his reputation. "Mes paroles amères furent considérées comme des preuves d'une âme haineuse, mes plaisanteries comme des attentats contre tout
ce qu'il y avait de plus respectable (p. 26)." Even the young man whose happy love affair he witnesses does not merit the title "friend". Adolphe describes his relationship to this individual in terms of a connection: "avec lequel j'étais assez lié (p. 29)," and finds little interest in the man's ongoing suit. This unwilling participation in the society of D* and his alienation from it by his indifference and ridicule confirm Girard's prediction about the subject of triangular desire: "Ce n'est pas la société qui fait du héros de roman un intouchable. C'est lui qui se condamne lui-même."26

These displays of the feeling of unfulfilled promise which leads a subject to triangular desire occur even before Adolphe begins his longings under the influence of a mediator. Expectations about his professional potential and the failure to create a place for himself socially combine to give him the low feeling of self-esteem to be conquered by absorbing the essence of a mediator. The fulfillment of his externally mediated desire causes him to seek a new mediator and goal and, at the same time, reveals to him his next mediator, Ellénore.

Although by virtue of his proximity to her Adolphe grants the role of mediator to Ellénore, the woman also exhibits the metaphysical autonomy that Adolphe seeks. Her

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26 Girard, p. 83.
position in society, although slightly irregular, is well established and provides her with a measure of self-fulfillment. Even more attractive to the hero, it is by her power over language that she both creates her reputation and maintains it. Once again the seed of the triangular desire which controls Adolphe throughout the affair with Ellénore—the wish to gain control of the means of communication—resides in his life prior to succumbing to the desire. Adolphe's very attraction to Ellénore grows from his fascination with language and his admiration for her linguistic skill. His first descriptions of his future mistress revolve around her conversational ability; in fact, as Godelieve Mercken-Spaas points out, "[r]emarks on language are the only physical details given about her." 27

These details depict a woman well in control of the gift of communication, using it to create an image of herself which contradicts the reality of her situation. Although she is endowed, according to Adolphe, with only "un esprit ordinaire (p. 33), " her social intercourse enables her to combat this weakness: "... ses expressions, toujours simples, étaient quelquefois frappantes par la noblesse et l'élèvement de ses sentiments (p. 34)." This basic communicative control has the potential for even further extension because of Ellénore's knowledge of several foreign

27Mercken-Spaas, Alienation, p. 9.
languages. Her manner of speaking, "toujours avec vivacité, quelquefois avec grâce (p. 36)," overcomes her limited fluency in those languages.

Ellénore's linguistic power, besides presenting the image of a polished eloquent conversationalist, also enables her to manipulate others. Despite her position as a man's mistress, she enjoys a fairly respectable reputation, due mostly to her control of language. She monitors her own speech closely, with the goal of denying her position. "Elle protestait, par chacune de ses actions et de ses paroles, contre la classe dans laquelle elle se trouvait rangée (p. 34)." At the same time she controls the words and subject matter of the conversations in her presence. "Elle repoussait sévèrement dans la conversation tout ce qui n'auraient paru à d'autres femmes que des plaisanteries innocentes (p. 34)."

Ellénore also demonstrates her communicative strength during Adolphe's pursuit of her.28 Indeed it is her power which establishes many of the obstacles confronted by the young lover. Her two written replies to Adolphe's romantic efforts strike just the right tone, according to the narrator, gently expressing "bonté . . . des conseils affectueux . . . une amitié sincère (p. 39)." But, at the

28 Even during these displays of strength, Ellénore's skills begin to decline. See discussion of the effect of Adolphe's quest on Ellénore, in chapter 6.
same time, she takes control of communication by making sure that Adolphe's words, both spoken and written, can no longer reach her. She responds to the protagonist's written declaration of love with a refusal to receive him during the count's absence. After his attempts to ignore this edict, she removes herself from the vicinity, leaving no way for him to write.

When, under the count's direction, Ellénore returns to the town and resumes interaction with Adolphe, she maintains her almost complete control of language. Her suitor makes some gains, lifting the total restriction of communication by winning the right to future visits, but Ellénore prevails by prescribing the conditions for Adolphe's continued exercise of that privilege. She regulates the frequency of opportunities for exchange, the amount of intimacy and the content of all further contact between her and Adolphe.

"Elle ne consentit à me recevoir que rarement, au milieu d'une société nombreuse, avec l'engagement que je ne lui parlerais jamais d'amour (p. 48)." Not content merely to establish the rules Ellénore actively seeks to enforce them. Adolphe shows up more and more frequently but always finds her in the midst of a group which he can join only by her invitation. "L'on ne racontait rien d'intéressant qu'elle ne m'appelât pour l'entendre (p. 49)." Such linguistic strength irritates Adolphe but can not fail to make its impression on his attitude toward communication.
Ellénore's next display of strength, the incident which confirms his disillusionment at the gratification of his first triangular desire and marks the beginning of his second such wish, occurs after the successful completion of the courtship. During the count's six-week absence Ellénore makes more aggressive moves to strengthen her grasp on Adolphe's linguistic opportunities. No longer content to dominate the conversational environment indirectly with the help of others, she widens her net to include actual physical manipulation of Adolphe as well. "Elle ne me laissait jamais la quitter sans essayer de me retenir. Lorsque je sortais, elle me demandait quand je reviendrais (p. 58)." These actions represent attempts to gain the exclusive reception of Adolphe's communication and, failing that, to dictate the moment for any outside intercourse. Ellénore's efforts have a second effect of placing Adolphe in a linguistically weak position by depriving him of an answer to his friends' invitations: "je ne savais que répondre à mes connaissances lorsqu'on me proposait quelque partie que, dans une situation naturelle, je n'aurais point eu de motif pour refuser (p. 58)."

Adolphe's expression of dissatisfaction with his affair with Ellénore, ". . . elle n'était plus un but: elle était devenue un lien (p. 59)," accurately describes the mediated longing which has captured him. The third point of the triangle, control of language leading to metaphysical
autonomy as object of desire, stretches an unbreakable bond between the two lovers standing at the other two corners. Only reaching the object of aspiration or renouncing its quest can release Adolphe from the inescapable structure. While in its grasp, the young man will experience its effects, which, in turn, will manifest themselves in his relationship with his mediator, Ellénore.

Adolphe does not follow Girard's predictions exactly. Indeed, in two important areas the relationship between Adolphe and his mediator appears to oppose Girard's description of the bond. For example, the closeness of subject and mediator leads, according to Girard, to an "atomisation de la personnalité," or a multiplicity of mediators. Adolphe remains firmly focused on Ellénore as the inspirer of his aspirations. Only once does the young man deviate from that pattern, when the baron de T* engenders in him a longing for a career and regular life. However, this detour is of short duration, and the protagonist returns under the influence of his mistress. Girard also declares that the term of the subject-mediator relationship regulates its nature. "Plus le règne du médiateur est bref, plus il est tyrannique." Ellénore's tenure of mediation for Adolphe is far from brief, lasting at least four years, but

29 Girard, p. 97.

30 Girard, p. 97.
it is certainly tyrannical. The extreme emotional variations, the joys and the suffering that both partners endure do not characterize a peaceful, benevolent union. Nevertheless, the violent emotional upheavals experienced by Adolphe and Ellénore follow perfectly Girard's other descriptions of the bond formed by a triangular desire. He illuminates the inescapable nature of that link, the master-servant tie that results, and the hypocritical behavior of the subject involved. All of these aspects manifest themselves during Adolphe's affair with Ellénore.

The permanence of Adolphe's relationship with his mistress results from what Girard calls "médiation double ou réciproque." This reciprocal mediation is an effect of the inevitable contagion of the triangular desire. "Le désir métaphysique est éminemment contagieux."31 This infectious quality marks all such wishes, but in a case of internal mediation, the proximity of subject and mediator intensifies the effects, engendering double mediation and yet another triangle of longing. "Deux triangles identiques et de sens inverse vont se superposer l'un à l'autre."32 The double triangle represents a more permanent structure, because of the constant reinforcement the two rivals give it. "Le désir va circuler de plus en plus vite entre les deux rivaux,


32 Girard, p. 104.
In the case of Adolphe, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment of Ellénore's infection with the triangular desire. Part of the inability to determine that origin resides in the first-person narration of the story. Girard considers a natural effect of the contagion that "[c]acun imite l'autre tout en affirmant la priorité et l'antériorité de son propre désir." Adolphe's narration reveals the beginning of his own yearning, but effectively disguises the transmittal of it to Ellénore so that only her behavior in the relationship exposes the existence of double mediation. The first indication of that reciprocal longing emerges during the six weeks of the count's absence. Her possessive demands on Adolphe's time and company during that period echo his own domineering actions of the earlier part of the relationship, in trying to maintain exclusive control of the other's communication. The irritation that Adolphe feels after those attempts confirms the beginning of his triangular desire and leads to the continual struggle between the two lovers. By this time, then, Adolphe and Ellénore have

33 Girard, p. 104.
34 Girard, p. 104.
established the reciprocal mediation that comprises their relationship.

Because of the constantly circulating desire in double mediation, the liaison between the two subjects/mediators tends toward permanence. This constancy consists not of stable satisfaction with the status quo but, paradoxically, of repeated assaults against itself. The two desirers are involved in an inescapable endless struggle which creates a type of paralysis. "Ils restent, face à face, immobilisés dans une opposition qui les engage tout entiers." 35 Once involved in the desire for control of language, Adolphe and Ellénore discover the nature of this perpetual conflict. Each time the protagonist initiates a break with his mistress, Ellénore's reaction arouses his emotions and he finds himself more deeply involved with her. Each time Ellénore tries to bring her love even closer to her, Adolphe feels more restrained and more convinced of the need to extricate himself from the affair.

This inability to reconcile the conflict creates pain for both Adolphe and Ellénore, an effect which follows all cases of mediated desire: "Tout désir selon l'Autre, si noble et si inoffensif qu'il nous paraisse à ses débuts, entraîne peu à peu sa victime vers les régions infernales." 36

35 Girard, p. 177.
36 Girard, p. 108.
Naturally in the case of double mediation both subjects/mediators are victims, but see themselves as victims not of the desire, but of the other partner. "Chacun voit dans l'autre un persécuteur atrocement cruel." Adolphe, despite minor admissions of his role in maintaining the affair, blames Ellénore for "la vie de précipitation, de trouble et de tourment à laquelle sa passion me condamnait (p. 77)" and calls the affair "une situation qui me coûtait mon bonheur (p. 92)." At the same time, Ellénore attributes her lasting misery to Adolphe "Par quelle pitié bizarre n'osez-vous pas rompre un lien qui vous pèse et déchirez-vous l'être malheureux près de qui votre pitié vous retient? (p. 144)" Unfortunately for them, they are both wrong, for neither one is able to make the decisive break as long as each is caught in the current of reciprocal mediation.

The combination of persecution and the mental paralysis inherent in double mediation establishes between the two partners involved a master-slave relationship. Both the dominant partner and the submissive one lose their independence in that union; the slave to the master and the latter to the situation. Only by his connection with the subservient Other can the controlling individual retain his control. Girard defines the master-slave bond in the triangular desire as a struggle in which "chacun joue sa

37 Girard, p. 104.
liberté contre celle d'autrui. La lutte est terminée dès que l'un des combattants confesse son désir et humilie son orgueil."38 The narrating Adolphe, intent on revealing the "antériorité et supériorité" of his aspirations, plainly declares that his liberty is constantly menaced in his affair. Ellénore's risk of liberty lies in her sacrifices of her reputation to continue the liaison, for the best life possible for her lies in her constant devotion to the count. The two lovers repeatedly refer to their losses during their struggle.

Since the conflict's end follows the confession of desire, Girard defines the foundation of this master-slave link as hypocrisy. "La dialectique romanesque repose sur l'hypocrisie. La violence, loin de servir les intérêts de celui qui l'exerce, révèle l'intensité de son désir; elle est un signe d'esclavage."39 The subject of a triangular desire relies on dissimulation to avoid disclosing the existence of that desire, and, in so doing, maintains the superior role. Insincerity certainly figures in Adolphe's dealings with Ellénore, but the dissembling of the hero of mediated desire is disguised by the narrator's presentation of the facts. Although he claims to be deeply troubled by his insincerity, the narrator describes only seven quarrels with Ellénore

38 Girard, p. 114.
which he ends by recourse to dissimulation. After only five of these does he give any indication that his words are not true, and in only four of those five clues does Adolphe accuse himself of deceit.

The first conflict which Adolphe describes appears to show the young man at his most sincere. As the day nears for the hero's appointed time in D* to end, Ellénore wants her lover to write to his father and request an extension. At the end of this discussion, Adolphe puts aside his reluctance and agrees to write. Nowhere in his description of that quarrel does Adolphe mention dissimulation; the inference that his agreement with Ellénore was dishonest comes from his earlier and subsequent expressions of dissatisfaction with the affair. After the young man receives permission to tarry longer, the couple once again argues. In ending that dispute, Adolphe takes back all his previous accusations of despotism. Again, it is the narrator's appraisal of his feelings "de gêne et de contrainte (p. 63)" before and after the altercation which point to hypocrisy. Twice more Adolphe concludes discussions with his mistress by assuring her of affection. Both of these incidents result from Ellénore's wish to leave the count. The young man's final move in the first quarrel is to declare his devotion to his paramour's happiness, and, in the second, to express his happiness at Ellénore's love. The subsequent "Mais . . ." after his first statement hints at his dissimulation. After his second
conciliatory statement he specifies his feelings: "Pendant que je lui parlais, je n'envisageais rien au-delà de ce but et j'étais sincère dans mes promesses (p. 69)." The insistence on the concurrence of speech and feelings implies that the sincerity does not last past the moment of utterance.

In later episodes Adolphe clearly states that his love-talk to Ellénore represents dissembling of his sentiments. The letters that he writes to her from his father's house he condemns as deceiving because of their closing statements. "[J]'ajoutais rapidement quelques phrases ardentes ou tendres, propres à la tromper de nouveau (p. 77)," he writes after the first letter. "Je n'avais pas dit ce que je pensais. Ma lettre ne portait aucun caractère de sincérité (p. 78)," he says of the second. Adolphe's final hypocritical answer to Ellénore follows their discussion of the count's offer to take his former lover back. The protagonist closes this quarrel with repeated assurances of his love and denial of his previous actions and statements.

All of these apparently insincere declarations of love and devotion seem to contradict Girard's assertions about the use of hypocrisy in the triangular desire. Each of Adolphe's final statements serves to bind the couple more closely together, which is the opposite of his avowed goal. Yet, within the context of mediation, he cannot wish for an end to the affair because that would terminate his quest with no
hope of success. Consequently, the hero's true desire demands that he stay with Ellénore. These reassurances of love do not disguise his need to maintain the relationship. What renders Adolph's impassioned reconciliations permissible in the master-slave union is their position in the discussions, following Ellénore's even more violent exposure of her desire. Every time Ellénore capitulates first and takes the slave role of betraying her yearning, Adolph expresses love to her. Although Adolph's wish to stay with his mistress represents weakness, he resists self-betrayal longer than his partner. Since his moment of weakness strengthens the link between the two, he clearly holds the superior role.

Adolph's hypocrisy lies outside these statements which the narrator classes as insincere; rather, it is found in the words which precede these statements, which cause Ellénore's exposure of her desire. Girard defines successful dissimulation: "Tous les succès éclatants, dans l'univers de la médiation double, relèvent de l'indifférence réelle ou simulée . . . . Tout le secret consiste à faire de l'indifférence un spectacle sans laisser voir son jeu."40 When Adolph expresses disenchantment with the relationship, he is merely feigning disinterest and provokes Ellénore into her emotional revelations of desire. In each of the above

40 Girard, p. 72.
confrontations Adolphe commences by displaying indifference: he hesitates to write his father for permission to stay longer in D*; he coldly informs Ellénore of his father's response to that request; he attempts to discourage Ellénore from leaving the count; he writes to Ellénore of their friendship; he writes to tell her not to come to his home town; and he tells her he no longer loves her. After all these statements, Ellénore reacts with emotion, which weakens her and prompts her tears or despair.

If, as application of Girard's theory indicates, Adolphe's hypocrisy with Ellénore lies not in the declarations of love with which he closes every painful confrontation but in his indifference to the relationship, the narrator's comments on his insincerity represent another act of dissembling. Each time the older Adolphe proclaims, "[j]e n'avais pas dit ce que je pensais (p. 78), " or "Ces simples paroles, démences par tant de paroles précédentes (p. 89)" or "le sentiment qui me les dictait s'éteignit avant même que j'eusse fini de les prononcer (p. 101)," he is in fact deliberately deceiving the reader. Several factors lead to this startling conclusion, among them the role of the narrator in general, Adolphe's personality, and the influence of internally mediated desire.

A first person narrator plays a unique role in his narrative because he appears not only as story-teller, but as a character in the narrative. Therefore the recounting
character is not immune to the personality traits which affect his "acting" personnage. Patrick Brady discusses this ambiguity of narrator and concludes that "[f]or immanent criticism [defined by Brady as an approach "in which ... the critic stays within the text itself in so far as it is possible, with little or no reference to causality"], every narrator is an Unreliable Narrator."\(^{41}\) The reader can not trust the narrator implicitly because of the failings of human memory, or the unconscious or purposeful distortion of facts in order to interest the reader, to justify his actions or merely to relive the past as it might have been. To mistrust the narrating Adolphe's assertions concerning his sincerity merely shows prudent caution on the reader's part.

Three studies on the narrating Adolphe verify the need for caution. Ruth P. Thomas demonstrates that the narrator's perceptions fail to clarify his past. The questions addressed to the reader and the phrases that place Adolphe's sincerity in doubt indicate that the older Adolphe does not fully understand his past emotions and actions. When the narrator attempts to advance an explanation for his actions, he often contradicts himself, blaming human nature, society, himself, and destiny successively for the failure of his

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relationship. The resulting account of his life does not lead to self-understanding but to self-destruction.\textsuperscript{42} Ian R. Morrison demonstrates that the narrator loses lucidity and suggests that this decline plays an important role in the novel.\textsuperscript{43} Timothy Unwin also concludes that Adolphe's narration, an attempt at self-analysis, fails. He attributes the failure to the older Adolphe's growing involvement in reliving his earlier life.\textsuperscript{44} These articles explicitly state that the narrating Adolphe can not be depended on to present an objective account and analysis of his younger life. The implicit conclusion is that, unconsciously, Adolphe distorts his narrative.

Considering Adolphe's character as a youth, the narrator could, indeed, engage in occasional conscious adjustments of truth while recounting his story. It would be a remarkable recovery if, as an older man, he completely abandoned his hypocritical habits. Ian Alexander states that "Adolphe . . . leads in the art of dissembling . . . [H]e is capable of employing a complicated 'double-think' and 'double talk'

\textsuperscript{42} Ruth P. Thomas, "The Ambiguous Narrator of \textit{Adolphe}," \textit{Romance Notes}, 14 (1973), 486-495.

\textsuperscript{43} Ian R. Morrison, "Emotional Involvement and the Failure of Analysis in \textit{Adolphe}," \textit{Neophilologus}, 60 (1976), 334-341.

\textsuperscript{44} Timothy A. Unwin, "The Narrator and His Evolution in Constant's \textit{Adolphe}," \textit{Swiss-French Studies/Etudes Romandes}, 3 (1982), 60-86.
which both conceals and reveals."45 Shoshanna Felman points out that Adolphe suffers the same fate as Lorenzaccio: "[h]abitué de longue date à la feinte, il lui devient impossible de se révéler, impossible de s'exprimer authentiquement."46 These assessments describe the character of Adolphe as protagonist, but it is dangerous to assume that the narrator is free of these earlier faults, especially as he intensely relives his earlier experiences.

Adding the effects of the influence of triangular desire to those of memory adds even more credence to the theory that the narrating Adolphe misleads the reader with his comments on insincerity. These comments occur only during the recital of communicative encounters while he is suffering the consequences of internal mediation. Most follow conversations with Ellénore, but occasionally the baron de T* is the recipient of the alleged hypocrisy. Even in these cases, Ellénore is the subject under discussion. As the narrating Adolphe relives the events dictated by his metaphysical yearning, he experiences again the effects of that longing. Girard points out that the hero of such a desire reveals weakness when revealing his wish. Just as the young Adolphe wishes to hide the true motivation for his

45 Alexander, p. 27.

actions, so does the narrator, while intensely involved once again with his past life, seek to disguise the truth from his reader and from himself. He can achieve such an effect by telling the reader that his conciliatory remarks represent dissimulation.

The truth of Adolphe's relationship lies hidden among both the actions and the words of the hero and the narrator. In reality, the young Adolphe wants to stay with Ellénore, his mediator, in order to pursue his desire for language control. The narrator's first step in concealing the truth is to describe the discontent felt by the hero in the relationship. This unhappiness results from the fact of the triangular desire, but the writing Adolphe lays the blame on Ellénore and his own lack of love, thus implying that a dissolution of the union would lead to happiness. The narrator next records his younger self's words or actions which display to his mistress a wish to leave. These words or actions represent the dissimulation of the subject of internal mediation. Ellénore's reaction of weakness permits the hero to utter words of reconciliation, a statement of the truth. Although these words take the form of declarations of love, the emotion that Adolphe feels for his mistress has no bearing on the fact that she is his mediator. The significant aspect of these words is their expression of the desire to stay with Ellénore. Having revealed his wish both to Ellénore and to the reader, the narrator once again works
to contradict his words by denying them, as he bemoans the fact that he has not expressed his thoughts sincerely.

Such a narrative strategy places Adolphe at a third point in the progression of narration described by Girard. The theorist assigns *A la recherche du temps perdu* the first position in the development. That narrator, according to Girard, describes his words, actions, and sentiments to the reader, including the sentiments in order to explain why his words and actions oppose each other.

Mais si je lui cachais les premiers [sentiments] et s'il connaissait seulement les secondes [words], mes actes, si peu en rapport avec elles, lui donneraient si souvent l'impression d'étranges revirements qu'il me croyait peut-être fou.47

In Dostoevsky's novels, however, the process is different, consisting of "cacher les sentiments et à révéler les paroles."48 The reader must depend on himself to explain any contradictions between a character's words and actions, finding the explanation most usually in the influence of mediated desire. The narrating Adolphe demands even more from his reader, however. He returns to the Proustian technique of recording sentiments as well as words and actions, but his purpose is not to explain himself. His

47 Cited by Girard, p. 245.

48 Girard, p. 246-7.
account of his feelings does not permit a reconciliation of
his words and actions. Indeed, by virtue of the fact that
his stated emotions agree with only some of his words, they
emphasize the gap between words and deed. The narrator's
intent in presenting sentiments is to mislead the reader,
camouflaging the truth of his actions (he stays with
Ellénore) with contradictory words and sentiments.

The complicated concealment of the truth does not always
occur, because Adolphe does not always betray his desire. As
long as Ellénore's immediate reaction is anger or irritation,
Adolphe maintains his disinterested pose. After her lover's
announcement that he has received permission to stay in D*,
Ellénore echoes Adolphe's unemotional tone. The two proceed
to exchange "reproches mutuels (p. 65)" and accusations. It
is only when Ellénore weakens, displaying "son visage couvert
tout à coup de pleurs (p. 65)," that Adolphe drops his
indifference and displays his own desire. Later, when the
two discuss Ellénore's plan to leave the count, Adolphe
continues his opposition to it until Ellénore resorts to
violent emotion, asking him if he will refuse to see her.
That betrayal of her longing prompts Adolphe's
reconciliation. Even the mere thought of Ellénore's
weakening can dissuade Adolphe from his course of hypocrisy
and lead him to confessions of love. When he writes to her
from his father's house, he tries to imbue the letters with a
tone of affection and friendship rather than love. But the
vision of his mistress, "la pauvre Ellénore, triste et isolée, n'ayant que mes lettres pour consolation (p. 76)," changes his style and he turns from coldness to the warmth of love. Although he does not witness Ellénore's sadness first hand, the mere knowledge that it will occur suffices to allow Adolphe to quit his deception and display the weakness of the victim of mediated desire.

In some confrontations, Ellénore resists the impulse to expose her involvement in a triangular longing. At these moments Adolphe maintains his simulation of indifference. Ellénore's arrival in her lover's hometown results in a stormy reunion between the two. Ellénore begins the discussion in an attitude of defiance and continues in that attitude. Her conversational moves display her own strength: "elle m'examinait . . . elle irrita ma fierté par ses reproches . . . elle outragea mon caractère (p. 79)."

Adolphe responds in kind and the couple engages in a three hour battle of "deux ennemis irréconciliables, acharnés à se déchirer (p. 80)." Ellénore never relents in her anger; she sheds no tears, nor does she express either love or fear of abandonment. Because of her strength, Adolphe does not permit his own desire to surface in a reconciliation. Later, when Adolphe plans and executes an elopement in defiance of his father's wishes, Ellénore again refrains from tearful sadness. Instead she somberly pronounces on Adolphe's action: "vous croyez avoir de l'amour, et vous n'avez que de
la pitié (p. 83)." Faced with her display of indifference, Adolphe remains silent before he tries, albeit weakly, to reassure her of love. Twice more before their trip to Poland, the couple will experience similar disputes. When Ellénore hears of the restoration of her father's fortune and when she receives reports of his death, she wishes to return to her native land with Adolphe. The young man resists her wishes and an argument ensues. In both cases there is no revelation of weakness and no real reconciliation. Ellénore neither cries nor faints; Adolphe does not declare his love; nor does the narrator describe feelings which contradict words and actions. Life continues as before with the only change one of residence as the two move to Warsaw.

The relationship between the protagonists, from the moment of Adolphe's disillusionment with satisfaction of his first desire until the move to Poland, forms the triangle of double mediated desire. Adolphe, the subject of desire; Ellénore, his mediator; and language control, the object of longing, represent three points in a static structure. That structure serves to explain the mysteries of the affair between Adolphe and his mistress. The permanent unhappiness of both partners and the protagonist's hypocrisy result from the influence of metaphysical desire.
Chapter 4: Corruption of Communication

Adolphe's internally mediated desire, aspiring to gain control of the means of communication between him and Ellénore, colors his relationship with Ellénore. The endurance of the union, the endless conflict, the master-slave tendency and the hero's dissembling are all results of the double mediation existing between the two partners. Adolphe and Ellénore do more than suffer the effects of their mutual longing, however; they also attempt to reach their goal of mastery over words. Their efforts lie in their actions and, more significantly, in their conversations, for their relationship contains far more talk than action. In the course of their quests, they acquire a new linguistic skill, learning to wage war with words as their weapons as well as the prize of victory.

Examining each of the couple's discussions reveals their plan of attack, the method each partner follows to reach the end of his search. Every linguistic exchange between the lovers consists of moves of offense and defense, and most end in defeat or victory for one of the partners. As time passes, each combattant devises his or her strategy based on his or her skill with the chosen weapon, and the conversations escalate into battles in a great war over communication.
Critical analysis of the characters' power struggle through and over language is incomplete. For the most part scholars fail to recognize both Adolphe's and Ellénore's involvement in the conflict. Grahame C. Jones and Ian Alexander conclude that Ellénore participates more actively in the dispute than Adolphe. "One sees [Ellénore's passion] in Ellénore's desire not only to control Adolphe's actions, but to take command of his very thoughts and moods . . . [T]his tyranny is exercised not only through words but also through 'le regard'."¹ Carla Peterson points to Adolphe's courtship of Ellénore as an example of the linguistic conflict: " . . . both speech and writing function as highly effective weapons."² Godelieve Mercken-Spaas correctly identifies Adolphe's combative use of words later in the relationship. "he uses silence, like language, as a weapon to conquer her, for he either breaks the silence or imposes it on her."³ Mercken-Spaas is one of the few critics who describe Adolphe's and Ellénore's relationship as a mutual quest for power and the role of language in that search. "The procedures of seduction and sacrifice are attempts to


² Carla Peterson, "Constant's Adolphe, James's The Beast in the Jungle and the Quest for the Mother," Essays in Literature, 9 (Fall, 1982), p. 228.

³ Mercken-Spaas, Alienation, p. 96.
gain power over the Other. . . . The techniques for these . . . procedures are various forms of verbal and non-verbal communication . . . "4 However, before a character can assume mastery over his or her partner, he or she must seize control of language. Linguistic control is not only the means to dominate the other, it is also an end in itself, the object of the triangular desire. Mercken-Spaas neglects the true nature of the conflict and does not explain the procedures involved.

Jeannine Jallat does make the connection between a character's power over language and his power over the other: "[c]ette histoire d'une communication impossible définit aussi deux personnages dans leur rapport à la parole."5 However, Jallat does not analyze all the reflections of that relationship. Her main concern is the characters' use of parole directe (direct discourse) and parole indirecte, a use which reflects their strength. According to Jallat, employing direct discourse shows a character's strength, while weakness manifests itself in indirect discourse. "[C]elui qui s'empare de la parole directe s'assure la maîtrise du jeu." "La parole indirecte est . . . le lieu

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4 Mercken-Spaas, Alienation, p. 130.

5 Jallat, p. 84.
privilégié des embarras de parole, des 'efforts' et des 'contradictions' du discours. . . "

Jallat's work takes the first step in explaining the difficult linguistic relationship between the two lovers, but she does not go far enough. Because she concentrates on the use of direct discourse, she neglects to see the signs of strength present in indirect discourse. Her assertion that strength lies in recourse to la parole directe condemns as weak all scenes of strictly indirect discourse, yet the conflict continues through these scenes. Even in incidents of mixed discourse, there are methods of asserting strength, and these methods merit consideration.

