CHAPTER 2

Revolution and the Private Sphere
Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Zulma, Recueil de morceaux détachés, 1786–1795

In this second chapter, and in the four chapters that follow, we turn to Staël's political role during the Revolution. During this time, she took action – she collaborated with others; she published tracts and manifestos; she drafted other tracts that remained unpublished. Everywhere her gender complicated things for her – she published her first plays in print runs of twelve copies, and her revolutionary tragedies are only now seeing the light of day. We begin our study of her role in politics by tracking Staël's buffeting between private and public spheres via the publication history of three important early texts, in often granular detail, beneath the Revolution's burning sky.[1]

Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1788

This text in which critics have sought the birth of modern criticism erects a scaffolding the author will name Romantic twenty years later. It is also a political act: While praising Rousseau, Staël enrolls him among supporters of her father Jacques Necker, who gained from this public praise in 1789. She evokes Montesquieu, Claude Adrien Helvétius, the "géométrie politique" she likely takes from Nicolas de Condorcet. This is among the first studies of Rousseau, and reading his work, Staël insists on the fate of women; her striking formula of 1788, "esclavage domestique," returns in her new 1814 preface. Lastly, the text emerges from the Encyclopedist milieu that Rousseau detested, the salon of Madame Necker.[2]

This chapter appeared in French in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 371 (1999), 189–219. Georges Poulet, *La Conscience critique*, 16, describes "ce que nous pouvons appeler un *Cogito* critique. Non pas je juge, donc je suis . . . mais j'admire, donc je suis." Beneath this elegant sign, we wish to thank Simone Balayé, who reviewed this entire text with the generosity and elegance that distinguish her, and Jean-Daniel Candaux, who lent us his time and his wisdom: he is preparing a comprehensive Staël bibliography, to which this short analysis owes a good deal.

Staël, who turned twenty in 1786, spent two years preparing this work, presented as an improvisation. Madame de la Briche, "aux approches de l'hiver 1786–1787," reads letters and reflections by the young ambassador's wife with the comte de Crillon, on the *Confessions* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Robert de Luppé dates to summer 1786 a letter to Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard: "Je vous soumets sept lettres sur Rousseau qui font l'éloge entier"; but Staël does not have seven letters before 1787 at the earliest, if not autumn 1788. On May 27, 1787, a pregnant Staël asks her husband Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein to bring her "le *Contrat social* et les *Lettres sur la montagne*": "Je lis *Emile*, mais je n'écrirai sur cet ouvrage qu'après mes couches. Il faudra parler de l'amour maternel et je veux auparavant le sentir." Edwige-Gustavine enters the world on July 31, 1787. These readings suggest that the short letter on politics is begun before the letter on *Emile*, in summer 1787, but its call to the nation "bientôt rassemblée" necessarily dates from after the convocation of the Estates General by the author's father on August 8, 1788. The letter may thus have been recomposed in proof before publication in December. In January 1789, Henri Meister in the *Correspondance littéraire* publishes extracts of this "petit volume in-12, de 140 pages. Elle n'en a fait tirer qu'une vingtaine d'exemplaires."[3]

The story of this publication is complex. William Merhab analyzes fifteen versions of the printed text; I examine sixteen, and there are others. The Meister edition appears neither at Broglie nor at Coppet, suggesting that the author's personal copy has gone missing; Jean-Daniel Candaux was able to identify two duodecimo texts dated 1788 and with 141 pages, of which one at least seems to be the *editio princeps* (A/X^A). Merhab is not preoccupied with identifying pirate editions, but when four texts announce the date 1788 ($A–D^C$), while the book appeared only toward December, suspicion seems prudent. For instance, the badly printed volume allegedly prepared "Au Temple de la Vertu, chez le premier Restaurateur de la France" (J) might seem pirated, but its variants return in 1798. I offer in the Appendix to this chapter an analysis of these editions, bearing witness to the immediate success of Staël's first book, a success that engaged her in a public career against which she protested, if she did not fight.[4]

Indeed, the *Lettres sur Rousseau* launched a polemic focused primarily on the double thesis of Rousseau's suicide and Thérèse Levasseur's bad character, a polemic that guaranteed, all through 1789, a vogue for the daughter of Necker, hero of the hour. On January 21, she sends Nils von Rosenstein these "quelques lettres dont j'ai fait tirer vingt exemplaires pour

mes amis seulement. J'attache un grand prix à ce qu'elles ne soient pas publiques . . . [I]l m'était cependant important qu'on ne les imprimât pas." She repeats this disavowal in 1814 in her second preface. Around the month of February, Madame de Vassy née Girardin writes to Staël a letter defending Rousseau, guest of the family, and Staël refers in return to "cet Ouvrage connu seulement de mes amis" as she refuses a public edition; her decision to permit one, after all, may have been caused by Madame de Vassy's decision to publish her letter in the press. The *Vie de J. J. Rousseau* by the comte de Barruel-Beauvert, dated *in fine* to May 18 and which also cites the Vassy letter without the reply, contains long extracts of the *Lettres*, along with Staël's little-known response to a letter requesting the loan of a copy:

