

Protecting Catholic Boys and Forming Catholic Men at the Collège Stanislas in

Restoration Paris

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In 1804, a few years after the Concordat eased tensions between France and the Catholic Church, Claude Rosalie Liautard opened a Parisian school for boys in which “religion, natural basis of all public and private virtues” would also underpin the curriculum. By February 1805 Liautard was declaring himself overwhelmed with success in the form of forty-five pupils, and the fall of the Empire meant that the beginning of the 1816 school year saw 350 pupils in the *pension* Liautard, rue Notre Dame des Champs. Under the Restoration the school was renamed the Collège Stanislas, and it became one of the most successful Catholic schools in Paris.¹

Liautard was both an opponent and a product of the Revolution. His parentage is uncertain; he appears to have been illegitimate, possibly the child of influential parents since he was raised in Versailles on the margins of court life in the last years of the ancien régime. Educated at the Collège Saint-Barbe and then at Polytechnique among its first pupils, he was well placed to take advantage of revolutionary change. He refused to swear his hatred of royalty at Polytechnique and left the school, shortly afterward entering the newly reopened seminary of Saint Sulpice in 1802. When he opened his own school, Liautard, still a few weeks away from ordination, was about thirty, and in a position to exploit any loopholes that the Empire might offer devout Catholics.

The headmaster Liautard was at the older end of a generation of Catholics who, without having been actively involved in the revolutionary dismantling of the ancien régime Church, found themselves faced with the question of how to be Catholic in post-revolutionary France. Although Liautard, like many priests of the early nineteenth century, frequently invoked the ancien régime, his goal was to establish a new model for Catholic instruction. Education, Liautard believed, was particularly important to the project of rechristianizing France because it was an area where revolutionary principles had established deep institutional roots in the form of

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¹ Georges Sauvé, *Le Collège Stanislas. Deux siècles d'éducation* (Paris, 1994).

the Napoleonic University. At Stanislas, Liautard took on the University, the revolutionary bastion that “prevent[ed] the healing of wounds to the social body.”²

Families, Liautard believed, especially families that wanted to raise devout sons, were the victims of the University’s ambitious grasp on French schoolboys. Recently, scholars have turned their attention to the family and the Revolution, looking both at representations of family and political power and at the legal reorganization of the family with the consequent redistribution of power among its members.³ Liautard was aware of both and disapproved of both in equal measure. If we understand the Revolution as a “struggle ... over the moral economy of the family,”⁴ then it is imperative to consider the counter-Revolution in similar terms. Men like Liautard understood themselves as restoring order to an institution ordained by God but perverted by the revolutionaries’ destructive impulses. Stanislas was a necessary first step toward the creation of a nation composed of Christian families based on principles of hierarchy, deference and affection.

Although Liautard maintained that his goal at the Collège Stanislas was to remove education from the clutches of the State and return it to fathers, his attitude toward the family was ultimately ambivalent. He believed that, at its foundation, the Revolution had been an attack on the family, and he complained that the Restoration was insufficiently zealous in its efforts to reverse revolutionary damage. Liautard’s essays on the University insisted that there could be no true restoration of French social order until education was returned to the authority of fathers and the wisdom of the Church. On the other hand, in his daily management of school affairs, Liautard demonstrated a mistrust of actual families. Real fathers often failed to measure up to the ideal of paternal authority, and Liautard firmly believed that boys belonged in the “paternal” atmosphere of his school rather than the paternal atmosphere of their fathers’ homes. Finally, Liautard’s pedagogical style often departed from the paternal altogether. The headmaster’s rapport with his pupils derived from a language of fraternity, in particular, from a romantic notion of intensively cultivated friendship. Affection and trust, nurtured in the secluded, protected setting of the boarding school, was the foundation of an education that prepared boys to be both independent young men and obedient Catholics.

Liautard takes on the University

Liautard wrote obsessively about the University, both under the Empire and, especially, during the Restoration. His files are full of texts in which he, often under the alias of Andronicus, “headmaster ruined by University statutes,” rails against the educational bureaucracy. Many of these pieces are cast as dialogues with well-meaning fathers or with young men striving, against the odds, to get a good education. Liautard wrote these dialogues in the voices of fathers and sons because he believed that the University’s greatest fault was to ignore paternal authority and thus to teach

² Archives du Collège Stanislas [hereafter ACS], “Réponse du Correspondant” 102 ter II 3-4. On the foundation of the University, see Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s* (New York, 1994), chap. 7.

³ See especially Lynn A. Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992); and the recent work of Suzanne Desan, including “‘War Between Brothers and Sisters:’ Inheritance Law and Gender Politics in Revolutionary France,” *French Historical Studies* 20.4 (1997), 597-634; and “Qu’est-ce qui fait un père? Illégitimité et paternité de l’an II au Code Civil,” *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales* 57.4 (2002), 935-64.

