CHAPTER 15

The Italian Romantics and Madame de Staël
Art, Society, and Nationhood

La soumission d'un peuple à un autre est contre nature.

Staël, *DA* [1810], I 12

L'Italie est une expression géographique.

Prince Metternich, *Mémoires*, August 6, 1847[1]

By 1815, when Staël returned to the Italian peninsula, she had engaged firsthand with Europe from Moscow to Madrid. Ever restless, she now took time away from attending to John Rocca's health and her daughter's wedding to launch Italian Romantic debate, as this second chapter on Restoration Europe will outline. Staël's triumphal visit to Italy in 1805, while her nemesis Napoleon took Lombardy's iron crown, is documented, as is the society she met. Staël claims in 1808 that her works aimed to give Germans and Italians back their lost "réputation de sincérité et d'esprit," and Byron in Venice praises *Corinne*'s accuracy, yet *Corinne*'s list of modern writers is brief: Gian Vincenzo Gravina and Gaetano Filangieri, Melchiorre Cesarotti, Alessandro Verri, Saverio Bettinelli, Vincenzo Monti. These are the half-remembered names of a society tour, but Staël's eye for genius led her, ten years later, to a new group of writers, the Romantic liberals working for Italy's national rebirth. The Italian press before 1815 was favorable to Staël but muted; Dina Lanfredini notes four or five *Corinne* reviews, arguing that word spread in private and stressing that the opportunist Davide Bertolotti translated *De l'Allemagne* in 1814, the year of its Paris edition. Bertolotti's case is telling: His *Spettatore* praises Staël in 1814–1815, then slanders her on political grounds in his July 1816 attack, evoking *Corinne* and *De l'Allemagne* but citing *De la littérature* alone. In 1821, he prints a public homage to Coppet.[2]

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Things have changed by Staël's second visit to Italian lands. In Milan with August Wilhelm Schlegel throughout October 1815, she leaves for Genoa and Pisa with two concerns, her husband's tuberculosis and her daughter's marriage, returning in mid-June 1816 en route to Coppet. Ten years of Empire and the Austrian restoration in Lombardy have eaten at her optimism for Italy, a nation brought to the brink of liberty: "Il y a dix ans qu'il y avait plus de caractère en Italie qu'à présent"; "[J]amais le peuple n'avait plus l'air d'esclaves qui se réunissent pour voir passer leurs maîtres." "Ils se mettent en fureur," she adds, "si on attaque la littérature et les beaux-arts et cela ne leur fait rien, d'entendre parler de l'Italie comme d'un pays qui doit être conquis et asservi." As she considers Napoleon's perversion of the French Revolution, Staël writes her first article on the current state of Italy for the *Biblioteca italiana*; her July letter coincides with her return to Coppet.[3]

Staël's two censored articles, written during a time of close ties with Milan, played a key role in launching Romanticism and, later, Risorgimento alike. Many of their topoi reappear in ensuing Italian polemic, sometimes in direct quotation. From January: the commerce of thought's value, Italian science, neologism, imitation's sterility, Homer, a poetry that rules and study cannot teach; Northern models, myth's infantilism, theater as magistrate, vapid Italian opera – rude to Gioachino Rossini in 1816 – scholars and poetasters, our need of feeling prior to art, and Italy's long sleep ahead. From July: Italian scientists' knowledge of Europe, their obscurity at home and fame abroad, unlike Italian writers; knowledge versus imitation; Italy's flood of clichés; divine inspiration. These echoes merit full analysis, joining literature, commerce, religion, society, science, and politics like the finest texts of the 1816 debate.[4]

Retracing Staël's place in Italian Romanticism, and the nature of her role, is the briefer subject of this chapter. The sections that follow present eleven Italians who helped shape Romanticism, and Staël is an integral part of each story, as we shall see. Staël may seem a hidden planet in Italy, but for almost 200 years her 1816 articles have opened histories and vanished thereafter. It is incredible that the question of her Italian impact, aside from scholarship on Giacomo Leopardi, Vincenzo Monti, and Ludovico di Breme, can have been so readily ignored. How and why has Staël vanished? Her gender, her citizenship, and her religion may have their part, since Romantic nationalism puts strong pressures on historiographers – and Staël contributed, like her contemporary Victor Frankenstein, to the very creature that authored her demise.