> Je condamne à l'obscurité, monsieur, les lettres dont vous voulez bien me parler. Je me vante de votre témoignage sur un fait disputé, mais que je crois vrai. Mon culte pour la mémoire de Rousseau me fait apprendre avec grand plaisir l'hommage que vous voulez lui rendre; & j'ai plutôt désiré d'exciter à le louer que je n'ai pu me flatter d'y être parvenue.

This would lead us to redate even the reeditions bearing the date 1788 to after February 1789.[5]

On March 23, 1789, "Prault demanda et, le 20 avril, obtint un privilège" for a public printing of this work, an edition preceded by others that had benefited from a tacit permission. Despite a tenacious legend, each edition prior to 1814 includes the author's appeal to her daughter, who died on April 8, 1789; Louis-François Prault and the others who publish after this date did not then consult Staël. March on the other hand was a fruitful month; on March 24, Madame de Créqui writes that Staël "a fait imprimer ses *Lettres* avec augmentation" and Pierre Moultou, heir to Rousseau's manuscripts, writes to refute the suicide thesis and to ask whether *Mouton* in the printed letter (F/H^G) refers to his father. The typo suggests that Staël did not publish this exchange; Madame de Créqui is mistaken, or the augmentation she speaks of is simply the preface, absent in A and present everywhere thereafter. The *Remerciements de Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Mme la baronne de Staël*, an April fool in eight octavo pages dated "Aux Champs Elysées, ce premier avril" cites H^G, speaking of the exchange with Madame de Vassy and of letters "qui font tourner la tête à Paris depuis trois mois" – a Paris awaiting the Estates General. Around July 1789, Louis de Champcenetz publishes a *Réponse aux Lettres* [. . .] *sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Bagatelle que vingt libraires ont refusé de faire imprimer*, dated to Geneva, which provokes a *Réponse à la réponse de M. de*

Champcenetz and a *Courte réplique à l'auteur d'une longue réponse*, also dated to Geneva, August 1789, and by Madame de Charrière, though taken for Staël's work; Madame de Charrière returns to the fray with the *Plainte et défense de Thérèse Levasseur*, dated December. Here then are seven public responses in a year, without counting the press. Why? On December 9, 1787, Louis Petit de Bachaumont's *Mémoires secrets* describe a run-in between Staël and the brother of Champcenetz, giving an epigram on her in reply, "*Armande* a pour esprit tout ce qu'elle a pu lire," which Champcenetz published the same month in *Le Songe d'Athalie*, but which appears in 1852 in an edition of the works of his mentor Antoine Rivarol: "Armande a pour esprit *des moments de délire*." Champcenetz wrote a prose portrait of Staël as a "femme savante" in a new brochure that the *Correspondance littéraire* describes in June 1788; his response to the *Lettres sur Rousseau* is part of a long campaign. Thus, we see the role of personalities in this polemic, along with Staël's place in the history of Rousseau criticism.[6]

What, to conclude, accounts for the success of this work? The growing vogue for Necker and Rousseau – two Genevans – marked by editions of Rousseau's works to which this volume was often added; the political situation amid the wait for the Estates General in May; the force and charm of the text; but also, and as always with Staël, the gift she had for controversy. Already in 1789, her judgments displease some, and a second legend presents her as a badly informed young author. However, she draws on sources available to very few: firsthand testimonies from Pierre Moultou, François Coindet, Meister, and even Necker. It is Meister who in 1778 launches the thesis that Rousseau had poisoned himself; he also maintains that Thérèse, "pour demeurer seule maîtresse de son esprit, avait éloigné de lui ses meilleurs amis." Meister attributes his theses to "un homme tendrement attaché à M. Rousseau," likely Coindet, Rousseau's old factotum and Necker's secretary. Coindet, who was able to devote himself to the impression of the *Lettres*, had not seen Rousseau since 1768, but René Louis de Girardin invited him to Ermenonville one week after the author's death. As testimony to the suicide, the letter to Madame de Vassy cites Coindet and *Mouton*: This is indeed Paul Moultou, who had placed the young Madame Necker (Suzanne Curchod) with Madame de Vermenoux. This friend to whom Rousseau bequeathed his manuscripts, and who presented Meister to him in 1764, might disavow the suicide thesis, but he liked Thérèse no more than Coindet or Meister did and refused to visit her as a widow. When Staël set out to write, she thus miraculously consulted not only vague acquaintances of Rousseau but also