The communication psychologist Paul Watzlawick, because of his conception of communication not "as a one-way phenomenon (from speaker to listener)" but "as an interaction process," provides a framework by which to analyze the linguistic encounters of Adolphe and Ellénone. 7 Specifically, four of Watzlawick's theories do much to explain the couple's communication. First Watzlawick contends that there is no such thing as non-communication, so that even silence says something. Secondly, the psychologist

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6 Jallat, p. 80, 79.

describes relationships as either complementary or symmetrical. Thirdly, each piece of communication has both a report and a command aspect. Finally, Watzlawick elaborates the notion of a "Game Without End" of distorted communication. All of these theories work together to provide analysis and explanation of the couple's battle over language.

The linguistic wars begin once the two partners fall under the influence of double mediation, but seeds of it appear in even their early contact. During the friendship phase of their relationship, Adolphe and Ellénore enjoy an equality in conversation. The young man admires her skill, but he, too, can attract by his words. Part of his power lies in his novel use of language which contrasts with that of others in Ellénore's circle. "Une plaisanterie plus légère, une conversation plus variée . . . étonnèrent et attachèrent Ellénore (p. 36)." The two become friends and share communication equally for a time: "[n]ous lisions ensemble des poètes anglais . . . ; je causais avec elle sur mille sujets (p. 37)."

Such perfect equality comes to an end when Adolphe launches his courtship of Ellénore. The young man finds his linguistic power suddenly sapped when he wishes to declare his love. The family enemy, timidity, strikes and renders

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8 See Chapter 3.
the would-be lover speechless: "tous mes discours expiraient sur mes lèvres, ou se terminaient tout autrement que je ne l'avais projeté (p. 38)." His written assault on the obstacle is successful, but it also draws him into a linguistic confrontation with Ellénore. Having declared his love by letter, Adolphe wants to follow through in person, only to learn that Ellénore refuses his communication. She does not admit him to her presence, and then, as he continues to write, forbids even that possibility by removing herself from the neighborhood. Once she is back, however, Adolphe returns to his post as would-be suitor with the goal of winning the right to communicate with Ellénore. At the dinner party he concentrates his efforts on reviving the old intimacy which existed prior to his declaration of love. "Je ramenai la conversation sur des sujets que je savais l'intéresser . . . je parvins à me faire écouter d'elle (p. 45)." His tactics work and he gains the confidence to continue his fight when the two meet again.

At this point Adolphe resumes his courtship of Ellénore, but his suit consists of a series of assaults on the control of language. In their first encounter after Adolphe's restoration to favor, the two partners' discussion clearly reflects this linguistic nature. The topic under consideration, Adolphe's wish to continue seeing Ellénore, especially in light of the actions preceding this moment, really symbolizes a communicative power struggle. Adolphe is
fighting for the right to free communication with his hoped-for mistress. Ellénore struggles to maintain her right to refuse such communication. The procedure of conversation also displays the nature of the struggle, as the two exchange control of the occasion to speak.

In this discussion, Adolphe gains the floor from the beginning, seizing control of the word before Ellénore has a chance. "Elle voulut parler: je lui demandait de m'écouter (p. 46)." Even the narrator's recounting of that opening stresses the notion of power in language. Adolphe asks not only for the chance to speak but also for an audience, for Ellénore to listen to him. His strength is not absolute, however; although he maintains control of speech, weakness prevents complete eloquence: "je continuai en ces termes, non sans être obligé de m'interrompre souvent (p. 46)." Adolphe's address consists of a plea to Ellénore to forget his declaration of love and allow the return of the earlier friendship between the two. The young man couches this request in visual terms: "[j]'ai pris l'habitude de vous voir . . . je ne veux que vous voir; mais je dois vous voir s'il faut que je vive (p. 47)," but those terms mask the communicative nature of the demand. The previous friendship of Adolphe and Ellénore consists of shared enjoyment of language: reading English poetry and conversing about thousands of topics. Restoration of the friendly
relationship would lead to reestablishment of the sharing of words.

Ellénore has no response to Adolphe's request, so the young man continues to speak, calling on both debating and dramatic skill: "levant toutes les objections, retournant . . . tous les raisonnements qui plaîdaient en ma faveur. J'étais si soumis, si résigné . . . (p. 48)." In the end Ellénore agrees to accept his communication, but she manifests her strength by placing conditions on the nature of that communication. The narrator expresses the outcome of the discussion in martial terms: "nous étions contents . . . moi, d'avoir reconquis le bien que j'avais été menacé de perdre . . . (p. 48)."

Adolphe's discontentment with Ellénore's enforcement of two of her conditions to conversation with him provokes the next skirmish over language. Ellénore insures Adolphe's compliance with her regulations by surrounding herself with other acquaintances. This method of defense inhibits Adolphe's linguistic power and limits his participation in conversation. Ellénore invites him into the group as she wishes: "on ne racontait rien d'intéressant qu'elle ne m'appelât pour l'entendre (p. 49)." But Adolphe longs for intimate conversation with Ellénore, and her guests hamper both his access to such communication and his eloquence: "des soirées entières se passaient sans que je pusse lui dire autre chose en particulier que quelques mots insignifiants ou
interrompus (p. 49)." Such feebleness irritates Adolphe, prompting him to carry on the linguistic battle in public. He begins to alter his conversational style in a manner designed to aggravate Ellénore. "Je devins sombre, taciturne, inégal dans mon humeur, amer dans mes discours (p. 49)." He even makes a more direct attack, trying to wrest control of her communication from her and the other guests: "lorsqu'un autre que moi s'entretenait à part avec Ellénore [,] j'interrompais brusquement ces entretiens (p. 49)."

These tactics lead to another exchange between the couple as Ellénore expresses her unhappiness with Adolphe's conduct. Although Ellénore begins the discussion, Adolphe takes over and addresses her at length. Again he places the conflict on a communicative level by opposing their recent experiences to the old. Their shared communication has given way to Ellénore's new social life, which he classifies as "ces éternelles conversations qui se prolongent précisément parce qu'elles ne devraient jamais commencer (p. 50)."

According to the young man, their friendship should consist of an intimacy which contrasts with the superficial intercourse with others. "L'amitié n'a-t-elle pas ses secrets? N'est-elle pas ombrageuse et timide au milieu du bruit et de la foule? (p. 50)" The contrast has its effect, as Ellénore permits more intimacy, which allows the relationship to progress past friendship. As always, the progression is, to Adolphe, a linguistic one. "Elle me
permit de lui peindre mon amour; elle se familiarisa par degrés avec ce langage: bientôt elle m'avoua qu'elle m'aimait (pp. 50-51)."

The establishment of the love relationship restores a certain equilibrium in linguistic power. Once again the two engage in shared communication as they each recount their happiness in love. Yet the narrator betrays the existence of the germ of the struggle to come. Adolphe's contribution to the conversation revolves strictly around his own feelings: "me proclamant le plus heureux des hommes." Even his expressions of love reinforce a superior position, as he does not praise his mistress for her qualities, but assures her of his feelings: "lui prodiguant mille assurances de tendresse, de dévouement et de respect éternel (p. 51)." He does not grant Ellénore the opportunity to speak without his own direction: "[j]e lui faisais répéter les plus petits détails," and the story he wants to hear is that of her sufferings, hopes, and fears, a topic which clearly reflects weakness.

Yet Ellénore still has access to language and asserts her need to control even in this time of comparative equality. Having already violated her moral code by her relationship with the count, she wishes to avoid a second transgression with Adolphe. She attempts to keep the love relationship platonic, or rather, to continue its existence on a strictly linguistic plane. Failing that, she is willing
to cut off communication entirely in order to avoid the temptation to consummate the relationship. "Plus d'une fois elle forma le projet de briser un lien qui ne répandait sur sa vie que de l'inquietude et du trouble (p. 52)." Adolphe counters these moves with all the linguistic tactics at his disposal: "je me plaignais, je m'emportais, j'accablais Ellénore de reproches . . . . Plus d'une fois je l'apaisai par mes supplications, mes désaveux et mes pleurs." The vocal expression gives way to written as he writes a long, impassioned letter in which he reinforces their communicative dependence on each other. He follows the letter with more spoken words of love, counting on his verbal eloquence to contrast with the Count's silence in love. "Il aurait pu contracter des liens plus honorables . . . : il ne le lui disait point, . . . mais ce qu'on ne dit pas n'en existe pas moins, et tout ce qui est se devine (p. 55)". He continues his attack, alternating verbal approaches from "des emportements qui l'effrayaient" to "une soumission, . . . une tendresse, . . . une vénération idolâtre (pp. 55-56)," and obtains the success he seeks.

In each of these early exchanges, the opportunity for equal access to language remains. Although the characters each try to control the process, their willingness to share language with each other marks the majority of their efforts. Only for a time does Ellénore seek to deny Adolphe the right to speak and write to her. In these cases, however, it is
concern for her reputation, and not the desire to silence Adolphe which motivates her. Once she consents to receive his communication, her attempts to regulate, again coming from moral reasons, also tend to re-establish shared linguistic activity with him. Adolphe, for his part, is also trying to improve the couple's communicative opportunity. Indeed, even his efforts for physical consummation of the relationship can be seen in this light, for this physical act represents yet another form of communication.

However, following that success, the couple's communication begins to change from normal to abnormal. Adolphe abandons his externally mediated desire for an internally mediated one with Ellénore as mediator. That new longing infects Ellénore with a similar wish, and the two suffer the effects of reciprocal mediation. That shared yearning for control of words corrupts the couple's use of language as they each try to achieve the goal while concealing it from their partner. In this phase of the relationship, both Adolphe and Ellénore manipulate language, seeking to gain power over it and to weaken the other's grasp on it. Each discovers a favorite linguistic weapon which assures them victory in the skirmish. For Ellénore that weapon is the silent treatment, while Adolphe chooses to distort language.

Ellénore's first attempt to dominate her lover's communication occurs after the consummation of their affair,
when she tries to gain exclusive right to receive his conversation. Her actions, trying to keep Adolphe with her at all times and forcing him to account for every minute he will be away inhibit his linguistic opportunity. Adolphe is left speechless in front of his acquaintances. Even more significant, the young man loses linguistic power within the relationship. His "conseils de prudence" go unheeded by Ellénore. When finally he complies with her efforts to limit his communicative opportunities and cuts short his time away from her, he finds that his use of language suffers from inefficacy. Although he imagines a linguistic prowess, "je me faisais une fête de la consoler (p. 59)," Ellénore's frank expression of emotion," elle ne me déguisait aucun de ses mouvements (p. 60)," robs his words of their strength. His actual performance differs considerably from what he had hoped. "je souffrais deux heures près d'elle avant de pouvoir l'apaiser (p. 60)."

In later encounters Ellénore chooses the silent treatment as an effective weapon. Before entering the relationship she discovers some of the power of this arm, as her concern for her reputation leads her to employ it. Her refusal of face-to-face communication with Adolphe after his first love letter produces a strong emotional reaction in the young man. Of course, she remains ignorant of the immediate effect of intensifying his love: [l]'amour, qu'une heure auparavant je m'applaudissais de feindre, je crus tout à coup
l'éprouver avec fureur (p. 39-40)." However, she does learn of the extreme emotion that her gesture caused Adolphe, for he writes her again. "Je lui peignis en termes déchirants mon désespoir, les projets funestes que m'inspirait sa cruelle détermination (p. 40)." Despite this knowledge of Adolphe's reaction to the loss of verbal language use, she proceeds to eliminate all opportunity for use of the written word as well by leaving town. Again the action devastates Adolphe to the extent that he no longer remembers his original unsentimental intent. "J'étais étonné moi-même de ce que je souffriais ... Je ne concevais rien à la douleur violente indomptable, qui déchirait mon coeur (p. 40)."

Ellénore learns of Adolphe's pain only later when the count informs her that the protagonist represents "l'un des hommes que votre départ inattendue a le plus étonné (p. 41)."

Having some knowledge of the power of silence to affect Adolphe, Ellénore does not hesitate to use it once the relationship has developed into the struggle for mastery of communication. In early skirmishes she conveys strength by her silence. During the count's six-week absence, as the conflict between the two lovers escalates, Adolphe wishes to reassert his own superior strength and regain control of the couple's use of language. To achieve his goal of limiting their conversational opportunities, according to his discretion, he appeals to Ellénore's regard for social conventions. "Je lui donnais donc des conseils de prudence,
tut en l'assurant de mon amour." Even in his manner of address he reinforces his own dominance, advising and assuring Ellénore, both verbs which indicate delivery of speech from a superior position. Ellénore responds with not merely silence, but active resistance to listening: "plus je lui donnais des conseils, moins elle était disposée à m'écouter (p. 59)." The situation continues even after the count's return, so Adolphe becomes even more frantic in his domineering attempts. His calm tone of assurance gives way to emotionally tinged words. "Je parlai vivement à Ellénore . . .; je la suppliai (p. 61)." Inserting a rational note, the young man reminds his mistress that her reputation, her fortune, and her children are at stake, but again Ellénore chooses to remain silent instead of addressing her lover. Later, when Ellénore tells Adolphe of her decision to leave the count, she uses the silent treatment in another way. Rather than a means of defense to prevent her submission to Adolphe's domination, silence becomes an offensive weapon. At the close of the discussion, she orders Adolphe to leave and follows this order with two days of silence. Adolphe again experiences the effect of deprivation of the possibility of communicating with Ellénore. His emotions intensify beyond his belief: "je souffrais d'ignorer son sort; je souffrais même de ne pas la voir, et j'étais étonné de la peine que cette privation me causait (p. 67)."
These strong silences prove to be the exception rather than the rule. More often Ellénéore's speechlessness is accompanied by pallor, trembling, tears, or loss of consciousness, which mark her silences as weak. When Adolphe is to leave D*, Ellénéore reacts with a request that he stay. Adolphe finds his arguments against staying met with tears: "elle pleurait si amèrement et elle était si tremblante, ses traits portaient l'empreinte d'une souffrance si déchirante . . . (p. 62)." Although this silent treatment emanates from obvious weakness, it loses none of its efficacy. Adolphe reacts with reassurances of love and hastens to write his father. His receiving permission to stay provokes another discussion with Ellénéore, during which she again falls into a feeble silence: "je vis son visage couvert tout à coup de pleurs (p. 65)." Adolphe reacts in his usual manner and brings the discussion to an end. In the course of another conversation, Ellénéore's silence becomes even weaker as she falls in a faint (p. 89). Adolphe responds in a fashion identical to his earlier reactions: "je la relevai, je l'embrassai . . . 'Ellénéore, m'écriai-je . . . je vous aime d'amour' (p. 89)." Even later, sickness and death cause her silence and Adolphe reacts in the same way.

In these incidents, Ellénéore's silence represents more than a mere refusal of Adolphe's communication and carries meaning of its own. Paul Watzlawick maintains that non-communication does not exist.
Behavior has no opposite. In other words, there is no such thing as non-behavior . . . . Now if it is accepted that all behavior in an interactional situation has message value . . . , it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot not communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value.9

Ellénore's silence provokes a response because of the message Adolphe receives from it.

According to Watzlawick each piece of communication carries two messages, one of which he calls the report aspect and the other the command aspect. The report aspect refers to the content of the speech, while the command describes the speaker's evaluation of himself and the relationship between him and the listener.10 There are three possible command aspects: confirmation, in which the speaker accepts the other's definition of himself and the relationship; rejection, in which the speaker refuses to accept those definitions, and disconfirmation, which "is no longer concerned with the truth or falsity of P's [the speaker's] definition of himself, but rather negates the reality of P as the source of such a definition," saying, in effect, "you do

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9 Watzlawick, p. 49.

10 Watzlawick, pp. 51, 83, 84.
not exist."¹¹ This message is most devastating, undermining as it does the speaker's confidence in his existence.

Adolphe's reactions to the silence of Ellénore reveal that the command aspect of that silence is disconfirmation. His emotional response lies, of course, in the intensifying effect, but Adolphe also experiences a linguistic response to most of Ellénore's speechlessness. Linguistically, he suffers the need to combat the silence; he multiplies his own words to replace Ellénore's lack of them. During the courtship, he follows the first invocation of the silent treatment with another letter. After the second, he suffers even more acutely because he has no receiver for his communication. The strong silences prompt Adolphe to multiply his arguments; the weak ones provoke assurances of love. In all cases, Adolphe rushes to fill the void with his own language, as if the sheer quantity of words will prove his existence to Ellénore and to himself.

Adolphe's most effective weapon, distortion of communication, also carries a disconfirming message to his partner, but like Ellénore, he experiments with other weapons first. In his early efforts, he attempts to rely on his eloquence to assert control of the linguistic situation. In the first two arguments he tries by his advice and his appeals to his mistress's interest: "je lui représentais

¹¹ Watzlawick, p. 86.
l'intérêt de sa réputation, de sa fortune, de ses enfants (p. 61)" to dominate, but Ellénore combats his reason with her strong silence. In the scenes concerning the extension of his stay in D*, his debate becomes more emotional although the young man continues to rely on his eloquent expression of his feelings. "Je me plaignis de ma vive contrainte, de ma jeunesse . . . du despotisme (p. 65)." When Ellénore discloses her plan to leave the count, Adolphe reassumes his reasonable manner of arguing, "je lui parlai de l'opinion du public;" "Je lui rappelai ses enfants," before giving way to emotion: "je redoublai mes prières (p. 67)." The command aspect of all his messages lies in rejection. He does not accept Ellénore's definition of herself nor of the relationship. However, his rejection of that appraisal does not advance his quest of gaining control over language.

Once Ellénore leaves the count, Adolphe discovers a more effective weapon against his partner, as the two partners are bound more closely together by the scandal and its accompanying loss of linguistic skill. Their communication within the relationship also takes a new direction. "Ellénore et moi nous dissimulions l'un avec l'autre (p. 73)." The two partners begin to distort their language by silencing certain emotions: "[e]lle n'osait me confier des peines . . . je n'osais me plaindre d'un malheur (p. 73)."

But neither Adolphe nor Ellénore can remain silent at length, so the two must substitute another topic for the troublesome
one. "[N]ous parlons d'amour; mais nous parlons d'amour de peur de nous parler d'autre chose (p. 73)." By permitting the distortion of language the couple establishes a dangerous precedent, because Adolphe will avail himself of the practice at the height of his quest. Indeed, the next time communication is distorted, it is Adolphe only who participates in the perversion: "je me reprochais l'ingratitude que je m'efforçais de lui cacher (p. 75)."

The young man's first opportunity for extended "solo" use of distorted language occurs during the separation occasioned by his return to his father's home. Although this trip provides the means to effect the break that the protagonist claims to want, he still aspires to achieve linguistic mastery. That domination remains possible only within the framework of the relationship, so Adolphe maintains communication with Ellénoire by writing to her. His letter begins with distorted communication as he substitutes "les mots d'affection, d'amitié, de dévouement, à celui d'amour (p. 76)." Not only does this substitution disguise his involvement in an internally mediated desire (see chapter 3) by feigning indifference to the liaison, it also disconfirms Ellénoire's appraisal of the relationship. The words of friendship deny her the right to make judgments on the nature of the couple's love. The addition of "quelques phrases ardentes ou tendres (p. 77)" reveals the protagonist's weakness, but by presenting a command message
contradictory to that of the substitution (acceptance of Ellénore's appraisal rather than denial of her right to judge), it magnifies the effect of disconfirmation. This disconfirmation becomes even more manifest in light of the fact that only Adolphe knows what content and what evaluation of the relationship lie underneath the surface.

Each of the subsequent letters that he sends contains similar perversions of language, especially as Ellénore continues to press for an end to the separation. Adolphe substitutes vague language for specific: "je ne lui répondais rien de précis à ce sujet. Je lui marquais vaguement que je serais toujours charmé de la savoir, puis j'ajoutais, de la rendre heureuse (p. 78)." Again his distortions have a disconfirming effect, containing neither outright acceptance nor rejection of Ellénore's position, indeed responding not at all to her own concern: coming to join him. Even after resolving to "parler avec franchise," Adolphe distorts language as he advises her to wait a few months before joining him (p. 78).

By their use of weapons of silence and distortion of communication, Adolphe and Ellénore's communication degenerates from normal to abnormal. They become more concerned with the command aspect of a piece of communication than with the content of it. This concern prompts them to use language to disconfirm their partner's appraisal of self
and the relationship. In all of these efforts, they enjoy for that moment control over language.

Concentration on the command aspect of communication leads the couple to develop a mode of linguistic exchange which is similar to the Game Without End formulated by Watzlawick.\textsuperscript{12} Instead of a clear-cut use of the negative for the affirmative and vice-versa, Adolphe and Ellénore's version of the Game consists of the complicated substitution of topics of conversation and the use of vague rather than specific language to disguise their message. That message, virtually the same for each character, consists of two parts: each partner asserts that he or she will determine the circumstances of the couple's communication and admits his or her dependence on the other in order to achieve that goal. Each conversation between the protagonist and the heroine show their continued distortion of the message by their abnormal communication. Adolphe also traces the couple's increased involvement in the Game by his intermittent descriptions of the state of their habitual communication.

Adolphe's narrative contains several passages which provide a report on the progress of the Game Without End. The characters begin experimenting with the Game following their quarrel over Adolphe's extended stay in D*. The violent exchange of accusations and complaints causes the

\textsuperscript{12} See Watzlawick, pp. 233-236. For a detailed description of the Game, see Introduction, pp. 24-25.
couple to avoid speaking of certain things: "[n]ous avons prononcé tous deux des mots irréparables; nous pouvions nous taire, mais non les oublier (p. 65)." The suppression of certain topics of conversation changes their relationship and, since so much of their union relies on linguistic exchange, their manner of communication. Their attitude toward their discussions changes: "y rencontrant encore du plaisir, mais n'y trouvant plus de charme (p. 65)" and the quarrels multiply. Even further involvement with the game results when Ellénore leaves the count. The two partners do not disclose all of their feelings about this change and substitute talk of love for the topics that concern them: ". . . nous parlions d'amour de peur de nous parler d'autre chose (p. 73)." In this early phase of their voluntary transmission of distorted messages, Adolphe and Ellénore act by mutual agreement, just as the couple in Watzlawick's Game Without End. Eventually, however, they will be unable to withdraw from the manner of communicating which they willingly begin.

Before they go to Poland, the couple's version of the Game consists of silence and imprecise language. Adolphe describes their conversation as a series of "phrases indirectes . . . des protestations générales et de vagues justifications (p. 97)," after which the partners fall silent. Adolphe indicates that the words, although vague, send a clear message of attack and protest. He even believes
that each of the partners knows clearly the message that the other wishes to send, because "nous savions si bien mutuellement tout ce que nous allions nous dire que nous nous taisions pour ne pas l'entendre (p. 93)." Despite Adolphe's confidence in his and Ellémore's ability to decipher untransmitted messages, the lovers suffer harmful effects from this method of communicating. Silence tends to place Adolphe in need of proving his existence and imprecise language has a disconfirming effect on Ellémore. By avoiding a specific expression of their feelings, Adolphe and Ellémore are perpetuating both the distortion of communication and its harmful effects.

The move to Poland and the subsequent widening of the couple's circle of acquaintances gives them the opportunity to put an end to the distorted communication which forms their version of the Endless Game. Adolphe's renunciation of his mediated desire causes him to seek an end to the couple's linguistic conflict. His actions, however, continue the perversion of language, for he answers Ellémore's conversational initiatives with silence or monosyllabic fragments. Although he is not deliberately using words to disguise his emotions, neither is he expressing them clearly, so no progress is made toward ceasing the Game.

Ellémore tries to bring in an outsider to help end the Game, the only possible way to do so according to Watzlawick, but because the couple continues their distortion even with
this woman, the Game also endures. Adolphe tries to defend himself to the friend by his skillful use of language, but he also avoids absolute precision of expression: "sans me permettre une parole qui prononçat clairement . . . (p. 111)." Although the protagonist later becomes more specific as he defines his emotion for Ellénore, his confession of no longer loving her classifies the relationship and its problems as strictly emotional. In so doing Adolphe conceals part of the truth and continues to play the Endless Game. Ellénore, for her part, perpetuates the Game in her conversation with the friend by her manner of couching specific attacks in general terms: "elle reproduisit sous diverses formes des idées générales, qui n'étaient que des attaques particulières (p. 112)."

As Adolphe and Ellénore continue in their distortion of communication, they finally abandon their use of general rather than specific language and return to the substitution of a new topic of conversation for the troublesome one: "nous mettions les observations et les faits à la place de [nos sentiments intimes] et nos conversations avaient repris quelque charme (p. 116)." At this point the couple has come full circle in their Game Without End. They began by speaking of their emotions, specifically love, rather than the troubles caused them by Ellénore's abandonment of the count and her children. Now they speak of anything but their emotions.
Adolphe and Ellénore never succeed in putting an end to their distorted communication, but the Game does end. Ellénore's illness and the accompanying refusal of all linguistic exchange accomplishes this action. She neither speaks nor permits Adolphe to do so, which results in a suspension of the Game. The death of Ellénore, one of the players, brings the Game to a decisive close.

Another type of abnormality threatens communication, according to Watzlawick, that concerned with the nature of interaction, its symmetry or complementarity. The psychologist defines a symmetrical interaction as one in which "the partners tend to mirror each other's behavior," while in a complementary exchange, "one partner's behavior complements that of the other."\(^{13}\) Watzlawick points out that neither partner forces the other into a symmetrical or complementary reaction, but that both partners' behavior departs from their pre-supposed definition of the relationship. All communicative exchanges can be classed as either symmetrical or complementary, and although symmetry is based on equality and complementarity on difference, the abnormality lies in the exaggeration of the nature of interaction: "escalation in symmetry and rigidity in complementarity."\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) Watzlawick, p. 68.

\(^{14}\) Watzlawick, p. 69.
Valentini Brady-Papadopoulou classifies Adolphe and Ellénore's relationship as complementary, but she does so in terms of their emotional behavior. Adolphe's efforts to end the relationship and Ellénore's possessive and dependent attitude strike the critic as "dissimilar but complementary modes of behavior [which] evoke each other." However, in their pattern of linguistic exchange the couple follows a symmetrical pattern. Each tends to answer the other's communication with a response in the same tone and of the same type. Accusation follows accusation, and a display of emotion prompts more emotion. Because of this symmetry of exchange, the conversations often end with no firm decision on the subject under discussion. However, each character suffers gains or losses as far as his control over language is concerned.

An in-depth analysis of Adolphe and Ellénore's relationship reveals their use of abnormal communication, both by concentrating on the command aspect of an expression and exagerration in the nature of their exchange. Besides the direct discourse mentioned by Jallat, these other methods aid them in their conflict over control of words.

This conflict endures throughout the middle section of the novel (chapters 4 through 7). Adolphe participates less

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and less after his renunciation of mediated desire,\textsuperscript{16} entering the fray again only when exterior events revive his longing for linguistic mastery. Ellénore's efforts continue until, weakened by the results of the combat, she falls into her final illness. Until that time each conversation between the lovers represents a skirmish in the communicative war.

Ellénore's entry into the realm of mediated desire, marked by her attempts to control Adolphe's linguistic output, provoke very quickly the first altercation. The young man's resulting social linguistic weakness prompts him to initiate the discussion, by professing fear over the possibility of compromising Ellénore's reputation. Having the first word insures a character a strong position throughout the conflict, for he or she can thereby set the tone for the exchange. Adolphe presses his offensive advantage by adopting the superior position of giving advice. Ellénore counters her lover's advice with a strong silence, refusal to listen to him, despite his repeated attack: "plus je lui donnais des conseils de ce genre, moins elle était disposée à m'écouter (p. 59)." Ellénore's continued silence, accompanied by "une expression de douleur" forces Adolphe to retreat and puts an end to the dispute.

Adolphe opens another round of attack once the count returns and suspects the existence of the affair. Again he takes the offensive both by uttering the first word and by

\textsuperscript{16} See Chapter 5.
speaking from a superior position. Indeed, he multiplies his efforts and launches a three-pronged assault on his mistress. First he brings more emotion to play in his opening: "je parliai vivement à Ellénore . . . je la suppliai (p. 61, emphasis added)." He emphasizes his own wisdom in recognizing "[l]es dangers qu'elle courait (p. 61)." At the same time he demonstrates his reasonable quality by concerning himself with Ellénore's risks: "je lui représentail l'intérêt de sa réputation, de sa fortune, de ses enfants (p. 61)," and by suggesting not an outright end to the relationship but merely an interruption of his daily visits. Again, Ellénore maintains a strong silence, from which she breaks into direct discourse in which she urges Adolphe to make the most of the short time allowed them. Her powerful silence and capture of the access to words terminate the conflict in her favor as the couple continues to live as before.

In these first two meetings the command aspect of the topic under discussion relates to control of the communication within the relationship. Adolphe's command message consists of rejection of Ellénore's view of their bond as "un amour pur de tout calcul" in which she can indulge in an "abandon complet (p. 60)." At the same time Adolphe proves still to be concerned with the content of his message, as evidenced by his repeated attacks in the first encounter and his varied assault in the second. Ellénore, by
her silence, however, demonstrates greater concern for the command aspect of her communication, and this silence disconfirms Adolphe's assertions. The couple maintain symmetry of interaction in both these encounters. Adolphe attacks from a strong position, but Ellénore counters with her strong silence and seizing access to language in direct discourse. Her non-verbal betrayals of the weakness of mediated desire, "une expression de douleur (p. 59)" and a pallor "comme la mort (p. 61)," do not hamper her verbal strength. The disputes end in a virtual stalemate as neither partner makes any tangible progress towards his goal of linguistic mastery.

