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Title	Private pain and the public temper
Authors	O'Donovan, Patrick
Publication date	2021-02-25
Original Citation	O'Donovan, P. (2021) 'Private pain and the public temper', in Watt, A. (Ed.), The Cambridge History of the Novel in French, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 275-291. doi: 10.1017/9781108683920.020
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-history-of-the-novel-in-french/5BB496D480E15DFB7BCE3A4465049E36 - 10.1017/9781108683920
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Download date	2026-11-01 09:23:23
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/11117



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Private Pain and the Public Temper: The Personal Novel and Beyond

Patrick O'Donovan

The treaties of Lunéville and of Amiens, signed in 1801 and 1802 respectively, marked the end of the Revolutionary Wars and seemed to herald a period, however equivocal, of peace. Such hopes were not to last. The rapid renewal of war, which stemmed above all from Napoleon's unappeased imperial ambitions,[1] threw the future direction of politics once more into doubt. As Europe turned again to conflict, an explicit concern for the place of language and literature in the appraisal of the impact of the Revolution emerged as one issue among many for debate. It has been argued that the very instability of the Revolution itself resulted from a 'competition for discursive legitimacy' concerning the issue of how to interpret and to give expression to the people's will.[2] The Revolution prompted a reappraisal of culture from several distinct angles, a number of which, in turn, impinge both on the conceptualization and the practice of literature. Mme de Staël, for her part, was to insist on the peculiar timeliness of fiction, on the basis of its affective impact: 'after a long revolution, hearts have become singularly hardened, and yet that sympathy for pain which is the true bond between mortals was never more necessary'.[3] In *De la littérature*, Staël addresses the issue of how the highly cultivated and refined literary practice of pre-Revolutionary France could be brought to bear on the preoccupations of the moderns who come in its wake. The issue of taste thus shapes her understanding of literature as one competing discourse among the many that proliferate in a modern society.[4] Her view p. 276
of the significance of the novel derives from a sense of the heightened importance of the most private of experiences — those rooted in suffering and insoluble personal conflicts — at a time when the divisions of the public sphere are no less acute.

The first years of the nineteenth century also witnessed the publication of works of fiction that were to become legendary reference points in French and European literary culture — on account of their innovative variations on traditions of the eighteenth-century novel and also because of the ways in which they testify to a crisis of identity and of meaning in the wake of the French Revolution. Staël, who acknowledges the illustrious history of the novel in English, addresses the question of just what this genre can be said to offer to the 'peuples libres' ['free peoples'] of modern times, prompting her to speculate on how French writers might respond to examples of fiction in English and in German so as to give a new direction to literature in post-Revolutionary France.[5] What this chapter will show is that the long-term cultural significance of the fiction of the first decades of the century lies not so much in the high-flown sentimental rhetoric with which it has long been associated as in its navigation of the interplay that Staël identifies between an altered private domain and a public one shaped by continuing conflict.

That the stakes in publishing were not only literary would be confirmed when Staël's *Delphine* appeared in 1802: the novel provoked Napoleon's wrath and led to the banishment from Paris of its author. The writers of two works that were to assume a central place in the tradition of the *roman intime* assume divergent stances regarding prevailing states of belief and of social organization. Thus, in *René*, Chateaubriand expounds what is ostensibly a moral

This is the accepted manuscript of an article published in *The Cambridge History of the Novel in French*, ed. by Adam Watt (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 275–91; DOI: 10.1017/9781108683920.

[1] Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics: 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 229.

[2] T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?*, second edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 60, drawing on the work of François Furet and Lynn Hunt; Blanning notes also the parallel destabilizing impact of constant war in the 1790s.

[3] 'Quelques réflexions sur le but moral de *Delphine*' ['Some reflections on the moral goal of *Delphine*'], in *Œuvres*, ed. by Catriona Seth (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), pp. 972–3. See also Chapter 17 'Between Romance and Social Critique: Staël and Women Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century', below.

[4] *Œuvres*, pp. 209–23.

[5] *Delphine*, in *Œuvres*, pp. 310–11.

fable in support of his apologia for Catholicism in the *Génie du christianisme* (*The Genius of Christianity*).[6] By contrast, Constant in *Adolphe* presents his protagonist as being alienated from the dispositions characteristic of commercial modernity, at odds, that is, with 'that tranquillity of mind which results from being occupied and from the regular course of affairs'.[7] Adolphe
p. 277 repudiates this cast of mind, a sign of the outlook that marks him out as a suspect figure, one who, as we read in the exchange of letters that closes the work, was always 'anguished', 'agitated' and 'discontented' (*Adolphe*, p. 142.)[8] The paradox of the 'intimate' novels that were a prominent strand in literary production in the first two decades of the nineteenth century lies in their unexpected scope — social, ethical and (indirectly) political, as well as literary. With the later rise of the historical novel, such an engagement with the legacy of the Revolutionary years becomes more direct, if not always more overt.[9]