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Two Outsiders: Foscolo and Leopardi

Ugo Foscolo's problematic links to Staël seem to contribute to his increasing conflict, after 1815, with Italy's emerging Romantics. Comments begin in November 1807, with a remark on *Delphine*: "[T]he book is itself of little account, and I am certain it will bore you." In 1808, Foscolo takes up *Corinne ou l'Italie*; calling it a "viaggio donnesco in Italia," he says he is reading "la dottoressa de Staël" for a laugh at her "chattering *sentiment*," and that "women should not write unless they are in love." Actual reading offers Foscolo a charge against *Corinne* he thinks worth publishing at least four times: her confusing the two historical Aretinos. Carlo Cordié argues that the author of the *Sepolcri*, published like *Corinne* in April 1807, resented his absence in *Corinne*'s review of Italian writers – the more shocking, feels Geneviève Gennari, given Foscolo's ties to Monti, Giuseppe Albrizzi, Francesco Cicognara, even Jean-Charles-Léonard Sismondi. In Foscolo's *Learned Ladies*, a passage on women's incompetence outside love condemns the love lessons of "the modern Corinna," given, with "too much matter of speculation, to her fair contemporaries"; he concludes, "[I]f a *stupid* woman deserves pity, a *foolish* one never escapes contempt. For *folly* consists precisely, not in paucity of knowledge, or poverty of understanding, but in making a bad use of both." Such women are neglecting "the end, for which Nature has destined them." As Foscolo refuses fealty to Austria and leaves Milan for self-imposed exile – a misguided roll of the dice – in May 1815, Sismondi tries to visit him; near Geneva in August, Foscolo condemns German Romantic epistemology, "seeking the road from an unknown point to reach a point still more unknown," much like himself. Such imaginations, he adds, fill a volume of *De l'Allemagne* – "from what I hear, since I haven't read it."[5]

Foscolo is, in short, not a blank slate when in 1816 Quirina Magiotti twice sends news of slanders on Staël by *fiorentinelli* and *miserabili giornalisti*, and of her pleasure at Breme's superb reply. Staël's 1816 article also insults Foscolo's Homer translation, calling his rival Monti's version inimitable. In June, Foscolo, back at Italy's borders and unable to remain in Berne, is invited by his former disciple Breme to the woman's brilliant court at Coppet, an exile's court he cannot hope to rival. He refuses. Perforce absent from the Italian Romantics he had led before 1815, Foscolo prefers to ignore their work in the survey of recent Italian literature, appended to *Childe Harold*, which he lets his translator John Hobhouse sign in April 1818 – until his odd conclusion: "A great question at this moment divides the learned world in Italy into the partisans of

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classical poetry, and of the poetry of romance." A moment later, Foscolo calls that *great question* an "idle inquiry," words that forever alienated Breme, as Giuseppe Acerbi seized on them, and caused even Silvio Pellico to drift away; it is, then, worth noting Foscolo's remark that these Italians "have adopted the division of Madame de Staël." In his published response to Breme's anger, Foscolo chooses to focus on the 1816 invitation to Coppet: "I neither went there, nor replied." Foscolo's unfounded claim, in his next paragraph, to a "great celebrity" he received in England may offer a handle on the mood of this man who asked Madame d'Albany to hang his portrait next to Alfieri's. Understandable if ignoble resentments shape Foscolo's rift with his own followers, and Staël has her part in that story.[6]

