FRENCH WOMEN WRITERS, 1800-1850

By
Betty Sue Tilley

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The relative position of women in literature is now so important that it is difficult for one to realize that women writers have not always had such prestige. Since the time of Sappho, one of the first women writers of whom we have record, the feminine touch has gradually, by a much slower process than one would expect, been applied to the different realms of literature. The development of feminine literature in France, chronologically, has followed much the same pattern as that of the other nations of the western world. In this developing pattern, the first half of the nineteenth century has been chosen to be studied in the light of the feminine achievement and contribution to French literature.

A general survey of feminine achievement of that particular era will have the purpose of discovering either: (1) why there were so few feminine writers during the period, or (2) why so few achieved great fame.

The second purpose of this study is to discover exactly what was written by French women from 1800 to 1850. This will necessitate a consideration of the several genres of literature to which women contributed, primarily, the novel, poetry and letters. In discussing the works of each one it will be shown how they reflect the literary movement of the time.

Finally, an attempt will be made to determine the lasting contributions of the women writers of the period to the development of French literature.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Political Background and the End of the Salon

The influence of environment, of time and place, on the work of an author cannot be disregarded. It is from these that ideas are born, and from ideas, literature. So, before any examination of the literature of a particular era can be in any way a true picture, it is necessary to view that age politically.

The beginning of the nineteenth century in France was attended by the advent of Napoleon to full reigning power. The preceding years, from 1789 on, had been a period of continual political strife. The absolute monarchy had been overthrown and several attempts made at a new regime for the people. The Constitution of 1791 had set up a limited monarchy, which collapsed when the foreign armies entered France to come to the aid of the royal family. The establishment of the First French Republic coincided with the first success of the revolutionary armies against their foreign enemies. The execution of the king was followed by the Terror, which attempted to put an end to internal strife. This accomplished, the National Convention was able to go on with its work on a new constitution. By 1795 it was certain that France would have a republican form of government under bourgeois influence. The Directory lasted only a short time. In 1799 Napoleon's coup d'état was followed by

the promulgation of another constitution which made him First Consul. His first task was to put an end to the War of the Second Coalition. This done, he turned his attention to organizing the internal affairs of France, (establishing a centralized administration, establishing the Bank of France, arranging the Concordat, making judicial and educational reforms, etc.). In 1802 a plebiscite made Bonaparte First Consul for life. From this it was only a step to his assuming the title of Emperor in 1804. His tireless ambition now made him turn to the conquest of continental Europe, which he achieved by 1808. Unable to defeat the British Navy, however, he tried to ruin her commerce and industry by the "continental system." The failure of this scheme, an upsurge of nationalism and the changed character of his army all contributed to his defeat. In 1814, the occupation of Paris forced him to abdicate and to go into exile on the island of Elba. In 1815, he returned, but soon defeated again, he was withdrawn from the political picture by his final imprisonment at St. Helena.

France returned to the status of a monarchy under Louis XVIII, but a constitutional monarchy according to the royal charter of 1814. At first the ultra royalists rebelled and proved to be more conservative than the King. In 1816, however, the moderate royalists won the majority and made some reforms which were annulled again in 1820 by the repressive and reactionary measures of the ultras. The accession of Charles X in 1824 continued these measures but in face of the growing opposition of the

bourgeoisie. Now that class, the liberal idealists and the Napoleonic veterans were all arrayed against the king and the chambers voted against him and his premier. This impasse was solved by the July revolution, which was followed by the abdication of Charles and the choice of Louis-Philippe by the Chamber as king. At first, the upper bourgeoisie staunchly supported the new king. But the lower middle class and the working people, still deprived of the vote, the Legitimists, the Catholics and the Socialists all finally joined with the upper classes in their opposition to the king, as he became more conservative. The intrigues and corrupt practices of Louis-Philippe and his prime minister, Guizot, came to an abrupt end with the Revolution of 1848. A provisional government composed of representatives of the middle class and the working class set up the Second French republic and drafted another constitution. Profiting by the quarrels of the various democratic elements Louis Napoleon was elected to the Assembly and six months later to the presidency. Two years later another coup d'état ended in the virtual dictatorship of Louis and in 1852, in his being proclaimed Emperor.

Not only had the Revolution brought about a series of changes in the government of France. It had also put an end to that social institution, the salon, which had played so great a role in the development of literature for almost two centuries. A source of inspiration and encouragement to men of letters, indeed a decided force in their formation in the

seventeenth century, the salon had maintained its influence in the literary world in the eighteenth century. But it had become a deterring influence since it continued to impose its standards of good taste and convention upon the writer, thus hindering the freedom of the individual. Sincere, intense emotion was not considered in good taste. It was still, with rare exceptions, only the subject of analytic study. Finally, the language of the salons was exquisite or bombastic, unable to express sensations and sentiments. With the return of the émigrés, the salons were reopened, but they no longer dominated literature. Only rarely after the Revolution were writers "hommes du monde." Now literary men followed their own personal ideals or the tenets of a group of writers. The enlarged reading public took the place of the small homogeneous group of the earlier period. The press, which had become powerful during the Revolution, inherited some of the influence of the salon in the direction of literary taste. After the fall of Napoleon, a number of literary magazines sprang up, some still defending the classical ideals, others openly defending the new school. Salons flourished again, but they did not again exercise a hold upon literature as they had before 1789.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IN LITERATURE, 1800-1850

The tangible contribution of women to literature has always been and is today less than their influence upon the works of the men who write. Without any close examination, one might expect the period under discussion to have produced more feminine writers than the number which can be discovered. An attempt to explain the number which have survived and have attained any degree of importance reveals this to be due to a combination of reasons.

One hundred years is a short time in many of the calculations that are made daily, but in the field of literature a century can bring about many changes. During the century which has elapsed since the days of the women whose literary achievement will be discussed, many have been simply forgotten. According to a fairly recent article, in the field of poetry alone there were many feminine writers whose names no longer live. The number of women poets in France during the period 1800-1830 seems to have been greater than the number of those in the corresponding period of the twentieth century. In the year 1830, evidence has been found by the author of this article of about 2,000 women poets composing 250,000 "romances" a year.[1]

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[1] Charles Auvery, "Les muses élégiaques de 1830," Muse Française, August 10, 1930, cited by Clarissa Cooper, Women Poets of the Twentieth Century, New York, King's Crown Press, 1943, p.3.

This number is astounding even to a student of the literature of the period. Such a condition may well have existed in the other genres of literature.

In view of the large number of women who were said to be writing in the period, there must be some explanation either in the life of the women or in the quality of their work for the oblivion into which they have fallen. The following relevant quotation will help to shed some light on the question:

> "L'homme est évidemment fait pour vivre en société, pour avoir un culte, des lois, et pour cultiver les sciences et les arts. Chez les sauvages, toutes les lois de la nature sont outragées, tous les droits usurpés au hasard, parce qu'ils y sont méconnus, de profondes réflexions, l'expérience des siècles, l'accord unanime de tous les peuples civilisés, ont fixée l'idée sur la véritable destination de femmes, et par conséquent leur état dans la société."[2]

That brings into consideration the social position of women of the period in France. The French woman has only received the position of a voter in society, by a law passed in March 1944.[3] By subtracting a hundred years from the prevailing stage of development, it is not hard to visualize the early nineteenth century woman of France without legal rights of her own. The French woman, though always noted for the elevated cultural position which she has held, was not looked upon favorably in the business world, either. A career of any kind, aside from that of a wife and mother, was frowned upon, that of literature

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[2] Mme de Genlis, De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française, Paris, Chez Maradan, 1811, p. xviii.

[3] Independent Woman, XXIV (January, 1945), 4.

not excluded. One writer of the period, Mme de Genlis, quotes from a newspaper of the day:

> "...elles ne méritent aucun égard, parce qu'en devenant auteurs, elles abjurent leur sexe et renoncent à tous leurs droits..."[4]

Very few women braved public opinion to have what they had written published. If they did any writing, it was generally kept very private, even locked away in a desk, for only intimate friends to read. One of the poets who dared to have her work published, Madame Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, expresses the situation poetically:

> "Les femmes, je le sais, ne doivent pas écrire
> J'écris pourtant
> Afin que mon coeur au loin to puisses lire
> Comme en partant."[5]

In the light of this subjection of women it is truly impossible for one to tell what might have been the possibilities of women writers of the era.

Besides the social disapproval, very few women had sufficient education to write well. This really was one of the results of the social disapproval; since, if women were not to write, they were not felt to need the education. Mme Genlis says:

> "...Le manque d'études et l'éducation ayant dans tous les temps écarté les femmes de la carrière littéraire."[6]

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[4] Mme Genlis, op. cit., p. xxxi.

[5] Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Poèmes et Proses, p. 68, cited by Cooper, op. cit., p.4.

[6] Mme Genlis, op. cit., p. iii.

From the work of such critics and historians of nineteenth century literature in France as Le Breton, Brunetière, Sainte-Beuve and Faguet has been collected a list of some of the women who figured in literature in the first half of the century to be studied more closely. These are: Mmes de Staël, Krüdener, Cottin, Souza, Duras, George Sand, Desbordes-Valmore, Girardin (Delphine Gay), Dufrenoy, Tastu, Delphine Custine and Mlle Eugénie de Guérin. The accompanying table is a chronological arrangement of these writers, from which can be seen the decade or decades in which each did the greater part of her work.

CHRONOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF WORKS OF WOMEN WRITERS, 1800-1850*

1800-1810	1810-1820	1820-1830	1830-1840	1840-1850	After 1850
De la littérature - 1800 Delphine - 1802 Corinne - 1807	De l'Allemagne - 1810 Mme de Staël 1766-1817				
Valerie - 1803		Mme Krüdener 1764-1824			
Malvina - 1801 Amelie Mansfield - 1803 Mathilde - 1805 Elisabeth - 1806		Mme Cottin 1773-1827			
		Ourika - 1825 Edouard - 1825 Mme Duras 1778-1828			
"La Mort de Bayard"-1807		Oeuvres poétiques - 1827 Mme Dufrenoy 1765-1825			
Charles et Marie - 1802 Eugène de Rothelin - 1808	Eugène et Mathilde - 1811	Mlle de Tournan - 1820 La comptesse de Torgy - 1822	La Duchesse de Quise - 1831 Mme Souza 1761-1836		
	Elégies et Romances - 1818	Elegies et poesies nouvelles - 1824	les Pleurs - 1833 Pauvre Fleurs - 1839	Bouquets et prières - 1843	Mme Marceline Desbordes-Valmore 1735-1854
		Essais poétiques - 1824 Nouveaux poétiques - 1825 "Les soeurs de Sainte-Camille"- 1822	Le Lorgnon - 1831 Contes d'une vielle - 1832 Marquis de Pontages - 1835	Dramatic works: l'Ecole de journalists - 1840 Judith - 1843 Cléopâtre - 1847	Mme Delphine (Gay) Girardin 1804-1855
"Le Resida" - 1807		Oiseaux du Sacre - 1825	l'Education maternelle - 1835 Le Livre des Enfants - 1837	Lectures pour les jeunes filles - 1840	Mme Amable Tastu 1798-1885
			Indiana - 1831 Valentine - 1832 Lelia - 1833 Jacques - 1834 Mauprat - 1836	Spiridion - 1840 Le compagnon du tour de France - 1840 Consuelo - 1842 Le Meunier d'Angihault - 1846 Le Péché de M. Antoine - 1847 Jeanne - 1844 François le champi - 1844 La mare au diable - 1846 La petite fadette - 1848	Les maîtres sonneurs - 1852 George Sand 1804-1876

* Each writer's works are listed horizontally with her name appearing in the decade in which she died. The diaries and letters of Mme Custine and Mlle Guerin are not listed.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANTICISM

The literary movement which evolved into a position of supremacy, even complete dominance, came to be known as the Romantic movement. To understand the significance of this movement, frequently called a "literary revolt," one must have a conception of the literary conditions existing immediately before it. The continuation in the eighteenth century of the dominance of Classicism is evident in all genres of literature--in drama, poetry and novel, in that descending order. Classicism with its profound respect for the literature of the Greeks and the Romans, along with a parallel almost general ignorance of the literary and historical past of France, with its fixed and separate genres, its determined laws of versification, its restricted language and subject matter, its objectivity and its perfect balance between emotion and reason, had held a greater sway in France than in other countries such as England, Germany and Spain. These countries found it easier to rid themselves of that dominance more quickly than did France, a fact which helps to explain the later development of the Romantic movement in France than in the other countries.

Retarded as this flowering of Romanticism was in France, it had been developing slowly for more than a century. The seeds of a revolt against Classicism were sown even when that movement was at its height (i.e., The Quarrel of the Ancients

and the Moderns). Far back in the eighteenth century may be found other seeds of Romantic tendencies. In the character of Des Grieux, the hero of Prévost's masterpiece, Manon Lescaut (1731), a decidedly Romantic novel with its emphasis on sentiment or emotion, can be seen new tendencies. His character, because of his being madly in love with Manon, degenerates and disintegrates morally. Even as far back as that, Prévost may be seen as one who failed to follow the rules of absolute objectivity of the Classicists in projecting something of his own personality into the picture and adventures of Des Grieux. In his two long, though unfinished, novels, La Vie de Marianne (1731-41) and Le Paysan parvenu (1735-36), Marivaux also turned away from some of the Classicist rules in depicting middle class characters and their lives instead of the aristocracy and the court only.

With the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau came to the evolution of Romantic characteristics a man of genius who turned his ability in the direction of the Romantic. Against a background of nature, the mountain scenery of La Savoie, which the author knew and loved so well, Rousseau unfolds the tearful story of Julie d'Etanges and Saint-Preux, her tutor who became her lover. Into the story, Rousseau projected many of his own sentimental adventures, giving it the new characteristics of subjectivity and sentiment. The situation, which parallels something in Rousseau's life revolves around the love of the tutor for Julie which persists even after the intervening years of her happy

married life. In introducing these tendencies Rousseau laid the way for his close follower and disciple, Bernardin de St.-Pierre. He continued Rousseau's love for nature, but turned from mountain scenery to the exotic nature of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. A naturalist by profession, though a self-made one, St.-Pierre enriched the language of prose literature. With the necessity of enlarging the literary vocabulary to describe exotic nature, he introduced technical words, vivid color words as well as adding somewhat to the vocabulary used in the depiction of passion. Thus, even before the beginning of the nineteenth century could be found in French literature some of the tendencies which are now termed "Romantic."

These Romantic tendencies in the eighteenth century French literature were given an added impetus by constant interchange of ideas between England and France. This is greatly significant in the fact that England was in the eighteenth century more rapidly advancing toward Romanticism. Diderot's Encyclopédie had its beginning as a translation of the English Cyclopaedia by Ephraim Chambers. In it, even in its final form, is found the effects of English philosophy which made an impression on France of the eighteenth century. In the dramas of the philosopher Voltaire is seen the influence of Shakespeare. Such elements as his costuming, stage directions, "local color" and historical interest, show that influence. There had been in the eighteenth century translations of the works of the English

authors Young, Thompson, Gray and of Macpherson's Ossian. These emphasized elements such as melancholy, misty landscapes, tombs and ruins, already developing in French literature.

The French revolution contributed "le mal du siècle," which is greatly evident in Romantic works. The pessimism and disillusionment produced by the failure of the philosophical ideas prevalent in the eighteenth century and the earlier abandonment of religious faith on the part of many became characteristics of the truly Romantic novel, illustrated in the characters.

The hero of Chateaubriand's autobiographical novel, René, typifies this malady. Chateaubriand, in Atala, sets forth another type of exotic nature, that of the New World, as the background for great passion. In his Génie du Christianisme, he presents the beauties of Christianity in contrast with those of paganism. He gives especial importance to the description of cathedrals, visible symbols of the Christian faith, as well as religious and chivalric orders. In this work primarily, he initiated the interest in the historic past of France, especially in the medieval period. Chateaubriand rendered a service to the language of Romanticism as well. His works are noted for their picturesque, colorful and rhythmic prose.

This then was the background against which Mme de Stael projected her theories of Romanticism. She it was who first applied the word "romantic" to literature in contrasting it

to "classic." A definition which she has given in De l'Allemagne is:

> "Le nom de romantique a été introduit en Allemagne pour désigner la poésie qui est née de la chevalerie et du christianisme."[7]

In this work as well as in her other work of criticism, De la littérature, Mme de Staël crystalized into theory the characteristics of Romanticism. She discusses in them the background as well as the future of Romantic literature. Her autobiographical novels, depicting passion and genius form another link in the development of the Romantic novel which was to continue with Hugo, Balzac and Mme Sand.

It was after the works of Mme de Staël with her exposition of German Romanticism that other foreign literature again aided the development of French Romanticism. English influence was represented in the glory of the works of Byron, the popularity of the novels of Scott, the translated dramas of Shakespeare and their performances in Paris. Spanish influence, which had meant much to French literature, provided its color and liberty to be admired. Italy and Italian customs were presented especially in the novel of Mme de Stael titled, Corinne ou l'Italie, in Stendhal's works and in the popularity, in France as well as throughout Europe, of Manzoni's novel, I Promessi Sposi (1825-26).

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7 Madame de Staël, De l'Allemagne, Paris, Librarie Garnier Frères, n.d., p. 153.

In the other chief genres of literature, poetry and drama, the triumph of Romanticism was as great as, or even greater than, it was in the novel. Lamartine's Premières Méditations poétiques in 1819 achieved instant success and became the first poetry of real note in more than a century. Its spontaneity and personal lyricism achieved for it the greatest success of any Romantic work in that genre, even though it was the first. In the works of the poets who followed Lamartine, such as Hugo, Musset, and Vigny, came also the realization of the breaking of the bonds with which Classicism had bound poetry so closely. Lyric poetry reached its height in their work, which resulted in the complete revivification of the language of poetry as well as further depth of personal feeling and power of expression.[8]

Even later than its triumph in poetry came the triumph of Romanticism in drama. The bands with which the Classicists had tied drama were those of strict conformation to the unities of time, place and action and of strict separation of the genres. These principles of drama had been felt to be unnecessarily strict before the nineteenth century. The bourgeois drama had attempted a mixture of tragedy. The plays of Beaumarchais had attempted to do away with the unity of time and to introduce a greater area for the action of the play.[9] No great triumph

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8 George R. Havens, "Romanticism in France," Publications of the Modern Languages Association, LV (March, 1940), 10-20.

9 Gustave Lanson, Histoire de la littérature française, p. 973.

had been made, however, in breaking drama away from Classicist domination. The triumph finally came through the efforts of Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Vigny and Musset. In French drama, Romanticism chiefly revealed itself in the freedom of a mixture of genres, whereby one play might have both comic, tragic and historic elements. This new form was known as the melodrama. Hugo, though having offered his greatest contributions to Romantic poetry, plays a doubly significant part in the development of Romantic drama. The first great triumph of Romantic drama occurred with the presentation of his play, Hernani, in 1830, and with the fall of his last play Les Burgraves in 1843 is noted the close of the dominance of Romanticism in France.