It is true that the critic, historian and novelist Sainte-Beuve, in characterizing the diverse practices of the exponents of the 'roman intime', refers to delicate forms elaborated in the shadows, 'however agitated the times in which one lives'.[10] In other words, they are too intimate even to be regarded as novels and seem to mark a retreat from political discord. But when he comes to consider Mme de Krüdener, he highlights the genre's particular significance in what he terms the 'l'orage politique' ['the political storm'] of the Revolutionary years: it encompasses a crisis of faith and an acute sense of 'la misère du monde' ['the woes of the world']. By way of compensation, he also identifies Krüdener with other writers and thinkers — among them figures as ideologically diverse as Maistre, Saint-Simon, Ballanche, Fourier and Lamennais — on the grounds that what all of them share is the desire for a 'great regeneration of the world'.[11]

Like Constant, Krüdener was a cosmopolitan figure and she wrote for a cosmopolitan public. Sainte-Beuve portrays her as an irenic model of post-Revolutionary reconciliation, a Joan of Arc-like figure who stands for peace, social unity and compassion.[12] When she came to Paris in 1802, she soon established her own salon and, with the assistance of Chateaubriand, published a series of maxims in the relaunched *Mercure de France*. These were in fact simply excerpts from
p. 278 *Valérie* and the collection was designed to consolidate her social position in Paris.[13] It was in such circles that this novel, published in 1803, was a notable success; five French impressions appeared, together with three more in Germany, one in England, one in Holland.[14] The novel is largely epistolary, though it extends to other forms of testimony, including first-person narrative at the end, and deals with Gustave's fateful passion for the eponymous heroine. By contrasting carnal and disinterested forms of love, it seeks to navigate a path between the depiction of intense passions and a Christian stance.[15] The novel took Goethe's *Werther* (1774) as its model and extended its tale of unhappy passion in the direction of meditations on nature

[6] On the paradox of a confessional model in which a protagonist who is ultimately impenitent continues to exert a seductive charm, see Pierre Glaudes, '*René*: un récit exemplaire?', in *Chateaubriand et le récit de fiction*, ed. by Fabienne Bercegol and Pierre Glaudes, (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013), pp. 141–69.

[7] *Adolphe*, ed. by Jean-Marie Roulin (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), p. 70; further references in the text.

[8] Jerrold Seigel notes the extent to which selfhood in France is shaped by a strong sense of social and psychic conflict, in *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 37.

[9] A sign of this engagement is the prominence of political violence in post-Revolutionary historical fiction, as noted by Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 10.

[10] Sainte-Beuve, 'Du roman intime; ou, Mademoiselle de Liron', in *Portraits de femmes*, ed. by Gérald Antoine (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 60.

[11] 'Mme de Krüdner', in *Portraits de femmes*, p. 482.

[12] 'Mme de Krüdner', p. 488.

[13] An instance: 'It is through feeling that duty must be inculcated! This is a true vow of fidelity', in Julie de Krüdener, *Autour de 'Valérie': Œuvres de Mme de Krüdener*, ed. by Michel Mercier, Francis Ley and Elena Gretchanaia (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 43.

[14] *Autour de 'Valérie'*, p. 21.

[15] On Krüdener's innovations, among them the treatment of nature and of unconsummated love, and their impact on literary production in the decades to follow, see Alison Finch, *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 22.

and religion to match the expectations of conservative readers. It diverges from its source in its handling of the protagonist's demise: 'Werther would kill himself even if he did not love Charlotte; he would kill himself for the sake of the infinite, for the absolute, for nature; in reality, Gustave dies simply from love of Valérie.'[16] Throughout, Krüdener follows authorial strategies compatible with the taste of a resurgent elite readership and the aspiration to social acceptability in France.[17]

Chateaubriand would later say that ' "Valérie est la sœur cadette de *René*" ' ['Valérie is *René*'s younger sister'] — a loaded assessment that fails to acknowledge that the readership of each of these works was distinct.[18] His *récit*, which was begun in exile, first appeared alongside *Atala* (initially published as an independent work in 1801) as part of the *Génie du christianisme* in 1802 and was published separately in 1805. Chateaubriand emphasizes his own sense of political alienation, when in 1826, on the first publication in France of the *Essai sur les révolutions* (1797), he comments that the work is like the 'dark orgy of a wounded heart', whose confused sense of disenchantment is political through and through.[19] René, who in *Atala* receives Chactas's account of his and fateful Atala's passion for each other, in turn here tells his p. 279
own sorrowful tale to Chactas, his adoptive father in his exile among the Natchez, and the Père Souël, his spiritual confessor. The crisis that prompts René to narrate his story is precipitated by a letter from Europe. His focus is not so much 'his life adventures' as 'the secret feelings of his soul'.[20] These sentiments are recounted at length, along with his travels, his eventual return to his native Brittany, a scandalous avowal on the part of his sister Amélie, and finally his definitive departure for America.