⁴ Desan, “War Between Brothers,” 632.

students to disregard filial obligation. Even with his independent school, Liautard could not escape the University. Under the Empire, students in independent schools were required to attend classes at a *lycée impérial*, dressed in uniform with only the buttons indicating the name of their school. With very bad grace, Liautard sent as few of his pupils as he could get away with, grumbling that the order made every private *pension* look like a military camp.⁵ When the Empire fell apart, Liautard was confident that the University—“shameless daughter of irreligion, despotism, and tax policy, who will never be the daughter of our kings”⁶—was on its way out. He thus felt truly betrayed when the restored Bourbon monarchy adopted this bastard child and maintained the structures of Napoleonic education. In particular, he raged against the renewed requirement that boys from his school attend classes at state institutions.⁷

Liautard connected the University on the one hand to the Revolutionary reorganization of the family and, on the other, to the Napoleonic military machine. The bureaucratic apparatus of the University broke down the natural ties of affection and obedience that united fathers and sons and taught boys abstract notions of patriotic duty in their place. One fictional father who appears in a Liautard dialogue, “Jean Chardin,” recounts his own education and his efforts to educate his son against the backdrop of Revolution. Chardin, an elderly gentleman, had a good start in life, enrolling, like his own father before him, in a Jesuit school.⁸ The young Chardin even followed the Jesuits to Russia when they were expelled from France. His mother recalled him, however, and enrolled him at Louis le Grand, where he shared a school bench with Robespierre and Desmoulins. Clearly, Mme Chardin was the wrong person to have charge of a boy’s education, being occupied with running through her fortune in directing a salon. A resilient young man, Chardin himself became a teacher, and it was from this vantage point that he witnessed the Revolution and its generation of young men “thrown into the path of every error, accustomed to seeing every crime, to whom a thousand echoes whispered that bad is good and good is bad!”

The Chardin family story in the post-revolutionary period becomes a melodrama in which the Napoleonic University threatens the life and happiness of Jean’s son, “Xavier.” In a boarding school under the Empire, Xavier was nearly killed when undisciplined Bonapartist students decided to punish him for his royalism. Surviving that experience to reach young adulthood and be enrolled at the law faculty in Lyon, Xavier, in tears, approached his father.⁹ He admitted that he had not attended class for over a month: hardly anyone went, he explained, sometimes not even the professor. In his next appearance, Xavier was pale and agitated, weeping again, and Jean Chardin feared that his son had “abandoned his honor.” Xavier’s honor was intact, but the spectacle of his fellow students’ vice had bruised his spirit. In particular, his cousin “Adraste” had become a gambler and attempted suicide; when Xavier and his father visited, Adraste was ripping off his bandages and refusing medical attention. Within a few days Adraste and his grief-stricken mother were sharing the same tomb. Xavier provided the moral of this melodramatic tale: “These schools are perdition! Oh Father, two thousand young men, in the turbulence of

⁵ Copy of the order with Liautard’s marginal comments. ACS 102 ter II-3-9, 13 Aug. 1812. See also the draft letter from Liautard to Olivier, ACS 102 ter II-2-6, n.d., in which the headmaster explains that he stopped sending pupils to the *lycée Napoléon* in the waning days of the Empire.

⁶ “Extrait d’une lettre de Strasb. a M.A.,” ACS 102 ter II-2-6, 9 Dec. 1814.

⁷ Draft letter from Liautard, ACS 102-I-6-1, 28 Jan. [1824?].

⁸ “Jean Chardin au rédacteur de la Quotidienne,” ACS 102 ter II-3-4, 1828.

⁹ “Explication entre Jean Chardin et son fils Xavier au sujet des cours de facultés,” ACS 102 ter II-3-4, 1828.

adolescence with its violent passions, stacked up in Paris! No authority imposes itself, no surveillance holds them back; they have no family for shelter, no friends, no acquaintances ... from whom to ask advice. ... How can one struggle with oneself, against the most heart-breaking sloth?" Jean Chardin and Xavier did their best to fulfill the natural obligations of fathers and sons—guidance, love and wisdom on the one hand, obedience, respect and devotion on the other. These were difficult roles to play, however, when the State persisted in denigrating the father-son relationship.