While Foscolo was in England in 1816, the adolescent Leopardi was in provincial Recanati. Staël's profound impact on Leopardi has been splendidly reviewed. Leopardi grounds his poetics in two rejected letters to editors, answering Staël's 1816 articles and Breme's long 1818 review of Byron's *Giaour*. Angered "less by the Lady's opinions than by the meanness of her enemies," Leopardi praises Staël's genius, lamenting Italy's ruin as she does, and then uses Staël's own argument – that imitation is sterile – to reject her appeal to imitate the Germans: Learning means nothing without the divine spark. Arnaud Tripet notes that Leopardi *simultaneously* repeats this angry call to arms in his first patriotic *Canzoni*, where his poetry begins, in 1824, and he argues that answering Staël's charges prompted Leopardi, like all Staël's Italian readers except perhaps Foscolo, to form a new vision of Italy for the future. Leopardi's laments are personal and national at once, like those of *Corinne*: the *Ultimo canto di Saffo*, in which Leopardi cites Staël's somewhat private *Delphine*, owes as much or more to *Corinne*'s public and national discourse. His *Zibaldone* or notebook names Staël about seventy times, almost twice as much as any other French author. Nicolas Serban ranks Staël's influence above Montesquieu's; Mario Sansone argues that Leopardi reads Montesquieu through her. Listing great modern philosophers, Leopardi places Staël with René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He credits her with his discovery of philosophy and cannot grasp why readers find her style obscure; he has always found it the opposite, "with much of the sweetness of the ancients opposed to modern aridity." After 1819, when Leopardi discovers *Corinne*, and after *De l'Allemagne* in 1821, Staël recurs throughout his *Zibaldone*, shaping his grasp of Europe, its language groups, history, politics, and nations; of *ennui*; of art's independence; even his vision of genius and the self. In a gesture worth attention, he finds in

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her a firm ally against "the Romantic system," and a *bellissima*, *solennissima* "condemnation of the horrors and the excess of terror so dear to the Romantics" – also rejected by Breme, Manzoni, Pietro Giordani, and Stendhal.[7]

La Biblioteca italiana: Acerbi, Giordani, and Monti

Heinrich von Bellegarde, Austrian plenipotentiary in Lombardy, conceived the *Biblioteca italiana* in June 1815 as an anti-nationalist diversion, after the short-lived Kingdom of Italy's removal. When Foscolo refused its direction, he found Monti, the most famous poet in Italy, who brought the lesser-known Acerbi. Monti was ready to leave after January 1816. In March the hardliner Franz Joseph von Saurau replaced Heinrich von Bellegarde in power, and in July Acerbi seized control of the journal. By February 1817, three editors had departed, Monti and Scipione Breislak – Staël's friends since 1805 – and Giordani, though her ex-prefect friend Luigi Bossi remained. Acerbi's room for Romanticism in his *Proemi*, before 1818, vanished that summer with the *Conciliatore*'s revolutionary threat, and 1819 began with him profiting from Foscolo's and Hobhouse's *boutade*: "The Italian Romantics are few and little authoritative and are ridiculed by Romantics abroad." Opening this tool of Austria with a text by Staël, famous exile and foe of every tyrant, was an Austrian coup. So why did she allow it? Her friends, the journal's metamorphosis, and her first article itself may tell us; it was a poisoned chalice for Austria, as its reception indicates – hence, perhaps, Acerbi's ignoring her proposed articles in March 1816: a homage to Francesco Melzi d'Eril, whose death in January she felt ended "l'idée de la liberté représentative en Italie"; a preface on Leoni's Milton; reflections on Genoan and Pisan republics. I called these texts lost in 1995, but Brocchi reviews Leoni's Milton translation in the *Biblioteca*, December 1817 and February 1818, and Staël may yet be present there – as her Genoa text may be that of the vibrant, untitled Italian manuscript, in Albertine's hand with her mother's revisions, published in Staël's *Carnets de voyage*. Staël often had her children copy her texts, and her revisions include remarks like, "Cela *me* rappeloit l'histoire du cor d'Odin," an odd thing to add if revising your daughter's diary.[8]

If Breme founds Italian Romantic polemic with his *Discorso* in June 1816, Giordani in April grounds the neoclassical response on the same Staël article. Later Leopardi's friend and mentor, he translated Staël's January article for the *Biblioteca*, but placed his anonymous reply in the