The narrative notably focuses on issues of choice, positive or negative: thus, René considers but does not opt for the religious life. He illustrates all at once a European malady and its supposed remedy, namely flight from civilization: 'The more the heart is tumultuous and vehement, the more we are attracted to calm and silence' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 162). We already know, however, that among the Natchez he seemed 'un sauvage parmi les Sauvages' ['an untamed creature among the Natives']. His privileged interlocutors are few and are solely implicated in the the telling of the *récit* in that they motivate its framing and inconclusive internal reception. He displays a passive conformity with the manners of Natchez society, but resists social integration: the deep woods are the site of his renunciation of everyday social relations (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 155). What René experiences is something dual. He testifies to an ingrained *tristesse* that is 'the natural lament of man [...] even when he is giving expression to happiness'. But, on the other hand, the impact of his *passions* on his *cœur solitaire* is unfathomable: one can derive an undoubted sense of exhilaration from them, 'but they cannot be depicted' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 175). What results from all of this is a double bind that leaves him at odds with the world: 'study of the world had taught me nothing and yet I no longer possessed the bliss of ignorance' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 170).

The experience of social life merely redoubles this sense of disenchantment: 'every hour in society is a step nearer the grave'. The solitary protagonist turns instead towards a quest for an 'unknown good', even if this choice takes him on to ground that may be morally dubious. A rhetorical question hints at his acknowledgment of this risk: 'What fault is it of mine, if everywhere I encounter limits, if what is finite has no worth for me?' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 172). Indeed, as he embarked on the telling of his scandalous story, René experiences a p. 280

[16] Sainte-Beuve, 'Madame de Krüdner', p. 467.

[17] See Stephanie M. Hilger, 'Epistolarity, Publicity, and Painful Sensibility: Julie de Krüdener's *Valerie*', *French Review*, 79 (2006), 737–48.

[18] Krüdener, *Autour de 'Valérie'*, p. 21. As Finch notes, *Valérie* remained in print until the end of the century; *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 1–2.

[19] *Essai sur les révolutions — Génie du christianisme*, ed. by Maurice Regard (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 269. On Chateaubriand's view of himself as the instigator of 'a revolution in French literature', see Roger Pearson, *Unacknowledged Legislators: The Poet as Lawgiver in Post-Revolutionary France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 95–100.

[20] *'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, ed. by Jean-Claude Berchet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2007), p. 156; further references in the text.

sense of shame that is at odds with the calm of the setting in which he does so, dominated as it is by 'an inconceivable grandeur' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 157). Though the action is set in the Ancien Régime, the protagonist is portrayed as a modern tainted by the absence of a reliable value system.

An exchange of letters between the siblings marks a pivotal moment. René hints in writing to his sister at suicidal thoughts and prompts her arrival. She then in her turn disappears, leaving behind a letter in which she records her own intimate thoughts and above all urges her brother to cultivate a virtuous outlook.[21] The narration resumes in the present tense and at the point where Amélie makes her retreat from the world to become a nun (oscillating between formal *vouvoiement* and familiar *tutoiement* in the process), she departs with an implicit avowal, leading to continued suspense as to her true motivation (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 186). In the ceremony of the vows, she is prompted to make a now more explicit admission to René alone of her 'criminelle passion'. His belated realization of 'l'affreuse vérité' ['the hideous truth'], that he is the object of an incestuous passion, brings about a final purgatorial suspension of carnal instincts (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, pp. 190–1). What results is a painful crux, in that the resolution of the enigma of his sister's actions makes it plain to René that God had sent Amélie 'to save me and to punish me' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 193).[22] From this point onwards, the prospects are bleak: his exile is the translation of Amélie's enclosure and a response to it, just as her untimely death proves to anticipate his own among the Natchez.