The University that drove Xavier to tears and Liautard to distraction was the product of the systematizing and centralizing spirit of a general or a tax collector instead of the caring sensibility of a father or a true educator. Liautard's fundamental complaint about the University was that it set military discipline in place of family affection. The revolutionaries' confidence that they had attained perfection led them to "toss all their institutions into the same mold,"¹⁰ and, once Bonaparte came to power, that mold was military. The *lycées* were like "academic barracks,"¹¹ and their logic was fiscal, not pedagogical: under Napoléon "the monopoly of education was added to that of coffee and sugar."¹² Depressingly, Liautard saw little difference in the public schools of the Restoration. In one 1828 dialogue, Andronicus slipped into a *collège royal*—not difficult, because the teachers there were more or less interchangeable, and no one knew anyone else. He observed the pupils: "bleak, expressionless faces, identical postures ... they could have been Prussian soldiers drilled by the father of Frederick the Great." He wondered "if Sparta had come to Paris, if these youth had French blood in their veins, if they were really at that carefree stage of life when the days pass ... without worries over the future."¹³ Liautard concluded that no matter how many different institutions the Ministry of Public Instruction created, there was no concealing the fact that they were all essentially the same: "the same mania for generalization, for making everything derive from a single principle."¹⁴

In particular, Liautard despised the system of competitive examination: the *lycée* sacrificed nine-tenths of its pupils in order to train a handful of prize-winners. Some pupils came out as "skillful writers of essays, Latin and Greek machines" while most stultified in their mediocrity.¹⁵ Not all pupils could excel academically, but when *concours* set the agenda, average students would be "sacrificed to the glory of the school."¹⁶ Fathers would never abandon sons with merely ordinary intelligence, but public schoolmasters "limit[ed] themselves to calculating the pupil's chances of success, setting aside the rest." Students who misbehaved might even be let off the hook because of their academic talents.¹⁷ The official justification for requiring Stanislas boys to traipse across town to attend classes at a *lycée* or *collège royal* was that they needed "emulation"—that without exposure to the talents of the public schoolboys, their education would lack the competitive spirit.¹⁸ Liautard rejected the

¹⁰ "Considérations sur l'université," ACS 102 ter II-3-1, 13 Feb. 1816.

¹¹ "Etude de M Liautard sur l'Université," ACS 102 ter II-3-2, n.d. [after 1822].

¹² "Considérations sur l'université," ACS 102 ter II-3-1, 13 Feb. 1816.

¹³ "Elèves de l'université," ACS 102 ter II-3-4.

¹⁴ "Considérations sur l'université," ACS 102 ter II-3-1, 13 Feb. 1816.

¹⁵ "Etude de M Liautard sur l'Université," ACS 102 ter II-3-2, n.d. [after 1822].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7. On emulation and education, see Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford, 1999), chap. 1; Alan Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton, 1987); Paul Seeley, "Virile Pursuits: Youth, Religion, and Bourgeois Family Politics in Lyon on the Eve of the French Third Republic," (Ph.D. diss., University

emulation system as an “outdated method,”¹⁹ but he also believed that emulation was merely an excuse to drive private schools out of business, particularly since the University refused to allow him to hold prize-giving ceremonies—a staple of the emulation system—in his own school.²⁰

It was no wonder, Liautard claimed, that the eight- or nine-tenths of the State’s pupils left entirely to their own devices learned nothing but “discontent and rebellion.”²¹ Most schoolmasters were mere flunkies, paid a pittance to keep an eye on the ordinary boys that the school had no real intention of educating. Even though these were not the brightest students, they knew perfectly well they could get away with going to sleep in class and with insults and mocking language.²² Liautard relished accounts of the schoolroom riots and mini-revolutions that occurred periodically during the Restoration.²³ It was outrageous, he protested, that his boys should have to attend lessons at Louis-le-Grand, the school that was “so famous for its revolts and for its sinister principles.”²⁴ Liautard’s alter ego, Andronicus, declared himself unsurprised that the public institution to which he was forced to send pupils was “undergoing a siege ... that the beds, the tables and the benches have become offensive and defensive weapons, that the schoolmasters have only escaped death by precipitous flight.”²⁵ According to Andronicus, schoolboy revolutions were simply neglected boys’ revenge on authority, not political statements; the sons of political conservatives were often more active than the sons of liberals.²⁶ The University had to understand, Andronicus said, that youth who were “deaf to divine hymns ... were already consumed by the science of dissimulation, by the tactics of conspiracy.”²⁷

Napoleonic education, Liautard claimed, was like a disease-ridden family: “fathers infected with a scrofulous virus transmitting it to their children, and degenerate families passing down no heritage but the most shameful diseases.”²⁸ Bourbon kings failed to realize that their schools had been marked by the “double leprosy of Jacobinism and impiety;” only total destruction of the University, not merely reform, could effect a cure.²⁹ The transformation of a revolutionary society of individualized citizens into a Christian society of families had necessarily to pass through schools. The Collège Stanislas, with its instruction grounded in the affection

of Michigan, 1995); Jean-Claude Caron, *Génération romantiques. Les étudiants de Paris et le Quartier Latin, 1814-1851* (Paris, 1991).