his best and most faithful friend: One might then hesitate to qualify as arbitrary those judgments, on Thérèse for example, which stand within a well-established tradition. Before his death in 1787, Paul Moultou writes to Madame Necker as to the continuation of the *Confessions*: "Ses *Dialogues*, ses *Rêveries*, ont trop montré cette humeur noire et mélancolique qui le consumait depuis si longtemps . . . le meilleur, le plus aimant des hommes s'y sera peint comme le plus noir des ingrats." Staël invented neither the suicide theory, nor the attack on Thérèse, but she launched them, and at a decisive moment in Rousseau's posterity.[7]

This work subsequently held a place apart for Staël, who judged it worthy of two reeditions and three times gave it a new preface. Indeed, she often reworked this text, which opens and almost closes her writer's career. In 1798, the reedition (L/M^L) was a new political act: Her *avertissement* speaks of "idées politiques qui doivent fonder la République en France" – the subject of her manuscript treatise in 1798, *Des circonstances actuelles*. Staël and France had both changed a good deal since 1789, when one edition proclaimed her on the title page "FILLE UNIQUE de M. NECKER" (J), and the game of anonymity still ended with capitals for her famous father rather than for Staël herself. In 1789, Necker's reputation was at its summit; no praise seemed excessive. But under the Directoire, Staël remained almost alone in her loyalty to a once-universal cult, and she knew too well the laws of propaganda not to see what had to change. Four mentions of Necker are thus suppressed. The 1798 text in fact contains thirty-odd new variants, second thoughts above all that invite a genetic reading.[8]

In 1814 (N/O), the four passages on Necker reappear. This is not authorial caprice; the Emperor is on Elba, Staël's father is ten years dead, and she determines to honor him in a France free once again. Thus, rereading her chapter on Rousseau's political writings, she finds a sentence that begins "Je l'ai aimée aussi, cette liberté qui ne met entre les hommes d'autres distinctions que celles marquées par la nature" (*LR* 77). That gets Staël thinking: exile, the pulping of *De l'Allemagne*, the flight across a Europe at war. And she edits: *Je l'aime aussi, de toute la force et de toute la vivacité de mes premiers sentiments*. This 1814 text is part of a fairly complete program of Staël reeditions at the moment of the Restoration; but a book that combines Rousseau, the 1793 *Réflexions sur le procès de la reine*, and the 1812 *Réflexions sur le suicide* is not without a polemical agenda. More than ninety changes also bear witness to the care the author took over this last volume she herself published. After having reviewed and corrected her text in 1798, she trims it in 1814; these are mostly second

thoughts about the innovative style and blind faith of her youth, about some praise of Rousseau. It is all the more curious that she does the opposite for Necker, whose place becomes more explicit. She also suppresses the apostrophe to her daughter; in 1814, Staël has raised three children, and experience has likely clarified her thoughts on pedagogy. This book in fact contains rather more criticism of Rousseau than often claimed: "J'embrasse mon rival, mais c'est pour l'étouffer," Staël might have said – she knew very well how to place her praises, disliked her Genevan countryman's opinions on women, and had experienced firsthand the dangers of his program in politics.[9]

Staël's gift for tactics and the use she made of reeditions appear lastly in the fact that the 100-odd revisions she introduced in 1798 and in 1814 coincide a single time. It is a passage that disappears from both editions: "Ah! si l'homme n'a qu'une certaine mesure de force ... qu'il s'épuise s'il le faut, qu'il me laisse retomber, pourvu qu'il m'ait une fois élevée jusqu'aux cieux." Barruel-Beauvert, Madame de Charrière, and the authors of the *Remerciements* and of the *Réponse à la réponse* all note this phrase, of which Champcenetz remarks, "[L]e sexe de l'auteur ne pouvait percer plus naïvement." To conclude this textual journey between Louis XVI and his younger brother Louis XVIII, the *Œuvres complètes* introduce around forty new variants, a humble trace of the labor dedicated by Auguste de Staël to his mother's works.[10]