René's narration is enclosed within the immediate frame of the exchange with Chactas and Souël. The transition is quite abrupt and no less abruptly we see that the arguments that prevail are those which insist on the demands of society. Thus, Chactas's maxim in the light of what the priest says: 'happiness lies only in common paths' (*'Atala' suivi de 'René'*, p. 199). The work's closure lies in its return to the present moment and in the effacement of René: the moral remainders are left to the reader to resolve. While the action is set in the earlier part
p. 281 of the eighteenth century, the plot of *René* cryptically shadows the course of the Revolution. Following the travels on which he embarks after the death of his father, René returns to France at the beginning of the Regency in 1715. This he depicts as a 'change more astonishing and more abrupt than had ever come about among a people' (*'Atala', suivi de 'René'*, p. 170). Precisely because the work itself is post-Revolutionary, the *mal du siècle* with which René comes to be identified is ultimately 'the product of its age: sentiment as politics'.[23]

Though Sainte-Beuve is at pains to emphasize the almost spontaneous character of the personal novel, the genre does display distinctive traits that account for its literary impact, including the appeal to the device of confession, the elaboration of complex frames, extending on occasion into other more philosophical works, like the *Génie du christianisme*, a conspicuously poetic register,[24] the interplay of narrative modes, including epistolary and first-person narration, typically equivocal or inconclusive endings, and more or less oblique references to the historical or social context of post-Revolutionary modernity. The hybridity of the genre is notably illustrated by Senancour's *Oberman*, a work first published in 1804 that was to exert a major influence on the early works of writers like Sainte-Beuve and Sand in the 1830s, when it was republished in a revised form. This too is an epistolary narrative and is occasioned by the experience of disappointed love: Oberman's retreat into the solitude of what he terms 'une

[21] This exchange thus has marked Rousseauist overtones, as Jean-Marie Roulin observes, in '*Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* dans les fictions de Chateaubriand: démarcages et décalages', in Bercegol and Glaudes, eds, *Chateaubriand et le récit de fiction*, pp. 53–66 (pp. 56–7).

[22] As Walter Cohen comments with reference to *Atala*, 'Christianity is both problem and solution', in *A History of European Literature: The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 375.

[23] Pearson, *Unacknowledged Legislators*, p. 128.

[24] See Fabienne Bercegol, who argues that the sentimental novel's idealist orientation is in purposeful contrast to the materialist view of nature that informs libertine fiction, in 'Le roman sentimental: bilan et perspectives', in *Métamorphoses du roman sentimental: XIX^e^–XXI^e^ siècles*, ed. by Fabienne Bercegol and Helmut Meter (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), pp. 21–46 (p. 23).

terre étrangère' ['a foreign land'][25] prompts him to engage in an extended meditation on nature, the self and the uncertain destiny of humanity in a period of social and political turbulence. The work, which is practically devoid of narrative action, was composed in fragmentary form over many years and is as much part of a larger *œuvre* comprised of *rêveries* in a Rousseauist vein and philosophical treatises, like *De l'amour*, published in 1806, as it is a fully independent work.[26]

After a decade of war, Napoleon suffered a decisive defeat at Leipzig in October 1813, p. 282
prompting Constant to write in his diary: 'Such an earthquake! Nemesis.'[27] The Emperor did indeed fall, though of course he made a spectacular return to power in the spring of 1815 and only slightly less dramatically summoned Constant, one of his longstanding critics, to assist him in preparing the 'Acte additionnel' to the Constitution of the Empire. There followed a week of intense debate between them, culminating in the publication of the 'Acte' in the *Moniteur* of 23 April. In the course of those seven days, Constant also found the time to give a reading of *Adolphe* in Mme Récamier's salon.[28] Constant was one of several notable figures in Revolutionary and Restoration France who was both a political thinker and a political actor, and at the same time was to be as significant a figure in contemporary literature as he was in politics. The publication of *Adolphe* the following year was to be decisive in securing his reputation as a writer.

There are notable parallels between Chateaubriand's *René* and Constant's *Adolphe*. Each story has a personal dimension that did much to shape its reception. Each one can thus be seen as intervention into wider social and cultural debates rooted in private experience. Each gives prominence to a prevailing state of disenchantment that is amplified in each writer's theoretical works.[29] Each narrative comes with elaborate frames that straddle the fictional world of the story and the actual context in which it is received (that of the *Génie du christianisme* in Chateaubriand's case and the successive authorial prefaces to *Adolphe* in that of Constant). There are significant differences between them too. Though both are thinkers who rely on historical contrasts between the ancients and the moderns to shape their interventions, it is notable that *Adolphe*, unlike *Atala* or *René*, makes no appeal to a past or an exotic environment. Most importantly, they adopt contrasting positions on the world of the moderns — Chateaubriand seeking at least in appearance to justify the redemptive framework of Christian belief where Constant gives overwhelming prominence to the secular judgements that the p. 283
actions of his protagonists prompt.[30]

What Constant terms the freedom of the moderns is private freedom of choice under the essentially calm conditions of life typical of the commercial state of social development.[31] The advocacy of this kind of freedom can amount to the promotion of a discourse of generalized rational progress as it is mobilized to respond to and to shape economic and social forces, and through which, more importantly, the Rousseauist general will is 'exorcised'.[32] For all that, the domain of private life does not guarantee any prospect of serenity. The composition of

[25] *Oberman*, ed. by Fabienne Bercegol (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), p. 59.