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April issue. Mario Fubini stresses the ties between this text and Leopardi's July letter. Calling Staël a person too "dotta e gentile" to attack Italy deliberately, Giordani accepts her claims that study and theater can save Italy, that myth is overused, and that Italy is infected by feeble verse; but he contests the (non-Staëlian) claim that study of antiquity is futile, and rejects German fantasy and exaggeration as a model. Italy's salvation lies not in imitation but in national originality – precisely Staël's belief, as it happens. Fubini finds this text apolitical, a belief all the harder to accept given Acerbi's many clashes with Giordani's liberalism. In 1817, Giordani reads and praises Shakespeare, perhaps prompted by Staël's appeal; in 1818, he notes his liking for her *Considérations*. Staël wrote her July letter in answer to Giordani's elegant reply.[9]

Though Staël may have met Acerbi in 1805, her main reason to accept the *Biblioteca* was her old and pliant friend, Monti. Monti's place in Romantic polemic is ambiguous. In January 1816, he helps Staël place with Antonio Stella her husband Rocca's memoirs of Spain's guerrilla war; in June, his brief *Dialogo* defends her, while he counsels rejecting Breme's *Discorso*; in October, finally, he adds a disclaimer to Breme's Alfierian review of Rocca's text, prompting the outburst Breme bluntly confides to Staël in December: "*Monti vous êtes mort et vous infectez déjà*." Pellico politely shared this feeling, in a quarrel Staël avoided. In February 1817, Monti broke publicly with Acerbi and tried to break the *Biblioteca*. Acerbi prevented Monti's projected rival journal, but Austria, revealingly, quashed his attacks on Monti after 1820, and his journal sides with Monti in 1825's mythology debate.[10]

Il Conciliatore, I: Borsieri, Pellico, and Breme

We move now from Austrian debates to the young Romantics and their reply to Austria, *Il Conciliatore*. "Borsieri, Breme and I," writes Pellico to his brother in December 1815, "are bound by the most intimate friendship." For this tutor of Count Porro's children, as for Stendhal, Breme's aristocracy may have counted; but Pietro Borsieri wrote the *Proemi* for *Biblioteca* and *Conciliatore* alike. This trio was destroyed after 1821 by exile, death, and Austrian prisons; surviving, what might they have become? Acerbi censored then rejected Borsieri's nationalist *Proemio* before January 1816. In September, Borsieri published an ironic reworking, the *Avventure letterarie*, arguably the finest piece of the whole Milan controversy. Written in November 1815, the *Proemio* has been read as a pure homegrown origin to Italian Romanticism, but Borsieri saw Staël during

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October, and his text already has current Staëlian themes: imitation, the slave trade, Napoleon's corruption of thought; ties between art, moral science, and literature; the love of truth, beauty, and genius that determine progress; the "invisible chain of intelligence and ideas which links the multitude that learns with the genius who creates." Borsieri's central focus, like Staël's, is Italian weakness and sterility, the abuse that "calls an Italy tied up an Italy united" – Acerbi's refusal was no accident. Baretti and Gozzi, Laurence Sterne and Foscolo help shape Borsieri's September reworking, but Staël's place is somewhat larger: Besides mentions of her articles and Breme's and Trussardo Calepio's replies, the *Avventure* lists her *Lettres sur Rousseau*, *Réflexions sur le suicide*, *De l'influence des passions*, *De la littérature*, *Delphine*, *Corinne ou l'Italie*, and *De l'Allemagne*, and mention the American Republic's request for her bust. *Corinne* dominates the chapter on novels; the ensuing farce attacks Bertolotti's slanderous July review, quoting whole pages from *Corinne* in answer, and closing with a splendid image, an old, decrepit prop statue of "Italy" brought on to gull spectators and close another feeble play.[11]