Progress does become apparent in the next skirmishes between Adolphe and Ellénore. The ostensible subject of dispute concerns Adolphe's departure from D*, but the underlying notion of control of communicaton still motivates the combattants, each striving to dictate the circumstances of their interaction to the other. The arrival of Adolphe's father's order to the young man to return home puts an end to the uneasy peace of the previous stalemate and necessitates a new battle. Once more, Adolphe takes the initiative, but his recent losses have their effect as he begins weakly. Rather than seizing control of the first word, he allows his father to speak for him by showing Ellénore the letter. She utters the opening remarks in this altercation. Although she manifests the strength worthy of the parole directe, her non-
verbal expressions of weakness counteract that strength. Tears and her manner of address: "je vous conjure" mark the submissive position. Adolphe attempts to assert power, but even in doing so recognizes the ambiguous weakness of his mistress as he describes both his own efforts and those of Ellénore in strong terms: "[j]e voulus combattre sa résolution (p. 62)." Nevertheless, Ellénore submits to her feeble nature, abandoning direct discourse for an eloquent, weak silence: "elle pleurait si amèrement et elle était si tremblante, ses traits portaient l'empreinte d'une souffrance si déchirante . . . (p. 62)." Faced with his lover's weakness, Adolphe can appear to submit by his posture: [j]e me jetai à ses pieds" and his agreement to her request "je sortis pour aller écrire à mon père." Yet, even in yielding he regains some ground, as he achieves the right to a superior position of making assurances: "je la serrai dans mes bras, je l'assurai de mon amour." His final moves not only terminate the exchange (a sign of power), but define him as the partner who guarantees the couple's continued communicaton. For that moment he has control over his and Ellénore's use of language. Indeed, the next time he sees her, he has no need of words: a gesture suffices to convey his actions of the afternoon to his mistress and to grant her happiness. "J'instruisais Ellénore par un geste que j'avais fait ce qu'elle voulait. Un rayon de joie brilla dans ses yeux . . . (p. 63)."
The father's affirmative response to Adolphe's request prompts the second round of this confrontation. Adolphe maintains his hold on words, by breaking the silence. The narrator underlines his strength in this encounter by using direct discourse for his remark. Ellénore forgets her earlier momentary weakness for an equally powerful stance. The direct shots follow one after the other for a time, causing the skirmish to escalate to a full-blown battle. Even the narrator recognizes the martial nature of the argument and couches his description in such terms. The two lovers emerge from the first exchanges, "blessé[s]" but able to continue, so that [l']a scène devint violente (pp. 64-65)." Both characters abandon la parole directe, but keep their strength by advancing "reproches mutuels (p. 64)." For a time Ellénore appears to triumph with her volley of accusations ("elle m'accusa. . . "), which originate from a superior position, while Adolphe counters with complaints ("je me plaignis"), the expression of a weaker stance. However, in the midst of that exchange, Ellénore retreats into tears. Again the silent treatment, although a sign of weakness, prompts Adolphe to reverse his position and respond in his usual manner. He hastens to break the silence and terminates the interview with assurances. "[J]e m'arrêtai, je revins sur mes pas, je désavouai, j'expliquai (p. 65)."

These two disputes end in much the same stalemate as the previous two exchanges; the lovers continue their existence.
However, each partner makes small gains toward control of communication. Ellénore's repeated use of a tearful retreat into silence, carrying a disconfirming message to Adolphe, proves to be an effective method of causing the young man to yield ground. His voluble answer to this weapon consists of an eloquent surrender concerning the immediate matter. Ellénore's gains, however, constitute a Pyrrhic victory, because her lover increases his own power by putting an end to the exchange and assuming the superior position of proffering reassurance.

During these two disputes the lovers continue to conduct their interaction following a symmetrical pattern; however, that pattern undergoes subtle alterations from their earlier discussions. In the first confrontation Ellénore begins with a "résolution" which Adolphe tries to combat. Ellénore's tears, the result of emotion, lead to Adolphe's confession of emotion. The second altercation, recounted in more detail, demonstrates the symmetry more clearly. Adolphe's announcement in direct discourse prompts a similarly unemotional declaration from Ellénore. The couple continues with these moves, escalating to more personal attacks in each of their speeches. Their responses become "reproches mutuels," then intensify into Ellénore's accusations. Adolphe's reply to these accusations makes a break in the upward trend. Although the subject-matter "ma vive contrainte, . . . [le] despotisme" remains on the same
dangerous level, the manner of delivery weakens as he offers complaints rather than accusations. Ellénore responds to this small retreat with an all-out withdrawal into silent treatment and Adolphe answers with another confession of emotion. In both exchanges, both characters respond symmetrically by answering strength with strength, emotion with emotion. Ellénore's change from the strong stance to a weaker one turns the battle.

The next set of encounters between the two protagonists concern Ellénore's leaving the count. These interactions observe a symmetrical pattern: one of strength followed by strength; the other of weakness provoking weakness. Ellénore launches the offense, writing a message ordering Adolphe to see her. Upon his arrival she continues to attack, by speaking first and by using direct discourse. Adolphe follows with a reasoned defense, but his mistress answers each of his moves: "[j]e lui parlai de l'opinion du public; je lui rappelai ses enfants" by direct refutations of his arguments. Adolphe becomes more emotional: "[j]e redoublai mes prières." Ellénore counters with a more emotional response, accompanied by a strong gesture "en saisissant mon bras avec une violence qui me fit frémir." Adolphe voices his assurances, but Ellénore cuts off his flow of language and dismisses him.

The second encounter almost parodies the first in its following a similar pattern. Only the position of the
players changes. Ellénore again convokes Adolphe's presence by letter, but rather than telling him to come, she "me priaït d'aller la voir (p. 68)." She utters the first word, normally an aggressive move, but her "air à la fois content et timide" weakens the attack. This time it is she who fills the silence with an unending stream of words concerning her present and future plans. Her control of access to language (it is she who speaks) does not extend any further as her words carry little effect. "Il était visible qu'elle se faisait un grand effort, et qu'elle ne croyait qu'à moitié ce qu'elle me disait.(p.68)" She simultaneously recognizes her weakness and Adolphe's strength, for she knows that, given the chance, her lover's communication will weaken her: "Elle s'étourdissait de ses paroles, de peur d'entendre les miennes; elle prolongeait son discours ... pour retarder le moment où mes objections la replongeraient dans le désespoir (p. 68)." Adolphe, content at having his strength recognized, responds with his usual tactic for ending a discussion and reinforcing a superior position. He departs from the seemingly weak position of giving in to Ellénore's wishes, all the while consolidating his strength. Unlike Ellénore he succeeds in infusing his words with their full meaning so that his language is more powerful than hers. "Pendant que je lui parlai, je n'envisageais rien au delà de ce but et j'étais sincère dans mes promesses (p. 69)."
This latter exchange finds the characters once more concerned less with the report and more with the command aspect of their communication. Ellénore's barrage of plans has no coherence: she informs Adolphe of her definite break with the count, her financial situation, reminds him of his time in D*, and reveals plans for the future all within the space of six lines. Underlying this incoherent content, however, is a clear recognition and acceptance of her weakness and Adolphe's strength. This evaluation of herself and her relationship remains most significant. It is to that message that Adolphe responds. He, too, presents an incoherent report consisting of expressions of his happiness, and explanations of his desires and motivations. The command aspect of his communication, acceptance of her definition of the relationship, is again the important one.

The couple's next set of skirmishes occurs after their long separation. Ellénore's arrival in town puts an end to that episode. Although she informs Adolphe of her arrival, the first move in this encounter, he initiates the conflict by his arrival and his first words. These words reinforce Adolphe's superior position, as they consist of reassurances intended to calm his mistress. However, Ellénore does not respond in her usual manner to such language. Rather, she puts an end to Adolphe's conciliatory words and initiates her own much harsher attack: "... elle démêla bientôt mes efforts; elle irrita ma fierté par ses reproches (p, 124)."
Her unceasing assaults on Adolphe's character lead him to respond in kind and the conflict escalates even further. The narrator reports that "une fureur insensé s'empara de nous (p. 80)," and describes the two partners as "deux ennemis irréconciliables, acharnés à se déchirer (p. 80)." This dispute lasts three hours, ending with no reconciliation. The two combatants follow a symmetrical pattern of increasingly harsh statements which lead, as they must, to a stalemate.

Adolphe's father's intervention in his son's affair causes the tone of the next encounter of the two lovers to differ markedly from the earlier one. Adolphe's beginning strength results from his realization that his father's expulsion of Ellénore from the city will put an end to his own quest for linguistic mastery. Such a move would remove his mediator and would surrender the young man's power over communication to his father. In addition, he would be left without a partner in his language use. In the monologue which follows his hearing of the news, he expresses concern for Ellénore: "à qui dirait-elle sa douleur? (p. 82)" But Adolphe would be equally bereft if his father's move is successful, so he makes plans to forestall the expulsion. Formulating those plans "pour mon éternelle réunion avec Ellénore" revives his emotional involvement with her and at the same time endows him with linguistic power.
Upon entering Ellénore's lodging he takes control of language both by proferring the first words and by preventing her response. These words are strong by nature of the direct utterance and by his use of the imperative. Using the familiar "tu" form also reinforces his superior point of departure. As the couple continues the exchange en route, Adolphe still tries to prevent Ellénore's access to language by his actions: "je l'accablais de caresses, je la pressais sur mon coeur (p. 82-83)." When she manages to speak, her utterances take the form of questions, but Adolphe does not deign to answer: "je ne répondais à ses questions que par mon embrassements." He maintains his control by choosing the moment to break the silence with his explanation of the couple's sudden elopement. Ellénore responds with gratitude, but asserts her own strength by analyzing the contents of Adolphe's explication: "elle démêla bientôt des contradictions dans mon récit." Her own strength increases as she takes command of the communicative exchange. First she forces Adolphe to clarify the contradictions: "[à] force d'instance, elle m'arracha la vérité;" then she seizes control of la parole directe to make her pronouncement on Adolphe's sentiments. In the face of her mastery, Adolphe yields his own power: his response to his mistress takes considerable effort and proves futile: "[j]e m'efforçai de la rassurer, j'y parvins peut-être," and he falls silent.
Adolphe's grand gesture to ensure the continuation of his linguistic desire revitalizes the couple's conflict but alters it at the same time. The two partners exert more force to attain control and in so doing follow a complimentary pattern of exchange rather than a symmetrical one. Adolphe's energetic seizure of communication, recalling his linguistic power during courtship, produces a submissively silent Ellénore. Although she tries to assert her own control: "[e]lle voulut répondre . . . [e]lle résistait," Adolphe cuts her efforts short. While her questions indicate small gains in linguistic access, they do not lead to a meaningful content message, but rather to the command aspect of Adolphe's superiority manifested in his kisses. The young man's decision to break silence and allow his mistress's participation in the communicative act enables Ellénore to seize control and the two reverse positions. Ellénore's strength forces Adolphe's submissive response. He contradicts himself, speaks at her dictation, loses his ability to reassure her of his emotion and finally falls silent.

Ellénore's re-established strength does not last. Already in the next set of encounters, she displays some weakness. These two exchanges follow the count de P*'s offer of half of his fortune to Ellénore if she will separate from Adolphe. During the five months since their elopement the young man makes some gains by determined efforts. He
communicates by way of "plaisanteries perpétuelles" and "assurances de tendresse" and once again enjoys the dual power of such language. His melancholy gives way to "une émotion douce qui ressemblait presque à l'amour (p. 86)," and Ellénore appears happy. However, he does not restore to himself the absolute power, as indicated by his use of the qualifying expressions ressemblait, presque, and paraisait. He will still occupy a weak position in the first discussion.

This discussion (pp. 86-87) begins with Adolphe's recognition that Ellénore is deliberate silencing "une idée qui l'occupait." Adolphe is the first to speak, but he does so from a submissive stance, offering "solicitations" concerning Ellénore's agitation. Because of his continued weakness it takes some time before his communication has its effect. Ellénore finally consents to speak, but her first words refer not to the subject troubling her but to Adolphe's reaction to it. She manifests force by extracting her lover's guarantee to remain in his feeble position: "elle me fit promettre que je ne combattrais point la résolution qu'elle avait prise." Ellénore's need to ensure Adolphe's cooperation already betrays some crumbling of her strength, but she loses no more as she summarizes the count's letter and announces her own refusal of his offer. Adolphe maintains his silence out of weakness: "[j]e n'osai lui rien objeeter."
Yet, away from Ellénore, he marshalls his forces to combat Ellénore's plan and returns to a second confrontation (pp. 88-89) with greater strength. His strength does not endure and his eloquent direct discourse gives way to weakness. His communication deteriorates: "je sentais mes idées devenir plus vagues" and he tries to adjust his manner of presentation to counteract this difficulty: "je continuai d'une voix précipitée." Adolphe's declaration that he no longer loves his mistress saps her strength. She remains silent for a while, utters a few words in la parole directe, but then faints. To this manifestation of weakness and invocation of the disconfirming effect of her silent treatment Adolphe reacts in his typical fashion. He quickly changes his posture from the strength of complementarity and assumes the weaker position from the couple's symmetrical pattern, expressing love to Ellénore. Ellénore regains consciousness and strength as she dictates communication to Adolphe: "elle me les fit répéter plusieurs fois." Although Adolphe speaks at her dictation, his words are powerful because Ellénore believes his reassurances.

Adolphe claims that the report message of these words is false; indeed, as he points out, they contradict his earlier declaration. Yet the command aspect, Adolphe's desire to continue the relationship, is not false. Faced with the prospect of a loss of his mediator and therefore of his
chance to obtain the object of aspiration, language control, he reacts to ensure the constancy of the mediator.

This moment of linguistic symmetry restores the couple to a more symmetrical pattern of interaction. The symmetry resides in each character's remaining strong enough for the altercation to end in a stalemate. Nevertheless the complementary superior/submissive pattern also appears in Adolphe's use of language. Ellénone initiates the next confrontation (pp. 90-92), declaring in direct discourse her intention not to join her father in Poland unless Adolphe accompanies her. Her voice and tone, marked by "je ne sais quoi d'âpre et de violent (p. 91)" reinforce her power. Adolphe's response, although not expressed in direct discourse, is equally strong. He opts at first for the eloquence of reason, reminding Ellénone of his career and family situation. "Je lui parla de ma situation, du vœu de mon père, de mon propre désir." He then becomes more emotional: "je priai, je m'emportai," but to no avail as Ellénone adopts a strong silence. Adolphe weakens further as his efforts fail to convey his message to Ellénone. "Je tâchai ... de l'attendrir sur [mon] malheur ... ; je ne parvins qu'à l'exaspérer. Je lui promis d'aller la voir en Pologne; mais elle ne vit dans mes promesses ... que l'impatience de la quitter." Ellénone rejects these weak messages and the two make no decision to leave Caden. In the resumption of this discussion, following the death of
Ellénore's father (pp. 93–94), both protagonists take a strong stance. But this time there is no stalemate, as Adolphe agrees to go to Poland.

The characters' desire for communicative mastery prompts them to use language as a weapon in order to gain further power. During their courtship they learn of the strength of language, both on themselves and others, and they use this knowledge while trying to achieve their internally mediated desire. Their efforts cause language to deteriorate from normal to abnormal in terms of the pattern of exchange and the command message of communication. Although the lovers demonstrate a certain amount of power during their quarrels, their distortion of language destroys their relationship both to each other and to words.
Chapter 5: The End of Adolphe's Quest

Although an internally mediated desire places its victim in an inescapable situation, this fate disappears once the desire loses its power. According to Girard, the loss of power usually happens near the moment of the hero's death, when the subject recognizes the existence of and then renounces the triangular desire. This conversion process leads the hero to contradict his earlier life and change his actions. Death usually follows this conversion, but it is not a necessary end. The situation presented in Adolphe differs only a little from Girard's predictions. The protagonist actually experiences three conversions, one which the narrator reports and two occurring sometime between the end of the narration and the editor's meeting of Adolphe. The first changes are temporary, but just as the first triangular desire, that of external mediation, illuminates and explains the second, the first renunciation of desire discloses the existence of the others. The final actions of the protagonist also confirm the later conversions.

The couple's move to Poland sets in motion Adolphe's first renunciation of mediated desire. That move helps break the hold of the triangular desire on the two lovers, in that outsiders intrude into the circle of communication previously restricted to the young man and Ellénore alone. Both characters find that such interventions highlight the losses
each suffers in the doubly mediated quest for language control. Such realizations enable Adolphe to distance himself from his mediator, recognize the relationship, and then renounce it, all necessary steps for conversion from mediated desire.

The baron de T* exerts the first pressure on Adolphe. In the young man's first interview with this friend of his father, the hero learns of his current linguistic weakness. He finds himself unable to respond to the older man's questions about his circumstances. "Il... me demanda les causes de mon séjour en Pologne, me questionna sur mes projets: je ne savais trop que lui répondre (p. 97)." The baron soon abandons this roundabout manner of speaking for a direct attack, urging Adolphe to leave Ellénore. Adolphe is unable to repel this assault. "Je voulus l'interrompre." His communicative strength returns to him only when the baron turns his attention to Ellénore: "[l]a réputation d'Ellénore est loin d'être intacte." Adolphe finds his voice and staunchly defends his mediator: "il n'existe pas sur la terre une âme plus élevée, un caractère plus noble, un coeur plus pur et plus généreux." The baron relents only a little, but tempers his criticism of Ellénore, praising Adolphe's potential, then naming Ellénore as an obstacle to his success. The denigration of Ellénore again arouses Adolphe and he asserts his linguistic strength to pronounce words of defense which end the interview.
The influence of this conversation on the young man, however, continues to be felt for some time as he ponders the baron's words. What strikes him particularly is the older man's redefinition of the relationship between Adolphe and Ellénore. "Entre tous les genres de succès et vous, il existe un obstacle insurmontable, et cet obstacle c'est Ellénore (p. 99)." This pronouncement breaks down the triangle which has long held Adolphe in its grasp. He no longer perceives Ellénore as the mediator to achieving the goal of language control (and at the same time as a rival for this goal); now she stands between him and another road to autonomy. She represents a pure hindrance now, not a rival, for she neither possesses nor desires this object: a successful career.

While contemplating this new view of his relationship with Ellénore, Adolphe finds himself confronting the idea of death, another necessary ingredient in the hero's conversion, according to Girard. "La vérité du désir métaphysique est la mort. Tel est le terme inévitable de la contradiction qui fonde ce désir."1 Normally it is the hero's own death which prompts his enlightenment concerning desire: "tous les héros obéissent à un même appel vers le néant et la mort,"2 for the

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2 Girard, p. 288.
subject sees that death will bring an end to his own weakness of body and spirit, in the same way that attaining the divinity of the Other will do. Adolphe's thoughts of death spring from his sight of a light in a far off cottage and he imagines that the inhabitant may be facing his end. But by virtue of his reflection on death, he is able to see it in much the same light as Girard presents, that is, as an end to his pitiful existence. "Je répands du malheur autour de moi, pour reconquérir quelques années misérables que le temps viendra bientôt m'arracher (p. 107)!

Facing the idea of death as an end to his aspirations and Ellénore as an obstacle rather than a mediator enables Adolphe to renounce his internally mediated triangular desire for communicative control. "Ah! renonçons à ces efforts inutiles; . . . demeurons immobile, spectateur indifférent d'une existence à demi passée; vaut-il la peine de la disputer? (p. 107)" In pronouncing these words Adolphe voices his intention to participate no longer in the linguistic combat with Ellénore. His first conversion has occurred.

For a conversion to be authentic, according to Girard, it must engender "une nouvelle relaton à autrui et une nouvelle relation à soi-même." Adolphe's interaction with Ellénore after his contemplation of death demonstrates the

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3 Girard, p. 294.
first such change as he carries out his plan to renounce the mediated desire for language control. Before his renunciation he seeks to delay his return to Ellénore, a return which represents to him the continuation of the linguistic struggle, as evidenced by his description of that reluctance. "][J]'étais heureux de retarder le moment où j'allais entendre de nouveau sa voix (p. 105)." Having experienced his change of direction, when he again thinks of Ellénore, he no longer hesitates to go home to her. In his new state of mind he assigns no communicative significance to their future encounter. "Je me peignis son inquiétude, et je me pressais pour arriver près d'elle (p. 108)." Although hearing of Ellénore's search for him arouses Adolphe's irritation at his mistress's possessiveness, he manages to overcome that annoyance. Even in her presence, he maintains his resolution not to participate in linguistic battles. Ellénore reacts to his arrival with "des transports de joie," which touch Adolphe, but elicit no provocative replies. The narrator remarks, "je la quittai, cette fois du moins, sans avoir rien dit qui pût affliger son coeur (p. 109)."

In the days that follow, the young man continues in his non-combative role, repelling Ellénore's assaults, but not returning them. Ellénore's "questions impétueuses" do not prompt Adolphe to respond in kind and thus begin an escalating symmetrical pattern as during their most tempestuous days. Rather, the protagonist answers with "des
monosyllabes contraintes" which effectively fend off her attack, but do not continue the battle. The daily conversation between the two lovers comes to reflect Adolphe's new attitudes concerning his relationship with Ellénore. Before the trip to Poland the couple reach a point at which their everyday interaction follows a battle plan somewhat similar to that of their momentous discussions. Adolphe and Ellénore alternate attacks, and each time the other responds in a similar fashion. "Nous nous attaquions donc tour à tour par des phrases indirectes (p. 92)." Rather than escalating in emotion, however, each exchange represents a diminution of intensity which finally leads to a mutual silence: "pour reculer ensuite dans des protestations générales et de vagues justifications, et pour regagner le silence (p. 92)." Now, the nature of everyday conversation changes as more silence replaces the exchange of attacks: "nous passions tête à tête de monotones soirées entre le silence et l'humeur (p. 114)." Adolphe recognizes that this new pattern results from the fact that "la source des longs entretiens était tarie (p. 114)." That source was the influence of the triangular yearning for communicative mastery, which Adolphe has now renounced.

Although Ellénore participates in these silent evenings, she does not experience a conversion similar to Adolphe's and does not abandon her quest for control of language. Indeed, Adolphe's indifference to the formerly shared object of
desire increases her own interest in it. Her "questions impétueuses" fail to bring her any victory, so she calls in the reinforcement of her friend to help her revive Adolphe's interest in the relationship. When that move also fails, she opts for a further broadening of her circle by trying to establish a position for herself in the society of Warsaw. This action does stimulate Adolphe's dormant interest in the linguistic conflict enough to arouse him to speak to Ellénore concerning her plan: "je tâchais de la dissuader de cette entreprise (p. 114)." Indeed, the young man once again concerns himself with his conversational ability: "bien que je ne les exprimasse qu'avec ménagement (p. 114)," but he goes no further than this one attempt. His subsequent thoughts on the subject he keeps to himself: "que de fois je rougis pour elle sans avoir la force de le lui dire (p. 115)." Although he knows that it lies within his power to put an end to Ellénore's pursuit of society: "[u]n mot de moi l'aurait calmée (p. 115)," he refrains from uttering that word, for it would also mark his re-entry into the communicative war.

Eventually Adolphe finds that he must pronounce that word and put an end to Ellénore's new way of life. For a time afterward he succeeds in remaining impervious to the influence of the mediated desire for language control, no longer responding to Ellénore's tearful silent treatment in such a way as to continue the conflict: "ses larmes . . .
m'arrachai[en]t des cris sans pouvoir m'arracher un désaveu (p. 121).” However, he finally succumbs to the force of proximity of his mediator and to the contagion of such a desire. This renewed influence of metaphysical longing manifests itself in the couple's communication; once again their interaction consists of a series of stormy scenes. "Je ne saurais peindre . . . quelles fureurs résultèrent de nos rapports ainsi compliqués. Notre vie ne fut qu'un perpétuel orage (p. 121)."

Adolphe's renewed vulnerability to the contagion of desire originates not only from his continued closeness to Ellénore, his mediator who still suffers the influence of the shared longing. His conversion fails to effect a new relationship with himself, one of the results necessary to indicate a complete change, according to Girard. Although he can relate differently to Ellénore, he can not withstand that part of himself which embroils him in the triangular structure. In the midst of his conversion, he still finds that "je n'avais plus aucune estime (p. 106)" for himself. This self-loathing influences his interaction with the outsiders who enter his communicative network.

When Ellénore enlists her friend's intervention in the relationship, Adolphe finds himself facing accusations similar to those comprising his mistress's attacks. "Cette amie m'entretint de mon humeur bizarre, . . . de mon inexplicable soif de rupture et d'isolement (p. 110)." The
young man's concern in responding to these attacks is to
demonstrate linguistic power, the same emotion motivating him
in his earlier discussions with Ellénore. He wants to
justify himself to the friend, but at the same time he
displays his strength in language. "[J]e racontai mon
histoire avec ménagement . . . sans me permettre une parole
qui prononçait clairement que la difficulté véritable était de
ma part l'absence de l'amour (p. 111)." His efforts yield a
result similar to that of his courtship era command of words:
he gains a favorable position with the friend: "[l]es mêmes
explications . . . portaient la conviction dans l'esprit
dans son impartiale amie (p. 111);" and he stimulates his own
feelings.

[J]'ajoutais que l'amour n'entrait pour
rien dans les devoirs que je m'imposais.
Cette vérité, jusqu'alors renfermée dans
mon cœur . . . prit à mes propres yeux
plus de réalité et de force par cela
seul qu'un autre en était devenu
dépositaire (p. 112).

Ellénore's social efforts also arouse Adolphe's concern
for asserting linguistic strength, because they make him an
object of blame. Ellénore's enemies see Adolphe as proof of
their belief that Ellénore's lifestyle alienated her from her
father. Her friends also blame Adolphe. "Ses amis me
reprochaient de lui faire tort . . . [I]ls m'accusaient
d'indélicatesse: j'abusais . . . d'un sentiment que j'aurais
dû modérer (p. 116)." Only by speaking can he improve his public position, either by making public all of the information concerning his relationship with Ellénore, which he hesitates to do: [j]e ne pouvais rendre le public dépositaire de ce secret (p. 116)," or by uttering the words which will put an end to Ell énore's social whirl: "[u]n mot de moi l'aurait calmée (p. 115)." In both this situation and the earlier discussion with the friend, Adolphe's reputation and self-esteem rely on his display of mastery of communication. His relationship with himself and his power over words do not change in his conversion.

Another indication of his failed change of heart is the fact that it originates in another triangular desire and, for this reason, it cannot be lasting. Although his interview with the baron gives Adolphe a new perspective on Ellénore, enabling him to break her bond as mediator for him, the same conversation gives him another desire: that for the regular life to be found in a career and marriage to a socially acceptable woman. The young man admits the baron's role in his wish: the words which he remembers most from the older man's discussion remind him of his potential career. "Entre tous les genres de succès et vous . . ." revives his memories of his success in school and his hopes for the future. Later, another remark of the baron's, "[q]uelques mots, prononcés au hasard par le baron de T* sur la possibilité d'une alliance douce et paisible . . . (p. 102)," directs his
thoughts to the contemplation of a suitable wife. From these two trains of thought, yearnings inspired by another, Adolphe proceeds to his moment of conversion. His susceptibility to triangular desire, manifest even at his renunciation of a former such longing, insures that the conversion will not be permanent.

Once he re-enters even slightly the realm of the internally mediated desire, Adolphe finds himself more and more bound to pursue his aspiration. He establishes contact with the baron de T* and the action continues to emphasize the impermanence of his conversion. Renewed intercourse with the ambassador reiterates the attraction of the newly created externally mediated desire for a career. He even takes steps toward that goal by assisting the older man in his work. "Il me chargea de quelques travaux relatifs à sa mission (p. 123)." More significantly, Adolphe's involvement with the baron also places him in more situations where his self-esteem depends upon his communicative ability, as he becomes involved in his friend's social circle. The young man's first exposure to that circle gives him an opportunity to exercise his power over language and enjoy a moment of success. Adolphe describes his first reaction to this new society in emotional terms: "[j]e fus d'abord embarrassé (p. 123)," but his later remarks indicate that this emotion, much like timidity, contains a significant linguistic aspect. To conquer his embarrassment Adolphe must speak. "[J]e fis
effort sur moi-même; je ranimai, je parlai (p. 123)." The young man makes his speech effective, using words filled with "le plus qu'il me fut possible de l'esprit et des connaissances," and succeeds, as before, in creating a good impression because of his communication. "je m'aperçus que je réussissais à captiver l'approbation (p. 123)."

Adolphe's conversational success in this group setting carries over into his more intimate conversations. He manages to explain his interest in the baron to Ellénore and console her for his daily absences. At the same time he convinces the baron of his waning interest in his mistress and his intention to end the liaison as a result of the older man's influence. In both these settings he avails himself of a rediscovered eloquence, using arguments based on the baron's friendship with his father and his filial responsibilities with Ellénore. With the baron, Adolphe's efforts take the form of "un ton plus lest et plus dégagé", "des maximes générales," and "la plaisanterie (p. 124)." The narrator expresses concern over his slight distortions of communication: his vagueness with the baron and his deliberate silence toward Ellénore: "je savais que le baron voulait m'éloigner d'elle et je le lui taisais (p. 123)."

These manipulations indicate that the young man is renewing his quest for linguistic power, for he is the master of his words, imposing his own interpretation of life on his interlocutors.
These small successes soon come to an end and, as a result, Adolphe becomes firmly entrenched in his former mediated desire for language control. At the next opportunity for social conversation Adolphe finds himself in quite the opposite position, one of weakness. The other guests use their language to gossip about Adolphe, and leave the young man unable to overcome the speechlessness of "embarras (p. 125)." The baron rescues the protagonist and with his own conversation, seeking to "me donner des éloges," manages to put an end to his guests' frequent repetitions of the story of Adolphe's life. Yet, even though delivered from the harmful talk of the others, Adolphe does not come to the point where he can use his own voice to defend himself and create a name for himself. His weakened condition continues in the presence of the baron and becomes magnified by the intrusion of a letter from Ellénore. This letter serves both to the baron and to Adolphe as a concrete symbol of the young man's "servitude," but the young man's interpretation of that slavery has a linguistic significance. Already in pain: "[j]'étais encore froissé de la douleur que j'avais éprouvée," still feeling weak because of his own communicative failure: "autant plus violent que je me sentais plus faible", Ellénore's missive, "pleine d'amertume," demonstrates a strength that he does not have at the moment. Her letter can reach him even at the baron's and can, by its very presence, contradict all that Adolphe has
told the baron in his maxims and jokes concerning leaving Ellénore.