[26] On the work's genesis and textual history, see *Oberman*, pp. 9–21. On Oberman's self-isolation as an act of self-deliverance leading to the pursuit of an ideal of civic virtue, see Caroline Jacot Grapa, '*Oberman*: l'histoire et le politique', in *'Oberman'; ou, le sublime négatif*, ed. by Fabienne Bercegol and Béatrice Didier (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2006), pp. 25–46.

[27] *Journaux intimes*, ed. by Jean-Marie Roulin (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), p. 620.

[28] *Journaux intimes*, p. 699.

[29] Chateaubriand coined the legendary phrase of the unsettling '*vague* des passions', claiming that 'the more civilized peoples become, the greater the increase in this *vague* state of the passions', in *Génie du christianisme*, p. 714. According to Constant, the modern individual must learn to resist the sense of alienation generated by the uniformity of post-Revolutionary society, in *Écrits politiques*, ed. by Marcel Gauchet (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 164–71.

[30] See Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau on the 'profane' character of the novel as a genre dedicated to the mediocrity of the common life of the moderns, in *Splendeurs de la médiocrité: une idée du roman* (Geneva: Droz, 2008), p. 8.

[31] *Écrits politiques*, pp. 596–7; 602.

[32] Keith Michael Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 181–211 (p. 193). Constant was to refer to 1789 as 'our happy revolution', concluding that despite the Terror it gave the

Adolphe in its final state was preceded by that of two other works, *Amélie et Germaine* and *Cécile*, where the intimate sources from which all of the narrated material springs are more overtly acknowledged. In *Amélie et Germaine*, speaking in a voice poised uncertainly between his own and that of a fictional narrator, Constant refers to just how the senses shape affective life more powerfully than any other force: 'My heart, my imagination, and above all my senses need love.'[33] In *Adolphe*, however, the negativity of love is twofold. First, Adolphe's desire is exacerbated by Ellénore's resistance: he states that her ambivalence 'had exalted all my sensations, all my ideas' (*Adolphe*, p. 82). And then the reality of love is disclosed only at the point, on Ellénore's death, where it is lost.

The rise of individualism gives a new salience to confession as the medium in which the problems of freedom are rehearsed. A concern with the freedom of the moderns and its impacts defines a literature of individualism seen as a force of social rupture and also as the cause of a breach in the effective moral frameworks to which individuals can appeal. Confession is a means of representing these tensions. The confessional urge to self-justification is problematic in narrative and rhetorical terms, as Richard Bales has pointed out, because it is rooted in
p. 284 the failure of the protagonist's quest. *Adolphe* stages the reception of just such a troubling confession and so further crystallizes what is an important element of the narrative, namely the characterization of the social world as the theatre of acute clashes over values: this is the outcome of the exchange of letters between the publisher of the found manuscript and a correspondent who had known Adolphe and Ellénore that closes the work, not just because these contradict each other, but also because the first letter pre-empts the second, and is in turn pre-empted by Adolphe's own narration. The task of evaluating his actions is accordingly passed on to the reader.[34] The representational yield of the personal novel considered generically is both distinctive and problematic: what Bales characterizes as 'subjectivity with a vengeance'.[35] Built into the typically highly architectonic narrative frameworks which these texts mobilize is, then, the intimation of the connection between subjective crisis and a host of problems through which modernity defines itself: in the case of *Adolphe*, the critical issue is one which is central also to Constant's political theory, namely freedom. Adolphe's painfully belated realization on Ellénore's death, where he speaks in free indirect discourse as protagonist rather than as the older narrator, confirms as much: 'j'étais libre en effet; je n'étais plus aimé' ('I was indeed free; I was no longer loved', *Adolphe*, p. 139).

Constant's reputation as a political philosopher rests on his characterization of the freedom of the moderns, the much-used formulation we owe to him.[36] He can equally be identified with what can be termed the literature of the moderns. Literature so conceived is historically and culturally important in representing the significance of freedom seen as a central component of modernity, including the potential negativity of the negative freedom long associated with
p. 285 Constant. The impact of the freedom of the moderns comes to be articulated as much in a literary as in a political framework, so extending the concern that we have seen Staël express regarding the novel as a means of representing the experience of 'free peoples'. The substance

French the political form most appropriate to the freedom of the moderns, namely representative government (*Écrits politiques*, pp. 591–2).

[33] *'Ma vie' — 'Amélie et Germaine' — 'Cécile'*, ed. by Jean-Marie Roulin (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), p. 100.