To summarize briefly the characteristics of Romanticism in France, one might note the following points. Whereas Classicism had placed its greatest emphasis on the glorious literary past of Greece and Rome, Romanticism placed its emphasis on the past of France, not only literary but historical as well. Thus medievalism becomes one of the aspects of Romanticism. For the fixed and separated genres were substituted more flexible genres. In the field of drama this resulted in the appearance of melodrama. Poetry came out from under the domination of classical standards to display greater flexibility in its subject matter, versification and especially language. Lyric poetry, with its powerful expression of personal feeling became the great achievement of Romanticism. In prose as well as poetry, the objectivity of the works of Classicism gave way to

subjectivity, showing the author in his works (the manifestation of "moi"). The balance between emotion and reason maintained by the Classicists was destroyed, with the greater emphasis given to emotion. Prose style, as a whole, was renewed, becoming rhythmic and colorful. In all of its aspects, Romanticism stood for liberalism and thus made possible the existence of all later literary movements.[10]

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10 Havens, op. cit., p. 20.

CHAPTER V

MADAME DE STAEL

At the threshold of the century, came Anna Louise Germaine Necker, Baronne de Staël (1766-1817) to make her lasting contribution to French literature. By her very maiden name she attests to her relationship with the political life of the time as well as its literature. The daughter of the Swiss banker and financier, Necker, who came to be the Minister of Finance of France 1776-1780 under Louis XVI, Mlle Necker was associated very early in her life with the great Frenchmen of the day. In her mother's salon, she met and conversed with the contemporary history-makers and writers. As a child, she was known for her precocity and conversational brilliance. After an early "mariage de convenance" to the Swedish Baron de Staël-Holstein in 1786, Mme de Staël formed her own salon which gave evidence of its political as well as its literary significance in the fact that she was twice exiled by Napoleon. This salon of Madame de Staël (Rue de Bac) was one of the greatest of the day along with that of Madame Récamier, and was known widely for its number of adherents.[11] That success was due to her exceptional capacity for brilliant conversation. Writing was to her only a way of keeping in touch with the world and a substitute for conversation, which stimulated and inspired her. Mme de Staël felt a need for fresh knowledge and fresh

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11 W. E. Nitze and E. P. Dargan, History of French Literature, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1938, p. 497.

contacts, which she gained in her salon. One of the saddest facts of the turbulent years of the revolution was the forced abandonment of her salon.[12] Her first literary work appeared just before those turbulent years, in 1788. Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J.-J. Rousseau is an indication of one of the greatest influences (after Montesquieu) upon her later works. Even during the Revolution her mind and her literary hand were not idle. Politics and its contacts stimulated her, so that she took what part she could in it. This interest is evident in De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations, which she published in 1796. Soon after this time, her marriage became no longer bearable to her, so that, in 1798 she separated from Staël-Holstein. At the turn of the century, she began to give herself to literary theory and its practice in the novel. In 1800, she gave to the literary world De la littérature (considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales). It was after she had put some of her theories into practice in her first novel, Delphine, that she was commanded by Napoleon, to whom the freedom she proclaimed was threatening, to keep at least thirty leagues from Paris.

This exile began for Mme de Staël a period of travel and of increased literary activity for her. She went first to

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12 Abry, Bernès, Legèr and Crouzet, Editors, Les grands écrivains de France, Paris, Henri Dedier, 1935, V, 1109.

Germany, then back through France and to Italy, there she received inspiration for her second novel, Corinne (1807). A second time in Germany she turned her primary attention from travel experiences to the customs, literature and thought of the country. Inspired by the study of Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Fichte and the Schlegels, she gave to French literature the fruit of that study in De l'Allemagne.[13] Before she was able to effect the publication of this work, Mme de Staël again came into conflict with Napoleon. Her liberalism and continued defiance of his ever-increasing dictatorship called forth his second banishment of Mme de Staël, from the entire country in 1810. Again her exile occasioned extensive travel, in Austria, Russia, Sweden, and England. Though she had completed the book in 1810, it was not until 1813, in England, that she was able to have it published. During this period she remarried and not until 1814 did she return to her beloved Paris. Soon after, in 1817, she died there, leaving two posthumous works: Dix années d'exil (1821) and Considérations sur les principaux événements de la revolution française (1818).

In studies on French literature, Mme de Staël is named many times the theoretician of Romanticism, through whose influence the final triumph of the movement was made possible.

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13 Ibid., p. 1110.

It is with her two works, De la littérature and De l'Allemagne, primarily, that she has gained such recognition. The former was in the field of art and letters a revolution analagous to that brought on by Montesquieu's L'ésprit des lois.[14] In the Preliminary Discourse to the second edition of De la littérature, Mme de Staël has stated her purpose in writing the book as follows:

> "Je me suis proposé d'examiner quelle est l'influence de la religion, des moeurs et des lois sur la littérature et quelle est l'influence de la littérature sur la religion, les moeurs et les lois. Il existe dans la langue française, sur l'art d'écrire et sur les principes du goût, des traités qui ne laissent rien à désirer, mais il me semble que l'on n'a pas suffisamment analysé les causes morales et politiques qui modifient l'esprit de la littérature. Il me semble que l'on n'a pas encore considéré comment les facultés humaines se sont graduellement développées par les ouvrages illustres, en tout genre, qui ont été composés depuis Homère jusqu'à nos jours."[15]

To accomplish this purpose, the work is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with "Literature of the Ancients and of the Moderns." From a study of the tragedy, comedy, philosophy and eloquence of the Greeks, she turns to the evolution of Roman literature. The literature of Italy, Spain, England, Germany and France is the basis for her study of modern literature. In this study (especially in Chapter XI), she explains her distinction between the

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14 Gustave Lanson and Paul Tuffrau, Manuel d'histoire de la littérature française, Paris, Librarie Hachette, 1931, p. 511.

15 Madame de Staël, De la littérature, p. 12.

literature of the North and that of the South (Midi). As explanation, she offers the climate as one of the principal reasons for the distinctive features of the literature of the North, which she finds so admirable. This discussion makes evident the influence which the early intense study of Montesquieu had on Mme de Staël. He had included in L'ésprit des lois (primarily in Books XIV and XVII) a consideration of the influence of climate on laws and political office.[16] Mme de Staël adapts this theory to literature. She finds that contemplation of the somber nature and misty atmosphere of the North inclines the northern peoples to be melancholy. However, their harsh climate gives them a certain pride and detachment which makes independence a prime necessity for them. A profound respect for women results in "sensibilité." These characteristics are reflected in their literature beginning with Ossian. These, then, are the qualities together with its later philosophic tendency that lead Mme de Staël to prefer Northern literature to that of the South.

In the second division of the work, Mme de Staël turns to "the present state of knowledge in France and its future progress." Her purpose she gives:

> "Je crois intéressant d'examiner quel devrait être le caractère de la littérature d'un grand peuple, d'un peuple éclairé, chez lequel seraient établies, la liberté, l'egalité politique et les moeurs qui s'accordent avec ces institutions."[17]

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[16] Abry et al, op. cit., p. 1111.

[17] Staël, De la littérature, p. 266.

Surveying the thought trends and ideals of liberty and political and social equality evolving in the French people as a whole, she foresees that a new trend in literature must inevitably result. In her prediction of what that new literature will be, or should be, she refers again and again to characteristics of the literature of the North, which she finds desirable for incorporation into French literature. Together with this incorporation is advised the abandonment of the superannuated models still upheld by some writers, though inconsistent with the "new" society of France. The changing, non-static quality of social institutions and of literature is one phase of the theory of perfectibility, which Mme de Staël propounds in De la littérature. An outgrowth of that belief in progress professed by the eighteenth century philosophers, this theory is stated thus: "la masse des idées en tout genre s'augmente avec les siècles."[18]

When Mme de Staël was exiled from Paris by Napoleon, she made the most of her forced absence by taking advantage of the opportunity of travel. It does not seem strange that she chose to go into Germany, one of the countries whose literature she had distinguished as Northern and for which she had such great admiration. While there, Mme de Staël received the inspiration with which she wrote her second major critical contribution. To effect a fuller understanding of the origins of the literature of the North, she has divided her study into four parts: (1) Germany and German customs, (2) Literature and Art,

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[18] Staël, De l'Allemagne, Preface to Second Edition, p.7.

(3) Philosophy and Morals and (4) Religion. From a discussion of the social and physical environment of the Germans, she goes on to explain that their customs and social institutions have become permeated with the spirit of liberalism (independence as well as submissiveness) which is transferred to their literature. Other of their characteristics she lists as sincerity, fidelity, kindness, industry, imagination, musical inclination, slowness and inertia,--all of which she declares had their origin in the North and are transferred into German literature.

In her discussion of literature and art, Mme de Staël makes a distinction between classic and romantic poetry:

> "...considérant la poésie classique comme celle des anciens, et la poésie romantique comme celle qui tient de quelque manière aux traditions chevaleresques."[19]

and links the second with the Christian era:

> "La littérature romantique ou chevaleresque est chez nous indigène et c'est notre religion et nos institutions qui l'ont fait éclore."[20]

Since it had its roots in the soil of the country, this literature is still capable of being perfected. Thus she states concisely several of the trends of the Romantic movement already indicated and tried by Chateaubriand.

In her discussion of German literature she gives special attention to the discussion of dramatic art and it is here that

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[19] Staël, De l'Allemagne, Part 2, Ch. XI, 153.

[20] Ibid., 155.

she compares German, French and English tragedies. The Germans judge the whole tragedy and thus would not take offense at a comic scene inserted for relief and effect as would the French. Mme de Staël continues with a discussion of the French classical tragedy which, despite its perfection, is not in accord with the century nor with national customs. The classic rules of tragedy would hamper a tragedy based on French history or religion. Of the three unities only the unity of action is important according to Mme de Staël. After making these observations she speaks of the desirability of greater freedom of versification. From the study of foreign plays such as those of Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare, she hopes above all that new ideas may be gained by French writers.[21]

In the last two parts of the book Mme de Staël considers German philosophy and religion underlying their literature. Through an explanation of their philosophy, she reiterates her ideas for the changes to be brought about in French literature. Finally she considers the possibility of an international (or at least European) literature to which each nation would contribute its characteristic note.