Because of this low point of weakness, Adolphe's promise to break up with Ellénore is, in reality, a statement of his re-entry into the sphere of internally mediated desire. The earlier renunciation has given him a new outlook, however. He now believes that ending the liaison would place him firmly in control of the couple's communication. The phrasing of the promise indicates that the matter of the break-up is a linguistic one: "j'oserai le lui déclarer moi-même (p. 126)," an action in which the young man will be asserting his control of language.

The protagonist's linguistic actions with Ellénore following this pledge betray even more that he is again suffering from his metaphysical desire, as he deliberately distorts communication. "J'étais arrivé... décidé à tout dire... je niai... ce que j'étais déterminé à lui déclarer le lendemain (p. 127)." Indeed Adolphe's communication with Ellénore from this moment until her death once again reflects the dual nature of a relationship based on his desire. Just as in his earlier deep involvement in the struggle for language control, the protagonist's feelings, words, and actions show no thread of agreement. The hero professes to want to leave his mistress, but that sentiment finds no concrete expression in deed (he continues to stay with her) or words: not only does he not declare the
end of the affair to Ellénore, he expresses tenderness to her.

Adolphe's linguistic gentleness contrasts with his earlier distorted communication with Ellénore because of a difference in the triangular relationship. The semi-successful renunciation of Ellénore as mediator leads him to a new perception in the structure of the triangle. Ellénore no longer stands between him and his goal of language control; now his language stands between him and Ellénore. He recognizes that he is but one step away from gaining the power which he sought; all that he lacks is the act of uttering "des paroles qui la repoussassent dans l'isolement (p. 128)." Those words, though not yet uttered, separate him from Ellénore, as does his letter to the baron, assuring him that the break-up is complete. "J'avais imploré le ciel pour qu'il élevât soudain entre Ellénore et moi un obstacle . . . Cet obstacle s'était élevé . . . (p. 130)." Because of this new perspective on the triangle, Adolphe no longer needs to conceal a desire to stay with Ellénore and feign indifference to her. His words with his mistress reveal his continued involvement in the relationship. Indeed, he uses them to recall their earlier, happy days, first by his apparent weakness: "je commençais une phrase que j'interrompais aussitôt (p. 128)," then by his willingness to share communication: "[j]e recherchais des entretiens que j'avais évités; je jouissais de ses expressions d'amour (p. 131)."
Ellénore's illness complicates even more the new triangular relationship. Adolphe's words still serve as a barrier between him and his mistress. Not only has she received his letter to the baron, which causes her illness, but also all his words, past and present, separate the two. Adolphe's language use in the past makes him to Ellénore "la voix qui m'a fait du mal (p. 133)." His present words with their contrasting promises of future happiness ("commençons en ce jour une nouvelle époque [p. 135]") and eventual separation ("une fois, un jour peut-être [p. 135]") aggravate Ellénore's illness. "Pourquoi m'avait-il rendu l'espérance pour me la ravir aussitôt (p. 135):" At the same time, Ellénore's declining health and its effects on her own communicative powers represent another usage of the silent treatment, reminding Adolphe of his need for Ellénore as mediator to his desire for language control. A vicious circle originates, as his efforts to re-establish that tie with his mistress lead him to utter the words which hinder the union.

Ellénore's death carries the same double effect for Adolphe. His quest for language control ends victoriously, for he has silenced his rival for that object. But because of Ellénore's silence, the victory is meaningless; communicative mastery depends on the participation of a partner. The young man recognizes this linguistic deprivation: "nul ne me disputait mon temps ni mes heures;
aucune voix ne me rappelais quand je sortais (p. 143)." With no mediator, Adolphe has no way to achieve his metaphysical desire.

Adolphe does experience an authentic conversion from triangular desire at sometime in his life, but that change takes place outside the boundaries of the narrative. Although Ellénore's death appears to wield such an effect on the young man, as evidenced by his intense sorrow, he does not truly renounce his desire. In his realization of what Ellénore means to him, "[j]'étais libre, en effet, je n'était plus aimé; j'était étranger pour tout le monde (p. 143)," he approaches the first part of the conversion process, that is, the recognition of his own nothingness. Girard says that, before a conversion, the hero "est à bout de ressources; il lui faut, pour la première fois, regarder en face son désespoir et son néant." But Adolphe takes no further step; he does not renounce his mediator or his desire. Indeed, his action with Ellénore's letter reflects the continued influence of the desire. Upon finding the letter the young man recalls his mistress's instructions that he burn it, but he cannot do so. He is compelled to read the letter: "je ne pus résister au besoin de la lire tout entière (p. 143)."

The choice of words is revealing: Adolphe needs to read the letter in order to exercise his control over Ellénore's

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4 Girard, p. 293.
communicaton one last time. In burning the paper the young man would be following Ellénore's instructions and allowing her words to go unreceived. Not only does he receive the words himself in his reading, he also saves them from the destruction that Ellénore had planned for them.

Another indication that Adolphe does not renounce the mediated desire immediately following Ellénore's death comes from the acquaintance who reads the manuscript for the editor. This man informs the latter that, after his mistress' demise the young man "n'a pas été moins inquiet, moins agité, moins mécontent (p. 147)" than before. In spite of the regret he feels at his mistress's demise Adolphe involves himself in similar situations during his life. The editor's correspondant says that he has letters which prove that the young man remains "la victime de ce mélange d'égoïsme et de sensibilité qui se combinait en lui (p. 148)." Adolphe does not renounce his desire; he merely chooses mediator after mediator to try to achieve it.

However, the young man finally renounces his aspiration for language control, as indicated by his behavior in the reader's first sight of him. During the weeks that the editor knows Adolphe, the protagonist shows no inclination to display control over language and communication. "Il était fort silencieux (p. 13)." On the contrary, he seems to avoid even the most elementary of exchanges, breaking his silence only to respond to the editor's remarks. He does not give
his name, even to his servant: "qui [lui] servait . . . sans savoir son nom (p. 13)." Adolphe's only experience with words at this time in his life consists of reading, a strictly personal relationship with language. Yet even in this activity he is careful to avoid over-involvement, counter-balancing the quantity of books with his approach to them. "Il lisait beaucoup, mais jamais d'une manière suivie (p. 13)." The protagonist no longer suffers the influence of the triangular desire for mastery of communication. He has renounced that desire and undergone conversion.

Adolphe's renunciation of desire manifests itself in another way, in his act of recording his past. Girard emphasizes the link between renunciation of desire and writing. "Il faut réserver le titre de héros de roman au personnage qui triomphe du désir métaphysique dans une conclusion tragique et devient ainsi capable d'écrire le roman." 5 The details of Adolphe's own "conclusion tragique" do not appear in the narrative, but the very fact that he writes his life story clearly demonstrates that the young man experiences such an end. Even more important than the tragic end is the renunciation of the mediator that results from it. Girard states that this act is necessary to the narrative process. "C'est de la rupture avec le médiateur que jaillit l'inspiration romanesque. C'est l'absence de désir présent

5 Girard, p. 295.
qui permet de ressusciter les désirs passés."

Even before Adolphe exhibits his lack of interest in communication to the editor, the hero has renounced the metaphysical desire and the mediator, and this renunciation leads him to record his story.

However, Adolphe's narrative, unlike those studied by Girard, does not demonstrate a total cure from triangular aspiration. While reliving his past the narrator gets caught in the same fascination with his earlier longing, and, under the influence of this yearning, corrupts his recital of the story. This corruption appears throughout the story and, in a more dramatic form, at the conclusion of the novel.

Throughout the story Adolphe's growing re-involvement with his mediated desire manifests itself in the narrator's evolution as a character. Timothy Unwin and Ian R. Morrisson discuss this evolution and demonstrate that, as the novel progresses, the character loses his analytic ability as a result of his intense reliving of his past. The structure of Adolphe's account also demonstrates this deep involvement. While recounting the episode, the narrator often addresses the reader, issuing general statements of his philosophy,

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descriptions of his current state of mind, or comments on the past that he is recording. The proportionate amount of these intrusions of the narrator vary from chapter to chapter, and help indicate his involvement in the story. The more closely he identifies with his younger self, the less he pauses to comment on his actions. At the beginning of the narrative process, Adolphe is at his most objective, for he writes as a man cured from the mediated desire. In the first chapter the authorial Adolphe intrudes more often than any other: seventy-five lines out of 259, (or 28.9%) give expression to the narrator's thoughts as he writes. In chapters two, three, four, and five the narrator still inserts his commentary in a significant amount, but he intrudes less often. Chapter Two contains the smallest amount of commentary in the first half of the novel, forty-one out of 560 lines, or 7.3%. This chapter recounts Adolphe's first  

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8 I have computed the amount of narrator intrusion in the most conservative and objective manner possible, so as not to risk distorting the facts. All non-quoted passages in the present tense ("je ne sais peindre maintenant;" "L'homme est si faible."), and all exclamations or rhetorical questions ("Malheureuse visite!" "Qui me peut expliquer?") reflect the narrator's voice. Some passages in the conditional perfect, representing conditions contrary to fact, seem to come from the narrator's present, as do some passages in the passé composé indicating an enduring negative fact (je n'ai jamais su). In a further effort for accuracy, all intrusions were computed with a half-line as the smallest unit, sometimes with a line consisting of only one word not being counted. However, the total lines of the novel were counted as one line, no matter the length. This procedure may distort the proportions downward, but this seems preferable to distorting in the other direction.
experience of the triangular desire, his externally mediated longing for the enjoyment of a love relationship. The significant diminishing of the narrator's voice reflects the influence of this desire. Chapters Three, Four, and Five contain approximately the same amount of inserted material: twenty-eight of 304 lines (9.2%), thirty-eight of 348 lines (10.9%), and fifty out of 401 lines (12.5%) respectively. Chapters Six and Seven, those in which Adolphe describes the couple's most stormy conflicts, contain the smallest amount of commentary from the narrator. Four lines of narrative intrusion appear in the 314 lines in chapter Six (1.3%), and seven and a half lines out of 378 are devoted to the recounting Adolphe's remarks in Chapter Seven (1.9%). At this point the narrator suffers the effect of the mediated desire almost as much as his younger self and concentrates on recording his memories. In chapter Eight, Adolphe describes his relationship after his first renunciation of the metaphysical quest, and the narrator also relives the renunciation. His commentary occupies thirty six and one half lines of 329, or 11.1% of the text. As the hero Adolphe falls again under the spell of the mediator, the narrator also feels the effects and once again retreats from the present. In chapter Nine he intrudes a total of 6 out of 201 lines (2.9%) and in Chapter 10 in 21 out of 458 lines (4.4%). The use of commentary on the narrative demonstrates Adolphe's level of involvement in his quest, a level which changes
throughout the narrative and which remains objective only in that part of the novel which precedes the hero's involvement in the triangular desire.

Another indication of Adolphe's corruption of his narrative is the abrupt ending of his account. He records Ellénore's final communication to him and then stops. This ending does not follow Girard's description of the conclusion of a novel: "[t]ous les héros prononcent, dans la conclusion, des paroles qui contredisent nettement leurs anciennes idées . . ."\(^9\) Adolphe does not depict the "conclusion tragique" that leads him to renounce his mediated desire nor does he disavow his earlier life. He leaves it to others, the editor and his correspondant, to inform the reader of the hero's cure and the life that leads to it.

The abrupt ending of Adolphe's narrative merits more critical attention. Two scholars advance explanations for it. Reichler points out that "l'écriture s'interrompt lorsqu'elle a mis en scène la mort de la femme, comme si elle avait alors rempli sa fonction."\(^{10}\) However, this explanation fails to take into account the fact that Adolphe also recounts his finding and reading of Ellénore's letter. Delbouille discusses this letter and its significance in

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\(^9\) Girard, p. 292.

ending the novel. "Le dernier mot reste . . . par-delà la
tombe, à la malheureuse compagne d'Adolphe." According to
Delbouille, this ending indicates that it is Ellénore's
perception of the relationship which prevails. However, this
theory raises the question of Adolphe's motivation in writing
the narrative. Despite his denials of a self-justifying
intention, clearly such an aspect does enter into his
recital. The editor finds that element present and condemns
it. "Je hais . . . cette fatuité d'un esprit qui croit
excuser ce qu'il explique (p. 150)." Permitting Ellénore's
explanation to endure does not fit in with the character of
Adolphe. His decision to break off the recital of his story
results from his increased involvement in reliving his past.
Once he records Ellénore's words, the narrator realizes that
he has achieved the goal which attracts him throughout the
relationship, the control of Ellénore's language. His
partial transcribing of words which his mistress intended to
destroy strikes him as the fulfillment of his quest, so he
breaks off his narrative for he needs it no more.

Indeed, the entire recounting of the story demonstrates
Adolphe's success at attaining his desire. Because the
object of his aspiration is control of language, when he
writes about the quest, he achieves that control. Just as
reading, saving, and transcribing Ellénore's final letter

11 Delbouille, p. 191.
give the young man power over those words, so does recounting his relationship with Ellénore and the conversations which comprise it give him power over all her communication. After Adolphe commits his experiences to paper, every word that Ellénore utters, writes, or even keeps silent, passes first through the filter of Adolphe. If Ellénore occasionally seize control of the couple's communication and dominates, it is only because Adolphe the narrator permits her to do so. Indeed, for the very fact of her existence, let alone the content of her conversation, the reader must rely on the narrator. By virtue of his great interest in language and communication, the narrator betrays his metaphysical desire. But by virtue of his narration alone, he achieves his goal.

Not only does Adolphe satisfy his aspiration of controlling Ellénore's use of language, he succeeds, in a sense, in achieving the personal autonomy that the triangular desire represents. By writing his narrative, he enjoys the power of creation inherent in language. Not only Ellénore, but all other characters: the nameless friends, the baron de T*, the count de P*, and the father find their voices only through the narrator. "il est ... manifest que les 'je' épisodiques--Ellénore, le père d'Adolphe, le baron de T*--ne sont que des satellites gravitant autour de la planète Adolphe, qui du moins dans son récit, les maintient dans une
situation subalterne."\textsuperscript{12} In addition, Adolphe the narrator is responsible for determining the important events of his story. He achieves autonomy by virtue of the fact that he is the god of the world of his own creation. "I am speaking of the 'author' . . . as the God who hovers above the little world he has created. He knows it totally from a superior, supraexistential point of vantage. . . .\textsuperscript{13}

The protagonist of \textit{Adolphe}, then, does not undergo his conversion entirely as Girard predicts. Rather he experiences a series of conversions before he completely removes himself from the realm of mediated desire. Each of these changes demonstrates one aspect of Girard's theoretical conversion, but only the last of them endures. The first conversion, prompted by a new externally mediated desire and by contemplation of death, lasts only until his linguistic weakness revives in Adolphe the yearning for mastery of communication. The second conversion, whose origin remains unknown, is more complete because he achieves a degree of cure strong enough to enable him to write about his desire. However, his literary adventure provokes a renewal of desire.


and a realization of satisfaction of longing. The third conversion also results from an unknown source, but is evident by his withdrawal from linguistic conflict, behavior which contradicts his earlier actions. This conversion is complete, leaving Adolphe in a spiritual death, ready and waiting for the physical end of his life.
Chapter 6: Stilling the Mother Tongue: Ellènore and Language

Adolphe's decision to launch a courtship of Ellènore and his subsequent choice of her as mediator for triangular desire profoundly affect not only her emotional life but also her relationship with language. The liaison with the young man and the linguistic conflict that ensues destroy her reputation, fortune, and health, and slowly strip Ellènore of all powers of communication. She changes from a strong, highly-skilled speaker to a silent observer, before retreating to eternal silence, death. While Adolphe seeks to attain his metaphysical desire, Ellènore's loss of strength in language makes her a victim of that desire and the loser in the battle for communication.

Critics have begun to examine works of literature for expression of women's relationship with language. Naomi Schor, for example, describes Emma's powers of speech and writing in her study of Madame Bovary. Bernadette Fort demonstrates that Manon's speech, heard through the filter of Des Grieux's narrative, contributes to the enigmatic

impression made by the character. Two studies of this type draw attention to the female protagonist's process of evolution towards a greater power of language. Linn Konrad shows that the heroine of Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, through her reunion with a childhood love, "grows in power and eloquence." Formerly a silent woman, she becomes a master of speech, able in one exchange to use it to meet "the different needs for truth on the part of Guido, Prinzaville, and Marco." Bernard Magné describes a similar gain in communicative strength in Agnès, the heroine of Molière's *Ecole des femmes*. Magné states that Arnolphe's confinement of Agnès, ostensibly to have her educated into a morally upright wife, serves, in reality, to deny her access to language. Horace's intrusion into Arnolphe's plan thwarts it on both levels: Agnès discovers love and, at the same time, develops her powers of language.

The studies of Magné, Konrad, and Schor indicate that the woman's linguistic development follows her introduction to love. However, Ellénore's entrance into a romantic

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relationship engenders a totally opposite effect. Her already established linguistic mastery cannot remain unaffected by the communicative conflict. Because of Adolphe's efforts to wrest it from her, Ellènore's power must decrease rather than increase.

It is interesting to note that it is Ellènore's access to and command over spoken language which suffers from her relationship with Adolphe. For the most part, she retains her strength in written expression. Throughout the course of the relationship, Ellènore writes ten letters whose contents are specifically recounted in the novel. Most of these letters display essentially unaltered communicative power, although her emotions sometimes weaken her writing. The first letter to Adolphe demonstrates strength by its refusal of further communication with him, but the second note weakens in its resolve by containing signs of emotion which betray a sentiment of regret. Ellènore's second pair of missives follows a similar pattern. In these two notes she sends for Adolphe, first to discuss leaving the count de P*, then to inform her lover that she has done so. The first message is the more masterful one. "Ellènore m'écrivit de passer chez elle à l'instant (p. 66)." Later, after establishing her own home, she manifests some fear concerning Adolphe's reaction to her action. This fear causes her to weaken her message; no longer commanding, she now requests
Adolphe's presence: "un billet par lequel Ellénore me priait d'aller la voir . . . (p. 68)."

However, only these two epistles display such weakness, as all further written communication from Ellénore shows her strength. While Adolphe is at his father's house, Ellénore writes another pair of letters to her lover. In the first she demonstrates her ability to decode Adolphe's letters by understanding the meaning behind his vague references to their reunion: "[e]lle avait compris par mes lettres qu'il me serait difficile de quitter mon père (p. 77)." She also announces her intention to travel to the young man's hometown. That understanding and the unemotional declaration show power that often fails her in conversation. Her second letter carries signs of emotion, just as earlier letters did, but in this case the emotion does not weaken the message. She effectively expresses her indignation and intention not to obey Adolphe's directive to delay their reunion for a few months. Ellénore solidifies this written expression of power by following the letter in person, not only acting out her expressed intention, but also giving her a chance to initiate face-to-face communication.

Even in her writing to someone other than Adolphe, Ellénore continues to express a strong position. Her next two letters she writes to the count de P* in order to refuse his offer of a fortune if she leaves Adolphe. She fills each letter with the simple message of rejection, untouched by any
emotion. "'J'ai répondu, me dit-elle, et vous devinez bien que j'ai refusé' (p. 87)," she says of her first letter. The second letter serves more to put an end to her discussion with Adolphe than to communicate with the count, for she merely repeats her earlier refusal: "elle confirma sa réponse au comte de P* (p. 89)."

Ellénore's letter to Adolphe during his evening at the baron's and the letter that she asks him to destroy are her final written communicative acts. Again, both of these epistles display strength. The power of the first resides in its symbolism, however, rather than in its message. Adolphe does not recount the contents of this note (although the reader can imagine that it expresses Ellénore's desire that Adolphe return home), but he clearly expresses the symbolism in the mere act of her writing to him. Both he and the baron interpret this letter as a sign of domination. Despite Adolphe's recognition of his mistress's weakening grasp on spoken language, he sees in the letter Ellénore's attempt to pursue him "partout, comme un esclave qu'on doit ramener à ses pieds (p. 126)." Similarly, the posthumous letter of Ellénore displays a strength which starkly contrasts with her embrace of eternal silence on the spoken level. Adolphe does not reveal the entire contents of this letter, an effect of the great power contained in it. The words are so strong that they sap the strength of Adolphe even years later as he records his discovery of them. "Je n'ai pas la force de la
transcrire (p. 143)." Although critics have discussed both the function and the place of this letter in the narrative and its relative honesty or insincerity, not one of them questions the fact that in it Ellénore displays strength by her words. Ellénore does acknowledge in this letter that Adolphe has gained power over language, to her own detriment. "Dites un mot . . . . Est-il un pays où je ne vous suive? (p. 144)" Her actions depend on Adolphe's direction of them, consisting of linguistic exchange; yet the young man has not pronounced those words. Those words that he does utter torture his mistress. "Ces paroles acérées . . . me suivent, elles me dévorent (p. 145)." However, her accusations of anger and weakness ("Pourquoi vous montrez-vous furieux et faible? [p. 144]"), her predictions of her death and of Adolphe's reaction to it are strong uses of language.

The continued strength of Ellénore's writing results from Adolphe's concentration on spoken communication in his

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5 For discussion of the question of function and place, see chapter 5, pp. 157-158 and footnotes. David Baguley and Grahame C. Jones differ on the question of honesty in this letter. The former scholar holds that the letter is free from the dissimulation that marks other communication in the novel because it is never sent. Jones, on the other hand, states that Ellénore may be free from deliberate intention to deceive, but that the letter may be false simply because Ellénore's interpretation of the facts is wrong. See David Baguley, "The Role of Letters in Constant's Adolphe," Forum for Modern Language Studies, 11 (1975), 29-35 and Grahame C. Jones, "Ellénore's Letter, Its Bearing on Adolphe," Essays in French Literature, 20 (1983), 12-19.
desire for control. Many factors provide explanation for this neglect of written language. Todorov points out that, in the novel, writing presents the form of a langue impersonnelle. The most striking of the traits of such language is the ability to change reality, to "transformer le sentiment en réalité." Such a power makes impersonal language "la parole la plus sûre, la plus réelle, plus réelle que la réalité." Todorov also declares that the impersonal nature of writing renders it of easier access to the novel's characters than speaking.6 David Baguley describes letter writing as "the extreme form of involvement" with the world of language, and finds that Adolphe maintains his insincerity in writing.7 Godelieve Mercken-Spaas, however, argues against Todorov and Baguley that letters are impersonal, and therefore sincere, only when the distance between destinataire and destinataire is real.8 All of these judgments evaluate, for the most part, Adolphe's attitude to writing and not Ellénore's, but they do much to explain Ellénore's continuous power over written words. The impersonal nature of writing (as defined by Todorov and modified by Mercken-Spaas), the difference in involvement between writing and speaking, and

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the distance of writing all work to keep letters outside the realm of language control.

Although Todorov classifies letters as impersonal language, writing can also be seen as the most personal form of language. In this activity, the writer may have a conception of the eventual reception of his work, but linguistic exchange occurs between the writer and his paper. Once the words have been written, they permit no possibility of changing. Certainly the writer may substitute one word or phrase for another during the process, but unless he recopies the page he cannot destroy the evidence of the earlier expression: a simple line through the discarded word leaves it visible to the reader and invites his interpretation; more vigorous disguise hides the original word, but averts the reader to the writer's change of opinion. Even without such changes, written words remain a permanent fixing of the writer's sentiments. There is no way to retract a statement completely; one may disavow the reader's interpretation, but not the fact of expression. These circumstances render impossible any chance to control another's writing. The reader's absence prevents him from any hints of gesture or tone that the writer should modify his message during the process. Indeed, the reader's reactions come long after the production of the language to which he is reacting.

Adolphe's early personal experience with language teaches him to place writing in a different category from
speaking. His father's communication displays a marked contrast between the two forms of language: in letters, the older man's constraint disappears and he sends messages containing both affection and a significant amount of content. Later Adolphe will tend to regard writing as a means toward more fluent expression of his emotions. In declaring his love, in fighting the obstacles of Ellénone's modesty, and in pressing for physical consummation, he abandons his spoken efforts and writes letters to obtain his immediate goal. This confidence in his writing wavers only when he is absent from Ellénone, when his vivid thoughts of her reception of his letters make them appear more like face-to-face conversation.

In addition, Adolphe's choice of Ellénone first as love object then as a mediator of desire rests more on her ability to speak. During the friendship and courtship, Ellénone displays her command of spoken language more often and in a much more masterful way than she does her writing ability. As Adolphe's first description of Ellénone indicates, the heroine's conversational skills attract the young man, not her writing skill. Indeed, Adolphe remains ignorant of that aspect of Ellénone's command of language until after he begins his pursuit of her. Even then, her letters are responses to his own writing and not her own initiation of communication.
For all of these reasons, written language never enters the linguistic conflict between the two characters. Lacking the immediacy of the face to face language of conversation, writing remains immune to the give and take pattern of the characters' conflict. Written language can symbolize power, as it does when Ellénore sends messages requesting Adolphe's presence or the letter at the baron's, but the characters cannot seize power over the written word from the other. All their efforts to control communication take place on the spoken level and this allows Ellénore's writing skills to remain intact while her speaking ability degenerates and disappears.

Before Ellénore's involvement with Adolphe, she enjoys not only free access to language but also the ability to use that freedom to her advantage. Ellénore's strength manifests itself in two areas of discourse: the public sphere of social conversation and the private world of intimate conversation. Her skill at both of these aspects compels Adolphe's admiration for her and dominates his first description of her. By careful manipulation of her own and her company's language Ellénore places herself in a position of superiority. She overcomes the hindrances of both her irregular position in society and of her average intellect by virtue of her command of speech.

Such communicative power distinguishes Ellénore from her contemporaries. Like the other women of the society of D*
she is of no remarkable intelligence ("Ellénore n'avait qu'un esprit ordinaire [p. 33]"), but she attracts Adolphe's notice because of her language skills. In contrast with the mediocrity of the other women of her circle, "[c]haque mot qu'elle disait me semblait revêtu d'une grâce inexplicable (p. 37)," so for linguistic reasons alone Ellénore appears worthy of the young man.

Ellénore's power of communication in intimate conversation manifests itself to Adolphe during the days of the couple's friendship as the two enjoy a sharing of language. Together they read English poetry, a difficult adventure with words, made so by both the foreign and the poetic aspects of their reading. The equal participation of both Ellénore and Adolphe is necessary to the success of such an endeavor. The couple's other linguistic activity, "je causais avec elle sur mille sujets (p. 37)," also demonstrates Ellénore's power in intimate communication by its reminder of the older woman who first initiates Adolphe into the joy of a shared experience with language. Once again the young man finds a conversational partner capable of extensive discussion. Although the verb causer suggests a measure of lightness not present in his "conversations inépuisables" with his older friend, it also connotes a different type of relationship, one of friend to friend rather than elder to younger. At any rate, the diversity of
their subjects indicates the inclusion of serious as well as light-hearted talk.

Ellénore's strength in using intimate language continues to manifest itself through Adolphe's courtship of her. The young man's inability to declare his love could easily be a result of his knowledge of her strict control of the content of remarks addressed to her; an avowal of love is certainly as dangerous to the reputation she is trying to maintain as joking remarks. Such a confession also represents the intrusion of a new type of language into the couple's communication, another possible source of Adolphe's timidity. Ellénore's linguistic mastery silences Adolphe's talk of love even before he can utter it, and she continues in powerful manipulation of communication once Adolphe's feelings become known. Upon receiving the protagonist's letter, Ellénore not only decodes the letter successfully, "[elle] vit dans ma lettre ce qu'il était naturel d'y voir (p. 39)," but writes a proper response, displaying both her friendship and her morality. This latter consideration causes her to assert her control over language and take away Adolphe's right to share words with her: "jusqu'au retour du comte de P*, elle ne pourrait me recevoir (p. 39)."

Adolphe's first attempt to defy her interdiction and go see her anyway, fails: "on me dit qu'elle était sortie," but this ploy does not prevent his written communication from reaching her. She answers the young man's letter by
repeating her prohibition of intimate conversation: "elle persistait dans sa résolution, qu'elle m'annonçait comme inébranlable (p. 40)." This time Ellénore enforces her decree more strictly by removing herself from the area. "Elle était partie pour une campagne dont ses gens ignoraient le nom (p. 40)."

When Ellénore returns to D* and the couple resumes their friendship, she again asserts control over language. She consents to the resumption of the relationship, but places several limits on the communication that she will share with Adolphe; her conditions inhibit the frequency of conversation, the intimacy and the subject matter. "Elle ne consentit à me recevoir que rarement, au milieu d'une société nombreuse, avec l'engagement que je ne lui parlerais jamais de l'amour (p. 48)." Ellénore also undertakes to insure Adolphe's compliance with her regulations by surrounding herself with others. She still seeks to include Adolphe in her linguistic experiences: "on ne racontait rien d'intéressant qu'elle ne m'appelât pour l'entendre (p. 49)."