[34] On the effacement of clear distinctions between Constant's supposed judgements on the *récit* and the narrator's own stance within it, and how this results in a formal reflexivity which makes its moral content at best ambiguous, see Marian Hobson, 'Theme and Structure in *Adolphe*', *Modern Language Review*, 66 (1971), 306–14. See also Thorel-Cailleteau, who notes that Adolphe's story keeps in play all of the possible interpretations of his conduct, even though this is the true issue on which a judgement is to be made, in *Splendeurs de la médiocrité*, p. 88.

[35] *Persuasion in the French Personal Novel: Studies of Chateaubriand, Constant, Balzac, Nerval and Fromentin* (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1997), p. 4.

[36] This conception is notably expounded in 'De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes' ('On the Freedom of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns', *Écrits politiques*, pp. 591–619). Constant's philosophy of political liberalism came to be more widely known from the time of the promulgation of the Charte in 1814. Thus, for Stendhal he was to become 'l'homme par qui l'on pense juste en France' ('the man by whom one thinks rightly in France') in *Œuvres complètes*, XXXIX, *Napoléon*, ed. by Victor Del Litto and Ernest Abravanel (Geneva — Paris: Slatkine, 1986), p. 301.

of the literature of the moderns is decisively shaped by a rupture that is not only social and political: hence the recurrent emphasis on subjective crisis, even though in *Adolphe* it is the interplay of judgements on the protagonist that proves to be as significant as the 'sympathy for pain' which, as we have seen, Staël considers to be the decisive new contribution of fiction. And the cultivation of equivocal endings illustrates why the autonomy of literature is culturally significant when it comes to evaluating modern individualism.

Constant's motivation in publishing *Adolphe* in 1816 was financial. He had fled to England after Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo and agreed a contract with Henry Colburn in London. The work was also published in France in the same year, where it sold for 3.5 francs. Colburn paid Constant 1,400 francs for the rights, in other words about £220 (the annual income of a family of farm labourers in 1815 was about 400 francs). When Jane Austen moved in 1815 to the much more prestigious firm of John Murray, she was offered the sum of £450 for the copyright of her three available novels. By contrast, Walter Scott's annual profits from his novels were estimated in 1818 to be £10,000.[37] At this time, Colburn owned a circulating library, through which *Adolphe* no doubt found its audience, over and above those who may have acquired it having already heard him read it in one of the many salons in Paris and in London where he had done so. This was still, however, the pre-professional era of fiction writing in France.

The July Revolution of 1830 marked Constant's long-awaited political apotheosis; he was among those who accompanied Louis-Philippe to the Hôtel de Ville following its capture by the *révoltés*. The three days marked not only the end of absolutism, but also the eclipse of grand political gestures of all stripes: the expansionary foreign policy ventures envisaged by Charles X on his ascent to the throne in 1824 were curtailed, while Louis-Philippe moved quickly to preempt the threat of social upheaval.[38] By this time, the long-dead Napoleon commanded, not Europe, but posterity.[39] Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (*The Confession of a Child of the Century*), published in 1836, testifies vividly to his enduring ascendancy. Musset's narrator, Octave, speaks for an 'ardent, pale, nervous generation', those whose dream of military glory was erased by Napoleon's fall. This generation, the children of the Empire and grandchildren of the Revolution, faces its own grave crisis of belief. Even if the religious and temporal powers of old have been restored, they can no longer command the assent of those for whom a future proportionate to the visions inherited from the decades of upheaval and war has yet to materialize. Thus, Octave laments the twin afflictions from which they suffer: 'Tout ce qui était n'est plus; tout ce qui sera n'est pas encore' ('all that was is no more; all that will be is yet to be').[40] p. 286

For all that, the 1830s were the years in which writers born in the first decade of the century, a generation that would be active almost until the centenary of the Revolution, emerged as major novelists. Hugo published *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482* in 1831, a year after he had enjoyed a triumph with the controversial first performance of his play *Hernani*; the novel represented a conscious turn in the direction of a more popular readership. Its many-stranded melodramatic plot is notable for the flatness of its characters, by contrast with those of the personal novel.[41] Set in 1482, the novel portrays the cathedral and the city as subject to a 'tempête civile' ['civil storm'], but also to temporal forces that extend to the time of the Count of Mirabeau and beyond the Revolution to the present.[42] The plot is centred on conflicts not only between persons and classes, but also world-views and ideologies, in keeping with Hugo's

[37] Kathryn Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 222, 220.

[38] Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 667–8.

[39] See Friedrich Sieburg, in *Napoleon. Die hundert Tage* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1956), p. 413.

[40] Alfred de Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, ed. by Gérard Barrier (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 20, 25, 26, 36. Vigny's *Servitude et grandeurs militaires*, published in 1835, likewise casts a retrospective 'sorry gaze' on a 'universal annihilation of beliefs', in *Œuvres complètes*, II, *Prose*, ed. by Alphonse Bouvet, 1993), pp. 683, 821.