When this work was finally introduced to the French readers, it laid additional stones in paving the way for the "new literature," which was being evolved. It became the basis for all romantic criticism and influenced her contemporaries and successors.

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[21] Staël, De l'Allemagne, Part 2, Ch. XIV, 192-202.

The novels of Mme de Staël are somewhat subjective in that the protagonists of both bear a strong resemblance to their author. Le Breton explains the difference thus: "...l'une (Delphine) est la protestation de son coeur et l'autre (Corinne) celle de son génie."[22] Using as her theme the protestation of the independent individualist, Delphine: "...un homme doit savoir braver l'opinion, une femme s'y soumettre," Mme de Staël writes her melodramatic tale of the "grande passion" of Delphine and Léonce.

Delphine d'Albémar, a young widow of nineteen, falls in love with Léonce (a young man of Spanish and French descent) whose marriage to her cousin, Mathilde de Vernon has been arranged. Though Léonce returns that love, he is unable to convince his mother that Delphine's generosity, warmheartedness, talents and intelligence outweigh her independence and unconventionality. Delphine, devoted to her aunt, cannot prevent her cousin's marriage by pressing her own love. Sympathy for an unhappily married friend leads Delphine to permit a rendez-vous at her home. This ends in a brawl and in the death of the friend's husband. Loyalty to her friend makes Delphine assume the entire blame. Léonce, shocked, makes no effort to learn the truth from Delphine and hastens to marry Mathilde. Too late the impulsive and generous action

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22 André Le Breton, Le roman français au XIX^{e} siècle, Paris, Boivin & Cie, n.d., p. 115.

of Delphine is explained to Leonce. There follows an interlude in which Léonce and Delphine see each other daily. This is finally stopped by Delphine at Mathilde's request. She takes refuge in a convent and finally takes the veil in order to avoid the exposure of another impulsive act that, though scandalous in appearance, is really innocent. Immediately thereafter both Léonce's mother and wife die. At last free to marry Delphine, he finds her a nun. He wishes to marry her still but, although the revolutionary government of France disregards all religious vows, he cannot bring himself to defy traditional opinion. Léonce goes off to join the royalist army, is captured and executed. Before his death, Delphine starts off with him to the place of execution but dies en route of poison that she has taken.

In developing the theme, Mme de Staël shows the force of public opinion upon the lives of her minor characters also. Thérèse, the young friend of Delphine, defies public opinion until her husband is killed and then bows to it by entering a convent. No longer welcomed in society because of her divorce, Mme Lebensei is forced to live quietly in the country with her second husband. She voices her complaint:

> "...il n'existe aucun moyen pour une femme de s'affranchir des peines causées par l'injustice de l'opinion."[23]

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[23] Staël, Delphine, p. 389.

Mme de Vernon declares women to be the victims of all social institutions:

> "...j'étais convaincue que les femmes étant victimes de toutes les institutions de la société, elles sont dévouées au malheur."[24]

Emotion plays a capital role in Delphine. This "besoin de l'âme" manifests itself in tears, sighs, stifled cries, fainting and illness. One of the more desperate and violent manifestations of emotion occurs when Léonce stops Delphine's carriage as she attempts to leave the city. On hearing his voice:

> "...je fis des efforts pour ouvrir la portière, le tremblement de ma main m'empêchait d'y réussir; le tremblement augmentait à chaque seconde... Léonce me porta pendant quelques pas; il me croyait évanouie, je ne l'étais point; j'avais conservé le sentiment de l'existence pour jouir de cet instant, peut-être marque par le ciel comme le dernier et le plus haut degré de la félicité qu'il me destine."[25]

Another manifestation of violent emotion occurs when Thérèse is taking the veil. Delphine and Léonce have gone there at Thérèse's request. The convent chapel is the same one where Léonce was married, which gives rise to great emotion. Then Thérèse gives Léonce a letter which tells that Delphine is planning to leave him. Almost overwhelmed by that news, Léonce drags Delphine to the altar making her vow before God that she will not leave him or else he threatens to kill himself. With this emphasis on emotion and her melodramatic

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[24] Ibid., p. 220.

[25] Ibid., p. 264.

plot, Mme de Staël paves the way for the truly Romantic characters of a later day, who revel in their passions and are unrestrained by conventions or public opinion.

When in 1807, with a new fountain of literary resources gained from her travels in Italy, Mme de Staël wrote Corinne, ou l'Italie, she gave to the literary world her romantic self idealization. This cosmopolitan novel, emanating from her genius, takes as its theme the place of woman in the social and literary world. Morillot states the theme thus:

> "...c'est encore l'histoire d'une femme supérieure par l'ésprit et par le coeur qui se soustrait a la règle de l'opinion et qui meurt, victime de sa révolte."[26]

The story is that of Corinne and Oswald (Lord Nelvil), who goes to Italy to recover his health and especially to overcome the melancholy and remorse caused by his father's death. En route, he meets a young Frenchman, le comte d'Erfeuil, who in Rome persuades him to go to the public ceremony at which Corinne, an accomplished and talented poet, is crowned by her fellow academicians. Idol of the Italian people, Corinne is also the center of interest in Roman social and intellectual circles. Her conversation and her improvisations lend charm to every gathering. Accompanying the Count to Corinne's home, Oswald finds her even more attractive than at the public ceremony.

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[26] Paul Morillot, Le roman en France, Paris, Librarie de l'Adadémie de médecine, n.d., p. 367.

Corinne proposes to dispel Oswald's melancholy and make him love Italy and Rome as she does. There follow excursions to churches, palaces, tombs, ruins,--all of the glorious past of Italy is revealed to Oswald. After Holy Week and Easter are observed in Rome, they go to Naples and Vesuvius. Corinne reveals the fact that she is the half sister of Lucile Edgermond, the girls whom Oswald is to marry. She tells him of her happy youth in Italy and contrasts it with her brief stay with her father's family in a provincial English town. When her father's death make that town and her stepmother's antipathy unbearable, she returned to Italy. Oswald leaves Corinne in Venice swearing to return or to have her accepted as his wife in England. Lady Edgermond will not agree to Corinne's return but takes every opportunity to make Oswald aware of Lucile's charms. Oswald, hurt by Corinne's rare, brief letters, finally agrees to marry Lucile. Meanwhile, Corinne, overcome by anxiety, comes to England, fails to see Oswald but hears of his plans. Unwilling to make her sister unhappy, she sends back Oswald's ring. Immediately after his wedding Oswald learns of Corinne's visit and in despair seeks death in the army. Corinne returns to Italy to live in seclusion, seeing only her devoted friend, Castel Forte, until her final illness. Then it is that she sees Oswald, Lucile and their daughter and forgives all.

The first Romantic characteristic of the novel, the personal and autobiographical element, has already been mentioned. Mme de Staël's own conversational brilliance pervades each chapter

and Corinne's popularity reflects the author's own warm reception in Italy. Corinne, like Mme de Staël, is not only a woman of great talent but also a woman with a great heart. It is not surprising then that sentiment plays a role in the novel. Less prominent than in Delphine, it still appears frequently. As, for instance, after Oswald's rescue of a drowning man at Naples and at Corinne's dramatic triumph in Venice. Filled with emotion is the scene in the garden of the Edgermond home in England. The abandoned Corinne arrives when a ball is in progress, wanders about and comes upon Lucile, now Oswald's fiancee, praying at the tomb of their father for her father's and sister's guidance. In a great impulse of love for Lucile, Corinne sends his ring back to Oswald, then staggers away to faint on the road. The subtitle of the novel suggests its dual interest. Its influence was great in spreading knowledge of Italy and the Italians among French readers. In Castel Forte, she gives us her conception of the Italian character. She goes beyond Italy and describes well the English and English society through Oswald and the Edgermond family. The French people she describes with less sympathy in her presentation of le comte d'Erfeuil and Mme d'Arbigny. With these three nationalities represented and her English and Italian settings, Mme de Staël shows again her cosmopolitan point of view.

Through her works and their influence, Mme de Staël stands out far above any others of her time as the one woman,

who, along with Chateaubriand, awakened the contemporary literary generation as well as the succeeding one from its calmness in the hands of a degenerate Classicism to bring forth the revolution, as it were, of Romanticism.

The other feminine writers of this period, of whom perhaps only one, George Sand, attained a success comparable to that of Madame de Staël, will be considered according to the genre of literature which they represent in the greater part of their work. The field of the novel claims first attention, not only because this period was the beginning of the century which has been called "the century of the novel," but also because Mme de Staël's contribution in that genre logically leads to a consideration of her co-contributors.

CHAPTER VI

Mmes KRUDENER, COTTIN, SOUZA AND DURAS

The relatively high status given to Mme de Staël in the literature of her time in the preceding chapter must have some basis for comparison. This comparison brings in four novelists whose works appeared in the same decade as did the major part of those of Mme de Staël; i.e., the first decade of the century. For the first place among these four, two are almost equally qualified. These are Mme Krüdener and Mme Cottin, although the former is most often credited with more talent.

Baroness Barbara Julie de Krüdener (née Wietinghoff) 1764-1824, came to the field of French literature as a "deserter from a foreign camp." Born a rich heiress in Livonia, she only came to Paris in 1789, at the age of twenty-five. At eighteen, she had been married in a "mariage de convenance" to Baron Krüdener, who became a Russian ambassador to Venice and to Copenhagen. Though French was not her native language, Mme de Krüdener brought to its literature her only novel, Valérie. That novel appeared in 1804 (really December, 1803 with 1804 as the publisher's date),[27] two years after Mme de Staël had published Delphine. After this work, Mme de Krüdener wrote no other. Piqued by the novel's failure to please

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[27] Clarence Ford, The Life and Letters of Madame de Krudener, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1893, p. 76.