¹⁹ “Elèves de l’université,” ACS 102 ter II-3-4

²⁰ In towns with a *lycée* or a *collège royal*, prize ceremonies in private *pensions* were illegal. “Commission de l’Instruction publique: extrait du registre du Jugement de la commission,” 20 Nov. 1819. The ceremony at Stanislas was especially egregious because it included a student play satirizing mutual teaching, a method especially associated with “emulation.” ACS 102 ter II-2-6 and “Histoire d’Andronicus” in ACS 102 ter II-3-4. Liautard also complained that the *concours* were unfair to pupils from Catholic schools because the exams were in the hands of teachers trained under the Convention, Directory or Empire who bore a grudge against private pupils. Liautard to the Grand Master of the University, ACS 102 ter II-2-6, 6 Nov. 1822.

²¹ “Etude de M Liautard sur l’Université,” ACS 102 ter II-3-2.

²² ACS 102 ter II-3-3. See also “Professeurs des collèges royaux,” ACS ter II-3-4, 1828.

²³ Agnès Thiercé, “Révoltes de lycéens, révoltes d’adolescents,” *Histoire de l’éducation* 89 (2001): 59-93. Although focusing on students in higher, rather than secondary education, Jean Claude Caron’s *Génération romantiques* offers a useful account of political ferment among the Parisian *jeunesse des écoles*.

²⁴ “Etude de M. Liautard sur l’Université,” 6.

²⁵ “Elèves de l’Université,” 102 ter II-3-4, 1828.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Considérations sur l’université,” ACS 102 ter II-3-1, 13 Feb. 1816.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and deference due to paternal authority in the Catholic family, was the model that Bourbon kings should adopt.

The Collège Stanislas: what kind of father did boys really need?

In place of the University's competitive logic and military discipline, Liautard proposed schools with a "gentle and paternal regime" where "the headmaster's strictness would be tempered by that indulgence to which children are accustomed at their mother's breast."³⁰ Only a system that respected paternal authority would, in turn, induce boys to respect paternal and also political authority. Given Liautard's insistence that the Napoleonic system had taken the father out of a child's education, Stanislas—a Parisian boarding school—was not an obvious solution. Stanislas pupils did regularly refer to Liautard as their "second father" and to the school as a family—but what of their original fathers and families?³¹ Liautard's writings on education have a certain *Emile*-like quality to them: fathers were their children's natural educators, except for those boys fortunate enough to have Liautard/Andronicus as their tutor.

In the re-creation of an education based on paternal affection and filial obedience, Christian principles, naturally, were fundamental; teachers should have to pass tests of "wisdom, virtue, [and] religion" so as to produce a teaching corps that, Liautard specified sarcastically, "could genuflect with holy water, without affectation and without looking too awkward."³² Although Stanislas included a *petit séminaire*, the school focused on training boys for secular careers. Certainly many vocations emerged from the school, but Liautard primarily served a clientele who did not want their sons to become priests. When parents inquired about the school, Liautard emphasized not only religious training and academic subjects, but also instruction in music, dance, horseback riding and fencing.³³ Young men leaving Stanislas were ready to enter *le monde*. Although Stanislas avoided the Restoration puritanism that attacked dancing in particular, religious observance did regulate life at the school. Prayers, pious readings, and catechism instruction punctuated daily life; Liautard emphasized that the more consistency a child was subject to, the more his "character will become flexible and his temper amiable."³⁴ It was important that daily religious observance not become a chore, however, as Liautard believed his school should avoid "boredom with God." "Religion that one absorbs through all the pores" was better for young boys than one that took the form of tiresome lessons or threatened punishments.³⁵

Although the place of religion at Stanislas indicates attentiveness to the wishes of fathers, Liautard's management of the school suggests that he (and, perhaps, the parents who sent him their children) mistrusted families' capacity to prepare their

³⁰ "Réponse au Correspondant," ACS 102 ter II-3-4.

³¹ See e.g. the verses addressed to Liautard by his students in ACS 102 ter II-2-9.

³² "Etude de M Liautard sur l'Université," ACS 102 ter II-3-2.

³³ The prospectus for the school (ACS 102 I-1-1, 19 July 1805) is careful to detail the secular learning that pupils could expect (in particular, mathematics, useful sciences and *arts d'agrément*) in addition to the religious foundation. See also Liautard to Mme la comtesse de Charpin, ACS 102 I-8, 21 Oct. 1828. Liautard was also convinced that educating future priests with their future flock was beneficial both for the individuals and for the Church. "Réponse au Correspondant," ACS 102 ter II-3-4.