Pellico's correspondence is a hub for this whole period, and Staëlian themes again recur – echoing her books, however, rather than her articles, a fact that has hidden these echoes from purely literary reviewers. In May 1816, Pellico argues like the *Considérations*, which Staël had discussed in his company during October, that Napoleon's power vanished when he mistook his own nation's physical and moral forces. In February 1817, a letter discussing Staël claims that we are subject to a Kantian invisible law, which positive religions misrepresent. In July, he suggests that Staël helped cause Breme's sudden cult of reason, perfectibility, and the "true evangelical doctrines, that is, those of philosophy nourished by the spirit of Socratic charity." In February 1818, Pellico regrets seeing Byron's gothic *Giaour* translated by Pellegrino Rossi in Geneva, that "amico di Ludovico e di tutta la *cotterie* di Mme de Staël"; but in August he pushes Breme to review her *Considérations*, which seem with *De l'Allemagne* to speak profoundly to his thought: He presents Staël's text as a death blow to the myth of Bonapartist liberalism – still alive two centuries later – saying that her book will do all of Europe a great good. In 1819, the author of *Le mie prigioni* repeats that Napoleon failed to help Italy but that France can now continue the transformation Christianity began, an imperfect sketch of the true religion that is the cult of truth; he adds in 1820 like *De l'Allemagne* that the aim of religion is not happiness, and that true religion, the glue of society, lies in Northern Europe, where different sects encourage emulation.[12]

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On July 31, 1814, Breme describes in one breath his new work on perfectibility and his verse translation of Corinne's *serva Italia* songs, noting that he hopes soon to discuss perfectibility with *Corinne*'s author – "l'homme de son siècle." As Angiola Ferraris shows, *Corinne*, *De l'Allemagne*, and the *Considérations* lie at the heart of Breme's much-censored and revolutionary thought. His models move from *idéologie* to Staël through his mentor Tommaso di Caluso – who also admits debts to *De l'Allemagne* – fusing Alfierian stoicism, politics, religion, and post-Kantian idealism in a vision of national regeneration. The two meet and talk throughout October 1815, and Breme follows Staël to Coppet in July–August; during this stay, his letters retrace his transformative discovery of a new Europe. In June 1816, Breme submits his *Discorso* to the *Biblioteca*, and Staël in Milan adds praise of this new manuscript to her July article. Acerbi rejects the *Discorso* and deletes Staël's praise in his translation, leaving a brief, mutilated mention. Breme, furious, publishes the *Discorso* in town and leaves the journal. In November, at Staël's request, he reviews Rocca's Spanish memoirs for them; Monti's disclaimer marks a second rift. The year 1817 brought the *Romitorio*, in which Marco Cerruti sees echoes of *Corinne*, and the *Grand Commentaire*, with Staël's Genevan publisher Paschoud. Breme finished the *Commentaire* at Coppet in August, after Staël's death, as her posthumous *Considérations* were edited – a book he reviewed in 1818 for the *Conciliatore*. Breme, Pellico, and Borsieri had dreamed since April 1816 of a new journal, a *Bersagliere*, based in Geneva, where Pellico lists Staël, Schlegel, and Sismondi as ideal collaborators. The *Conciliatore* is born here, and indeed opens with Sismondi, as Staël had opened the *Biblioteca*. Beside reviews of Staël, Constant, and Sismondi, the *Conciliatore* even reviews a book by Staël's pastor, Jean Isaac Cellérier. Modern editors have missed that detail; internationalism has no substitute. From 1815 onward, Italy's Romantics had gathered in Breme's opera box at La Scala; Byron and the English there joined Staël, Sismondi, or Stendhal, whose debts to Staël in Italy are another story. With the *Conciliatore*'s end in 1819, Breme made a final visit to Coppet; he died aged forty in 1820. Despite much excellent work, the links he offers between Staël, European Romanticism, and the Risorgimento still allow analysis beyond the scope of this chapter.[13]

Il Conciliatore, II: Berchet, Visconti, and Manzoni

Echoing its name, the *Conciliatore* had a second pole, led by Manzoni though he did not participate. The Manzoni–Berchet–Visconti group is