[41] This too is a feature of characterization in Vigny's *Cinq-Mars*; see Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, p. 105.

[42] *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482*, ed. by Marius-François Guyard (Paris: Garnier, 1976), pp. 504, 129.

own preoccupation with the continuing impact of revolutionary insurrection, to which he also gives expression in notes he kept during the summer of 1830.[43] In this way, the novel's
p. 287 impetus is ultimately prophetic, designed to capture a forward movement of history that it portrays as 'ineluctable'.[44] At the same time, the work, just like *Adolphe* and *René*, brings moral challenges clearly into view, though on a larger social and temporal scale; in this, the historical novel brings to bear on its sanctified setting a profane viewpoint that can equally be seen as shaping the literature of the moderns. Works in the tradition of the personal novel continued to appear, including Sainte-Beuve's *Volupté* (translated as *The Sensual Man*), which is again autobiographical, but notably differs from the models of Chateaubriand and Constant in being set in the period of the Revolution.[45] Several of Sand's novels of the 1830s, including *Indiana* (1832) and *Mauprat* (1837), are organized on the basis of a distribution of characters explicitly representing competing ideological and political positions in pre- and post-Revolutionary France. But she takes the personal novel in an altogether new direction too with the publication of *Indiana*. Her preface to a later edition in 1842 makes plain its concern with the 'the right that society holds over individuals', which it can be said to share with *Adolphe*, and more explicitly still its denunciation of the subjection of women in marriage.[46] In this, the novel is a world apart from the work of Krüdener, not least in its 'transgressive morality' and its challenge to the sentimental novel's conservative advocacy of a passive attitude of 'vertu'.[47]

The 1830s also witnessed the expansion of the book trade and the increasing professionalization of writing. Hugo's medievalism was indebted to Walter Scott and helped to trigger a prolific engagement with France's medieval past in the decades that followed.[48] Translations of Scott's work began to appear under the Restoration, with some half a dozen titles appearing in 1818 alone, in a context where the book trade was beginning to witness a revival after the
p. 288 period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.[49] By the time Hugo's novel appeared, the market was further expanding; cheaper editions were printed to provide access to a wider readership in the proliferating number of *cabinets de lecture*.[50] Following the publication of *Indiana*, Sand was drawn into complex negotiations with successive publishers that had a bearing on the design and scope of *Lélia*, which was to appear in 1833. She first sought a sum of 10,000 francs for the novel, before agreeing a contract for a one-volume edition for the much smaller figure of 2,000 francs. Negotiations were to continue, however, with the help of Gustave Planche, and within only a few weeks the projected work had expanded to two volumes, for a fee of 5,000 francs.[51] She lived on her earnings as a writer from that point onwards.

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[43] He notes, for instance, a shift in power relations between classes, and the symbolic transformations through which it manifests itself: 'The irrefutable argument of kings, the cannonball. The irrefutable argument of the people, the paving stone', in *Littérature et philosophie mêlées*, in *Œuvres complètes — Critique*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Reynaud (Paris: Laffont, 1985), p. 120.

[44] Victor Brombert, *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 68–9.

[45] On the dissociation of love and the senses in Sainte-Beuve's novel, which differs on this point from *Adolphe*, see Patrick Labarthe, *Sainte-Beuve: une poétique de l'intime* (Geneva: Droz, 2018), p. 103.

[46] *Indiana*, ed. by Béatrice Didier (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 41, 46–7.

[47] Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 140–1.

[48] On the parallel development of history writing and fiction with a shared strongly narrative orientation and a commitment to representing 'human experience in time and space', see Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, p. 1. On the distinctive historical experience of rupture and discontinuity in post-Revolutionary France and its impact on subsequent historical writing, see Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 32–53.

[49] *Bibliographie de la France: Année 1818* (Paris: Pillet, 1818), p. 153; see also Henri-Jean Martin, *Histoire et pouvoirs de l'écrit* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), p. 403. Such translations were frequently adapted to the taste of a more Catholic and legitimist readership; see Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, p. 104.

[50] Martin, *Histoire et pouvoirs de l'écrit*, pp. 401; 404.

[51] Béatrice Didier, *George Sand écrivain: 'un grand fleuve d'Amérique'* (Paris: PUF, 1998), pp. 91–2. On Sand, see also Chapter 22 'Gender and the Novel from Sand to Colette', below.