³⁴ Liautard to Mme la comtesse de Charpin, ACS 102 I-8, 21 Oct. 1828. See also Liautard's "Réunion des différens règlements de la maison," ACS 102 ter II-2-1.

³⁵ Liautard to Mme la comtesse de Charpin, ACS 102 I-8, 21 Oct. 1828.

sons for the future. Isolating pupils in a boarding school was absolutely crucial to Liautard's project, and he preferred to avoid day pupils who had too much contact with the world beyond school walls. Liautard expected to receive boys by the age of eight, often from the distant provinces; he anticipated that they would know how to read but not much else.³⁶ Older pupils were disruptive because they had tasted too much freedom at home to adapt to school life and they might bring "dangerous knowledge"—adolescent sexuality—into the school.³⁷ Liautard viewed anything that entered his school from outside—books, advice, visitors or knowledge—with suspicion. His management of the institution makes it clear that he expected boys to learn filial devotion and Christian piety at Stanislas rather than at home.

Parents were often the source of indulgence that made boys difficult to teach. According to the school's 1845 rules, parental visits were limited to the noon recess each day.³⁸ Too much family affection produced homesickness and made it difficult for a boy to fit in at school. Thus close attachment to their mother and to each other meant that one pair of brothers was "quite extraordinarily good" during recess, but Liautard informed their mother that they needed to loosen those family ties and accustom themselves more to the society of others.³⁹ Vacations were troublesome: the headmaster exhorted his pupils to enjoy their time at home, but there was always "much ground to be regained" when boys returned.⁴⁰ In a letter to one father, Liautard declared himself disappointed in the son's rudeness: "I search vainly for those lessons in manners that he ought to have received during the vacation."⁴¹ Another boy's ill behavior was such that Liautard believed his example to be "dangerous to his schoolmates" and suspected that he had acquired his taste for "liberty and pleasure" during the vacation.⁴² That same year, Liautard complained of another problem child, Gustave, whose father had assured the headmaster that he would return his son to school just as he was at the start of vacation. Back in Paris in the autumn, however, Gustave revealed himself much changed; his "adolescence was making itself felt; the fire is catching," and Liautard was afraid that "it might soon be impossible to put out the flames." Liautard blamed Gustave's frequent *exeunt* permissions and suspected that the family friend with whom he dined, Mme de Pasture, allowed him to wander around town unaccompanied.⁴³

Excursions into town—strictly limited and only permitted to visit family or approved friends—were particularly disruptive of school discipline. As Gustave's case suggested, puberty was bad enough if it took place within the school walls, but the stimulus of the outside world exacerbated it considerably. Liautard generally believed that parents authorized far too many *exeunts* and pointedly reminded them that they should not undermine his work by allowing their sons too much freedom. In

³⁶ For Andronicus' view of day pupils, see "Elèves de l'Université," ACS 102 ter II-3-4. Stanislas' prospectus informed parents that pupils must know how to read but be no older than nine (ACS 102 I-1-1). The Baron de Carra de Vaux recognized that his status as a day pupil was exceptional, a favor Liautard did for his parents. See his letter (1 May 1879) in the alumni file, ACS 189 (dossiers d'élèves), fascicule 1802.

³⁷ See e.g. letter to M Garrigues [?], ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 140 letter 965, April 1809; letter to M Viala, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 271 letter 2588, Sept. 1810.

³⁸ *Collège Stanislas, Règlement, 1846-47* in ACS 159. This is the earliest set of rules that I have found.

³⁹ To Mme Lacombe, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 73 letter 453.

⁴⁰ To M de May, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 47 letter 252, Nov. 1808.

⁴¹ To M de Changy, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 87 letter 557. See also the letter to M d'Ayguessives [?] about Alphonse, whose vacation apparently turned his thoughts away from his upcoming first communion. ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 88 letter 574.

⁴² To M Ghilin [?], ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 70 letter 437.

⁴³ To M de Moyenneville, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 72 letter 448.

1808, for instance, Liautard informed a father that his son's homesickness was a much less serious problem than his frequent excursions "with all sorts of persons." Clearly, Liautard thought that the boy had too many family friends for his own good.⁴⁴ As an activity that necessarily took pupils outside the school walls, equestrian lessons required strict rules, particularly forbidding any pauses in front of restaurants or cafes.⁴⁵ One reason why Liautard objected so strenuously to sending his pupils to classes at a public institution was because they had to walk across town and consort with boys from different schools. Although Stanislas employed a man to walk the boys to class, they were still vulnerable. Liautard claimed that the public school pupils slipped the Stanislas boys forbidden books—*Emile* and *La pucelle d'Orléans*—the latter of which, in particular, was likely to fan those flames of adolescence.⁴⁶

Even in the sheltered, Christian atmosphere of the Collège Stanislas, boys might suffer depression and despair. In October 1810 and January 1811 two pupils at Stanislas, Onésime de Musset and Antoine Ramé, like the unfortunate fictional Adraste, committed suicide. Both incidents involved Liautard in correspondence with the prefect of police. In these letters Liautard, anxious to exculpate himself and Stanislas, suggested that the suicides had occurred because the school had *insufficient*—not excessive—control over the boys. In both cases, parents—Onésime's overly-indulgent father and Antoine's misguided mother—interfered in their sons' education to disastrous effect.