Her enforcement of the rules, while confirming her own strength, also serves to weaken her suitor's competence in language, especially within the realm of intimate conversation. Adolphe's participation in shared communication is reduced to "quelques mots insignifiants ou interrompus (p. 49)."
Complete restoration of the couple's earlier shared use of language follows Ellénore's confession of love for Adolphe. Again the couple spends hours in conversation, discussing the history of their love. Nevertheless, during the progress of their relationship from friendship to love, despite Ellénore's demonstrations of power, she begins to lose her firm grasp on her linguistic power. Her response to Adolphe's second letter, even while affirming her refusal of his communication, lacks the strength of the first. This missive permits the young man to read into her answer "une impression de regret et de tristesse (p. 40)" rather than the mere friendly affection of her first letter. Her beginning weakness becomes even more apparent at the party held on her return. Both areas of communication, the social and the private, suffer from feebleness. At her first sight of Adolphe, Ellénore falters in her conversation: "ses paroles s'arrêtèrent sur ses lèvres; elle demeura tout interdite (p. 43)." Although she is able to recover from that temporary silence to listen to Adolphe's "questions indifférentes" and to respond to them enough to present a picture of calmness to the other guests, her linguistic behavior throughout the evening remains marked by the same weakness. At dinner she has difficulty in engaging in conversation. Rather than fulfilling her role as hostess and directing the speech of the others, she sits in silence. She retains only her ability to reply to remarks directed to her. "Quand on lui
adressait la parole, elle répondait avec douceur (p. 44)."
To Adolphé's private conversation she can answer only in
fragments; her reply to his threats of desperate action if
she will not receive him again consists only of the
protagonist's name. Her subsequent granting of the young
man's request remains unfinished. "je vous recevrai demain,
mais je vous conjure ... Elle ne put achever sa phrase (p.
44)." Interestingly, it is the assertion of authority which
is interrupted, not her acceding to Adolphé's wishes.

Ellénore manages to regain some strength in both areas
after this evening has passed. When Adolphé returns to visit
her the next day, she is able and willing to speak to him,
although he does not permit it: "[e]lle voulut parler (p.
46)." The conditions she places on Adolphé's future
intercourse with her enable her to expand her social
communicative skills, as she invites more people into her
home. Although Adolphé later denigrates this expansion,
"vous évitez ces éternelles conversations qui se prolongent
précisément parce qu'elles ne devraient jamais commencer (p.
50)," her participation in her new social life belies this
description. She finds pleasure and interest in her more
frequent exercise of her communicative skills.

This renewed social strength endures longer than her
renewed power over communication between her suitor and
herself. Despite her efforts to regulate that linguistic
commerce, Adolphé's neglect of the first condition (frequency
of interaction) and his outright attacks on the latter two
(intimacy and subject-matter) force her to give way. The
love relationship, although a re-establishment of shared
communication between the two partners, results from
Ellénore's weak enforcement of her rules of conversation.
Even while sharing the language of love, Ellénore displays a
decline in power. Adolphe does not deny his mistress access
to words, but he does dictate the content of Ellénore's
speech. After her recital of her sentiments of the past
weeks, an account revolving around the young man, Adolphe
wants to hear it again and again. "Je lui faisais répéter
les plus petits détails (p. 51)."

Shortly after this interlude, Adolphe begins to view
Ellénore as a mediator for his triangular desire for language
control. Despite her weakening since the beginning of the
courtship, she still displays a strength of communication to
which Adolphe aspires. However, from the moment of the
inception of this desire, Ellénore will find herself drawn
into a conflict with her lover over this mastery. Although
she experiences momentary gains, her losses in both areas of
conversation become increasingly more dramatic, until she
eventually loses all power to speak.

Because of the couple's increasing involvement with each
other and with the mediated desire governing their
relationship, Ellénore's first dramatic loss of linguistic
skill occurs in the realm of social intercourse. Her
decision to leave the count, itself a reflection of the
desire to control communication with Adolphe, severely
cripples the public aspect of her conversational ability.
Her formerly strict monitoring of her company's words
disappears. Although she continues to guard her own speech,
she no longer has the power to keep her guests' conversation
pure: "il s'introduisit dans leur ton quelque chose d'une
familiarité (p. 72)." One man goes so far as to display "la
passion la plus vive" for Ellénore, the expression of which
she is unable to repress. Although she rallies enough
strength to deny him future conversational possibilities (she
no longer receives him), even this show of power has no
effect. Ellénore can not quiet the disgruntled suitor's
"railleries outrageantes" and Adolphe must fight a duel with
the man to silence him.

Adolphe attributes this new tone in conversation to
Ellénore's lack of protection by a powerful man, but in so
doing he is engaging in an over-simplification of the events.
The power of the count de P* only serves to ensure Ellénore a
circle of acquaintances, as he is able to force certain of
the leading members of the society of D* to frequent his
home. "Son cercle s'était composé de quelques amis ou
parents de son amant et de leurs femmes, que l'ascendant du
comte de P* avait forçées à recevoir sa maîtresse (p. 36)."
Esteem for her came from her devotion to the man no matter
his fortune and her upright conduct in society, that is, her
skill at purifying her own and others' speech. The loss of the count's backing affects those people who associate with her, "[l]es hommes continuèrent à voir Ellénone (p. 72)," and her reputation for devotion to him. The ability to control the type of language addressed to her exists independently of these circumstances, so its loss is not an automatic result of the loss of protectorship, but rather an effect of declining linguistic skill.

From this moment, Adolphe and Ellénone, when together, live isolated from society, so years pass without the opportunity for Ellénone to exercise her social conversational ability. The move to Poland enables her to revive that activity, but that revival fails. Upon the couple's arrival in Warsaw, Ellénone retains enough linguistic strength to acquire and maintain some friendships. However, this is an intermediate form of linguistic activity, standing between the highly public discourse occurring in a wide social circle and the intimate exchanges between Ellénone and her lover. In at least one case, that of the friend whom she commissions to talk to Adolphe, Ellénone demonstrates the weakening effects of the mediated desire. Unable to control communication well enough to impose her own interpretation of the facts of the couple's relationship on her friend, Ellénone quarrels with her. Her blunt approach, which Adolphe attributes to a dislike of "la contrainte de dissimuler (p. 113)," represents, in reality, a lack of
refinement: "sans calcul," but more importantly, "sans ménagement." Skillful manipulation of words would result not in an outright rupture but in a healing of the breach between the two women.

This failure in a semi-social form of conversation might be one of the factors motivating Ellénore to try to re-establish a mastery of public language use. That attempt to create a niche for herself in the society of Warsaw demonstrates even more clearly her complete loss of linguistic power exterior to her relationship with Adolphe. The result of her behavior in every aspect of the endeavor stands in stark contrast to her earlier communicative success in D*. The people who come to see her do so not out of esteem for her or for Adolphe but out of curiosity. Her efforts to become more than a curiosity fail due to her feeble control over words. No longer does her expression of her ideas contradict her "esprit ordinaire" as it did in D*; now her "esprit juste mais peu étendu" prevents her from skilled practice of the receiving and interpreting of messages: "son peu d'étendue l'empêchait ... de saisir des nuances délicates (p. 115)." Her use of the expressive function of language also fail her in this plan: "il y avait dans ses actions et dans ses paroles je ne sais quelle fugue destructive de la considération qui ne se compose que du calme (p. 117)."
Ellénore does manage by her efforts to attract visitors to her home, but because of her linguistic weakness in the public aspect of communication she does not attain a successful integration into society. Both her enemies and her friends condemn her because of her social project. She only confirms the former group's opinion of her lack of respectability and puzzles and worries her supporters (although, out of loyalty, they blame Adolphe). Further evidence of this decline comes from the baron de T* when he describes Ellénore as a woman "que l'on ne voit que chez elle (p. 124)." Ellénore did not suffer this fate as the mistress of the count de P*. She sees friends in their homes, as witnessed by the sick friend she goes to nurse, and she also goes out. The servants' telling Adolphe that Ellénore was out may have been a ploy, but Adolphe gives no indication that it was an unusual occurrence. In Warsaw, she lacks the linguistic skill necessary to combat the circumstances of her situation.

The degeneration of the heroine's conversational skills with Adolphe follows a similarly regressive path. Enjoying full equality of participation in linguistic activity during the friendship, then equality of access under Adolphe's direction at the beginning of the love affair, Ellénore successively loses both command of the content and then ability of access to sharing words with her lover. Once involved in the struggle over power for words, she must either control at the expense of Adolphe's competence or
relinquish her own speech to him. Equality and sharing are no longer possible.

The moments of Ellénore's complete control are few. Her attempt to monopolize Adolphe's communication right after the consummation of the relationship, crippling as it does the young man's social intercourse and his linguistic ability with his mistress, is one of those moments. She also displays communicative mastery when she decides to leave the count. She summons Adolphe to her presence, addresses him first and responds to all of his objections with arguments of her own. At one point she betrays her submission to the doubly mediated desire by displaying violent emotion, but she remains enough in control to break off yet another argument from Adolphe and to dismiss him until further notice. Later, as the couple is eloping, she again demonstrates power over language. By her persistent questioning, she learns the role played by Adolphe's father in the elopement. Her address to Adolphe in which she redefines his emotion not only changes that emotion but reduces his linguistic power. His reassuring response is so uncertain that he does not know if he succeeds in allaying Ellénore's fears. Finally, he falls silent.

Sometimes Ellénore's bid for control over the couple's communication compromises her own linguistic skill. Her many uses of the silent treatment contain this double effect. During the discussions in which Adolphe tries to limit his
visits to her, Ellénore refuses to participate. Although this reaction leads to a victory in the skirmish at hand and affirms her strength, Ellénore loses by not exercising her communicative power. Even more ambiguous are those instances in which she remains silent because of tears. Such a reaction to Adolphe leads him to disavow his earlier statements and declare love for Ellénore, so there is an element of victory for the heroine. However, her betrayal of the mediated desire and abdication of the power to speak make Adolphe the clear winner. By his response he becomes the partner who confirms the continued existence of the relationship, the first step to assuming control of the use of language within the couple.

At other times Ellénore's use of the silent treatment clearly reflects her weakening hold on linguistic power. The most striking occurrence of this phenomenon also foreshadows the ultimate loss of communicative skill suffered by Ellénore. Adolphe's decision to tell Ellénore that he no longer loves her prompts this extreme reaction. His avowal leaves her speechless, staring at the table in front of her: "elle était immobile; elle contemplait tous les objets comme si elle n'en eût reconnu aucun (p. 88)." The naming of everyday objects is one of the basic aspects of language, and Ellénore's blank stare reveals that she is bereft of even this capacity to speak. Adolphe's touch restores her to the speaking world, but she has only the strength to attempt to
get away from him. Indeed, her efforts fail as she falls in a faint, yet another state of communicative loss.

The couple's trip to Warsaw marks the beginning of Ellénore's decline in linguistic power. She still makes every effort to exert control over communication and occasionally succeeds in capturing it for a moment. Generally, though, her powers decline and she finally renounces the struggle and retreats into silence.

Ironically, the first sign of her weakening linguistic strength results from Adolphe's renunciation of the mediated desire. With her lover no longer involved in the battle for linguistic control, Ellénore should be able to seize it and emerge the victor. However, the struggle has already exhausted much of her communicative power, so her efforts fail. Adolphe's renunciation produces a change in his behavior which Ellénore wants to understand. "Mon agitation redoubla les jours suivants; Ellénore voulut inutilement en pénétrer la cause (p. 110)." Her questions are insistent, but lack the power to combat Adolphe's resolve to participate no longer in the conflict. She can produce nothing more than monosyllabic answers from Adolphe. "[J]e répondais par des monosyllabes contraints à ses questions impétueuses (p. 110)." Unable to decipher her lover's conduct on her own, Ellénore seeks help from a friend. In doing so, she realizes that recourse to a third person represents a change in the couple's communication and blames Adolphe: "c'est votre
faute; autrefois je ne m'adressais à personne pour arriver jusqu'à votre coeur (p. 113)." However, Adolphe's only fault lies in his refusal to engage in the conflict over language; Ellénore's weakness is to blame for her inability to reach her lover and to prompt linguistic exchange with him.

As Ellénore tries and fails to reassert her strength in public use of language, she also finds more proof that her intimate communication has degenerated. Indeed, the motivation for her new interest in social life comes from her desire to revive Adolphe's interest in shared communication. Because of that longing she deliberately abdicates her power over the monitoring aspect of language. While in D* she was able to elevate public opinion by her careful manipulation of both her own and her audience's language. Leaving the count causes a significant degeneration of that skill, but by the time of her attempted conquest of Warsaw society, no trace of it remains. Now she permits rather than prohibits the young men to engage in conversation that she avoided formerly.

Both the content and the tone of these discussions take on a new dimension: Ellénore encourages their "sentiments" and "espérances," so it is likely that she allows them access to the language of love and flirtation. She also invites intimacy by granting them "de longs tête-à-tête (p. 117)."

Her monitoring of her own language suffers the same degeneration: "elle avait avec eux ces formes douteuses, mais attrayantes, qui ne repoussent mollement que pour
retenant, parce qu'elles annoncent plutôt l'indécision que l'indifférence, et des retards que des refus (p. 117-118)."

Although this degenerated form of communication results from a deliberate decision on Ellénore's part, a voluntary rather than involuntary weakening, it reflects her decline in intimate linguistic exchange with Adolphe. The narrator suggests that his mistress is seeking another, younger Adolphe: "Peut-être... trouvait-elle une sorte de consolation à s'entendre répéter des expressions d'amour que depuis longtemps je ne prononçais plus (p. 118)." Ellénore's search is not solely a quest for loving words, but for more control over words. The Adolphe who spoke of love did not have the communicative power that he now enjoys, so Ellénore could once again dominate discourse with a younger partner. Indeed, by her encouragement of the young men and her own ambiguous speech with them, she controls the content of their conversations.

Accompanying Ellénore's successive experiences of her linguistic decline is the realization of Adolphe's increasing communicative power. During this episode of social activity, both Ellénore and the young man recognize that his words have the power to put an end to her quest. Several times throughout this period Adolphe remarks that he holds this power: "[u]n mot de moi l'aurait calmée (p. 115);" elle m'insinuait qu'un seul mot la ramènerait à moi tout entière (p. 119);" "un mot fit disparaître cette tourbe d'adorateurs
Adolphe's reluctance to utter that word at the beginning of her social whirl forces her into more displays of her weakening control over language.

This episode brings to light further evidence of Ellénore's linguistic decline, for indeed it is the young man's speech which ends her efforts to conquer society and the heart of another lover. Although Adolphe says that he feels even more interminably bound to his mistress, "je me sentais chargé de nouvelles chaînes (p. 121)," he still maintains a strong position. In the days that follow, Ellénore tries to use her strongest weapon, the silent treatment, to draw Adolphe back into the communicative battle, but even that usual strength has weakened. Adolphe responds with his usual proliferation of words to fill the void: Ellénore's silence "m'arrachait des cris (p. 121)," but he does not seek to re-establish the mediated desire: "sans pouvoir m'arracher un désaveu (p. 121)."

These details of Ellénore's behavior in Warsaw point to a definite general weakening in control over language. Although Adolphe's renunciation of the mediated desire for linguistic mastery contributes to the inefficacy of his mistress's speech, that disavowal is not the sole reason. Indeed, Adolphe does re-enter the quest for control and the conflict that accompanies it. Significantly, forces exterior to the relationship, mainly public opinion, compel him to submit again to that tendency. Ellénore plays a very
small part in that return by sending the message to Adolphe at the baron's. If she retained linguistic power, Adolphe would have succumbed to the lure of the quest as easily as he did the first time in D*.

Ironically, it is Adolphe's eventual re-entry into the realm of mediated desire which causes Ellénore's ultimate linguistic loss. Her letter which prompts that re-entry, interpreted as a sign of domination by both Adolphe and the baron de T*, is a mustering of strength for one final effort. She maintains that strength long enough for her next interview with Adolphe, confronting him with accusations of perfidy, but both physical and linguistic weakness follow.

Ellénore's illness, designated by the servants as "une fièvre ardente," symbolizes the culmination of Ellénore's progressively severe linguistic deterioration. Her first symptom is fainting, a physical manifestation of her linguistic malady, being a state of inability to speak. Once revived, however, she voluntarily continues avoiding communication: "elle s'était jetée sur son lit sans prononcer une parole (p. 132)." Although she regains some power to speak, it is feeble, and she attempts to stifle it: "elle avait passé la nuit, prononçant des mots entrecoupés qu'on n'avait pu comprendre, et appuyant souvent son mouchoir sur sa bouche, comme pour s'empêcher de parler (p. 132)." After several hours of this condition, Ellénore has no need to prevent herself from speaking because she has lost the
potential for language. A servant reports that her mistress "paraissait avoir perdu l'usage de ses sens (p. 132)." In this state she is once again bereft of the ability to name everyday objects: "elle ne distinguait rien de ce qui l'entourait (p. 132)." Under the influence of her illness, Ellénone's communicative capabilities diminish to the extent that her language consists of hand gestures and only one word: "elle répétait mon nom; puis ... elle faisait signe de la main (p. 132)."

In contrast to her own weakness, Ellénone attributes great linguistic strength to her lover. In her mind, Adolphe has become "[l]a voix qui m'a fait du mal (p. 133)." Even after she has left her delirium, she still identifies the young man exclusively with his voice: "mais que cette voix que j'ai tant aimée, que cette voix qui retentissait au fond de mon coeur n'y pénètre pas pour le déchirer (p. 134)." At this point, Adolphe achieves, in Ellénone's view, complete control of language. After all the conflict that marks the affair, he is transformed into the voice upon whose silence Ellénone's life depends.

In her illness, Ellénone considers Adolphe the voice to be a harmful entity. In her final days of life, she asks him to set aside his identity with that destructive voice. In so doing, she renounces her part in the reciprocal mediated desire for linguistic control and refuses further participation in the communicative struggle. As a result of
her renunciation Ellénore's relationship to Adolphe changes; now she seeks his physical presence alone. "C'est [sur votre épaule], dit-elle, que j'ai toujours désiré mourir (p. 135)."

When the two take a walk, Ellénore leans on Adolphe for support because "[j]'ai du plaisir à me sentir encore soutenue par vous (p. 136)." Later, the heroine makes her intention even more specific when she asks him: ":[n]e me dites rien; je ne suis pas en état de vous entendre (p. 137)."

During the rest of her life, Ellénore continues to seek this kind of comfort from Adolphe. When the two lovers are together, she maintains silence, breaking it only to request the destruction of the letter she has written and to request a priest. Her prayers are her final words.

In Ellénore's death her final weakening into silence becomes manifest even to Adolphe. Aware of her approaching demise, she tries to communicate to her lover: "elle me serrera la main; elle voulut pleurer, il n'y avait plus de larmes; elle voulut parler, il n'y avait plus de voix (p. 142)." These attempts display her loss of access to language, and emphasize her reliance on only the physical aspects of her relationship. The futile gestures also demonstrate her inability to transmit any kind of message even without words. The narrator relates only the fact of her trying to communicate and makes no attempt to interpret her feelings.
Because of the renewed influence of triangular desire on Adolphe, he responds to Ellénore's illness and death as if she were once more invoking her use of the silent treatment. When she falls ill and forbids her lover entrance to her room, the action elicits his usual emotional and linguistic response. Seized "avec angoisse (p. 131)," he turns his communicative powers on the servants, to find out the cause of such behavior. "J'interrogeai les gens d'Ellénore . . . sur ce qui avait pu la plonger . . . dans un état si dangereux (p. 131-132)." The use of the verb interroger rather than demander or even questionner demonstrates both the intensity of Adolphe's emotion and the linguistic multiplication effect of the silent treatment. The expression indicates that the young man poses not one but several questions to the servants. Similarly, after Ellénore's death Adolphe feels the double effect of the silent treatment. At first unable and unwilling to comprehend what has taken place, he sits "immobile près d'Ellénore sans vie (p. 142)" until the noise of the other members of the household around him forces him to accept the death. His emotional reaction is immediate: "ce fut alors que j'éprouvai la douleur déchirante et toute l'horreur de l'adieu sans retour (p. 142)." The linguistic effect does not manifest itself in the same way as previously, for Adolphe no longer has a receiver for his communication. Indeed, this aggravates the problem of silent treatment: Adolphe feels compelled to affirm his
existence by filling the silence with words, but now no one can receive his words and confirm his existence. However, his thoughts, by their quick review of past, present, and future and their concern for his solitude, seem to be another desperate refutation of the silent treatment. They move from the present regret of his situation, "[c]ombien elle me pesait, cette liberté que j'avais tant regretté (p. 143)," to contemplation of his past ("Naguère...") back to the present and even the future. "Personne maintenant ne les observait [mes actions]; elles n'intéressaient personne... j'étais étranger pour tout le monde (p. 143)." Even in his sorrow the communicative aspect plays a significant role: "nul ne me disputait mon temps ni mes heures; aucune voix ne me rappelait quand je sortais (p. 143)."

Despite his emotional suffering after her death, Adolphe does, in fact, attain a small victory. His power to change Ellénone's life with "un seul mot" and his complete identification with his voice demonstrate his gains in linguistic strength made throughout the course of his relationship with Ellénone. Ellénone's renunciation of desire for control of language, her decline and loss of linguistic skills further display his power, for they result from his efforts to wrest that ability from her. This partial victory becomes even more complete when he writes his account of the relationship, because at that moment all of Ellénone's words become his property. His efforts lead him
first to still her voice and then to appropriate that voice as his own.
Chapter 7: Echoes of Linguistic Conflict

Due to their presentation of a similar story many novels prompt scholars to compare them with Adolphe. Benjamin Constant's Cécile, Madame de Staël's Corinne and Balzac's La Muse du département appear on a list of such works. Because of their similarity to Adolphe, examining them for elements of the linguistic theme in that novel not only provides another basis for comparison but also lends support to that linguistic theme. If the conflict for communicative power truly constitutes the theme of Adolphe, then it will be present at least to some extent in novels that resemble Adolphe.

Critics disagree on the nature of Cécile and its relationship to Adolphe, following one of two schools of thought.¹ Cécile is viewed by some critics as a novel and, as such, as a novel begun before and inspiring Adolphe, which was originally, perhaps, an episode in the earlier novel. Other scholars consider the work a récit autobiographique which followed Adolphe. For the most part, all agree that Cécile is intended to recount the happy side of love relationship in contrast to the unhappy one in Adolphe.

Because of the relationship between the authors of Corinne and Adolphe, critics have often considered the first novel to be a feminine perception of the kind of relationship portrayed in the latter. Georges Poulet finds more material to contrast rather than to compare in his article "Corinne et Adolphe: Deux romans conjugués." Although Adolphe resembles Oswald in his conflicting desires to stay with his mistress or to break up with her, the two novels differ markedly in both structural form and thematic concepts. Structurally, the presentation of the protagonist and the movement of events follow different patterns. In Corinne, the reader first becomes acquainted with Oswald, Lord Nevil, rather than the heroine. Once Oswald's character is established, Corinne enters the scene, but the reader hears of her glory from members of the Roman public and sees her through Oswald's admiring eyes before experiencing Corinne's personality first hand. This progression establishes a growing feeling of intimacy. In contrast, Adolphe appears from the beginning, first as a man of solitude, then as a first person narrator. Even this personal form of narration does not, according to Poulet, combat the detachment present in the work. The movement of events in the two novels differs along similar lines. In Corinne, all actions of the heroine tend toward the preservation of the love relationship, while in Adolphe

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2 Delbouille, Genèse, Structure et Destin, pp. 133-137.
every episode moves toward a gradual detachment of the couple.  

Thematic differences also occur between the two novels in an interlocking of the notions of love and time. For Corinne, life and love move from one moment to the next in a somewhat spiral pattern: "[l]'amour dont il s'agit ici est une agitation, c'est à dire un mouvement occasionnel et spasmodique."  

"Pour l'auteur de Corinnee, la vie consiste à passer sans répit d'un enthousiasme à l'autre." On the other hand, Adolphe's perception of time and love emphasizes the past over the present. The experience of love (and, by implication, any anticipated emotion or event) is over once it has begun: "l'actualité de l'expérience amoureuse se trouve pour ainsi dire consumée une fois pour toutes, réduite en cendres quasi à l'instant où elle éclôt." The past endures because one cannot change it and because it provides material for reflection in the present.

Mais l'amour au passé, comme souvenir des jours vécus en commun, reste inaltérable. Bien plus, pour ces anciens amants dont l'existence présente


4 Poulet, p. 586.

5 Poulet, p. 592

6 Poulet, p. 587.
vient de se vider de sa substance, il va constituer une autre existence, une vie de rechange à laquelle ils pourront se reporter.\(^7\)

Although Poulet discusses some aspects of language in the two novels, he draws very few comparisons between the two in this part of the discussion. The critic makes three declarations concerning language in *Corinne*: the relationship between characters is based on words, the heroine's genius consists of linguistic talent and endows her with power, and sentiment leads to verbal expression. From these assertions he concludes that language is everything in the novel.\(^8\) These declarations find no counterpoint in his discussion of *Adolphe*; Poulet states that Adolphe sees love as a way to initiate communication with others and that, in Adolphe's world, language gives the speaker a means of hiding his emotions. For this reason, *Adolphe* is open to more varying interpretation than *Corinne*.\(^9\) Despite Poulet's neglect of them, there are facets of language in the two works which correspond and which are revealed in applying *Adolphe*'s theme of the mediated desire for language control to *Corinne*.

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\(^7\) Poulet, p. 594.

\(^8\) Poulet, pp. 584-585.

\(^9\) Poulet, pp. 590-591.
Three critics present comparisons of Balzac's *La Muse du département* and *Adolphe*, justifying their work by quoting Balzac's letter to Madame Hansa: "J'espère que dans la fin de *La Muse*, on verra le sujet d'*Adolphe*, traité du côté réel." 10 The scholars begin by reviewing the many obvious references in *La Muse* to the earlier novel: Lousteau's assertion that life in Paris contains many recreations of the story recounted in *Adolphe*, Bixiou's advice to his friend to re-read *Adolphe*, Dinah's reference to Madame de Staël, the narrator's comparison of the private life of the two couples, Dinah's use of *Adolphe* to direct her conduct in the affair, Lousteau's criticism of his mistress's interpretation of the novel, and Dinah's assertion that the end of the couple's affair will not follow the pattern presented in *Adolphe*, the death of the mistress. From these several references the critics reach different conclusions as to the relationship between the two novels. Bernard Guyon concludes that the "partie réelle" in *La Muse du département* consists not only of Dinah's expression of her sentiments, but also of the more significant role played by poverty and society in the decline of the relationship, the greater emphasis on the physical

aspect of love and the non-tragic (thus more realistic) outcome of the story.\textsuperscript{11} Alison Fairlie examines Adolphe's appearance in the text of La Muse as both an omen, foretelling the outcome of the affair to the characters, and a stimulus for actions, as Dinah uses the novel to guide her behavior. The importance of these references is found in their placement at turning points in the action and revelation of the different ways of treating the same subject.\textsuperscript{12}

Unlike these two critics, Pierre Delbouille sees very little relationship between the two novels. He finds the only similarity in the theme of the sufferings of two people linked by chains of obligation rather than sentiment. In many details, he continues, the two works differ: Lousteau does not at all resemble Adolphe. The latter young man belongs to the aristocracy and receives a university education, while Lousteau originates from the bourgeoisie and is a journalist. The two men act from different motives as well: Adolphe is motivated by vanity and weakness, while

\textsuperscript{11} Bernard Guyon, Benjamin Constant et Balzac racontent la fin d'une liaison: Adolphe, Béatrix et La Muse du département," L'année balzacienne, 1963, 149-175.

Lousteau follows only the impulse of his egotism. The heroines also differ, according to Delbouille. Ellénore proves to be worthy of some esteem before her affair and during that involvement she acts according to the prescriptions of her sentiment. On the other hand, Dinah presents a somewhat ridiculous figure and behaves according to her imagination. Finally, the presentation of the narrative differs markedly. Adolphe concentrates on the story and the presentation of the characters' thoughts, while the third person narrator of *La Muse* intrudes often with details of life in Parisian society and the details of the characters' actions.13

Certainly the superficial events of all three stories resemble those of *Adolphe*, for they each recount the story of a hero's involvement with a woman, his wavering emotional commitment to that relationship, and the unhappy consequences of the liaison for both parties. In *Cécile*, the hero begins an affair with the title character, Cécile de Walterbourg. He experiences the same vacillations as Adolphe, not wanting to commit himself irrevocably to the relationship, not wishing to hurt Cécile, yet renewing his interest in the face of any obstacles that come between him and his mistress. Additional complications result from the hero's involvement with another woman, Madame de Malbée, toward whom the protagonist feels

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the same reluctance and zeal. The account remains unfinished, so the reader knows only a little of the outcome; the narrator eventually marries Cécile, but she suffers a fatal illness. In a similar fashion, the protagonist of Corinne also hesitates to make a choice between two women, Corinne, a celebrated Italian woman of genius, and Lucile, a young English woman. Oswald, the hero, finds that exterior forces such as his father's wishes and the conventions of his English society contribute to his inability to determine his emotional preference. He finally marries Lucile, but never loses his regret for Corinne, who suffers so much from the unhappy end of her relationship that she dies after a long illness. The plot of La Muse du département resembles that of Adolphe more closely than those of the other two works because it concerns a man and only one woman. Etienne de Lousteau, the protagonist, seduces Dinah, a young married woman in the provinces. She leaves her husband to join the journalist in Paris where the lovers' idyll lasts for only a short time before Etienne's disillusionment and poverty set in. These two factors weaken Dinah's resistance to fighting the intrigues of her husband, who threatens to take her children from her. She finally gives in to the double pressures and returns to her husband.

The linguistic theme of Adolphe lies beneath the emotional one and is revealed by the narrator's preoccupation with language. The narrator of Cécile discloses a similar
concern. Even the third-person narrators of *Corinne* and *La Muse du département* give an indication that the problematic relationship occurs simultaneously in the areas of emotion and communication. Evidence for this emphasis on communication also lies in the inclusion of several of *Adolphe*’s linguistically thematic elements. The desire to gain control of language, the distortion of communication, and a decline in power over words appear in all of these novels. In *Adolphe* these elements work together to form the theme of the novel. In *Cécile, Corinne,* and *La Muse du département* they play a significant role in the outcome of the relationship.