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unusual in its taste for Staël's German associate, A. W. Schlegel. Staël, Schlegel, and Sismondi shared for fifteen years a roof at Coppet, an esthetic and political agenda, and, after 1814 in particular, European celebrity: When this shared agenda shows up in other writers, naming one associate as a source thus grows problematic, yet many details do seem derived from Staël directly. In October 1816, Giovanni Berchet's *Lettera semiseria* echoes *De l'Allemagne*'s list of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and Gottfried August Bürger as Germany's three outstanding modern poets and translates the two Bürger poems Staël had focused on, as Berchet declares (30). Like her, he cites the tag "est deus in nobis," praising enthusiasm (47), and declares that the gift of poetry should be sought today in Germany, where poets' fame is due to their people's art. Like her, he regrets the lack of a capital city, and proposes a "patria letteraria" where a "patria politica" is lacking (24). The German taste for enthusiasm he attributes, like her, to climate, geography, society, and political circumstances, and their pensiveness he ascribes to their religious divisions (47–48). As Breme suggests, *De l'Allemagne* evidently stands at the heart of Berchet's text; his arguments may seem pro-Austrian, and his praise of Bürger was much condemned, but Berchet shared Austrian prison and exile with other Romantic nationalists. His *Lettera* also evokes the 1816 controversy, noting Florentine attacks on what a female visitor wrote nineteen years ago that ignored her praise of Italy in another book. Berchet refers here to Staël's 1800 *De la littérature* and to *Corinne*, and his talk of Christianity, melancholy, and perfectibility suggests that he has read the former (56, 53). Berchet thus did not need Staël's articles to know of her long-standing call for translation as a vital source of life for any nation; but it is worth noting that this, his most famous work, does precisely what she asked.[14]

Ermes Visconti's *Conciliatore* articles of 1818–1819 also owe much to Schlegel, though they name *De l'Allemagne* just once. A long review of Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* notes Staël's stress on a scene Visconti translates; yet a comparison with Voltaire's *Pucelle* also echoes Staël's review, as does the misreading of Schiller's coronation scene (416, 443, 451). Visconti's two long articles on Romanticism again use Staël without attribution. His Schlegelian *Dialogo* echoes Staël's "critique des beautés" theme; like Staël, his *Idee elementari* stresses links between art and society, as well as poets' need to be men and citizens, a theme dear to Alfieri and Foscolo (42, 436–437). Reading, states Visconti, as *De l'Allemagne* had, makes us participate by sympathy in the opinions of other ages (439); man is perfectible – for Staël's famous topos, Visconti cites her father Jacques

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Necker – and kingdom and republic are equally tools of circumstance for legislators to assure public welfare: This is a key argument of Staël's *Considérations*, which the same *Conciliatore* had reviewed two months earlier. Visconti's definition of Romanticism combines Staël, Schlegel, and Sismondi in its talk of Normans, crusades, the wars of religion, the navigators, and Italy's free medieval republics; Staël offered Visconti his attribution of modern love to women's new status, their veneration among the ancient Germans, and the abolition of slavery (446–8, 451). Modern love produces seemingly immoral acts based on an inner virtue. Here Visconti cites Staël's *Delphine* – her second explicit mention, and a tendentious choice (453). He goes on to trace, like her uncited *De l'Allemagne*, two leanings of the soul, external and internal, and to argue that the latter is Northern and modern (454). On this he builds his conclusion, citing Johann Heinrich Voss's neglected *Luise*, which Staël had stressed so heavily (456). In closing, Visconti turns to Schiller's *Don Karlos*, choosing to repeat Staël's focus on the incongruity of Posa's scene with Philip, a scene Breme also mentions. Once again, he uses Schiller as model while borrowing Staël's eyes (466). Visconti's uncited debts to Staël gain piquancy through Stendhal's extensive use of him in *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823–1825), in which similar debts to the woman are similarly unacknowledged.[15]