Onésime was fifteen when he arrived at Stanislas; this was far too old, but Liautard had reserved Onésime's slot because no one who knew of the father's talents and his love for his children "would be surprised that ... having been for Onésime *the most tender* of fathers, he would have hoped to have become the best of teachers and the most appropriate to form his intellect and his heart."⁴⁷ Indeed, such was the attachment between father and son, Liautard tells us, that from Onésime's tenth birthday to his departure for school they were never separated, and "all the respect that the father enjoyed because of his fortune, his reputation, his amiable character, was paid out to the son in all the caresses, indulgence, and adulation that self interest ... will encourage people to lavish on the children of the rich." Even after Onésime's enrollment, his father came virtually every day and often took the boy on excursions outside of the school—an unusual privilege in the *pension*. M. de Musset might have thought of himself as a model attentive father, but Liautard makes it clear that he spoiled his son.

With such an indulged childhood, it was not surprising that Onésime, although naturally a good boy who even supported a poor family with his pocket money, should have had difficulty adjusting to school. "Even the most reasonable and least spoiled pupils," Liautard explained, had difficulty accommodating themselves to "no longer having any resources other than their intellectual talents and the qualities of their heart." When M. de Musset decided that it was time for Onésime to grow up a little and began withholding some treats, the boy despaired and wrote to his mother saying that he would kill himself if they left him in the *pension* any longer. Shortly after, he did so, acting with clear premeditation and great *sang froid*, Liautard recounted. The headmaster professed himself unsurprised that M. de Musset blamed the school's discipline; Liautard told the prefect that he had concealed some parts of

⁴⁴ To M Carmier du Vivier, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 29, letter 190, 1808.

⁴⁵ *Collège Stanislas, Règlement 1844-1847*, ACS 159.

⁴⁶ Liautard to the Grand Master of the University, ACS 102 ter II-3-8, 3 or 4 July [1822].

⁴⁷ "Eclaircissements donnés a Monsieur le Préfet de Police," ACS 102 ter II-2-8.

the sad story from his client, because he knew that this loving father would be sorry to feel that he had hastened his son's demise.

Antoine Ramé, by contrast, was perfectly happy at the *pension* Liautard. Antoine, like Onésime, seems to have entered the school as an older pupil; he was about twenty in 1809 and had been enrolled for three years when his mother removed him from Liautard's care and sent him to the seminary at Saint Sulpice.⁴⁸ As a seminarian, Antoine experienced "episodes of madness" and was placed in a *maison de santé*. He begged to return to his old school, and his mother implored Liautard to take him back. Liautard reminded Mme Ramé that she had withdrawn Antoine—he refers at one point to an *enlèvement*—against his own advice and the wishes of the boy's father. Both Liautard and the father believed that a young man should take his time to choose a career, particularly if he were contemplating a religious vocation. But his mother was blind to the wisdom of this course, and Liautard believed that she blamed his school for her son's condition. The headmaster scolded her: "We made your son . . . a model of all virtues, especially obedience, simplicity, and humility, and because six months after having left us his mind goes, you hold us responsible."⁴⁹ Believing, however, that the remedy to Antoine's malady could only be found in "the same house where he had tasted such pure happiness, where he had his friends, a headmaster [*directeur*] with such great influence over him," Liautard readmitted him. The damage was already done, however, and while Antoine was happy to be back at Stanislas, it was "a mad happiness that seemed inevitably to degenerate into imbecility."⁵⁰ Shortly afterward, Antoine killed himself in the school building.

It is not surprising that Liautard denied responsibility for the deaths of Onésime de Musset and Antoine Ramé—two suicides within less than six months were potentially a disaster for a pension that relied on the confidence of parents. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Liautard assigned blame to parents. One standard culprit for suicide in the romantic era—disappointment in love—was not available to Liautard. The effervescence of city life, theatre and *mauvais livres*, and political agitation, however, were all part of the repertoire of romantic suicide, and all might have served the headmaster's analysis.⁵¹ But Stanislas, in so far as it was possible, sheltered boys from the temptations of the city and from the feverish politics of the day. Parents, who allowed their children too much license or pushed them into careers, were less aware than Liautard of the dangers that might ensnare youth.