*Cécile* presents the same linguistic theme as *Adolphe,* but the presentation of the narrative changes the structure of that theme. A type of fragmentation occurs due to the narrator’s involvement with two women. Each of his relationships displays a different aspect of the desire which binds Adolphe to Ellénore. Just as the narrator’s emotional relationship with each of the women is different, his linguistic relationship varies from Cécile to Madame de Malbée. This division of the narrator’s affection between two women weakens to a certain extent the communicative conflict as it is presented in *Adolphe.* At the same time, the separation clarifies that struggle, for understanding each of the conflicting desires separately leads to further
comprehension of Adolphe, where the same conflict occurs in the context of one relationship.

The entrance into a relationship by external mediation is the first example of the fragmentation which marks Cécile. The young hero finds inspiration for his wish to love not from one but from a pair of mediators outside the sphere of his longing. Relatively content in his marriage, the narrator does not seek anything more from life until he learns of his wife's affair with a young prince. That circumstance alone does not distress him: "[j]e n'essayai . . . point de la ramener par des formes tendres ou douces". Only ideas of his role as a husband and, later, public opinion cause him to seek to end either the affair or his marriage. However, even before he actively works for that conclusion, he experiences the inception of desire by mediation. Witnessing the joy of his wife and her prince leads the protagonist to long for a similar joy. "Mais les regards des deux amants, leur intelligence réciproque qui se trahissait dans les moindres choses, le bonheur qu'ils éprouvaient à se trouver ensemble . . . me jetèrent dans une profonde rêverie (p. 172)." As a result of that sight, the young man begins, just as Adolphe does, to long for a similar experience. With that goal in mind, he begins to review each of his female acquaintances as

a possible partner for romance. Even the protagonist's choice of a romantic partner results from mediation. Having rejected all of the women of his social circle, he is left without plans until an old woman mentions the name of Madame de Barnhelm. The mere mention of that name causes the hero to choose Cécile as his future mistress. "Mais, en l'entendant nommer, je me dis tout à coup que peut-être elle remplirait mieux mon but qu'aucune des femmes dont j'avais cherché à me retracer l'image (p. 172)."

The protagonist's reliance on two different mediators for inspiration of his desire for love finds an echo in his later romantic life. The young man suffers from conflicting emotions for two women. The double mediation (double used not with Girard's meaning of reciprocal mediation, but in this case of two mediators) continues. The two women serve as mediators to the young man's desire for linguistic power. His alternating feelings for each of the two women, then, are tendencies toward alternate mediators.

In Cécile the protagonist's first experience with mediated desire also contains a linguistic element. The event which prompts his first longing for love, the sight of his wife and her lover, appeals not only to his emotional nature but to his communicative side. Part of the joy of the happy couple's relationship originates in their shared communication. Despite the constraints on communication, resulting from the narrator's presence, they manifest an
"intelligence réciproque (p. 172)" which appeals to the young husband. This aspect of love has been absent from his relationship with his wife and strikes him as the very essence of true affection.

Due to his interest in the communicative facet of love, the protagonist displays an interest in such activity in his relationship with Cécile. His description of his chosen mistress, though lacking the detail of Adolphe's portrait of Ellénore, contains the information that she has "un son de voix doux." This detail is one of five that the narrator gives and its position in the description reveals its importance to him. He proceeds from an evocation of general impression: "une figure agréable, une peau très blanche," to more specific details: "de beaux cheveux, des bras et une poitrine superbes (p. 173)." The sound of Cécile's voice occupies the central point of this list indicating that it not only contributes to the overall picture of the woman, but also figures among the striking details which comprise her beauty.

The beginning of the relationship further emphasizes the linguistic appeal that love holds for the narrator. He immediately establishes a correspondence with Cécile. His initial step of sending a written declaration of love "[j]e lui écrivis le soir une une déclaration positive (p. 173)" seems a hasty beginning suitable to doom his efforts to failure, but in reality such rashness serves to perpetuate
exchange between the two characters. Cécile, following
convention and morality, immediately responds with a refusal
to receive the hero. The denial of conversational
opportunities arouses his emotions. "Je n'étais point du
tout amoureux d'elle en la lui envoyant; mais sur sa réponse
... je ressentis ou crus ressentir la passion la plus
violente (p. 173)." The correspondence continues as the
narrator responds to Cécile's interdiction; the narrator
remarks that the two "négociâmes pendant quelques jours (p.
173)."

Once the barrier to face-to-face linguistic exchange
crumbles, the couple's relationship acquires another mode of
communication. Besides conversation, the narrator and Cécile
share words by reading. "Je proposai des lectures (p. 173)."
This linguistic activity leads the couple to experience love.
The jealousy of Cécile's husband interrupts the young man's
daily visits and confirms the existence of love by the
couple's emotional reactions. The narrator remarks that his
own feeling is one of despair and that "Cécile en fut presque
aussi triste que moi (p. 173)." Although the couple
continues to see each other, their shared exchanges of
language cease with the end of their privacy. "Nous nous
vîmes à la promenade, au spectacle, dans quelques assemblées,
jamais chez elle, et jamais seuls (p. 173)."

The narrator's acquaintance with and love for the other
woman in his life, Madame de Malbée, contrasts with his
involvement with Cécile in that it results from a spontaneous inclination rather than a mediated one. Once he meets this woman, he experiences love. "J'en devins passionnément amoureux . . . . Au bout d'une heure, elle prit sur moi l'empire le plus illimité qu'une femme ait peut-être jamais exercé (p. 183, 184)." No other person contributes to the narrator's love for Madame de Malbée; no one introduces the two or speaks to the narrator of love. Indeed, his mind is on business and the possibility of renewing his relationship with Cécile. Madame de Malbée and her linguistic skill combat this inclination and lead the narrator to love.

This spontaneous desire resulting from attraction to the woman's communicative ability emphasizes the significant role played by language in this relationship. From the outset, Madame de Malbée demonstrates more linguistic power than Cécile. Indeed, she possesses considerable fame because of her communicative ability: she is, according to the narrator, "la personne la plus célèbre de notre siècle, par ses écrits et par sa conversation (p. 183)." His personal experience of the woman confirms public opinion. The narrator draws a detailed portrait of Madame de Malbée's physical attributes, the total of which he finds rather unattractive. Those details "formaient un ensemble qui frappait défavorablement au premier coup d'œil (p. 184)." However, just as Ellénore contradicts her reputation and limited intellect by her conversational ability, Madame de
Malbée's talent for using language counteracts her unattractive physical appearance: "lorsque Madame de Malbée parlait et s'animaït, [elle] devenait d'une séduction irrésistible (p. 184)."

Just as the narrator has two external mediators for the desire to embark on a romantic relationship with Cécile, he has two mediators for the longing to control language, Cécile and Madame de Malbée. With each of the women, he displays a different aspect of that wish. In his interaction with Cécile the hero is able, for the most part, to occupy the dominant position: he controls communication within the couple. In contrast, in his liaison with Madame de Malbée, he most often plays the inferior role. She controls the young man's access to and production of language. The narrator's inability to decide definitely between the two women results from these conflicting levels of power. Staying with Cécile gives him power over language, but prevents him from attaining complete mastery because Madame de Malbée continues to dominate her own language. Plagued by his ever changing relationship to language, the protagonist never resolves the conflict and settles with neither of the two women.

In his relationship with Cécile the narrator is happy as long as he retains control of communication. Once the heroine tries to gain any type of power, the narrator reacts to squelch her attempt at self-assertion. He responds in two
ways: by seeking either to put an end to the relationship, or to continue the liaison but under his direction. Naturally the reaction depends to a certain extent on the status of the affair, whether he is actively involved in it or not, but he does not necessarily choose to change that status. He also occasionally confirms the state of the relationship, by attempting to end it definitely or to continue it, but by his own pronouncement. Later, after the narrator becomes involved with Madame de Malbée, the status of that second relationship also plays a role in determining his reaction to Cécile's domineering efforts.

Language assumes an equal importance in the relationship between the narrator and Madame de Malbée, but the roles of the two partners reverse. The female exercises the greater linguistic power, the male the lesser. Yet the narrator retains his desire for communicative control; indeed, it is stronger when with this woman because she clearly possesses such skill. Her role as mediator, then, is more active than Cécile's. The relationship between the two characters follows a pattern similar to that between Adolphe and Ellénore. As a result of his mediated desire, the narrator professes an intention to leave Madame de Malbée but continues to stay with her. The union consists of stormy conflict and becomes a link of master and slave. The narrator himself recognizes this at one point when he calls
Madame de Malbée "le tyran . . . mais aussi . . . le but de ma vie (p. 214)."

Almost from the very first the narrator passes from loving Madame de Malbée to feeling himself subject to her. When he first falls under her domination, it poses no problem to his love. "Au bout d'une heure, elle prit sur moi l'empire le plus illimité qu'une femme ait peut-être jamais exercé . . . . Je passai tout l'hiver à l'entretenir de mon amour (p. 184)." Although the narrator does not recount his disillusionment in detail, his description of the first moment of dissatisfaction indicates its linguistic nature. At this moment in his life, the protagonist wishes to "faire éclater mon dévouement (p. 185)" to the republican efforts in France, and his method of doing so appears to be a written work, as evidenced by his naming it "un travail que j'avais commencé à faire (p. 185)," and later referring to "un excès de travail et de lecture causé par mon désir d'achever un ouvrage que j'avais entrepris depuis longtemps (p. 202)."

Although these may be two different works, the more detailed mention of the latter defines it as a written work and permits the assumption that the former also consists of writing. However, the protagonist's association with Madame de Malbée menaces the success of his endeavor: "Madame de Malbée . . . leur [aux chefs de la France républicaine] était suspecte; et leurs soupçons rejaillissaient sur moi (p. 185)." Because of these suspicions his mistress leaves
France, thus interrupting his writing. After this first interference with his linguistic output, the narrator never again professes any affection for this mistress; he speaks only of her power over him.

That power over the protagonist also lies in the realm of communication. Most often, her power manifests itself in the dictation of the circumstances of the narrator's use of language; Madame de Malbée, like Ellénore, wants the exclusive right to receive the protagonist's words. For that purpose she often summons the hero to her presence: "elle exigeait impérieusement ma présence, à une date fixée (p. 193)" and keeps him there: "[j]'étais à Rouen, suivait toujours Mme de Malbée . . . (p. 195)"; "l'ascendant de Mme de Malbée fut tel sur moi que . . . je ne fis pas une tentative pour hâter le moment de mon voyage à Paris, que Mme de Malbée avait fixé au milieu de novembre (p. 199)." In order to insure that she enjoys exclusively all intimacy with the narrator (including communicative), she wishes to prohibit his involvement with and marriage to anyone else: "[e]lle exigea de moi une promesse que je n'épouserais jamais aucune autre femme (p. 189)."

The most detailed episode which confirms the linguistic nature of Madame de Malbée's domination is that concerning the hero's letter to Cécile. At the beginning of this episode, the narrator declares that Madame de Malbée "avait l'habitude de lire mes lettres (p. 198)," and that, although
she does not always follow that habit, she chooses to do so as he writes to Cécile. To avoid a lengthy dispute, the narrator burns the letter. The existence of the habit and her anger at being thwarted in it clearly demonstrate Madame de Malbée's control over the narrator's access to and use of language.

Nevertheless the protagonist, like Adolphe, chooses to stay in the relationship. After each separation, he returns to her side, often merely obeying the demand of a woman "qui avait repris sur moi tout son ascendant (p. 194)."

Occasionally, however, the narrator rejoins Madame de Malbée voluntarily, and the motivation for each of these reunions reveals the linguistic desire present in his relationship. Each of these conciliatory returns occurs when the narrator feels assured of a chance to dominate the language of the relationship, because of the weakened position of Madame de Malbée. The first such reunion follows the proclamation of a second exile from France for the heroine. Although the hero claims to be on the verge of terminating his affair: "notre rupture eût été inévitable (p. 189)," he cannot permit an outside force to do so. Attributing the reconciliation to his own lofty sentiments: "[i]l n'était ni dans mon caractère ni dans mon coeur d'abandonner une femme proscrite (p. 189)," the narrator really hopes to profit from Madame de Malbée's loss of strength, as the exile cuts off part of the audience for her linguistic skill. Later, the narrator will
return willingly to Madame de Malbée in order to negotiate for the repeal of this exile. Again his position relative to his mistress strengthens in such circumstances, increasing the possibility of his communicative mastery. Indeed, he succeeds for a time in asserting more control over language as he proffers direction and advice. "J'avais réussi à guider assez bien Mme de Malbée . . . (p. 201)." However, his mistress does not follow his lead for long, which causes both the failure of the effort and another separation of the two lovers.

Extreme emotional pain on the part of Madame de Malbée also causes communicative weakness which prompts the narrator to return to her. The death of her father interrupts the protagonist's trip toward Cécile and brings him back to his mistress. Upon hearing of that event, the protagonist imagines the bereaved woman's grief. "Je me représentai son désespoir, au milieu d'étrangers, sans un seul ami qui pût concevoir ou partager sa douleur (p. 189)." Considering Madame de Malbée's taste for conversation, it is not unlikely that her method of mourning would demand a communicative partner in order to share her pain. The lack of such an outlet constitutes a weak linguistic position. The narrator voluntarily returns to Madame de Malbée in order to assume that role. Later, the hero hears of further sufferings of his mistress both because of his conduct and because of that of another young man. The discovery that he is not "l'unique
cause du malheur de Mme de Malbée (p. 203)" causes some of her language to lose its power. Her authority over the narrator consists "de reproches et de menaces (p. 203)," which have now become "profanés . . . ainsi employés à double (p. 203)." Because of the weakening of the language that binds him to Madame de Malbée, the protagonist prepares to return to her. The arrival of an envoy from the heroine stimulates his resolve to display strength in language with Madame de Malbée. This messenger encourages the hesitant lover in his thoughts of new found control. "Il me flatta de l'idée d'amener Mme de Malbée à ce que je désirais . . . (p. 204)."

Both of the narrator's relationships involve a mediated desire for language control as evidenced by the narrator's hesitation between the two women and the linguistic aspects of those relationships. Just as his relative position toward the mediators differs, so does the nature of his efforts to capture authority over language from each of the women. In Adolphe the hero's attempts at mastery take the form of distortion of language, enabling the command aspect of communication to present a disconfirming message. The protagonist of Cécile engages only slightly in such distortion, preferring other methods of achieving his desire. With Cécile, the narrator maintains control by forcing her to accept his own definitions of the relationship. With Madame de Malbée the narrator appears to falter in his efforts. He
mainly remains united with her, awaiting his chances to seize the power that she holds.

The relationship between the narrator and Cécile, begun in terms of linguistic exchange (the couple's shared reading), continues in that fashion even after the two partners' respective divorces. The possibility of their marriage, proposed by M. de Barnhelm, accepted by Cécile, feared by the hero, intrudes very little on the liaison because the young man's journey to Pyrmont serves to maintain the union as strictly a communicative one. In establishing this type of bond, the protagonist exercises his mastery over the couple's language. He defines the marriage plan as a potential but secret act: "[j]e lui demandai le secret sur nos projets (p. 177)," and imposes that definition on Cécile. He also controls the nature of the couple's interaction. It is his absence which causes the relationship to develop via letters. The narrator also guides the course of that development as he writes letters which not only express his emotion but also dictate Cécile's response. "J'écrivis ... à Cécile avec une tendresse ... et ses lettres ... me retraçaient le sentiment que je lui avais inspiré (p. 178)."

The narrator enjoys this type of relationship no doubt because of his successful direction of communication. He enjoys his own eloquent expression—his sentiments are those which "j'éprouvais réellement (p. 188)"—and also enjoys Cécile's participation in the exchange: "ses lettres me
causait un vif plaisir (p. 178)." In light of that pleasure, it is no wonder that he does not seek a change in the status quo of the couple's bond.

When, after a month, Cécile breaks the pattern of the couple's exchange, the hero loses his interest in the relationship. The narrator claims that it is because of the fear of causing his beloved pain at his disinterest in more intimate contact, but communication plays an important role in his lack of enthusiasm at seeing her. The episode begins with a letter from Cécile in which, rather than following the couple's established routine, she attempts to assert control over communication. Her letter fixes the time and circumstances of their next interaction: "elle me donnait un rendez-vous pour un jour fixe à Cassel (p. 178)" and also dictates the content of their conversation during that interview: "elle avait à me parler sur des choses importantes (p. 178)." This assertion of control disturbs the young man's satisfaction in his power over the linguistic nature of his relationship. Later, his choice of words to describe this meeting confirm that his annoyance springs from Cécile's attempted usurpation of power. He says he is "importuné de l'entrevue que Cécile avait fixée (p. 179)."

The hero's despair at Cécile's news (parental disapproval of the relationship) revives his feeling for her not only because it presents an obstacle to their future but also because it places him once again in a position to
control language. Her father's prohibition of further contact with the narrator makes it clear to the young man that her aggressive assertion of control is temporary. Although there exists a hindrance to further communication, the ability and responsibility for continued such interaction rests with him, for Cécile cannot defy her family.

Some months later, the hero establishes a correspondence with Cécile and the relationship continues in this pattern.

J'écrivais toutefois à ma bonne Cécile qu'[e] . . . j'aimais tendrement et aussi longtemps que Cécile me répondait régulièrement, je ne laissai pas languir . . . cette correspondance dans laquelle je trouvais toujours du charme (p. 180).

This time the relationship falters due to Cécile's silence. Again, the hero's irritation with Cécile results from her apparent attempts to control language. The mere fact of her silence does not provoke negative emotions (as her earlier fixing of their appointment did), nor does it arouse counterattacks on her control of language. Cécile imposes this silence: "Cécile, tout à coup, cessa de m'écrire (p. 181)," but her doing so does not strike the narrator as attempted control, perhaps because of his knowledge of her family situation. However, when he learns more about her lack of response to his letters, these added details put Cécile's withdrawal from communication in a new light. Now, the heroine is "fort détachée de moi . . . n'ayant paru ni
triste de notre séparation ni impatiente de me revoir (p. 181)." Failure to continue writing to the narrator has become an outright refusal of communication with him. Not only does the young man interpret the circumstance differently, "[s]on silence venait à l'appui de ce que l'on me disait (p. 181)," but he has the desire to put an end to the silence: "[j]e voulus pourtant lui faire une visite (p. 181)."

This visit prompts another skirmish in regard to the control of linguistic exchange between the two partners. Cécile's refusal to receive him seems to the narrator a further signal of her desire to end their union, and the communication between them. As before, his emotions react violently to such efforts; in anger, he makes his own decision to effect a rupture: "je formai subitement la résolution de ne point renouer avec Cécile et d'éviter à tout prix de la rencontrer (p. 181)." Cécile's next action, a letter of regret and proposal of another visit, once again seems an assertion of power. The narrator opposes her wishes because to give in to them would be surrendering the mastery to the heroine. That situation continues throughout several notes over the course of a few days "[e]lle insista. Je continuai à refuser (p. 182)," and the narrator maintains his resolve to end the relationship. Only Cécile's departure and subsequent letter change this resolution. In the first part of the letter, Cécile submits to the narrator's
linguistic authority by explaining her lack of communication. "Elle expliquait le silence qui m'avait blessé (p. 182)." But she follows this explanation by playing a dominant role and announces her decision to end the relationship: "elle renonçait à toute relation et à toute correspondance ultérieur (p. 182)." The narrator's inability to permit Cécile to dictate the termination of further linguistic exchange, coupled with a perception of her willingness to submit such control to him (by proffering the explanation and by displaying emotion: "[u]ne sorte de tristesse qui régnait dans sa lettre [p. 182]), prompts him to seize the communicative power by renewing the correspondance.

Following this episode, the relationship by letter recommences and the narrator finds the peace and joy of domination. His proposed visit to Cécile in Hamburg, like their earlier plans for marriage, becomes a potential action whose significance he alone determines. He requests it: "[j]e lui proposai de me rendre à Hamburg, et j'en sollicitai la permission comme une faveur;" Cécile grants his request, but the hero chooses the time: "[j]e renvoyai d'un jour à l'autre (p. 182)." The correspondance between the two lovers lasts this time until the narrator meets Madame de Malbée.

In each of his succeeding periods of involvement with Cécile, the narrator continues to enjoy that relationship while remaining in control of their communication. When his affair with Madame de Malbée interrupts his first
relationship, he is content, but he works to re-establish their bond when he next hears news of Cécile. Although her letter initiates their renewed correspondence, the hero appropriates the power of communication. His first step toward that end is to go see her, thus controlling the circumstances of the couple's linguistic exchange and giving him the power of the first word in initiating their face-to-face exchange. When this effort fails due to Cécile's absence, the protagonist writes her a powerful letter. He fills the missive with emotion guaranteed to arouse Cécile's: "[j]euxprimai vivement ma connaissance ... me fit exagérer mes regrets (p. 187)." The narrator also insures continuation of the renewed relationship in two ways. He requests that Cécile recount the events of the years that separated the two: "la suppliant de me faire ... le triste plaisir de me raconter toute son histoire (p. 187)," not only an invitation to further correspondence but also another irresistible emotional plea. He also once again promises a face-to-face meeting: "je lui dis que je tâcherais d'aller la voir dès que je saurais où elle était fixée (p. 187)."
The two techniques have their desired effect: Cécile responds to the narrator's dictation of subject matter by sending an account of her history of the past few years and the correspondance continues throughout the next few months.

When the renewed communication by correspondence gives way to face-to-face interaction, the protagonist still
controls the couple's linguistic exchange. He initiates the renewal of their personal contact and continues to determine the frequency of their visits. "Je m'éloignais donc à dessein, j'allais à la campagne; je passais quelquefois des semaines entières sans la voir (p. 191)." Although the hero claims that his return to Paris results from Cécile's linguistic strength, "elle m'écrivait des lettres tellement tristes que je me laissais entraîner (p. 191)," he is responding to an expression of weakness. Cécile's unhappiness at not seeing the narrator reveals her dependence on him for communication; he is, after all, "le seul homme auquel elle pût confier ses peines (p. 191)." The hero's return to Paris after such letters reinforces his mastery over Cécile, not vice versa.

That mastery gains further reinforcement from M. de Saint-Elme's jealousy. During the early days of this episode, the envy of Cécile's husband permits the protagonist to display a skillful method of dealing with the man's "plaisanteries amères et lourdes" and "manières impolies." The narrator does not divulge his replies to such overtures but indicates that he gains esteem from the heroine for his "modération" and his seeming to "les supporter pour elle (p. 190)." Later, as the situation becomes more serious, the narrator expresses even more power by proffering advice: "[j]e lui donnai les meilleurs conseils du monde (p. 191)." The jealous husband's efforts to limit his wife's contact
with the narrator do not disturb the latter, because they do nothing to usurp his control over the couple's communication. They provide him with opportunity to use language in the superior position, offering advice, assurances, and consolation to Cécile.

As before, what brings an end to this renewed contact is Cécile's attempted assertion of power over the relationship. After an indefinite separation punctuated by letters, Cécile tries to exercise some control by re-establishing opportunities for face-to-face communication: "elle me demanda une entrevue (p. 192)." Also in this letter she indicates that her husband "avait remis son sort entre ses mains (p.192)." The narrator accepts this show of power, but worries about his response to what he expects as Cécile's next such display, that is, an offer of marriage. After more thought, he determines that the best way to deal with Cécile's insubordination is to accept it, but at the same time, define it as a potential, eventual action. "Accepter, c'était presque ne m'engager à rien, tant il y avait de chances que son projet échouât (p. 193)." This appropriation of the power of defining the couple's future has its usual effect of strengthening the narrator's hold on their communication as he and Cécile continue to see each other: "[n]os entrevues se multiplièrent (p. 193)" and then to write. In this correspondence, the young man can exert his force as he fills each letter with exhortation "à se
consulter bien elle-même (p. 194)," but he also reiterates the eventual nature of their wedding: ". . . l'idée d'épouser Cécile, et alors je lui écrivais dans ce sens (p. 194)." With the relationship back on this earlier footing, ideal to the narrator's desire to control language, he is able to forget it, as the letters stop coming.

The relationship with Cécile continues to unfold in this manner, with the narrator describing in detail the course of the couple's communication. He mentions each letter and conversation in order to show his control over the linguistic exchange. Although Cécile occasionally attempts to exercise power herself, the protagonist follows each such attempt with his own appropriation of authority.

In contrast with this detailed recital of every confrontation with Cécile, the narrator's report on his communication with Madame de Malbée consists of a summing up of their usual mode of exchange. The two engage in endless quarrels, broken only by their frequent separations. "[M]es relations avec Mme de Malbée étaient devenues plus orageuses (p. 188)." "Nos premières entrevues furent assez peu amicales (p. 189)." "J'étais à Rouen, suivant toujours Mme de Malbée . . . gâtant par des paroles amères et des reproches peu généreux (p. 195). . . ."

Only occasionally does the narrator give details as to the content or structure of these quarrels and thus expose his method of attempting to seize control over the couple's
communication. During the quarrel over the letter to Cécile, the narrator displays the type of dissimulation shown by Adolphe in his altercations with Ellénore. The protagonist decides to tell Mme de Malbée about Cécile, a move which he describes as a method to liberate himself "à la fois et d'une dissimulation qui m'était pénible et d'un joug de force (p. 198)." Although he remains ignorant of it, telling his current mistress about Cécile represents his greatest strength, because in so doing he conceals his dependence on Madame de Malbée. At the end of a long scene, fatigue and fear cause the protagonist to retreat from his earlier position: "je travaillais, à la fin de la dispute, à rejeter dans le vague ce que j'avais dit au commencement (p. 198)."

The narrator indicates that he finds his decision to speak of Cécile rather ambiguous:

Ce parti, que je pris comme une preuve de force, n'était peut-être qu'un effet de la faiblesse dont j'avais pris l'habitude et qui me rendait comme impossible de résister longtemps à Mme de Malbée (p. 198).

Just as he remains ignorant of his strength, he remains ignorant of the truth in this encounter. He considers his final comments a disguise of the truth, but the truth resides in his action of staying with this woman. His dissembling lies in his announcement of a desire to unite with Cécile.

In another quarrel the narrator's tactic consists of complete
acceptance of Madame de Malbée's claims on him. He suggests they marry to make the promise legally binding. This acquiescence proves very effective in strengthening his position. "Elle n'était ni préparée à cette résolution soudaine ni habituée à me voir prendre un ton décidé. Son courroux fut égal à son surprise (p. 206)." This quarrel ends in a mutual dissimulation of desire, as Madame de Malbée and the protagonist publicly announce their indifference to each other.

Because of the contrast between the methods of reporting on his relationships with the two women, it seems clear that the narrator enjoys a different degree of success in gaining control of language with each of them. His control over the exchange of communication with Cécile is obvious as he recounts every revolt of Cécile and his achievement in quelling it. Even though he chooses to detail strong moments with Madame de Malbée, the relative infrequency of such moments and the great number of unreported quarrels indicate that his methods for asserting control over communication in that relationship fail.

The outcome of the subject's quest to fulfill his desire for language control follows a somewhat similar pattern in Adolphe and Cécile. The first phase of Adolphe's final attainment of control consists of his renunciation of his desire. The protagonist of Cécile makes such a disavowal following his metaphysical discussions with his Pietist
friend. In resolving to resign himself to the will of the supreme being, the hero willingly surrenders his pursuit of his own wishes: "[j]e renonçai, de fait aussi bien que d'intention, à toute espèce de direction de ma destinée (p. 209)." The narrator's conversion is genuine, for it leads to relaxed relations with Madame de Malbée. He avoids all further quarrels over linguistic power. "Je restai chez elle ... sans entrer dans aucune explication sur mes projets (p. 210)." He even responds to his mistress's efforts to revive the conflict with silence. "Quelquefois Mme de Malbée ... commençait à parler sur notre avenir, pour voir ce que je lui répondrais. Je me renfermait alors dans le silence, ou je cherchais à éluder une conversation ... (p. 210)."

With Cécile, however, his relationship does not change, as he continues to exercise his communicative authority, and it is this circumstance which leads to the narrator's re-entry into the realm of mediated desire. In the first enthusiasm of renouncing Madame de Malbée as mediator, the protagonist assumes an even more absolute control over language with Cécile by identifying his words as having divine origin: "je lui écris une partie de ce qui s'était passé, me disant que ce que je ne lui écrivais pas était ce que Dieu ne voulait pas qui lui fût écrit (p. 210)." When Cécile's reaction, a timid attempt to assert her own power ("[j]e vis dans cette lettre de Cécile que je courais risque de la perdre [p. 211]") reaches him, the narrator makes an
impassioned plea for Cécile to prepare to join him. Cécile obeys by moving to Besançon and the hero must engage in a complicated manipulation of communication, both in terms of content ("[j]'écrivais à Cécile que j'allais la rejoindre incessament. Je lui demandai huit à dix jours pour des affaires de famille [p. 212]") and in material terms ("Je m'arrangeai de manière à ce que mes lettres et ses réponses parussent retardées [p. 212]").

These successful efforts enable the protagonist to continue in his renunciation of Madame de Malbée as mediator. However, after he makes a definite break with his tyrannical mistress, Cécile's last attempt to assume some control over her communication with her lover causes him to ignore his renunciation and involve himself again with his mediator. En route to Besançon to join Cécile, the narrator sees two women approaching whom he identifies as Cécile and her chambermaid. The trip on foot to meet the carriage represents Cécile's attempt to determine the circumstances and time of the long-awaited reunion. The narrator's displeasure at this first revolt then a following one, in which Cécile refuses to enter the carriage for her return to Besançon, causes him to be ready for a renewed influence of mediated desire. The mere mention of his mediator's name suffices to complete that renewal. "Ce nom prononcé dans cette circonstance ... redoubla mon déchirement intérieur (p. 215)." The narrator hastens to confirm Madame de Malbée's ascendance by writing
her "la lettre plus passionnée qu'elle eût jamais reçue de moi (p. 215)."

