

From de Staël to Stendhal

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Country and Character in Germaine de Staël's *Corinne*

Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* is part travelogue, part love story, but central to its main conflict is the influence of national character on the decisions made by its protagonists, Oswald, Lord Nevil and Corinne. In Italy, Oswald searches for respite from the tyranny of duty and decorum, finding it embodied by Corinne, who, in standing at the center of attention and casting the men around her into the shadows, is everything English women are not.

Their relationship flourishes as long as Oswald remains in her element, but when military duty calls him home, the dilemma the couple faces becomes clear. Staël depicts an England full of opportunity for talented, ambitious men, but repressive for women of similar character. Oswald's recognition of this, coupled with a series of missed letters and misinterpreted circumstances, renders him susceptible to the suggestion by his would-be mother-in-law who is also Corinne's step mother, that Corinne, in typical Italian fashion, has forgotten him. This concern paired with a desire to restore Corinne's family name leads Oswald to marry Lucile, Corinne's half-sister and the archetype of English beauty and reserve. The results are disastrous, magnified by Oswald and Lucile's English inability to express their feelings, fears, and jealousies. They are saved from misery only by Corinne's intervention. She cultivates in both her half-sister and her niece the traits Oswald loved best in her: her creativity, vivacity, and artistic talent, qualities closely associated with her Italian identity. Staël's narrative neither demonizes nor glorifies either Italian or English culture, but demonstrates the close ties between culture, character, and identity.

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Morale et pratique post-impériales dans le cycle allemand de Stendhal

Par trois fois, Henri Beyle a entrepris l'histoire d'une jeune fille prussienne hantée à la fois par la question morale de la conquête et de l'ingérence et par cette interrogation stendhalienne majeure: après 1815, que faire et comment vivre? Du destin tragique de Mina de Vanghel, texte inédit du vivant de l'auteur, à l'inachèvement du *Rose et le vert* en passant par l'ébauche de *Tamira Wanghen*, l'immoralité théorique de tout empire pris sur autrui se conjugue avec l'immoralité pratique que l'on voudrait croire autorisée par l'insupportable absence de l'Empire napoléonien. La présente communication se donnera pour tâche d'élucider cette problématique dans ces textes à bien des égards avant-coureurs de *La Chartreuse de Parme*.