The failings of families thus justified Liautard's belief that, in a model school, the headmaster would have "an *immense authority*" over his teachers and his pupils.⁵² When Liautard in the early 1820s described this model school and proposed that the Minister of Public Instruction should choose a dozen schools to act as models and to create a "regenerated teaching corps" within twenty years, he clearly had Stanislas in mind. The Catholic family—and the future of a French society composed of Catholic families—needed the boarding school and the priest-schoolmaster to instruct its sons.

⁴⁸ Liautard to the prefect of police, ACS 189, dossier d'élèves, fascicule 1789, n.d.

⁴⁹ ACS 189, dossier d'élèves, fascicule 1789, 9 Nov. 1810.

⁵⁰ Liautard to prefect of police, ACS 189, dossier d'élèves, fascicule 1789, 29 Jan. 1811 and n.d.

⁵¹ Lisa Lieberman, "Romanticism and the Culture of Suicide in Nineteenth-Century France," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33.3 (1991): 611-29. See especially Lieberman's remarks on Catholic and anticlerical interpretations of suicide.

⁵² "Etude de M Liautard sur l'Université," ACS 102 ter II-3-2, emphasis in the original.

Fraternity and Friendship

So what are we to make of this apparent ambivalence about the restoration of paternal authority to boys' schooling? Despite Liautard's praise for paternal authority as the basis of education and society, he preferred his own authority to that of his pupils' fathers. It is noteworthy, however, that his rhetoric was often fraternal rather than paternal; the headmaster often chose to exert his authority in the guise of a wise elder brother or a dear friend. In his letters to his pupils, Liautard never presented himself as the stern headmaster-priest that one might expect from reading his critique of godless revolutionary education. He communicated with pupils who were at home sick or on vacation in informal, nearly egalitarian terms, full of good will and helpful advice, but never authoritarian. Liautard appears to have been—or at least to have aspired to be—a participant in the cult of romantic friendship that Gabrielle Houbre has described between early nineteenth-century schoolboys.⁵³ As sincerely as Liautard believed that paternal authority needed strengthening in the wake of Revolution, he was nonetheless deeply committed to a view of society—and his school—as fraternal.

Family metaphors at Stanislas did not always focus on the stern, paternal relationship between master and pupil. Liautard attributed the success of his school to the fact that he “took as much care of the children as the most tender and intelligent mother, without her natural weakness.”⁵⁴ His successor as headmaster, the abbé Lagarde, chose to represent Liautard seated under a tree with the youngest pupils in a circle at his feet, reading the daily spiritual meditation. Lagarde attributed the success of the school to Liautard's close rapport with his pupils and his desire to live among them, without too much formality. Thanks to Liautard's empathy, Stanislas' boys experienced the “community life of a religious family, a perfected, almost deified, imitation of the natural family.”⁵⁵

Liautard's correspondence with his pupils, either recent graduates or boys at home, indicates that he saw their relationship in just such an intimate, informal light. He regularly closed letters to pupils “je vous embrasse comme je vous aime,” much as he ended letters to close friends.⁵⁶ If these boys associated fathers with distant figures, imposing discipline and occupying a future world of adult responsibility rather than a present one of affection, then Liautard was no father.⁵⁷ Advising one pupil that he should not limit his social relations to his close friends, Liautard sympathized with his shyness. Moreover, instead of his usual thundering against the profligate company of public schools—a strategy unlikely to help a timid boy—Liautard suggested that, since the boy was forced into the public *lycée*, he ought to profit from those advantages it did offer, most especially the chance to “accustom young men to living with people of all conditions, [and] ... characters,” after which “one need never be awkward in company.”⁵⁸ He urged pupils not to prolong their vacations: “pack your bags: your laundry will be clean, your desk as well, and I will be there with the best

⁵³ *La discipline de l'amour. L'Education sentimentale des filles et des garçons à l'âge du romantisme* (Paris, 1997), chap. 2.

⁵⁴ *Mémoires de M l'abbé Liautard* (Paris, 1844), 57.

⁵⁵ M l'abbé de Lagarde, *Histoire du Collège Stanislas* (Paris, 1881), 108.

⁵⁶ See Liautard's correspondence with Armand d'Hautpoul, ACS 102 I-1-2.

⁵⁷ On the distance or absence of fathers as a source of power in the household, see Houbre, *La Discipline*, 47-8; Michèle Perrot, “The Father Figure,” in *A History of Private Life*, iv, *From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1990), 173; and Michèle Ménard, “Le Miroir brisé,” in *Histoire des pères et de la paternité*, eds. Jean Delameau and Daniel Roche (Paris, 1990), 365-8.