Presumably, like Adolphe, the hero of Cécile experiences another moment of conversion from triangular desire in order to be capable of writing his story, but he never undergoes a complete cure. Never does he appear as a man of solitude who avoids all but the most superficial contact with others so as not to embark on a path of desire by mediation. The narrator, like Adolphe, becomes involved in reliving the events of his life and renews the desire for language control. Although the narrative comes to an end in similar circumstances, Cécile's fatal illness and consequent loss of linguistic power, the narrator seems not to relish his victory. He recounts the illness, but does not transcribe any last words which convince him of his success, as Ellénore's letter does Adolphe. The figure of Madame de Malbée, because of her continued power over language, prevents the protagonist from realizing his goal. She disappears from the account, but still plays a role of mediator. The narrator's recital remains unfinished, leaving Cécile suspended between life and death and himself suspended between his partial power over language and his failure to achieve absolute power as represented by Madame de Malbée.

Although Cécile presents the same linguistic theme as Adolphe, it in no way recounts a happier view of such a relationship. Instead, the two affairs work together to
paint a dismal picture of the linguistic relationship between man and woman. In what he designates as an emotionally happy liaison, the protagonist's happiness rests on his ability to exercise power over the communication between himself and Cécile. Even possessing that modest amount of control does not ensure his interest in the relationship; only a threat to his power does that. In the affair with Madame de Malbée, who holds communicative mastery, the narrator knows very little happiness because of his desire to seize control from his partner. Neither situation leads to a happy outcome, for the narrator must both witness the end of his partial power and admit his failure to achieve absolute authority. Unable to do so, he suspends his narrative, leaving all three characters forever in linguistic limbo.

The hero of Corinne also finds himself unable to choose between two women, but there ends the similarity between this novel and Cécile. This novel also differs from Adolphe in its presentation of the theme of linguistic domination. Corinne contains many of the same elements, but these characteristics do not work together in the same way. Oswald's aspiration to control language remains secondary to his principal goal of the life of a typical English nobleman. The influence of the primary longing causes the heroine's unhappiness, but the secondary one affects the hero's relationships with Corinne and Lucile, alters their
linguistic development, and prevents him from happily reaching his primary object.

Oswald's great love for his father and guilt at being absent at his death cause him to wish to live his life according to his father's desires. The life envisioned by the older man comprises both public and private ambitions for his son; the latter designs prompt the most difficulty for the protagonist. For Oswald the public aspect of his future lies in an army career and the private in choosing a suitable wife and settling in the family home. Even this specific decision Oswald feels compelled to make under the influence of his father. The young man knows that his father wants Lucile Edgermond as his daughter-in-law: "il savait que l'intention de son père avait été de la lui donner pour femme, et il désirait y conformer."15 Although meeting Corinne leads him to reconsider Lucile, Oswald does not renounce his plan to choose the wife that his father would have wanted and, like any subject of external mediation, he proclaims his willing devotion to his mediator even to Corinne. "J'y jurai [à la tombe] ... que jamais je ne m'épouserai sans le consentement de mon père (pp. 332-333)."

Oswald's determination both to imitate his father's example

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and to pursue his father's goal causes him to falter in his constancy toward Corinne.

The direct effect of following his father's mediation arises late in the novel, when he encounters Lucile Edgermond. Although he has known of his father's intention concerning Lucile, he receives several reminders of it after his return to England. The mere sight of Lady Edgermond, Lucile, and the life they lead causes him to feel some emotion for the young woman of his father's choice: "il y avait pourtant un genre d'idées, un son musical, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, qui ne s'accordait qu'avec Lucile (p. 456)." The sight of his father's letter concerning Oswald's marriage to Lucile activates more strongly his willingness to let his father mediate his desires as it puts an end to his thoughts of marrying Corinne. "Au moment où Lord Nelvil avait su la volonté de son père, il s'était résolu à ne point épouser Corinne (p. 478)." Oswald receives one more confirmation of his mediator's desire when he sees the dedication his father wrote to Lucile. "À celle qui m'a consolé dans mes peines... à la femme qui fera la gloire et le bonheur de son époux (p. 495)." Reading these words, which recall to him at the same time his failure to his father and his emotion for Lucile, solidifies Oswald's resolve. Only a few days later, M. Dickson reveals that Oswald has said, "si j'étais libre, j'épouserais Lucile (p.
497)." The young man firmly desires what his father had wanted.

By contrast, Oswald's longing to love and be loved by Corinne originates in a more spontaneous and linear fashion. His first sight of her inspires him with feelings of friendship: "le premier regard fit de lord Nelvil son ami (p. 52)," which progress to admiration, being moved, fascination, and, finally, to love. The praises of the public and later of Prince Castel-Forte prepare him for the impact of Corinne on his emotions, but these influences do not work to mediate Oswald's desire. Corinne and her talents alone engender all of Oswald's affection for her.

Because of the strong influence of his mediator, Oswald abandons the object of his own spontaneous desire in order to attain that of triangular desire. However, during the time in which his spontaneous desire dominates, the protagonist discovers a secondary aspiration, that is, the wish to hold power over language. This desire does not motivate his involvement with or his hesitation about Corinne; instead it results from the happy relationship with the heroine. Despite the absence of this yearning in influencing Oswald's decision to abandon his loved one, his desire for linguistic mastery wreaks the same terrible effects on Corinne as Adolphe's did on Ellénore: she experiences a loss of linguistic strength which ends only when she unites with Lucile, but which suffices to kill her.
Oswald's relationship to language is problematic even before he meets Corinne. His linguistic ability determines the way in which he approaches his plan to fulfill his father's desires concerning his public life. Oswald has two choices, to pursue a governmental career: "[i]l y a dans mon pays la plus belle carrière civile pour les hommes éloquents (p. 305)," or a military one. Lord Nelvil opts for the latter because of his incomplete hold on language: "j'avais, j'ai même encore, une si grande timidité, qu'il m'eût été très pénible de parler en public (p. 305)." Even before a smaller audience Oswald experiences difficulty, as evidenced by his relationship with the Comte d'Erfeuil. The young Englishman begins his association with his travelling companion with regret and also with shyness: "sa timidité souffrait de se trouver tout à coup dans une relation habituelle avec un homme qu'il ne connaissait pas (p. 34)." This timidity gives way to discomfort after their acquaintance develops; Oswald never feels comfortable with the Frenchman's use of language.

Lord Nelvil's admitted limitations in communication contribute to his admiration for and fascination with Corinne. At first it is her appearance which attracts the young man, making him feel not only friendship for her, but preparing him for deeper feelings. "Ce beau ciel, ces Romains si enthousiastes et par-dessus tout Corinne, électrisant l'imagination d'Oswald (p. 52)." Soon, however,
the idea of her talent inspires him even more, first in terms of the novelty of celebrating such gifts: "c'était pour la première fois qu'il était témoin des honneurs rendus à une femme illustrée seulement par les dons du génie (p. 53)." Corinne's improvisation moves Oswald to sadness and delight; her few words of English further propel his feelings to the contemplation of love. "On a souvent dans le coeur je ne sais quelle image innée de ce qu'on aime qui pourrait persuader qu'on reconnaît l'objet que l'on voit pour la première fois (p. 69)."

The importance of language to both characters becomes apparent in the progression of their relationship from friendship to love. Each new phase of that development occurs on a linguistic as well as emotional level. The second part of Corinne's improvisation, that which delights Oswald, results from the heroine's successful interpretation of the protagonist's circumstances and her subsequent wish to speak to his grief: "elle se sentit le besoin de le satisfaire (p. 65)." By her letter to the Comte d'Erfeuil, in which she mentions Lord Nelvil's name first, Corinne betrays her interest in the Englishman. Her questions about Oswald and her tone of voice in a later conversation with the Frenchman convince him that his travelling companion is loved by Corinne. Oswald increases Corinne's respect for him by his manner of speaking which differs from what Corinne is used to: "Lord Nelvil joignait à ces qualités une noblesse
dans les expressions . . . qui fais[ait] contraste avec la
négligence et la familiarité de la plupart des grands
signeurs romains (p. 89)." Greater intimacy between the two
characters results from a letter which Corinne sends to
Oswald (p. 92-93), and the love is confirmed when the two
begin to consider themselves a couple, again a linguistic
change as well as emotional: "ils commençaient à dire
'nous' (p. 107)."

While their love and communication develop and deepen,
Oswald's desire to control language awakens. In his
relationship with Corinne, this aspiration remains an effect
of Oswald's first desire for a life such as his father wants
for his son, because Corinne's linguistic mastery contrasts
with that of an Englishwoman. "Il n'y avait certainement
rien de plus contraire aux habitudes et aux opinions d'un
Anglais que cette grande publicité donnée à la destinée d'une
femme (p. 49)." Oswald's first attempt at control, seemingly
harmless, is his request that Corinne speak English: "Oswald
. . . se plaignait avec douceur de ce qu'elle ne lui parlait
pas en anglais (p. 73)." Speaking English, however,
represents a renunciation of Corinne's identity, as she
indicates in her response: "[j]e suis Italienne (p. 73)."
Oswald gradually becomes aware that Corinne's existence not
only as an Italian but also as an eloquent woman contradicts
his father's wishes for him, and he seeks further to stifle
her gift of language: "il eût voulu que Corinne, timide et
réservée comme une Anglaise possédât cependant pour lui seul son éloquence et son génie (p. 192)." For the same reason, Oswald wishes to exercise power over Corinne's religious language, for that communication is not accessible to him: "il se rappela que Corinne professait un culte différent du sien, et qu'il ne pouvaient prier ensemble (p. 25)."

As the couple's love grows, Oswald begins to view Corinne's communicative mastery as an obstacle to their love, and he displays more openly his wish to control her use of language. The contrast between his own limitations and Corinne's talent prompt his worry: "de quelque avantage qu'il fût doué, [il] ne croyait pas l'égaler, et cette idée lui inspirait des craintes sur la durée de leur affection mutuelle (p. 193)." In his efforts, however, he begins by attacking not Corinne's linguistic power, but her fame, a result of that power. Oswald begins by asking his loved one if she would abandon her renown for him. "Vous ne me sacrifieriez donc pas ... ces hommages, cette gloire (p. 145)." Later, his words take a more menacing tone. "Il ne faut pas, madame, vous arracher à de tels succès, ils valent l'amour, puisqu'ils font ainsi palper votre coeur (p. 247)." Eventually Oswald more clearly expresses his wish to control language: "que ton génie se taise et que ton coeur soit tout à moi (p. 430)," but he also comes to accept his inability to limit that power and its results: "il n'était plus jaloux de la gloire de Corinne (p. 432)." He even
willingly renounces his previous efforts and places himself in submission to Corinne's linguistic authority: "[p]arle . . . fais-moi donc entendre le son de ta voix; je n'ai plus qu'elle pour me soutenir. Je veux me laisser guider par elle (p. )."

This moment of Oswald's linguistic subjection to Corinne represents also the moment of his most extreme involvement in his own spontaneous desire. Upon his return to England, the young man begins to feel the influence of his father's mediation and withdraws from Corinne and turns to Lucile. Yet, the linguistic desires awakened by his relationship with Corinne continue to affect the young man, playing a role in the development of his affection for Lucile and hampering the chances for a happy marriage.

Just as Lucile contrasts with Corinne in both looks and character, the attraction she holds for Oswald contrasts with that of her half-sister. Corinne wins Oswald's love by her communicative gifts, while Lucile gains his affection by her visual charms. Oswald finds himself captivated by the sight of Lucile, especially her face: "cette figure vraiment angélique (p. 450);" "la figure ravissante de Lucile (p. 451);" "un visage aussi charmant . . . semblait l'image de la pitié divine (p. 455)." Her manner also contributes to the charm: "lord Nelvil resta frappé de cet air imposant et modeste (p. 450);" "Oswald était profondément ému par cette réserve, par cette contrainte (p. 453)." The protagonist
wishes to remain faithful to Corinne: "il aurait désiré que l'éclat du génie de Corinne fit disparaître cette image légère qui prenait successivement toutes les formes à ses yeux (p. 457)," but the different types of attraction render impossible such a goal. Corinne's quality resides on a linguistic level and such memories lose their immediacy, especially when confronted with a strictly visual image, such as that of Lucile.

Despite the visual nature of his primary attraction, Oswald neglects the linguistic aspect of love for only a short time. Lucile's almost continuous silence reinforces her visual attraction, but also arouses within him a new kind of communicative appeal. At first the protagonist equates the power of Lucile's silence and her sister's eloquence.

Il faut . . . ou le génie de Corinne qui dépasse tout ce que l'imagination peut désirer, ou ces voiles mystérieux du silence et de la modestie, qui permettent à chaque homme de supposer les vertus et les sentiments qu'il souhaite (p. 453).

Oswald's English upbringing engenders this attitude which he manifests even in his interaction with his male friends: "il retrouva le plaisir de faire des découvertes dans les coeurs qui se révèlent par degrés aux regards observateurs (p. 445)." Lucile's few words to him permit Oswald to recognize her sweetness: "ces paroles insignifiantes étaient prononcées avec une douceur enchanteresse (p. 453)." They
also confirm for him Lucile's angelic quality. "Lord Nelvil tressaillit à ces mots dits en secret. C'est ainsi qu'une parole sensible aurait pu lui être adressée par cette figure angélique (p. 454)." In her remarks about her sister, Lucile discloses yet another quality to Lord Nelvil: "ce mot, je la regretterai toujours, lui parut révéler un aimable caractère . . . (p. 457)." The young girl's silence concerning her sentiments for Oswald and for his father also favorably impresses the young man. "Il crut voir dans ce silence la délicatesse la plus rare . . . (p. 495)." Finally the silence leads to love; Oswald loves Lucile, but it is a love based on ignorance: "il aimait Lucile presque sans la connaître, car il ne lui avait pas entendu prononcer vingt parles (p. 494), and on his continuing assumption that Lucile's silence signifies the presence of great quality: "il se disait qu'un extérieur froid et réservé cachait souvent les sentiments les plus profonds (p. 494)."

This attitude represents an even greater tendency to control language within the couple than Oswald's attacks on Corinne's gifts. Oswald takes upon himself the task of interpreting Lucile's silence: "supposer les vertus et les sentiments qu'il souhaite (p. 453)," of breaking that silence: "il faut enfin pénétrer dans son âme et savoir que l'on sent (p. 462)," and of interpreting those small bits of communication which do come forth. Oswald also feels compelled to judge Lucile's few contributions to
conversation: "lord Nelvil aimait et approuvait chacune de ses paroles (p. 532)."

However, the memory of Corinne arouses in Oswald the longing for a new type of language control as he attempts to force Lucile to engage in further communication. Even before his marriage the protagonist begins to doubt the charm of a woman's silence: "comme cette situation ne variait pas, il commençait un peu à s'en fatiguer (p. 498)." His disillusionment receives further stimulation from his knowledge of Corinne's trip to England. Now Oswald no longer interprets silence as a sign of profound sentiments, but as signifying a lack of emotion: "comparant sa douleur silencieuse avec les éloquents regrets de Corinne . . . il n'hésita pas à croire que Lucile l'aimait faiblement (p. 539)." The young man attempts to dictate to Lucile her attitude toward language: "son époux voulait lui donner quelques conseils sur le charme qu'elle aurait pu répandre dans la conversation en y mettant plus d'intérêt (p. 543)."

Besides his desire for linguistic control, Oswald also resembles Adolphe in his use of distortion of language during his relationship with both Corinne and Lucile. However, his perversion of language differs from Adolphe's by its source, form and command message. While Adolphe seeks to conceal the object of his internally mediated desire from his mediator by feigning indifference to her, Oswald engages only in distortion by silencing the sentiments which move him. With
Corinne he often suppresses two emotions: his love for her and his uncertainty concerning his father's approval of her. However, Oswald breaks his silence to remind Corinne of his desire to follow his father's wishes and he gradually comes to confess his love and plan for a future together. In addition, Oswald is not alone in his distortion of communicaton regarding these two subjects. Corinne also engages in disguising her thoughts of them, either by silence or by substitution: "tous les deux cherchèrent à ne pas parler de leur affection mutuelle (p. 127);" "elle craignait toujours, en prolongeant l'entretien sur le sentiment qui seul l'occupait, d'exciter Oswald à déclarer ses projets . . . souvent même elle dirigeait à dessein son attention vers les objets extérieurs (pp. 132-133)."

Only when it takes a written form is Oswald's silence harmful. His letters from England to Corinne contain no mention of his troubled emotions concerning his father's wishes and therefore do not succeed in expressing his emotions: "ses lettres devinrent moins tendres; car, au lieu d'exprimer ses propres inquiétudes, il s'occupait à dissiper celles de son amie (p. 471)."

In his relationship with Lucile Oswald also silences certain emotions, specifically his memories of and sentiments for Corinne. This concealment begins as soon as he hears of Corinne's trip to Scotland: "malgré ses efforts de . . . cacher [l'affliction qu'il ressentait], il était impossible ."
. . . que Lucile même ne s'aperçût combien il était malheureux
. . . et leur intérieur était très silencieux (p. 537)."

Once again, however, Oswald has a partner in his silence:
Lucile, who participates even more actively than he in the
linguistic corruption. Once she learns of Oswald's past
relationship to Corinne she begins to use language to conceal
her sentiments. His sadness before the departure for
America causes his wife to become even more silent: "le
morne silence qu'il avait gardé avec elle . . . avait . . .
redoublé sa timidité naturelle (p. 538)."

During her husband's absence, Lucile deliberately stops short of
completely expressing her emotions: "ses lettres à lord
Nelvil étaient bien moins sensibles que le fond de son coeur
(p. 540)."

Lucile's determination not to reveal her
knowledge of her husband's past serves to perpetuate the
conspiracy of silence, with the effect that the two
constantly "se blessaient réciproquement, parce qu'ils ne
s'avouaient pas leurs sentiments avec franchise (p. 545)."

Oswald's distortion of communication by silence and
substitution does not present a harmful message of
disconfirmation. In his spoken communication with Corinne,
his silence often signifies acceptance of Corinne's
evaluation of the relationship. When he cannot utter
promises of love or his fears of his father's disapproval, he
does so out of fear of commitment to that relationship. The
heroine recognizes this fear and wilingly participates in
distortion because of her understanding. Oswald's letters, on the other hand, do not transmit acceptance: "ses lettres exprimaient de l'irritation, sans en dire la cause (p. 473)."

Corinne interprets the irritation as rejection: "qu'il me dise que c'est lui qui peut déchirer ainsi sans pitié celle dont la moindre peine affligeait jadis si vivement son coeur (p. 474)." Rejection is also the message contained in his communication with Lucile; behind every exchange the young matron sees Oswald's sentiments for Corinne: "elle croyait voir dans ces conseils un souvenir de Corinne (p. 543);" "elle pensait que Corinne ... était l'unique cause [de l'enthousiasme de lord Nelvil] (p. 543);" "Lucile ... reconnaissait dans l'intérêt plus vif que lord Nelvil mettait à ses propres discours, le retentissement de son affection pour Corinne (p. 544)." Oswald never seeks to discofirm by his communication, but sends messages of acceptance or rejection.

Despite his avoidance of discofirmation, Oswald's distortion of language and his interest in exercising linguistic power result in a weakening of Corinne's linguistic strength, but once again the heroine shares responsibility for this effect. From the moment that she sees him, Corinne manifests a willingness to submit both emotionally and linguistically to the young man. Witnessing his emotion following the first part of her improvisation, Corinne tailors the second portion of her address to him. As
the relationship develops, her emotional attachment increases her dependence on Oswald: "elle se sentait plus subjuguée par son amour (p. 145)." Finally, she willingly places herself in a subserviant position to Oswald, "lui que je préfère à l'indépendante destinée qui m'a fait passer des jours si heureux (p. 410)" and announces herself to be his slave. "Fais ce que tu voudras de moi, enchaîne-moi comme une esclave à ta destinée (p. 413)." A linguistic weakness accompanies this emotional one. The heroine experiences an unusual constraint in Oswald's presence: "Corinne se tut quelques moments, n'osant pas essayer de lui parler (p. 127)." The famous poet of improvisation fails in an attempt to improvise because of her desire to please Oswald and his fellow Englishman, M. Edgermond. "Corinne, uniquement occupée de l'effet qu'elle produisait sur lui, perdait toujours la présence d'esprit nécessaire pour le talent d'improviser (p. 172)." Gradually she seeks the protagonist's approval before any public display of her talent (p. 191), and later will be dependent on him for inspiration for her use of language. After her failed improvisation, Oswald enables her to demonstrate her conversational skills: "pour l'engager à parler, il amena la conversation sur la littérature italienne, et provoqua sa vivacité naturelle (p. 173)." Corinne does not hesitate to admit to Oswald the role he plays in prompting her use of
language: "si je montre quelque talent, ne sera-ce pas mon sentiment pour vous qui me l'inspirera? (p. 193)"

Once Oswald leaves Italy, Corinne's linguistic deterioration accelerates. Her sole experience with words now depends strictly on him. She loses her ability to engage in one form of communicative activity: "la lecture lui était devenue impossible (p. 474)." All such activity now revolves around Oswald and his letters: "elle n'avait d'autre événement [sic], d'autre variété dans sa vie que les lettres d'Oswald (p. 470)." Upon arriving in England, even her power to exchange language with Oswald fails her as Corinne tries in vain to inform him of her presence there. She is at first uncertain as to what the content of her communication should be: "ne sachant point . . . comment elle ferait connaître à lord Nelvil son arrivée, et ce qu'elle lui dirait pour le motiver (p. 483)," Later, the mere act of writing daunts her: "chaque matin elle hésitait si elle écrirait à lord Nelvil pour lui apprendre où elle était (p. 487)." Finally resolved to write, she fails to express eloquently her emotions and, after several false starts, abandons the project altogether.

The effort to restore communication with Lord Nelvil saps Corinne's physical strength and her power over language decreases still more. She rallies occasionally, as evidenced by her successful direction of M. Dickson's conversation to the subject of Oswald and by her writing to Prince Castel-
Forte upon her return to Italy. Generally, however, the heroine's linguistic talents weaken on all levels: conversation, reading, and writing. With Prince Castel-Forte Corinne tries to enjoy her usual conversation but fails: elle était un peu honteuse de ne pouvoir plus répandre dans la conversation le charme qu'elle y mettait autrefois (p. 526)." She also tries to express her emotions in writing, but discovers a similar deterioration: "Corinne . . . voulut composer comme elle le faisait jadis; mais une distraction invincible l'arrêtait à chaque page . . . chaque mot lui coûtait à trouver (p. 519)."

Although Corinne's death completes the decline and regression into silence, the heroine summons extra strength which enables her to perpetuate her talents by passing them to others. In the public area of language, Corinne composes a final poem meant to provide a suitable finale to her life's work. "Corinne . . . souhaitait de laisser à l'Italie, et surtout à lord Nelvil, un dernier adieu qui rappelât le temps où son génie brillait dans tout son éclat (p. 579)." Her illness and unhappiness cause her to withdraw from society so that no one even knows where she is: ". . . on la croyait à Florence, mais qu'on ne savait rien d'elle, depuis qu'elle ne voyait personne et n'écrivait plus (p. 554)." By her public presentation of that composition, Corinne puts an end to the Italian public's ignorance of her circumstances. Corinne ensures the endurance of her fame, as a multitude fills the
hall for the recital. Her written words and her reputation survive the silence of her death.

Corinne also combats her eternal silence by perpetuating her gifts for conversation and foreign language. She revives her communicative ability enough to educate the women in Oswald's family. Juliette learns not only music from her aunt, but also Italian. Her skill at speaking the language and her manner of pronunciation emphasize her resemblance to Corinne, heretofore obvious only in physical traits. Lucile receives instruction in the art of social discussion, to which she applies herself with the goal of making herself as much as possible like "la personne qu'Oswald avait le plus aimée (p. 579)." In these two females, Corinne's power over the intimate use of language lives long after her own exercise of that power fades. She falls silent at death, but her last efforts insure that her voice does not.

Corinne's final silence is not like Ellénore's, because her death neither entirely stills her voice nor allows another to appropriate it completely. Her fate, although similarly unhappy, cannot be compared to that of Adolphe's mistress. The motivation for Corinne's decline also differs from that for Ellénore's. Although Oswald engages in some distortion of language, in doing so he does not conceal his desire for a life worthy of his father's approval. The guiding force of his father also prompts Oswald's longing to reduce Corinne's linguistic power within the relationship.
His linguistic desire is not for absolute control, so it inflicts less harm than Adolphe's aspiration. The linguistic elements present in Corinne make possible a comparison between it and Adolphe, but the former novel in no way duplicates the theme of desire for communicative mastery presented in the latter.

La muse du département also fails to duplicate the theme of Adolphe even while containing certain similar characteristics. Mediated desire plays a role in Lousteau's desire for Dinah, and the characters experience an evolution in their hold over linguistic power. However, Lousteau's motivation for his involvement with Dinah results from external mediation, not internal and he stays with her despite his lack of love for strictly material reasons. Dinah achieves a greater control over language while in the relationship, but this achievement remains secondary to her love.

The first element common to La muse du département and Adolphe is the initial appearance of triangular desire. In the later novel, the young lover, Etienne Lousteau, begins his pursuit of Dinah as a result of external mediation. While visiting the young woman's home, he meets her two older admirers, M. de Clagny and M. Gravier. Learning that the two men have contented themselves with a platonic relationship, Lousteau decides to attain the object of their desires. The two men become mediators for the journalist, as he wants what
they want. "Si . . . Dinah est vertueuse, elle vaut bien la peine que je cueille le fruit de son premier amour."16 This wish remains a purely external one and also stays strictly on the physical level. Because of this lack of evolution, Etienne does not, when disillusioned by achieving the object of his aspiration, turn to another mediator. He continues to desire the outward signs of social success, following the example of others with whom he associates (Nathan, Bixiou). His yearning for Dinah is just another facet of that life.

Although Lousteau's externally mediated desire contains no linguistic aspect, like Adolphe, he does use language as a weapon in his conquest of Dinah. The skillful use of words which brought him fame as a Parisian journalist gives him an advantage from the outset, for it plays a role in Madame de La Baudrayer's feelings toward him. Even before his arrival in Sancerre, she considers the possibility of a romantic adventure with Lousteau: "elle voulut le connaître, elle lut ses ouvrages et se passionna pour lui, moins peut-être à cause de son talent qu'à cause de ses succès auprès des femmes (p. 224)." As the two move closer to a love relationship, Lousteau's linguistic talents outweigh his amorous reputation, as he wins Dinah's love by those efforts. Although at the beginning of his seduction of the young woman

Etienne refers to the affairs in his past, his doing so permits the couple the intimacy of discussing love. Dinah must respond to this reference in order to live up to her own role as a woman of intelligence: "[a]ussi pour ne pas mentir à son renom de femme supérieure, madame de La Baudraye essaya-t-elle de consoler [Etienne] (p. 237)." Having achieved this intimacy Lousteau relies only on his linguistic power to impress his chosen partner. The first step in that progression is to speak to her of Paris: "les anecdotes curieuses sur les grands hommes du jour, les traits d'esprit . . .; mots et faits vulgaires à Paris (p. 237)." Lousteau also manages in his conversation to flatter Dinah which works in his favor. "Lousteau dit beaucoup de mal de la grande célébrité féminine du Berry, mais dans l'évidente intention de flatter madame de La Baudraye (p. 237)." His communicative skills thus displayed lead him to gain some reward of affection: "madame de La Baudraye . . . parut . . . plus affectueuse que la veille avec Etienne (p. 237)."

Even M. de La Baudraye, so tolerant of his wife's admirers that he permits their continual attendance on his wife, notices a difference in Dinah's attitude toward Lousteau.

Le petit La Baudraye avait surpris dans les yeux de Dinah, quand elle regardait le journaliste . . . cette rapide et lumineuse tendresse qui dore le regard d'une femme à l'heure où la prudence cesse (p. 244).
After this first success, and encouraged by Blanchon, Lousteau becomes even bolder with his approach. At the first opportunity afforded him by a private moment with Dinah, Etienne breaks the silence with a declaration: "[s]avez-vous combien je vous aime? (p. 247)" This time his boldness, coupled with his imprudent wrinkling of her dress, offends Dinah. Lousteau tones down his impetuosity, but continues a verbal assault on the hesitation of Madame de La Baudraye. His first weapon in this attack is his dramatic use of words: "[l]e journaliste prit alors un ton caressant (p. 248)."

Later the words themselves become more powerful, not only in their ability to express passionate sentiment, but also in their power to deceive part of the audience: "il y eut un moment où l'improvisaton de ce serpent devient si spirituelle sous l'effort qu'il fit pour singer la passion par des phrases et par des idées dont le sens, caché pour Gatien, éclatait dans le coeur de Dinah (p. 248)." His expression finds its reward, first in Dinah's consenting to look at him, then to laugh at his conversation and finally in her pardoning him (p. 248).

By virtue of his verbal skill, Lousteau succeeds in convincing Madame de La Baudraye of his love for her and she reciprocates his emotion. The two then enjoy a period of mutual love which, as in the relationship of Adolphe and Ellénore, consists of an equal exchange of communication, both
in terms of access to words and the subject of their conversations. Dinah demonstrates her own linguistic talents in her love talk to Lousteau. "Lousteau fut sensible à une flatterie qui chez presque toutes les femmes est une comédie' mais qui chez Dinah fut vraie (p. 249)." At the same time the journalist exerts himself to use the best material in his romantic "répertoire de récitatifs, de cantilènes, de nocturnes, de motifs (p. 249)." Their joy in this linguistic exchange, according to the narrator, confirms their love. Even when faced with their separation the two find pleasure in the communicative aspect of their relationship: "combien de promesses échangées! combien de pactes solennels exigés par Dinah et conclus sans difficultés par l'imprudent journaliste (p. 250)!