Napoleon she went to Germany and joined the ranks of Napoleon's enemies. Unlike Mme de Staël, however, she did not pursue any political aims but devoted herself to starting a religious cult in Germany, Switzerland and Russia. She became known throughout Russia for her influence at court. There have been few writers of any period or of any country who have gained the success with only one work that Mme Krüdener did.

Valérie is, as are Delphine and Corinne, a picture of its author, though idealized. Veiled with many small differences of detail, the story is that of an episode in the life of Mme Krüdener. Valérie, the young wife of a much older diplomat inspires the love of his young protégé and secretary, Gustave (in reality Alexandre Stakieff). Entirely oblivious of this fact, Valérie, by her acts of kindness and by her beauty, makes life so miserable for the young man that he, broken in health as well as in spirit, finally confesses his love to Valérie and leaves. Soon after, he writes a confession to Valérie's husband, who comes to stay with him until his death.

This novel is written in the letter form that had been stylized by Richardson and Rousseau,--primarily letters of only one person.[28] This style is considered today more difficult and less interesting reading. Though the novel is not recognized in the history of French literature as a major stepping-stone of the development of Romanticism, it is

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[28] Le Breton, op. cit., p. 8.

impossible to read it without the realization of its Northern tones. The tones are perhaps even more pronounced than those of Mme de Staël, which is not really surprising since Mme Krudener was a native of the North. Nature plays a primary part in the novel. Especially is that so for the hero, Gustave, who is the writer of the greater part of the letters and whom the reader can know more intimately. Nature is a background for his emotions. Mme Krüdener describes the natural settings in such a way that they either reflect the emotion itself or are in direct contrast to it. Some examples of her depiction of nature will clarify that statement. (1) When Gustave had just set out to join the count, he turned to nature and the declaration of its prime importance in his life:

> "...la solitude des mers, leur vaste silence ou leur orageuse activité, le vol incertain d'alcyon, le cri mélancholique de l'oiseau...Que de fois, dévoré par la fièvre de mon coeur, j'eusse voulu, comme l'aigle des montagnes me baigner dans un nuage et renouveler ma vie."[29]

(2) When Gustave first enters Italy, he writes:

> "...cette terre d'antiques merveilles, que le printemps venait saluer avec toutes ses couleurs et tous ses parfums."[30]

(3) To explain his understanding of nature, the changing of his moods with the different aspects of nature, he writes:

> "Quand la nature, et sa grandeur, et son silence, me parloient, étoit-elle autre qu'elle n'est

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29 Madame Krüdener, Valérie, Paris, Librarie des Bibliophiles, 1884, p. 12.

30 Ibid., p. 43.

> aujourd'hui? Où sont-elles? Les voix de la montagne, des torrens, des forêts? ou bien l'homme porte-t-il en lui, avec la faculté de mesurer la grandeur, le pouvoir de rêver aussi d'ineffables harmonies? Ah, sans doute, il est un langage vivant au dedans de nous-mêmes, qui nous fait entendre tous ces secrets langages."[31]

(4) Another example of the existence of harmony between nature and man's moods is:

> "Marie chantait doucement une romance et les paroles de l'amour, murmurées par elle, s'harmonisoient aux vagues, au bruit des rames et à celui des feuilles des peupliers."[32]

(5) And also:

> "...je t'écris d'un petit village...près de Conegliano...dont la site romantique était trop riant pour moi, j'ai cherché les montagnes, leur solitude me convient plus."[33]

Excessive passion is evident as one of the Romantic characteristics of Valérie also. It is found, as is the love of nature, chiefly in Gustave. Several examples will illustrate.

(1) As he tells Valérie of his love, ostensibly for another woman he experiences these emotions:

> "Un regard, quelques sons d'une voix susceptible d'inflections séduisantes contiennent alors tout ce qui fait délirer. La grâce surtout, cette magie par excellence, renouvelle tous les enchantements. Qui plus que vous, dis-je entraîné par le charme de son regard, de son maintien, a cette grâce. O Valérie! (je pris sa main) Valérie, dis-je avec un accent passionné."[34]

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31 Ibid., p. 106.

32 Ibid., p. 145.

33 Ibid., p. 154

34 Ibid., p. 76.

(2) The words and music of a song (by Rousseau) produce in him these effects:

> "Ma voix altérée ne peut achever; une sueur froide me rendit immobile; Valérie jeta un cri; je retombai sur ma chaise et je crus que j'allais perdre entièrement connaissance."[35]

(3) On receiving a letter from Valérie:

> "Oh quels moments d'enivrante extase!"[36]

(4) Just before he confesses his love to Valérie:

> "Et je tombai à genoux devant elle, j'embrassai ses pieds; elle se baissa et le portrait du comte s'echappa de son sein. Je ne sais plus ce qui m'arriva...et la terrible émotion que je ressentois dans cet instant où j'allais peut-être lui dire qui je l'aimois me fit trouver mal."[37]

Despite the fact that Valérie gives her name to the book, she does not arouse our interest as much as does Gustave. He is the true romantic hero. Afflicted with melancholy even in his youth (as is learned from fragments of his mother's journal), he becomes even more so in his unrequited and unconfessed love for Valérie. Though he still holds fast to his religious faith, many qualities in Gustave are the same as those found in René. The count, as a character, is quite normal and well-balanced in contrast to Gustave. The death of Gustave in the novel, in its lengthy description reminds one somewhat of that of Atala. The account of his death (from the time that the count arrives until the actual death) covers thirty-eight pages. (211-249)

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[35] Ibid., p. 88.

[36] Ibid., p. 110.

[37] Ibid., p. 164

A trace of cosmopolitanism appears in Valérie in the fact that a Russian writes about Italy, Denmark and Sweden with so much success.

Madame Krüdener's romanticism was not without outside influence. She was an intimate friend of Mme de Staël and delighted in attending her salon. It was there that the literary ambition of Mme Krüdener was kindled. There, also, was occasioned her meeting with the one who influenced her more than any other, Chateaubriand. At the salon of Mme de Staël, the friendship between Mme Krüdener and Chateaubriand grew to such an extent that she was the very first recipient of a copy of his Génie du Christianisme when it appeared in 1802.[38] Chateaubriand was delighted when the fruit of Mme Krüdener's literary work appeared in Valérie. It is related by many that he went so far as to call Valérie "la soeur cadette de René."[39] In many ways, it is just that. A romantically charming novel, it had no lasting effect comparable to that of the works of Mme de Staël.

The second of the four writers is Madame Marie (Sophie) Cottin, 1770-1807. Left a childless widow at twenty-three by the death of her Parisian banker husband, she turned to literature for compensation. Her five novels are, as those of Mme de Staël, each titled after and built around its heroine. They

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38 Ford, op. cit., p. 59.

39 M. B. Finch and E. A. Peers, The Origins of French Romanticism, New York, E. P. Dutton, n.d., p. 231.

are: Claire d'Albe (1799), Malvina (1801), Amelie Mansfield (1803), Mathilde ou Mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades (1805) and Elisabeth ou les exilés de Sibérie (1806). These novels, though seldom read today, had a very great contemporary success. Though their adherence to what could scarcely be distinguished as literary standards in this period of transition does not make for their present popularity, they do retain an historic interest in reflecting well the period.

Her novel Elisabeth is both removed from and near to Romanticism. The story is more concerned with events than with analysis of feeling and close study of character. The plot concerns a young girl, Elisabeth, daughter of Pierre and Phedora Springer, who had lived practically all of her life in exile in Siberie. As she grows older, she begins to wonder why they are different from some other people and why some things are forbidden to them. She finally learns that her father, a member of a high Polish family, had been exiled for political reasons. It is then that she determines not to rest until her father is pardoned. For help she turns to Smoloff, who is the son of the governor of the Siberian region of Tobalsk, and who has saved her father's life previously. Smoloff promises aid but has to go away before he can fulfil his promise. Determined, nevertheless, to go before the Emperor, Elisabeth seeks the help of an old priest who comes to their home. Together they set off across Siberia to Russia. On the way, they undergo many hardships and the priest dies. Alone, Elisabeth reaches

Moscow, where she finds Smoloff, who aids her in seeing Alexander. She receives the pardon and goes back to her parents to receive their blessing on her forthcoming marriage to Smoloff.

The primary point of interest of the novel is the virtue of the young girl with singleness of purpose. The love element in the story is of almost no significance. It is very unreal and seems to be added as an afterthought, probably with the intention of attracting more readers. Nature plays almost no part in the novel. Only at one point is any detailed description of the natural environment employed. That occurs at the point where Elisabeth leaves her home on her journey:

> "En ce moment, l'aurore commençait à éclaircir la cime des monts, et dorait déjà le faîte des noirs sapins; mais tout reposait encore. Aucun souffle de vent ne ridait le surface du lac, n'agitait les feuilles des arbres, celles même du bouleau etaient tranquilles, les oiseaux ne chantaient point, tout se taisait, jusqu'au moindre insecte: on eût dit que la nature entière se tenait dans un respectueux silence."[40]

At other times nature is only a harsh, unyielding obstacle to the success of her purpose. The depiction, however slight, of such a country as Siberia about which many people were curious, but few really knew anything, shows the use of an exotic background. Though the story is based on fact, it could not be called subjective. Other romantic qualities such as passion, melancholy, etc. are entirely lacking.

The novel, Malvina, is an earlier one but really shows nascent characteristics of Romanticism. Its characters are

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40 Mme Cottin, Elisabeth, Paris, Lavigne, n.d., pp. 126-127.

lifted from the eighteenth century for the most part. Notable is the great part which passion plays in the novel. In the hero, Edmond, it seems to be a frenzied jealous passion, while in Malvina it is somewhat suppressed. In the novel it is evident that Mme Cottin knew and admired Ossian. One of the characters has written some Gallic poetry, which he compares with MacPherson's accounts of Ossian. She calls the latter "sublimes ouvrages," and defends them against the attack of another character.[41] Though written much as is Elisabeth, in a pleasing straight-forward manner, Malvina is quite superior to it. When he wrote:

> "...les romans de Mme Cottin dans sa conception de l'amour, vont en se développant constituer l'amour romantique. Il en est chez elle à ses premiers begaiements, ses révoltes ne sont pas bien menaçantes et ses tristesses sont sans beauté."[42]

Le Breton could well have had in mind her novel Malvina.