⁵⁸ To M de Chabannes, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, pp. 10-11, 1808.

will in the world.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the headmaster’s reports to parents adopted an affectionate tone toward weaker pupils: after a disappointing term Liautard wrote to one father that his son’s “heart has been wounded; these internal injuries heal slowly. He has here, however, everything he needs to recover: good friends who offer only good examples, two or three teachers who take particular care of him, and a headmaster who can . . . inspire him with emulation.”⁶⁰

Liautard’s letters also suggest that he used friendship—particularly couched in Christian terms—as a disciplinary tool with his pupils. He informed one inquirer that Stanislas did not use corporal punishment; in fact, he said, any punishment at all was rare, first because the rules of the school were such as to make misbehavior difficult and second because boys imbued with religious principles behaved themselves of their own accord.⁶¹ Liautard teasingly scolded boys who neglected to write him⁶² and advised others to “pray a little, and for me, and love me as I love you.”⁶³ A child might take the wrong path, like poor Eugene who “isn’t worth what he once was,” but Liautard believed that because he was nonetheless “upright, sincere, and, also I think, one of my friends” he would eventually straighten out.⁶⁴ The headmaster offered parents instructions on handling their sons, suggesting, for instance, that one mother correct her son’s distraction and daydreaming “but adroitly and indirectly, so that he doesn’t know that I have written to you.”⁶⁵ Friendship, Liautard hoped, contributed to the moral and spiritual development of boys, and in practice the headmaster seems to have assumed that boys needed affectionate brothers at least as much as they needed obedience-imposing fathers.

We cannot, of course, actually know whether or not Liautard succeeded in winning his way into his pupils’ hearts as he believed he did. Even in the files of the old boys’ association, where the letters are almost completely laudatory, there are hints of pupils who found themselves “a bit disoriented in a big institution where we found theologians of whom several later became bishops” and who found Liautard preoccupied with politics rather than with the daily management of the school.⁶⁶ It is certainly possible that the headmaster’s attempts at brotherly comradeship struck his pupils as ridiculous.⁶⁷ Whether or not the headmaster succeeded in acting the role of his pupils’ loving elder brother, it is significant that he chose to imagine the social world of his school in those fraternal terms.

The experience of the Collège Stanislas suggests that Liautard, for all of his talk about the restoration of the rights of fathers, was himself very much a child of the Revolution and the Romantic era, and that fraternity came more easily to him than paternity. In spite of Liautard’s own legitimist political position, with its implication that the clock ought to be turned back to the pre-revolutionary period, his view of the

⁵⁹ To M le Cordier, fils, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 166 letter 1249, Sept. 1809.

⁶⁰ To M de Rangouse, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, pp. 147-8 letter 999.

⁶¹ To M Faget, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, pp. 150-1 letter 1002, May 1809. Liautard did expel students for misbehavior on a fairly regular basis, however. See Houbre’s comments on Catholic education and the emphasis on a schoolroom regime that provided no opportunities for misbehavior, *La Discipline*, 70-2.

⁶² To M de Buisseret, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 32 letter 198; to M Gustave de Moyenville, p. 182 letter 7.

⁶³ To Leon d’Archiac, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 2 letter 154, Sept. 1808.

⁶⁴ To M de la Toison, ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 49 letter 271.

⁶⁵ To Mme Dierieux [?], ACS 166, minutier Liautard, p. 215 letter 2091, May 1810.

⁶⁶ Francis Joseph de Miollis to the director, ACS 189, fascicule 1807, 18 Dec. 1874.

⁶⁷ See the “récollections” in which one schoolboy, at least, chides himself for making fun of his teachers, especially priests and especially in front of younger pupils. “Des devoirs auxquels j’ai manqué,” ACS 102 ter II-2-3, 1820.

proper functioning of the miniature society he governed within school walls was clearly tinged with the language of fraternity. Without affection between master and pupil, he argued, “a community is nothing but a herd of prisoners or slaves.”⁶⁸ The pupils and headmaster of the Collège Stanislas suggest ways of analyzing the experience of post-revolutionary Catholics that result in a picture that is more complex than simple nostalgia for the ancien régime, more satisfying than an image of counter-Revolution as mere reflexive opposition to anything that “Revolution” might stand for. The model of “family” that Liautard proposed to create at Stanislas was aimed explicitly at the new regime. In addition to fathers who demanded obedience, it contained sons who, in the course of their Catholic schooling, learned to combine the deference due to legitimate authority with the autonomy and egalitarianism they might expect as adult men and citizens.

⁶⁸ Liautard, quoted in Lagarde, *Histoire du Collège Stanislas*, 108.