Despite Lousteau's communicative strength in winning Dinah, his words exercise no power over his own emotions. Indeed, language to him has no relationship whatever to feeling, and like life, occupies the material rather than the metaphysical realm. Despite his success as a journalist, Etienne finds no magical creative power in language. For him words are work and writing consists of concrete activity: he "labourait sillon à sillon, ou si vous voulez, ligne à ligne, une nouvelle pour une Revue (p. 259)." This devaluation of writing from creative act to labor strips his language from expressing his thoughts or emotions. Rather it expresses the content necessary to gain the object, money. In this
literary life, this attitude permits Lousteau to write "un article dans le sens légitimiste et un article dans le sens dynastique sur un même événement (p. 261)." In his romantic life with Dinah, Lousteau is able to express whatever sentiments he finds necessary to satisfy her emotional needs and his own physical desires.

Lousteau's materialistic attitude toward language reveals that to him language is a means rather than an end. For this reason, the second phase of his relationship with Dinah does not consist of the unbreakable bond of an internally mediated triangular desire. Instead, the young man aspires to the life of success, and this longing guides him in his conduct of the affair. When he is unhappy with his mistress, that discontent results from his conflicting wish to stay with Madame de La Baudraye in order to enjoy her eventual wealth and his unwillingness to defer the pleasures of his life. These two goals stand in opposition only in temporal terms, not in terms of essence, for they are virtually the same.

Although the relationship does not result from a desire by internal mediation, it does present many of the same characteristics of such a bond. The most apparent aspect of this type of relationship is Etienne's habit of dissembling. Like Adolphe, the journalist claims to want to end his relationship, but continually proffers expressions of emotion which work to maintain the affair. Lousteau's deceit,
however, differs from Adolphe's in several areas. First, it causes him little or no mental anguish like that suffered by Adolphe. Although the narrator describes the protagonist as a man "habitué à ne rien dissimuler (p. 264)" who is affected by his deceit: "]fatigué de jouer depuis environ trois ans une comédie qui ne devient jamais une habitude (p. 264)," in reality Lousteau's duplicity follows his attitude toward language. Language to him is a product exchanged for a reward and he uses all of his language in the second phase of the relationship in order to maintain the status quo. The letters he writes after returning to Paris contain no truth of sentiment: "au lieu de répondre avec son coeur, il fit de l'esprit (p. 251)." Nevertheless, they do not disillusion Dinah in her first romance. When Madame de la Baudraye comes to Paris to live with Etienne, he uses his words to join the two lovers. His "plaisir qui débordait si bien en paroles et en caresses (p. 255)" dispels Dinah's fears after her lover's original reception of her. His oath of love till death "embelli de ses plus séduisantes chatteries (p. 257)" convinces her to stay rather than sacrifice herself for Lousteau's marriage. Later, when the harsh reality of caring for a household threatens Lousteau's constancy even enough for the heroine to fear ruin, the journalist responds to his mistress's ministrations with further deception: "il fut donc impossible à Lousteau de ne pas lui continuer les charmants tromperies de sa passion feinte (p. 262)." Even at
the end of their liaison, the protagonist obeys his compulsion to display a desire to stay with Dinah: "Lousteau jouait la tristesse, il voulait paraître sec et froid (p. 269)." Never does he feel remorse for his dissimulation.

Lousteau's hypocrisy also deviates from the pattern set by Adolphe in that his use of it does not evolve according to the state of his desire. He never strays from the course that he has set out for himself. His first declarations of love were false because of his intent to "singer la passion (p. 248)." His love in Paris is equally false: [i]l décida de rejouer l'amour avec une admirable perfection (p. 257);" "deux êtres unis par un amour, si vrai d'une part et si bien joué de l'autre (p. 260)." Motivated by his desire for a carefree life in society, Lousteau does not have to dissemble in order to hide an internally mediated desire, so he does not engage in following expressions of his indifference to his relationship with assurances of love and fidelity. He can continually feign love to keep Dinah happy.

The most striking difference between Lousteau's dissembling and Adolphe's is that Etienne does not have to hide his hypocrisy from himself, his friends or even Dinah. Bianchon, Bixiou, and even his former mistress Madame Schontz are all aware of his true sentiments. He publicly announces his wish to be rid of Madame de La Baudraye: "combien j'aimerais l'ami qui me délivrerait de Dinah (p. 265)!" Even Dinah herself knows the truth. After the birth of her first
child she is aware of the forces that threaten her happiness: "Dinah prévit dans la vie extérieure où Lousteau se laissait engager, une cause de ruine et pour son amour et pour le ménage (p. 262)." Having promised Lousteau that she will assume responsibility for the financial support of the household, she is aware of Lousteau's infidelity which follows. When M. de Clagny announces to her "vous êtes trompée," she replies "je le sais (p. 265)." Later she explains to her mother that she will do whatever necessary to save her love. Even while uttering this intention, she knows that it signals a change in her love: "son amour . . . allait être un travail au lieu d'être un plaisir (p. 266)." Even more than Ellénore, Dinah knows that Lousteau's use of language cannot be trusted.

Besides the male distortion of language, the couple resemble Adolphe and Ellénore in their formation of a master slave union, with each partner always aware of his role. From the outset Etienne manifests an intention to dominate his mistress: "Lousteau, qui voulait tenir Dinah dans sa dépendance, la maintint dans une ivresse continuelle à coup de fêtes (p. 257)." His efforts take place on the material level as he introduces his mistress to the social life of the capital. First he leads her to modify her appearance: "il . . . lui montra des jeunes femmes alors à la mode en les lui recommandant comme des modèles à suivre (p. 257)." The journalist also initiates his mistress into the spectacles
that comprise his life: "[la] musique aux Italiens . . . ,
les répertoires de tous les théâtres, leurs acteurs, les
journaux et les plaisanteries du moment (p. 257)."
Lousteau's most ambitious effort in his campaign to dominate
consists of his plan to make the two lovers' lives dependent
on their faithful relationship by their suicide/murder pact.
In his plan, each partner would write a suicide letter, thus
premising the other to murder him or her in case of
infidelity.

Dinah, for her part, willingly assumes the slave role
proposed by her lover. Once she learns of the necessary
sacrifices to maintain Etienne's life, she makes them,
selling her jewels and assuming domestic duties. In this way
she becomes a slave to his physical needs. "Dinah . . .
avait soin de prévenir les goûts de son cher Etienne, qui se
sentit le roi du logis où tout, jusqu'à l'enfant, fut
subordonné . . . à son égoïsme (p. 262)." Dinah's willing
submission causes her downward progression from humanity
toward animality as evidenced in her later relationship. Like
a pet, she responds to the slightest signs of affection. "Un
regard de Lousteau, sa main posée sur celle de Dinah la
rendaient tout obéissance (p. 265)." The loss of personality
does not stop at the animal level, however. Eventually
Madame de La Baudraye loses all sense of herself because of
her love: "elle était si bien fondu en lui qu'elle perdait
la conscience de son moi (p. 265)."
Concentrating solely on Lousteau's point of view reveals very few similarities to *Adolphe*. He begins the relationship from a triangular desire, engages in distortion of language, and achieves a master-slave relationship with Dinah. Yet all of these acts occur on a material level and do not transform the relationship into a metaphysical struggle. Etienne's disillusionment with the affair also takes place on a material level. The couple's poverty and its effects on Dinah's appearance prompt the journalist to change his attitude toward her. At first her love for him enhances Lousteau's reputation: "il éprouvait une jouissance de parvenu à se parer de la première femme comme il faut qui l'honorait de son amour (p. 260)." When Dinah sacrifices her appearance for the household's comfort, she no longer possesses the same charm: "le noir de la toilette déteignait sur lui, rembrunissait sa physionomie, et le rendait parfois brutal (p. 263)." The couple's continued poverty and M. de La Baudraye's excellent health further destroy Lousteau's confidence in the relationship (p. 264).

In contrast, Dinah does display an attitude toward language similar to Adolphe's and this attitude and her desire of non-spontaneous origin affect the relationship. Balzac gives a clue to Dinah's role in his expression of a desire to write a work which shows the feminine side of *Adolphe*. Even more telling is Lousteau's accusation to Dinah: "[v]ous jouez en ce moment à la fois les deux personnages [Adolphe et
Ellénore] (p. 269)." Etienne is speaking of the moment of the break-up, but his observation holds true for the whole novel. Dinah suffers as victim of the relationship, but she also follows Adolphe's pattern of a growing interest in language as a result of her liaison.

Dinah is not an exact replica of Adolphe, for she does not demonstrate the desire to find a substitute for divinity. Although her attitude toward God is flexible enough to permit her to convert from calvinism to catholicism "uniquement par ambition (p. 212)," she does hold at least a nominal belief in the existence of a supreme being. After the end of her affair she embraces a sedate, pious life, which again results from ambition: "dans la vie des femmes à la mode, elle voulut avoir du succès et elle en obtint (p. 271)." However, she is successful in convincing her mother and other pious women of her sincerity, for they accept and condone her life. Even in her relationship with Lousteau, Dinah retains some notion of her role as an earthly and not a divine one; she informs M. de Clagny that she wants her love to form "un vaste désert plein de Dieu, de lui, et de moi (p. 259)." Her affair with Lousteau does not originate from a need to try, with the aid of a mediator, to achieve the divinity of self.

Nevertheless, Dinah's love for Etienne does not consist of a pure, spontaneous, linear desire but follows a somewhat triangular pattern. Her dissatisfaction with her marriage
gives the first indication of her motivation. From the first
days of married life she has a plan to manipulate her
husband: "elle avait obéi pour commander (p. 218)." Her
goal is "l'espoir de débuter un jour sur le grand théâtre de
Paris (p. 218)." Her relationship with her admirers also
contains this ambition. When contemplating a declaration of
a preference for one of the men of her circle, she considers
each one's prospects for success. M. de Chargeboeuf pleases
her by "la personne et les manières (p. 219)," but has the
disadvantage of only minor goals for his life: "une ambition
bornée à une préfecture et à un bon mariage (p. 219)." M. de
Clagny, despite the fact that he is "le seul dont l'esprit
parlât à celui de Dinah" fails to please because his
"ambition avait l'amour pour principe (p. 219)." Madame de
La Baudraye also follows her ambition when she begins her
involvement with Etienne; impressed with his reputation, both
personal and literary, she wishes to know the man. That
aspiration prompts her arrangement of a pretext for his return
to Sancerre, in order that she might make an acquaintance
which will "ennoblir sa faute de tout l'éclat de la gloire
(p. 224)."

Although Dinah's desire for Etienne results from her
ambition, such a desire is not one by mediation. She does not
seek fame because Lousteau wants or possesses it, but rather
wants a relationship with Etienne because he possesses
celebrity. Her yearning also loses its impurity as Dinah
truly comes to love Lousteau. At first, she hesitates between the journalist and Bianchon "ces deux Parisiens entre lesquels elle voulait choisir un vainqueur (p. 225)," because it is a means to glory rather than a lover which she is seeking. During her growing acquaintance with the two men, she makes her decision for Lousteau. Once the journalist begins his masterful courtship of her, she falls in love with him: "elle apprenait de lui l'amour, il était bien le premier dans ce coeur (p. 249)." This love endures throughout the relationship.

In itself, Dinah's desire for fame appears to follow the material tendency already evident in Lousteau, but this materialism weakens in light of her attitude toward language and the significant role it plays in the heroine's life and relationship. Unlike Etienne, Dinah considers words more than a product or a medium of exchange for money. For her, language encourages the maintenance and growth of intellect. All forms of language contribute to this goal, including reading: "Dinah lut tout, jusqu'à des livres de médecine, de statistique, de science, de jurisprudence (p. 215)."

Similarly, the spoken word has the same potential effect of "entretenir son intelligence au niveau du mouvement parisien (p. 214)." Both the form and the content of conversation must work toward the desired effect, so Dinah exerts herself to keep her discussions free from "ni propos vides, ni galanterie arriérée, ni phrases sans valeur (p. 214)." She
also regulates the topic, directing her guests to speak of
"des découvertes dans la science ou dans les arts, des
œuvres fraîchement écloses au théâtre, en poésie (p. 214)."

Like Adolphe, Dinah becomes aware of the potential to
create her reputation by her use of language. The results
are mixed; the women of Sancerre feel "une véritable aversion
(p. 214)" to her intellect and linguistic ability, while the
men affirm her position as a superior woman because of her
communicative skills: "vous êtes au fait de tout ce qui
s'écrit, vous aimez la poésie . . . vous avez une
conversation ravissante (pp. 214-215)." Despite the feminine
opinion concerning Madame de La Baudraye and despite her
occasional tendency to ridiculous excesses in her
conversation (her amassing of "une fort belle collection de
phrases et d'idées [p. 215];" her adoption of "les idées . .
. le son de voix . . . [et] les manières masculines [p. 220]
of M. de Clagny and her other admirers), Dinah displays, like
Elléenore, considerable power over words. Her extensive and
varied reading confirms her power over that aspect of
language. In speaking, she possesses the capacity to "parler
sur toute chose avec la lucidité d'un style étudié (p. 215)."
The heroine also exercises power over the conversation of
others; she has control over communication in her marriage and
in her society. Her husband, preferring a life of action,
makes no claim on that power: "il lui laissait la parole . .
. [quand sa femme entamait la question . . . il . . .
s'évadait sans bruit (p. 215)." In her circle of friends, Dinah carefully regulates the form and content of discussion in order to render it more intellectual. Furthermore, by her command of spoken language, Dinah is able to transform Lousteau's opinion of her, both during his stay in Sancerre and during her life in Paris.

Dinah extends her mastery over language to include writing when she composes and publishes her poem "Péquita la Sévillane." Her literary venture does little to increase her personal fame, for she writes under a pseudonym, but she does enjoy the success of Jan Diaz. More importantly, her writing career shows another aspect of her attitude toward language. Words become not only a means of intellectual stimulation, but also a vehicle for expressing sentiment. The abbé Duret advises her to write in order to "convertir ses mauvaises pensées en poésie (p. 220)," and after having written Dinah realizes that her work expresses her emotions too clearly. "Dinah frémit de honte à l'idée d'avoir exploité quelques-unes de ses douleurs (p. 222)." This view of language contrasts starkly with Lousteau's, who writes strictly in view of his market. Although her lover's attitude amuses Dinah: "madame de La Baudraye souriait en voyant faire à Lousteau un article dans le sens légitimiste et un article dans le sens dynastique sur un même événement (p. 261)," she does not adopt this attitude herself because she knows it weakens one's linguistic power. "Elle vit Lousteau
travaillant . . . et lâchant, comme disent les peintres d'une oeuvre où manque le faire (p. 261)."

Dinah's view of language does not equal that of Adolphe in terms of the almost magical power it has to wound or deceive others, to intensify emotions, or to alter reality. Instead, words exercise their power over others in a material way by creating a reputation and on the self by stimulating the intellect and expressing feelings. This attitude is far enough removed from that of Lousteau to make language control more than a means, but an end worthy of being a goal. Mastering language will influence Dinah's relationship with Etienne, although not to the same extent that it does that of Adolphe and Ellénore. Dinah never wavers in her love for the journalist and never views him as a mediator for a desire for further communicative power. However, such an increase in power results from the relationship as Dinah gains linguistic strength because of her affair with Lousteau.

This result contrasts with the materialistic goal of Lousteau, who wants first the physical relationship with Madame de La Baudraye then the future financial rewards of such a relationship. His efforts to make Dinah dependent on him lead him to work a physical transformation on the young woman, but the effects of his actions go beyond the superficial aspect of dress and appearance. Dinah also achieves a superiority in the realm of language.
Dinah fut d'ailleurs supérieure à la plus charmante lorrette: elle pouvait être amusante, dire des mots comme Malaga; mais son instruction, les habitudes de son esprit, ses immense lectures lui permettaient de généraliser son esprit; tandis que les Schontz et les Florine n'exercent le leur que sur un terrain très circonscrit (p. 258).

Lousteau's education transforms Dinah even in his eyes. She no longer strikes him as a ridiculous provincial figure as he recognizes her maturation on the intellectual and linguistic as well as physical level. Dinah now contains "l'étoffe d'une Ninon et de Staël (p. 258)."

Dinah's linguistic development continues to the point that she takes over Lousteau's career. The first step in this progression is her ability to judge her lover's talent: "Dinah . . . eut bientôt jugé littérairement son idole (p. 261)." As events confirm her judgment, the heroine participates more actively in Etienne's literary life, first by helping provide content: "elle lui trouva des sujets, elle lui en dessina les canevas . . . , elle lui donna ses idées et ses jugements (p. 263)." Later she will provide both material and form by writing Lousteau's work herself: "... au besoin, elle lui écrivit des chapitres entiers . . . Enfin, elle fit deux livres qui eurent du succès (p. 263)." This early literary activity remains hidden from the public, but eventually Dinah openly becomes a writer. In the final phase of their relationship she assumes the sole
support of the household both with the income from her
inheritance and by her writing: "nous avons dix mille francs
de rente, et nous gagnerons bien ... huit mille francs par
an ... je ferai du théâtre (p. 265)!

Although Dinah continues to love Lousteau throughout the
development of her linguistic power, that love does undergo
an evolution related to her position of communicative
mastery. Before assuming an active role in Etienne's career,
Dinah aspires to help him by her domestic and emotional
support. She takes over the chores of running the household
in an economical manner so that her lover might live in his
accustomed style. Even this materialistic idea, though,
contains a germ of Dinah's metaphysical and linguistic
ideals, which M. de Clagny perceives: "[i]l devina que
Didine voulait se faire le bon génie du journalistes, le mettre
dans une noble voie (p. 260)." With her later accurate
judgment of Lousteau's literary abilities, Madame de La
Baudraye's love needs bolstering: "mais elle le justifiait
en se disant:--C'est un poète!tant elle avait besoin de se
justifier à ses propres yeux (p. 261)." This want of
reassurance disappears, however, when she participates in
Lousteau's writing. Such activity deepens her affection for
her lover: "plus elle donna, plus madame de La Baudraye aimait
Lousteau (p. 263)." Once she begins writing publicly, the
heroine's love again changes, from a source of pleasure to an
occasion for work.
Dinah's linguistic development is accompanied by a weakening in Lousteau's literary activity. From sporadic output at the beginning to accepting his mistress's help, Etienne degenerates into a total abandonment of writing when Dinah begins to support him openly. Although the heroine professes constant confidence in his talent: "c'est un poète . . . . Son talent périrait dans la misère (p. 266), the journalist does not return to his career even after he gains his independence from Dinah. He finds no material for articles or stories in his life. "Le flâneur avait déjà cherché des idées et d'articles et des sujets de nouvelles pendant tout un mois . . . (p. 271)." Finally he senses the extent of his weakness: "il se sentait incapable de recommencer des tours de forces littéraires (p. 271)." This extreme decline prompts his return to Dinah to solicit financial help. Even in requesting permission to see her Lousteau cannot rely solely on his command over language: he encloses his note in a cachet which Dinah had had engraved with the word "parce que".

Although Dinah's concurrent development of linguistic ability and Etienne's weakening in that sphere resemble the outcome of Adolphe's relationship with Ellèneore, Dinah's continued love demonstrates that, unlike Adolphe, she does not stay with her lover simply to attain such a result. However, like Adolphe, she renounces the desire for continued progress toward mastery. Her disavowal takes the form of a
final break with Etienne. In her new society she no longer employs her linguistic strength, but chooses instead a silent role: "elle ne disait pas deux mots (p. 270)." Despite her silence, she displays evidence of her abilities by her attitude toward her interlocutors: "elle écoutait avec une si profonde attention qu'ils s'en allaient convaincus de sa supériorité. Dinah vainquait à Paris par le silence . . . (p. 270)." Dinah remains true to her renunciation of linguistic power as she returns to Sancerre and resumes her place in that society. Unlike Adolphe, she does not confirm her possession of mastery by writing her story, but she does apparently retreat into a similar silence. Although the inhabitants of the provincial town speculate on her choice of a future favorite, her disappearance from the narrative suggests her transformation into a silent, passive stranger.

Balzac's novel succeeds in presenting a feminine side to the linguistic conflict which comprises the story of Adolphe, but examining Lousteau does not reveal such an element. Despite his entrance into love by external mediation and his constant dissimulation, Etienne does not fill the role of Adolphe in the conflict because of his concentration on the physical and material aspects of the relationship, life, and language. Dinah is the character with metaphysical longings as displayed by her attitude toward language and her progress toward mastery over words. Nevertheless, she does not become an identical twin of Adolphe because she does not separate
her linguistic adventures from her love. The impure motivation of the triangular desire disappears, but its fatal effects remain.

Indeed, the main element of similarity among Adolphe, Cécile, Corinne, and La muse du département is this unhappy outcome. Oswald and Lousteau do not transform the women they love to a mediator for desire as Adolphe and the narrator of Cécile do. But the mere involvement in a relationship causes the woman's relationship to language to change. Although the change is not necessarily one for the worse, as Dinah shows, the end of each of the women is silence.
CONCLUSION

Adolphe's enigmatic quality results from the apparent contradiction between the words, feelings and actions of the protagonist. The first-person narrator further complicates the mystery by intruding with comments on what he feels as he writes and with interpretations of his past actions. Despite its contribution to the confusion, the first-person narration provides the key to unlocking the enigma, for it reveals the fundamental concerns and motivations of the protagonist.

Because of the unreliability of a first-person narrator, the critic must not base any interpretation of the narrative solely on the events portrayed in the account. The only trustworthy aspect of the story is the fact of recounting. In Adolphe the extra-textual elements of the "Avis de l'éditeur," the "Lettre," and the "Réponse" confirm some of the actions in the narrative. An acquaintance of the couple assures the editor that the relationshp did exist and that the death of Ellénore did occur. The editor himself provides testimony that the protagonist becomes a silent individual whose manner suggests his having survived a great ordeal.

Adolphe's contribution to the body of evidence available to the critic consists of the choice of incidents (not the incidents themselves) and the words which comprise the text.

Both of these elements reveal that Adolphe's main preoccupation centers around language and communication. His
presentation of the affair makes of it a long series of communicative exchanges, punctuated by an occasional action, change of habitation, or death. Concentrating on these linguistic events causes him to choose linguistic vocabulary so that words related to speaking or writing outnumber those describing other actions. By his emphasis on communication Adolphe discloses that to him the importance of the affair with Ellénore resides in its opportunity for use of language. Further investigation uncovers the power attributed to language, as the narrator describes the effect of words on himself and on others. The stimulation of emotions, the alteration of reality, and serious harm result from the characters' use of language.

The relationship's existence and Adolphe's fascination with language are fact, and all of the narrator's story must prove to be consistent with those facts. Any reported thoughts, words, or actions which contradict the established evidence must be discounted. Following this body of evidence permits a reasonable interpretation of the facts. The narrating Adolphe fills his account with descriptions of his various desires: to be loved, to win Ellénore's love, to leave Ellénore, to protect his mistress from pain, to have a successful career and worthy family. Yet, despite his wishes, by his own admission, he accomplishes only the first two goals, which are one in reality. The facts support the existence of these first two wishes: Adolphe becomes
involved with Ellénore and she loves him. However, no evidence argues for the reality of the other desires, for the protagonist neither leaves Ellénore nor does he spare her unhappiness. The motivation for Adolphe's actions does not appear in the narrator's presentation of his aspirations.

Adolphe's feeling of fascination with language does not contradict his actions; furthermore, this feeling can be trusted because it follows from the act of narrating, rather than forming part of the narration. This linguistic fascination remains constant through all phases of the affair. The concurrence of this interest and Adolphe's liaison with Ellénore indicates that the affair must relate to his linguistic desire. In turn, that relationship permits explanation of Adolphe's behavior toward Ellénore through the application of the theory of triangular desire formulated by René Girard.

Girard's theory of the influence of a mediator on a desiring subject finds its most obvious application in Adolphe's initial romantic experience. The young man exhibits no tendency to seek love until he witnesses his acquaintance's happiness in his romance. That joy prompts Adolphe to aspire to possess the same object and leads him to emulate his friend, thus forming an example of desire by external mediation. Linguistic fascination also appears in the wish, for Adolphe proclaims his interest in the spectacle of fulfilled love.
This first mediated longing does much to explain Adolphe's behavior. The increase in his desire caused by encounters with obstacles and the disillusionment at attaining the object of his wishes both result logically from the fact of mediation. The mere existence of this aspiration further indicates that Adolphe has a tendency to such a yearning and so permits the examination of the relationship in terms of a triangular desire.

Adolphe's relationship to Ellénore, one of subject to mediator, must, by its nature, be stormy. Girard describes the inextricable pull of such a bond, the tendency to form a master-slave union, and the dissimulation necessary to maintain the link. All of these elements manifest themselves in the life of Adolphe and Ellénore. Each character considers himself enslaved to the other, Ellénore by her affection and Adolphe by the sacrifices of his partner. The protagonist cannot bring himself to sever the tie to his mediator, despite his professed wish to do so. He attempts to conceal his desire for the continuation of the union by dissembling, professing indifference to Ellénore until she admits her dependence on him by her tears and silence. Then Adolphe proclaims his love in order to insure the endurance of the relationship. The narrator further complicates the dissimulation by expressing shame at his hypocrisy. While the words of love may represent hypocrisy, they do contain
one element of truth in their expression of a wish to stay involved with Ellénore.

The influence of the mediated desire leads to a veritable war over language control and each discussion between the two partners becomes a battle in that war. The couple's behavior during their conversation reveals their choice of weapons in the conflict. Ellénore most often resorts to the silent treatment, while Adolphe distorts language to conceal his desire. Both partners' efforts result in corrupting their communication to the extent that it becomes abnormal. The abnormality appears in two areas: the symmetrical or complementary nature of exchange and the presentation of a message of disconfirmation of the interlocutor's appraisal of self and the relationship. For the most part, the couple's communicative exchanges follow a symmetrical pattern. Each partner responds to the other's remarks in a similar fashion; for example, accusation follows accusation. In several confrontations Ellénore's tears put an end to the symmetrical acceleration and prompt a symmetrically emotional display by Adolphe which ends the discussion. Ellénore's tears and silence affect Adolphe strongly not only because of their revelation of her desire but also due to the disconfirming message they present. Adolphe hastens to fill th silence in order to affirm his existence and heal the breach with his mediator. At the same time, Adolphe presents his own disconfirming message to
Ellénore by his expressions of indifference. These usually take the form of advice to postpone action and so cary no firm acceptance or rejection of Ellénore's evaluation of the relationship. The constant alternation of this disconfirmation with the apparently accepting messages contained in Adolphe's reassurances of love leave her unable to decipher either with confidence.

Such abnormal use of language slowly works to destroy Ellénore's hold on communicative power of any kind. She loses her speaking ability both in society and in the intimacy of her relationship with Adolphe. Even the protagonist's renunciation of his desire does not stop the heroine's decline. She eventually renounces all but physical contact with Adolphe, all language but her prayers, and withdraws into the eternal silence of death.

Adolphe, after his short-lived renunciation of his mediator, re-enters the realm of triangular desire and re-discovers his fascination with linguistic power. Sometime after Ellénore's death he undergoes a second conversion from longing by mediation and his able to write his narrative, but even this change does not endure. While telling the story he becomes more and more involved with it and cuts it off at the moment he realizes that the act of recounting gives him the power he has been seeking.

The story of Adolphe has been compared to that of several other novels in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries, among them Cécile, also by Constant, Corinne by Madame de Staël, and La Muse du département by Balzac. The presence of Adolphe's linguistic theme in these works indicates the validity of both the earlier comparisons and the communicative theme. Cécile presents an almost exact duplicate of the theme, with the exception that the two relationships in this work present different aspects of the desire for linguistic mastery. The narrator successfully controls communication with Cécile, but the relatinoship still suffers from his hesitation to commit fully to it. The other woman in the narrator's life, Madame de Malbée, serves as mediator for the desire for language control. The narrator despairs at his inability to end the lisaison, but stays involved in order to seize control. He fails at this task, and the result is the incomplete text of the story, which leaves Cécile suspended between life and death and the narrator between the two women. Corinne differs from Adolphe in its presentation of a man whose devotion to his external mediator, his father, prohibits a happy outcome to his relationship with the heroine. Oswald does manifest a slight desire for control of language, but this is secondary to his first aspiration. Corinne suffers a fate similar to Ellénore's, but is able to ensure the continued existence of her voice through Lucile and Juliette. Teh different nature of the desire to control language renders it less harmful than Adolphe's, but its existence does affect the couple's
fate. In Balzac's work, the longing for language control exists in the heroine and not in the man. The protagonist, Lousteau, views language merely as a material object in financial exchange: writing brings him money. His mistress, Dinah, however, considers words a means of expression of her emotions and thus valuable in themselves. During their affair she increases her hold over linguistic power, while Lousteau's decreases. Yet Dinah's feelings for language never become the object of an obsessive mediated desire as they do for Adolphe. Seeing her lover's power of communication diminish, she renounces her own talent and her love at the same time and withdraws into silence.

The theme of desire for linguistic control presents a new explanation not only of *Adolphe*, but also of the other novels compared to it. In turn, the presence of the communicative theme in all the novels suggests that the problem of linguistic control may be universal. The relationship of an individual to language seems to exert its effect over interpersonal relationships as well. In turn, the linguistic relationship between individuals can influence their emotional union. For the women of these novels, love and language seem to be inextricably intertwined, so that communicative development or decline results from their relationships. Although some women develop greater linguistic power when in love, the possibility of loss of such power seems more prevalent. The result of their
involvement with men deprives the heroines of their control
over even the spoken word, traditionally considered the main
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