Another of her novels, Mathilde, often considered the best, manifests Mme Cottin's interest in the glorious past of France. She recalls the time of Philippe-Auguste and the crusades of the twelfth century. Mathilde is a young novice, who starts with her brother, Richard Ier, on a crusade to the Holy Land before taking her final vows. In one of the many adventures which she encounters, she is captured by Malek Adel, a leader of the Mussulmans. Malek falls in love with Mathilde but she

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41 Mme Cottin, Malvina, Paris, Giguet and Michaud, 1805, pp. 61-63.

42 Le Breton, op. cit., p. 102.

refuses to marry him until he becomes a Christian. The warfare continues between the Christians and the pagans and another warrior leader, Lusignan, falls in love with Mathilde and tries to force her to marry him. He captures both Malek and Mathilde. In a battle with Lusignan, Malek is mortally wounded. This brings the battles to a close. Mathilde buries Malek as a Christian and, vowing never to leave his tomb, she takes her final vows. The Romantic element of the novel is evident in its portrayal of chivalry, both Christian and Moslem, and in its portrayal of excessive passion. One scene is especially noticeable in which Mathilde keeps repeating, "Es-tu chrétien?" to Malek when he declares his love for her and asks her to marry him. The scene and even the very words are reminiscent of a like scene in Atala. In its length, the novel is reminiscent of many of the earlier French novels, but it is written in much the same manner as Malvina.

Concerning the influence of Mme Cottin's works on later works of other authors, Le Breton has made a somewhat flattering comparison. He claims that other more gifted writers took the characters of Mme Cottin and made them famous. In Valérie by Mme Krüdener, he finds Claire d'Albe; in Xavier de Maistre's La jeune Sibérienne, Elisabeth; in Chateaubriand's Aben Hamet (Le Dernier Abencérage), Malek Adel (Mathilde); in Mme de Staël's Corinne, Amelie Mansfield and in her Mme Vernon (Delphine), he finds Mistress Birton (Malvina).[43] Even with such Romantic

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[43] Ibid., p. 93.

seeds, not capitalized upon to the fullest, Mme Cottin's works have not merited for her a place of major importance in the pre-Romantic development of the novel.

Even farther removed from the pre-Romantic school, but writers at the turn of the century, are Madame Adele Filleul (Marquise de) Souza (1761-1836) and Madame Claire (de Kersaint) Duras (1778-1828). The novels of the former, contain hints of the favorite Romantic theme--the struggle between the rights of society and of passion, but did not receive the treatment of the Romantics. Mme Souza still lived and thought according to the standards of the eighteenth century society and wrote about that society in order to appeal mainly to other readers like herself. Her works are not without merit, however, in depicting what they were intended to depict. As Sainte-Beuve wrote:

> "Qu'on ne recherche pas quelle fut sur elle l'influence de Jean-Jacques ou de tel autre écrivain célèbre, comme on le pourrait faire pour Mme de Staël, pour Mme de Krüdener, pour Mme Cottin..."[44]

Her most famous work, Eugène de Rothelin, is like her others a capitalization on some more or less insignificant event in her life, with the ending, primarily the only place in which her imagination predominates. Eugène de Rothelin, the hero of that

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[44] Sainte-Beuve, Portraits de femmes, Paris, Librarie Garnier Frères, 1886, p. 50.

novel, is a young man who having been reared by his father for twenty years away from the contacts of society, is brought to Paris and introduced to Parisian society. He becomes a protege of Madame d'Estouteville and soon falls in love with her granddaughter, Athénaïs de Rieux, who is the victim of an unfortunate marriage. The suggestion of an annulment of the marriage does not overcome the objections of Eugène's father. For a while, it seems as if the two are to be separated forever. The ending is, however, a happy one in which Mme d'Estouteville writes a letter to Eugène's father, revealing many things concerning Eugène's dead mother. This, along with the apparent unhappiness of his son, leads M. Rothelin to withdraw his objection and consent to the marriage. In this and the other novels of Mme de Souza, Mme de Staël is said to have recognized a novelty of subject which attracted her Romantic taste, but was very much disappointed, however, in the timidity of the treatment of the subject.[45] The novels of Mme de Souza are nineteenth century novels only in the date of their publication. In them can be seen clearly the eighteenth century characteristics of sobriety, precision of style, subtlety and vigor of psychological analysis; in contrast with which the literature of Romanticism was indeed a "revolution." Her words show the most charming side of eighteenth century society, which had disappeared with the

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[45] Finch and Peers, op. cit., p. 234.

Revolution.

Another writer, still dominated by the eighteenth century, but also somewhat of a transition novelist is Madame Duras. Her two works are Ourika and Edouard (1825). The former is the story of a young negress, who, though reared in Paris as the daughter of a white family learns by accident of social prejudice against her, and is made miserable by that knowledge. The solution of her problem she finds in "taking the veil." The second novel concerns the social problem of marriage between an aristocrat and a plebeian. Sainte-Beuve has expressed the theme of her novels as:

> "...une idée d'inégalité, soit de nature soit de position sociale, une idée d'empêchement, d'obstacle entre le dêsir de l'âme et l'objet mortel..."[46]

The idea of struggle in the novels leads him to say also:

> "Les romans de Mme de Duras sont bien de la Restauration, écho d'une lutte non encore terminée avec le sentiment de grands catastrophes en arrière."[47]

In her use of the convent and the priest in Ourika, one may see that the rôle played by Christianity makes her works different from those of Mme de Souza. Her friendship with Chateaubriand and knowledge of his Génie may give some basis for this element in her novels. Her other contacts with prominent contemporaries led to her interest in politics.

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[46] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 62.

[47] Ibid., p. 73.

The influence of her work was not great. Some have been able, however, to find in the group of social novels of George Sand some repetition of the themes of Mme de Duras' novels. She was, after all:

> "...une femme rare, qui opérait naturellement autour d'elle un compromis merveilleux entre le goût, le ton d'autrefois et les puissances nouvelles."[48]

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48 Ibid., p. 69.

CHAPTER VII

GEORGE SAND

In the decade from 1820-1830, no feminine novelist shared the triumphant period of Romanticism with Vigny, Hugo, Merimée and Dumas père. At the beginning of the fourth decade of the century, however, came George Sand (pseudonym of Lucile-Aurore Dupin, afterwards Baronne Dudevant), 1804-1876, to take part in the "harvest-time" of Romanticism. The life of this prolific novelist itself reads somewhat like a novel. The daughter of an officer of the Empire, she was left fatherless very soon after her birth and brought up by her mother and grandmother. Her mother seems to have dropped from sight soon, leaving Aurore at Nohant under the care of her grandmother. In 1822, after the death of her grandmother, she married Casimir Dudevant, from whom she separated in 1830. At that time she turned to Paris and to literature, for which she scarcely realized her own talent. Her first contributions were in collaboration with Jules Sandeau in "Figaro" and "Revue de Paris," periodicals of the time.[49] In 1831, she made her own debut with the novel, Indiana. From that time on, she occupied herself in prolific writing. After unhappy liaisons, which are greatly publicised today, with Sandeau, Alfred de Musset, a Venitian doctor, a lawyer and finally the composer, Chopin, she went to live in

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[49] B. F. Sharp, Editor, Biographical Dictionary of Foreign Literature, London, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1933.

comparative quiet at Nohant, busying herself with her writing. Her principal works are novels with the exception of her autobiographical works, l'Histoire de ma vie and Elle et Lui, and her articles in journals.

The different periods of George Sand's life are reflected by the several groups into which her novels are divided. As she was introduced to the literary scene, she was ready to gather up the work of the women novelists and to add to it what she had gleaned from Rousseau and Chateaubriand.[50] Beginning with Indiana (1831) and including Valentine (1832), Lélia (1833), Jacques(1834) and Mauprat (1836), George Sand makes her contribution to purely romantic extravaganza. In these novels, while in pursuit of a visionary Romantic ideal, she extols the revolt of human nature against social injustices. Her heroes and heroines are the melancholy beings created by the influences that she sustained. These novels reflect the failure of George Sand's marriage and contain marital controversies. Indiana, for example is concerned with a young wife torn between her infatuation for another man and the demand of society that she be true to her husband, who is much older than she and quite unsuited to the temperament of the young Creole. George Sand expresses some of her thoughts about the place accorded to women in marriage in her preface to the 1842 edition of Indiana. She says:

"...l'injustice et la barbarie des lois qui régissent

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[50] Finch and Peers, op. cit., p. 242.

> encore l'existence de la femme dans le mariage, dans la famille et la société."[51]

Indiana is introduced and depicted as "une creole nerveuse et maladive," "une femme rêveuse et triste," frail but with hidden strength, unaccustomed to society, naïve, credulous and generous. Since her marriage was entirely an arranged affiar, she has never known any love but the lifelong devotion of her cousin, Ralph. Ralph (Rodolph) Brown, who is living at the home of Indiana and her husband, M. Delmare, when the story opens, is depicted as a calm and taciturn individual. Only occasionally do his repressed emotions flare up. Upon the scene with these three characters and Noun, Indiana's Creole maid and companion, comes the young man Raymon de Ramière. He first loves Noun but upon seeing Indiana, falls in love with her. Indiana returns his love. Noun, seeing herself abandoned, drowns herself. With Indiana still torn between her infatuation for Raymon and loyalty to her husband there comes the crisis of financial ruin to the Delmare family. M. Delmare decides to return to the island of Bourbon (Réunion), Indiana's native island. In despair Indiana throws herself on the mercy of Raymon only to find his infatuation completely dead. She has no choice, then, but to follow her husband. His brutal treatment makes her long to escape, which she does on receiving a letter from Raymon. On her return to France she discovers that Raymon has married. Stunned by the news, she returns to Paris,

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[51] George Sand, Indiana, "Préface de l'édition de 1842," Paris, Calmann-Lévy, P. 1852, p. 15.

where she is found by Ralph, who has come to tell her of the death of M. Delmare. Completely helpless and docile she agrees to return to the island with Ralph, who suggests suicide as the only means of escape from their unhappiness. Occupied with these plans, they become less occupied with their misery and finally discover that they love each other. They decide to forget the past and to live always on the island.