Manzoni's *Materiali estetici* list sources for the *Adelchi* preface and the famous *Lettre à M. Chauvet* he sent Stendhal's friend Claude Charles Fauriel in 1820: Staël, Schlegel, Sismondi, and François Guizot's preface to Shakespeare. Like Berchet, Manzoni prefers Schlegel – in the 1814 French version by Staël's cousin, not Giovanni Gherardini's annotated 1817 translation from the French. *De l'Allemagne* is little used in 1820, with perhaps three echoes: on man and "l'effet des phénomènes extérieurs sur son âme," on theater's forced moral dilemmas, and in the closing apostrophe to France. The 1823 *Lettera sul romanticismo* has richer parallels, on genius making its own rules, and on Romanticism's equation of religion and true philosophy despite rival fanaticisms; yet Staël is most present, oddly, in other texts. *Sulla morale Cattolica* – like *De l'Allemagne* – rejects contemporary liberal lionizing of Jeremy Bentham with a long attack, "Del sistema che fonda la morale sull'utilità." It also cites, on religion and philosophy, *De l'Allemagne* and the *Considérations*, adding a long passage on this woman Calvinist, "one of the most splendid intellects ever to have concerned itself with the contemplation of man." Staël "forced the *ragionatori*, who felt they stood at the ends of thought, to get up and resume the journey." Manzoni's late work, *La Rivoluzione francese del*

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1789, comparing the French Revolution with Italy's in 1859, is a last intriguing footnote and deserves study. The center of this neglected text, in which Manzoni reviews his experience of Italy's new nationhood, is none other than Staël's father Necker, that butt of historiographers whom Staël is condemned for discussing too much. At the close of Manzoni's career, forty years after his first mention of Staël, he turns again like Leopardi to Coppet as a model for Italian experience.[16]

Conclusion

In 1819, Austrian spies in Venice reported on an Englishman named Byron, leader of a band of desperadoes called the *Romantici*. Italy's first Romantic debate was literary in name only: All but a few – Berchet, Visconti – saw higher stakes here, a struggle for the very idea of Italy, under her latest foreign masters, and a choice between Burmese isolationism and a place in the concert of Europe. In Napoleon's aftermath, Italy, like Germany, like France itself, had to be reinvented. In Milan, writes Pellico, *Romantic* and *liberal* were synonyms; yet Carlo Botta calls the Romantics *traitors*, and Bertolotti, Leopardi, and Carlo Giuseppe Londonio all echo the charge, for their very different reasons. Staël's 1816 articles cut, as was her wont, to the heart of this highly charged debate – hence an immediate impact that dwarfs that of her friends Schlegel and Sismondi. Staël's gift for polemic was also helped by her own ambiguity: Romantics paid homage to her, neoclassicists reused her originality arguments to attack the call for foreign models, and Leopardi invoked *Corinne* in condemning Romantic excess.[17]

The shape of Europe underlies this discussion, and Staël, with firsthand knowledge from London to Moscow, is in large part responsible for that scope. In 1815, after the French official Giuseppe Prina's murder, Borsieri attacks the fallen Napoleon, an attack Pellico would echo. By 1816, Italian focus shifts to the new master, Austria. Waterloo thus greatly complicates Staël's position; Napoleon, target of the *Considérations*, had persecuted Staël for the praise of oppressed Germany her 1816 articles repeated, and which now applied so well to Italy under German rule. It also complicates life for Breme – whose reviews redirect both her book on the French Revolution and her husband's book on Spain's anti-French uprising – and for Austria; when Saurau thought Staël useful, Klemens von Metternich in Vienna, who knew her better, warned against a "personne aussi dangereuse." That ambiguity is perhaps why, for all but Leopardi, her polemical texts seem more present than *Corinne*. Staël's fault lines run deep into

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Romanticism and Risorgimento and merit study – in the *Conciliatore*, in Manzoni's *1789*. From Milan, echoes move back across Europe, as Breme had hoped. Influence in German lands seems limited, ironically, to Austrian police activity, though A. W. Schlegel did publish in the *Biblioteca*, but England and America have debts to this debate through Byron, Hobhouse, Foscolo, and Polidori. Coppet forged further ties between Breme's *Conciliatore* and the English Whigs – Samuel Romilly, Henry Lansdowne, Henry Brougham, Sylvester Douglas, John Russell – and with Paris and Geneva, in Sismondi, Étienne Dumont, Victor de Broglie, Benjamin Constant, and Louis de Saint-Aulaire. Stendhal's career as a writer begins in this matrix, a European architecture unthinkable without Staël's visit. How sweet to see that grand architecture resurface.

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