In the second half of the century, books came more and more to be commodities. Works like *Adolphe* were first cheaply reprinted in composite volumes and later in more or less richly illustrated editions that were aimed at different segments of the market.[52] *Notre Dame* was frequently reprinted in editions that contained increasingly copious illustrations, and was also adapted by Louise Bertin as an opera as early as 1836, on the basis of a libretto written by Hugo himself.[53] At the same time, several of the forms of the personal and the historical novel came to be transmuted into versions of canonical realism. Thus, Balzac was to draw substantially both on *Adolphe*, in *La Muse du département*, and on *Volupté*, in *Le Lys dans la vallée*.[54] The *roman intime* was to become both a commonplace and a recurrent model in European fiction too. In George Eliot's *Felix Holt*, the protagonist finds Esther with a copy of *René* and agressively reproaches her for reading ' "this mawkish stuff on a Sunday" '. At a later point, when relations between them have taken a turn for the better, Felix and Esther walk in public together for the first time when he takes the opportunity to taunt her for defending ' "gentlemen like your Rénés, who have no particular talent for the finite, but a general sense that the infinite is the right thing for them. They might as well boast of nausea as a proof of a strong inside" '. At the very end of the novel, Eliot quotes a sentence from the exchange of letters that closes *Adolphe* as an epigraph.[55] The irony of these appropriations is that the earlier tales of unhappy passions are the means of bringing the couple together in this work. But it is impossible to dissociate the progress of their love from the sharp confessional and political conflicts in the midst of which it takes its course. Other appropriations were more cryptic. The plot of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* rewrites and magnifies that of *Adolphe*, but follows an altogether more baleful direction than Eliot's novel: Vronsky's affair with Anna, the later tensions in their relationship, the place of children in the plot, the difficult relations of the lovers with others in the society in which they move, her death and his subsequent despair all echo Constant's story. Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle* is a further reworking of Constant's tale and ends with a melodramatic restaging of the catastrophic discovery of misplaced choice.

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In fiction that spanned more than a hundred years since the first publication of *Atala* and *René*, private pains proved to have an afterlife beyond the framework of the personal novel as it was characterized by Sainte-Beuve. In other words, these and several of the other works considered here continued to form part of the 'working memory' of the European novel.[56] Thus, James's *The Ambassadors* revives elements of the plot of *Adolphe*: a young man's scandalous attachment to an older woman; the intercession of those who seek to separate them; the ultimate negativity of love. Just as significantly, however, the novel equally recalls the charged atmosphere of turbulence and violence that shadows Constant's writings as much as the others we have mentioned: James's protagonist Strether senses 'as if excited and exciting, the vague voice of Paris' and imagines that he can recover something of 'the days and nights of revolution, the sounds had come in, the omens, the beginnings broken out. They were the smell of revolution, the smell of the public temper — or perhaps simply the smell of blood'.[57] While in some of the versions in which we can witness the survival of these fictions of the

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[52] These and other aspects of the dissemination of Constant's work are documented in *'Adolphe' de Benjamin Constant: postérité d'un roman (1816–2016)*, ed. by Léonard Burnand and Guillaume Poisson (Geneva: Slatkine, 2016).

[53] Kathryn M. Grossman, 'From Classic to Pop Icon: Popularizing Hugo', *French Review*, 74 (2001), 482–95 (p. 485).

[54] On the latter, see Nicole Mozet, *Balzac au pluriel* (Paris: PUF, 1990), pp. 224–8. On the commitment to realism in the historical novel, see Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 13, 69, 100.

[55] George Eliot, *Felix Holt: The Radical*, ed. by Fred C. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 107, 221, 391. On the precursors to these nineteenth-century intertextual relations, see Chapter 9 'Anglo-French Relations and the Novel in the Eighteenth Century', above.

[56] In this, they contrast with the work of Scott, whose writings now form part of 'archival memory'; so argues Ann Rigney, drawing on the work of Aleida Assmann, in *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 224–5; see also Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 119–34.

[57] *The Ambassadors*, ed. by Christopher Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 401.

first decades of the nineteenth century, their echoes may have become truncated,[58] it remains true that the 'enchanted reveries' to which René, for instance, gives expression (*'Atala', suivi de 'René'*, p. 160) continue to reverberate in the work of later writers, as well as the sound and the fury of the public domain. Even as fictional forms change, then, the multiple memories encompassed in them endure. And the forms themselves, which were characterized at the outset as hardly amounting to novels at all, prove to be the source of new later varieties that are no less far-reaching. So, a narrative like *Atala* can leave its trace in a work such as Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902), where the same reliance on internal narration proves to be a means of engaging with the impact of nineteenth-century colonialism.[59] If form has shaped the working memory of modern culture in this way, it is because even the most intimate fictions that emerged from the French Revolution have been those where the still intractable ruptures of public life could be confronted too.

[58] Lissette Lopez Szwydky notes that changes to its plot in early adaptations ensured that *Notre-Dame de Paris* would achieve long-term mass circulation, but at the expense of the effacement of its political and social dimensions; see 'Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* on the Nineteenth-Century London Stage', *European Romantic Review*, 21 (2010), 469–87.

[59] See Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, pp. 378–9, 403.

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