Passion, the outstanding characteristic of the novel, is especially manifest in four different situations. The love of Noun for Raymon is described as "une orgie amoureuse." Raymon, in an outburst of passion says to Indiana:

> "'Je te jure, lui dit-il, d'être a toi corps et âme, je te voue ma vie, je te consacre mon sang, je te livre ma volonté, prends tout, dispose de tout, de ma fortune, de mon honneur, de ma conscience, de ma pensée, de tout mon être.'"[52]

Indiana is equally vehement in her expression of her love when she is faced with separation from Raymon (pp. 201-205). Finally, as Ralph and Indiana stand on a cliff, ready to jump to their death:

> "'Sois mon époux dans le ciel et sur la terre, lui dit-elle et que ce baiser me fiance à toi pour l'éternité.' Leurs lèvres s'unirent; et sans doute il y a dans un amour qui part du coeur une puissance plus soudaine que dans les ardeurs d'un désir éphémère; car ce baiser, sur le seuil d'une autre vie, résuma pour eux toutes les joies de celle-ci."[53]

The injustice of marriage laws is indicated by Indiana when she is aroused by her husband's jealousy and brutality. He

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[52] Ibid., p. 125.

[53] Ibid., p. 319.

refers to the law to uphold his authority and she speaks of herself as a slave and of him as her master. The unhappy earlier marriage of Ralph adds to the weight of the author's arguments. On this subject, George Sand is not content to let her characters speak, but interrupts the narrative to speak her own mind. Politics of the day enter the story, too, in the discussions of the three men. The Englishman reflects the liberal ideals of a country with a constitutional monarchy. M. Delmare harks back to the regime of Napoleon, under whom he had formerly served. Raymon presents still another view, that of the Legitimist. In contrast to this tale of conflicting emotions is the epilogue which describes the idyllic life of Ralph and Indiana on the island of Bourbon, in which one can foresee something of the idyllic novels which George Sand was to write later.

In this romantic vein, George Sand continued to write until 1827, when she came under the influence of some of the political and philosophic thinkers of the day, economists and socialists; Pierre Leroux, Michel de Bourges, Lamennais and Louis Blanc. Their theories are reflected in the succeeding novels: Spiridion (1840), Le compagnon du tour de France (1840), Consuelo (1842), Le Meunier d'Angibault (1845) and le Péché de M. Antoine (1847). In these novels she takes the part of the weak against the strong and of the poor against the rich. In Le Meunier d'Angibault, she depicts two couples who are kept apart because of the economically higher position of the women.

The miller is not acceptable to the Bricolin family as a suitor for their daughter, Rose, whom he loves, because he hasn't a large enough income. On the other hand, Henri Lemor is unwilling to marry the widowed Mme de Blanchemont because of her wealth and social position. The solution of the two problems is brought about by Marcelle de Blanchemont's generosity and the total loss of her fortune. The contrast between Marcelle, who would give up everything in order to make someone else happy and M. Bricolin, interested only in the accumulation of wealth, is one of the most interesting elements of the novel. Grand Louis, the miller, is probably the most normal of the characters in his attitude toward money. He is quite content with his lot and wants more money only in order to marry Rose. Henri has given away his inheritance and learned a trade because of his conviction that one is entitled only to the money one earns. He is the "rêveur" who has persuaded Marcelle to accept his "utopies." Even the jolly, well-balanced miller has read of these theories and has been attracted to them. These three look forward to a kind of communal society "quand chacun travaillera pour tous et tous pour chacun."[54] Marcelle explains it to Rose as:

> "...Une association vraiment sainte, une sorte d'église nouvelle, où quelques croyants inspires appelleront a eux leurs frères pour les faire vivre en commun sous les lois d'une religion et d'une morale qui répondent

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54 George Sand, Le Meunier d'Angibault, Paris, Calmann-Lèvy, 1852, p. 228.

aux nobles besoins de l'âme et aux lois de la véritable égalité."[55]

With her socialistic idealism, George Sand turned, in view of the imminent revolution of 1848, to the delightful and fresh description of rustic and poatoral life in the next group of her novels. During this period she gave to literature some of her best known and most lasting novels: Jeanne and François le Champi (1844), La mare au diable (1846), La petite Fadette (1848) and Les maîtres sonneurs (1852). These idyllic works have survived and still interest the reader of today. Their style as well as their subject matter has brought success to these novels. George Sand lived among the peasants of Le Berri and loved them. Her descriptions of their life were motivated and strengthened by that love and understanding.

The mid-century found George Sand writing in that vein, but soon to return to her "roman mondain," much in the same style as the novels which had won her first success, though without many of the Romantic affectations.[56] Her later work is represented by Le marquis de Villemer (1860), Jean de la Roche (1860), Mademoiselle de la Quintinie (1863) and La confession d'une jeune fille (1865). These novels did not achieve the success of her earlier works, since they seemed outmoded to the readers of the Second Empire.

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[55] Ibid., p. 142.

[56] Paul Morillot, op. cit., p. 439.

CHAPTER VIII

POETS

The Romantic movement in poetry was simultaneous with that in the novel in that its triumphant period was the same. In poetry, there came more quickly, however, an almost complete break with the former poetry of Classicism. For the most part, a poet was easily identified with either movement, with few transitionists such as have been noted in the field of the novel.

Dominating the field of Romantic poetry were Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo and Musset. The women in the poetry of Romanticism have been all but forgotten, except for their inspiration and influence on the masculine poets. There have remained, however, works of a few of the women poets of the time to show their literary activity. As has been heretofore mentioned (cf. Ch. III), undoubtedly many gems of Romantic verse were destined never to reach the publisher and the public because of the timidity and the position of the women who wrote them. The liberty of Romanticism must have released many women to write sentimental verse, but that verse was generally secret and private. It is not known today.

For her published writing, the woman who stands highest is Madame Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859). Born at Douai, she lost her parents in the Revolution and was forced to make her own way in the world from that time. She began in

the theater (l'Opéra Comique) at the age of thirteen. For several years she continued in the theater, going on to l'Odeon. After an unhappy love affair, ending for her in abandonment, she married her comrade of the theater, Valmore, in 1817. After that time, her verse began to appear. Some of the volumes were Elégies et Romances (1818), Elégies et Poésies nouvelles (1825), Pleurs (1833), Pauvre fleurs (1839) and Bouquets et Prières (1843).

The Romantic qualities of the poetry of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore which prompted Sainte-Beuve to call her "la premiere hirondelle du printemps romantique"[57] and also prompted the generous criticism of Baudelaire and Verlaine were not the result of her having studied the works of the ancestors of Romanticism. Rousseau, St.-Pierre, Staël, and Chateaubriand were not among her reading repertory. A quotation with which F. Loliée has aptly prefaced a volume of her selected verse seems to be her own explanation of herself:

> "'Quoi! vous voulez savoir le secret de mon sort?
> Ce que j'en peux livrer ne vaut qu'on l'envie;
> Mon secret, c'est mon coeur, ma souffrance, la vie;
> Mon effroi, l'avenir, si Dieu n'eût fait la mort.'"[58]

The love and melancholy in her poetry, which has chiefly the themes of love and death, can be seen as the spontaneous issues of her soul's emotion. For her, "Le besoin d'aimer était aussi

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[57] Abry et al., op. cit., p. 1215.

[58] Mme Desbordes-Valmore, Oeuvres choisies, Paris, Librarie Ch. Delagrave, n.d., Title page.

nécessaire que respirer pour vivre."[59] Her tearful poems reflect the events of her life which she found to be sorrowful. Her unfortunate love and the death of her child influenced her poetry to a great extent. As one of her biographers has written:

> "Her fame profited by her sorrows, for from this wound made by unmerited deception, by betrayal of good faith, flowed a spring of melancholic and passionate songs."[60]

Nature enters her poetry in her recollections about her childhood and her old home. Another group of poems consists of her occasional verses, many of which are addressed to her dear friends, Pauline Duchambge, Delphine Gay and another woman simply called Albertine. Still other poems deal with her children and some of these are quite happy.

The originality of form as well as of style was not the result of study on her part. The "vers impair," with her usually eleven feet, which she was the first poet to use,[61] was only an innovation necessary to express more completely her emotions. Nevertheless it was also a break away from a restricted form as was her subjectivity. Though not one of the great Romantic poets, in comparison with the men, Mme Desbordes-Valmore does make her contribution as a lyric poet to the movement as a whole.

A distinct personality in the Romantic group and a poet

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59 Ibid., "Notice", p. 8.

60 Ibid., p. 13.

61 Paul Verlaine, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1925, iv, 62.

herself was Madame Delphine (Gay) Girardin (1804-1855). Her eminence in literary circles began to be recognized by the time that she was only fifteen. Sophie Gay, her mother, was responsible for initiating Delphine into the society of the salons, where (known as "La Muse") she came to be associated primarily with the salon of Charles Nodier. By her brilliance, her gaiety and her charm, she won the admiration of the remaining Classicists and the Romanticists alike. Her poetry, though much shorter lived than her fame, won its first recognition in 1822, when she received a prize from the French Academy for the poem, "Les Soeurs de Sainte-Camille." The first volume of poetry which she published was Essais poétiques (1824). Her occasional poetry, especially her poem on the conquest of Algiers and the July revolution, helps to explain the title given to her of "Muse de la Patrie." The attractive characteristics of her poetry are wit and elegance. Sometimes, however, the excess of elegance stifles the real feeling of the poetry.[62] Not completely satisfied with poetry, she found her place in journalism, after attempting both the novel and drama. In 1846 she collaborated with Méry, Théophile Gautier and Jules Sandeau on La Croix de Berny. Although popular with her contemporaries, Delphine did not equal that popularity with lasting literary success. Her talent lay obviously not in the realm of literature, but in the realm of society, of which she was a

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[62] Sainte-Beuve, Causeries de lundi, Paris, Garnier Frères, 1852, III, 302.

veritable queen. Sainte-Beuve quotes her as saying:

> "'Mon front était si fier de sa couronne blonde,
> Anneaux d'or et d'argent tant de fois caresses!
> Et j'avais tant d'espoir quand j'entrai dans le monde
> Orgueilleuse et les yeux baisses!'"[63]

Another woman poet, the success of whose poetry "posterity has not confirmed"[64] is Madame Adelaide Billet Dufrenoy (1765-1825). Reared in a convent, Adelaide Billet married soon after leaving there at an early age. Only after the misfortune of financial ruin and the loss of her husband's eyesight did she turn to poetry. Her poem "Une nuit d'exil" recounts some of the details of her misfortune. She says:

> "Je vois ses yeux, privés de la lumière,
> Ne plus s'ouvrir que pour verser des pleurs!"[65]

It seems that she gained comfort just from the writing of her thoughts into poetry. Her poetry, which is generally conventional in subject matter and language, takes the form of occasional and other light poems. Examples of the former are: "A un Député, sur la mort de sa femme," "Sur la Mort de Florian," and "A Madame d'Antremont" (a friend who was leaving on a trip). The conventional subjects of the latter group are such as: "La Constance," "Le Soupçon," "Les Serments" and "Le Serrement de Main," through all of which is expounded her love for someone with the conventional name of Elmandre.

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63 Ibid., p. 299.

64 Berthelot et al., La Grande Encyclopédie.

65 Mme Adelaide Dufrenoy, Oeuvres poétiques, Paris, M. Hayes, 1827, p. 109.

Some amount of success came to Mme Dufrenoy in 1814, when she received a prize from the French Academy for her poem, "Mort de Bayard." This was the first prize ever accorded to a woman by a learned assembly.[66] In this poem, it is interesting to note that Mme Dufrenoy recalls an era in the history of France. Bayard was the last of the knights, "un chevalier sans peur et sans reproche." Even further back historically is the subject of the poem, "Clotilde," who was the wife of Clovis. These poems recall somewhat the interest of the Romanticists in the historical past of France. An evidence that Mme Dufrenoy was acquainted with the work of Mme de Stael is her poem in the form of a letter from Corinne to Oswald. An echo of an event which influenced Mme de Staël's Delphine, the passage of the decree in favor of divorce, is found in Mme Dufrenoy's "romance", entitled "Le Divorce."

Throughout all of her poetry, whatever the subject, conventionality pervades. It is evident that Mme Dufrenoy wrote for her own satisfaction with no apparent thought for the new literary trends.

A friend of Mme Dufrenoy who wrote much the same type of poetry was Mme Amable Tastu (1798-1885). Her poem which receives the most mention today is "Oiseaux du Sacre" (1825). Even that has very slight mention. One is unable to obtain her work in

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[66] M. A. Jay, Introduction to Dufrenoy's Oeuvres poétiques, Paris, M. Hayes, 1827, p. xviii.

order to discover why it has been forgotten; although the name of its author is often mentioned in connection with the literary society of her time. Sainte-Beuve has written one of his "portraits" about Mme Tastu in which he sees her talent as:

> "...un talent à demi voilé, qui n'est allé qu'à une gloire décente sous le contrôle du devoir."[67]

Though her verse is generally not good, he claims that especially in "Oiseaux de Sacre," she was aware of and could hear "les accents de liberté."[68] Near the latter part of her life she turned to prose in the form of educational works.

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[67] Sainte-Beuve, Portraits contemporaines, Vol. 3., p. 164.

[68] Ibid., p. 165.

CHAPTER IX

WRITERS OF LETTERS

The two remaining women considered in this paper, Delphine de Custine and Eugénie de Guérin, merit their place in an account of women writers of their time by the letters both left and by the diary of the latter.

Delphine (marquise) de Custine (1770-1826), one of the most beautiful and seductive women of her day came to be linked with Chateaubriand in one of his many affairs. Though she really loved him, the affair, meaning nothing to him, brought her only sorrow and misfortune. Her letters, which were collected only recently, tell the story of her life, which was a continual search for elusive good fortune. They also reveal the character of their author. Her love for her family,--her brother and her mother, was a great factor in her life, as well as her devotion to her son, Astolphe. Painting was one of her pastimes in which it is said that she was very talented. Her liberalism is also reflected in her letters.

Eugénie de Guérin (1805-1848) would not today take any credit for her journal which she left, to be published in 1855, after her death, under the title of Reliquiæ. The short life of Mlle Guérin was filled with two thoughts only. The first was of her brother, Maurice, and his literary success; the second, her own religion. The latter was not a serene religion, however. She seems to have been followed by a sense of forlornness,

boredom and dejected weariness.[69] Her journal, addressed to her brother, reveals those thoughts and their significance in her life. Matthew Arnold is high in praise of her in his Essays in Criticism, where he labels her with the term "distinction".[70] Her primary purpose in life was to make her brother known and she achieved that to some extent, while also doing the same thing for herself in the content and quality of her many letters and of her journal. She is quoted as saying: "It is the instinct of my life to write, as it is the instinct of the fountain to flow."[71] Sainte-Beuve, in explaining how her life was motivated by even small things and events, wrote:

> "Le moindre incident, le moindre mouvement, dans cette vie tranquille produit des jeux d'une fantasie ou d'une affection pleine de grace."[72]

Though their lives were entirely opposite, Eugénie de Guérin illustrates, as does Mme de Custine, a life filled with a devotion to a member or members of her family.

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[69] Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, First Series, London, Macmillan and Co., 1937, p. 130.

[70] Ibid., p. 155.

[71] Ibid., p. 131.

[72] Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, p. 201.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Through the consideration and study of the twelve women who made achievements worthy of mention in the years from 1800 to 1850, one is able to draw several conclusions. We have seen first how the participation of women in the profession then called "letters" was not considered suitable and that, even when they wrote things worthy of mention, social opinion evidently hindered all but a small minority from publishing. Even when their work was published, unless it emanated from true genius, it was generally subordinated, either by its own lack of merit or by its lack of public recognition, to the work of the great men of the day. From the examination of representative works of that minority of women it has been discovered that they contributed in varying degrees, especially to the novel and poetry. In these genres they contributed more or less to the development of the one great literary movement of that period, which was Romanticism. Mme de Staël's initiation of Romantic theory and criticism has made hers one of the great names in French literature. Her novels, moreover, illustrated some of her theories and developed the role of sentiment as found in the pre-Romantic novels of the eighteenth century. The characters of her novels, Delphine and Corinne, moreover, definitely reflect the author. Mme Krüdener in her single contribution to the

genre, created in Valérie the Romantic hero, Gustave, akin to Rene, but one whose religion made him resigned to his fate. Mme Cottin added at least two more to the list of Romantic characters, the passionate Edmond in Malvina and the devoted Malek-Adel in Mathilde. The latter as an exemplary Moslem knight adds an exotic note, which is to be found also in Elisabeth. Malek-Adel's luxurious palace and the customs and beliefs of his people necessarily figure in a story of the crusade, which forms the historic background of the novel.

The works of Mme Souza and Mme Duras have little or no place in the development of the Romantic novel. Merely a glimpse of the subjective element is caught in Mme Souza's nostalgic descriptions of eighteenth century French society. Mme Duras raised the question of inequality of race and rank in her novels. In her own life she adjusted herself very well to the changed conditions that accompanied the Empire and the Restoration.

George Sand, the second great woman writer of the period outranks Mme de Stael in the novel. Her first novel, Indiana, is truly a novel of passionate love with some exotic background. Though it reflects the author's problems, it does have wider significance. It indicates George Sand's awareness of the social problems of her day, just as does the later novel, Le Meunier d'Angibault. Her greatest claim to fame, however, lies in her depiction of the peasants of her native province, Le Berri. Indeed she is the first of a long line of regional novelists.

The fame of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, the most gifted of the women poets studied, has increased since her death. Her lyric poems, simple as they are, are truly Romantic and deserve their place in the period, though they do not rank with the best of the great poets' works. Compared with Mme Valmore, Delphine Gay Girardin is almost lacking in feeling in her works. Her real contribution to the period lay rather in her association with her more talented colleagues. Mme Dufrenoy, despite her prize-winning poems, prolonged the eighteenth century style of poetry. The lack of subjectivity and the conventionality which pervade her poetry are in direct contrast to the distinctively and wholly personal verse of Mme Desbordes-Valmore. The oblivion into which Mme Amable Tastu has fallen, may, perhaps, be an indication of the comparative failure of her work to meet adequately either the demands of the Classicists or to reflect clearly anything of the Romantic.

Two women stand out as letter writers of the day in France. No two persons could be so different, as they appear in their letters; and yet both have a very real affection for their families. Mme de Guérin's journal and her letters probably have more permanent quality than those of Delphine de Custine.

The first half of the nineteenth century, then, brought to France two of its greatest women in the field of literature, Mme Staël and George Sand, along with several others who stand at different distances behind them to fill in the whole scene of women writers.

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Approved by:

W. S. Barney

Director

Examining Committee:

Meta Hasava Miller

May Delaney Bush