Zulma, 1794, and the *Recueil de morceaux détachés*, 1795

If the publication of the *Lettres* is shrouded in mystery, that of *Zulma* and the *Recueil*, in 1794–1795, is simpler. *Zulma* appeared in 1794 and saw two reeditions prefacing the *Recueil de morceaux détachés*: in 1796, published by Staël's friend Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, and then in London in 1813. The *Recueil* appeared in 1795; by the 1796 reedition, Staël has placed *Zulma* at its head. These 1796 and 1813 editions have some curious variants. In 1796, Staël replaces her *avertissement* for *Zulma* with a less burning *avant-propos*; as in the *Lettres sur J. J. Rousseau*, a more settled author tones down early daring. Revisions, however, are less frequent; not counting the typos, *Zulma* offers in total eight substantive variants, the *Recueil* twenty-three.[11]

What presents problems is the writing of the *Recueil*. The *avertissement* for *Zulma* is dated "ce 10 Mars 1794," and the text would seem to date from that winter. But for the *Recueil*, there are very few items in the dossier. In her preface, Staël announces about the three short stories,

"[J]e n'avais pas vingt ans quand je les ai écrites, et la Révolution de France n'existait pas encore," adding that her *Essai* comes afterward; the *Epître au malheur*, she says finally, was "écrite sous la tyrannie sanglante qui a déchiré la France." The precious *Notice* of her cousin Madame Necker de Saussure offers nothing further. On December 13, 1793, Staël asks her husband to fetch from Signeul "mes trois romans qu'Alexandre a dû lui remettre," and she writes again of this on May 10, 1794: "*Adélaïde*, *Pauline* et *Mirza*, que Gambs possède dans son hôpital et que je voudrais bien qui ne fussent pas perdus." The three short stories thus exist in manuscript before September 2, 1792, when the author flees Paris. This brief dossier has encouraged a traditional dating: *Mirza*, *Adélaïde et Théodore*, *Pauline*, before April 1786, when Staël will turn twenty (her marriage is that January 14); the *Epître*, during the Terror; the *Essai*, late 1794 or early 1795. Staël would thus have chosen in 1795 to publish juvenilia written around 1786, first mentioned in 1793 and alongside two more recent texts, a decision that would require interpretation.[12]

As it happens, at least one detail here is false – the date of *Mirza* – and a series of coincidences obliges us to consider a different dating hypothesis. Briefly, here it is: *Mirza*, late 1786; *Adélaïde et Théodore*, summer 1790, when Auguste de Staël is born during Louis de Narbonne's absence at Besançon; *Pauline*, around this time, but perhaps transformed for Adolph Ribbing after May 1794; the *Epître*, *Zulma* during this same spring 1794, and the *Essai sur les fictions* in the company of Benjamin Constant, between winter 1794 and spring 1795. Two texts here change date and meaning: *Adélaïde et Théodore* and *Pauline*.

Mirza may date at the earliest from after the month of August 1786, when the chevalier de Boufflers returns from Sénégal with two slaves, the famous Ourika, taken in by Madame de Beauvau, and Ziméo, the Ximéo of *Mirza*. This short story seems to reply to the resonant early portrait of Staël by the comte de Guibert, *Zulmé*, which specifies: "Zulmé n'a que vingt ans." *Mirza*, which speaks of first loves – "les âmes passionnées ne connaissent que des extrêmes" (*RMD* 171) – and which has a political target, the slave trade, seems to show clear progress compared to Staël's bourgeois drama also dated 1786, *Sophie ou les sentiments secrets*, in which the closed universe of the young author revolves around an adored father figure. Like Pygmalion, Mirza transforms her love object, even offering herself to the slavers as stronger than the man she loves. It is curious to note in Staël, whose dark complexion was remarked on, the antinomy of blonde heroines like Adélaïde or Delphine and brunettes like Corinne, half sister of the blonde Lucile but descendant of Mirza and Zulma, African

and Native American respectively. This antinomy plays out subsequently throughout the nineteenth century.[13]

Adélaïde et Théodore and *Pauline*, with their delicate satire on social mores, seem to come from another world. In both short stories, a heroine who is badly married and already widowed falls in love with a man who gives her a son – Staël's story after 1790, widowhood aside. Could the author of *Sophie* write this? Let us compare her remark to her husband: "Il faudra parler de l'amour maternel et je veux auparavant le sentir. Je déteste en ce genre ce qu'on fait avec de l'esprit." Staël does not know maternal love before July 1787; her first love begins with Narbonne in autumn 1788, when she publishes her *Lettres sur Rousseau*. "Dès qu'il m'a vue," she writes to Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre in autumn 1789, "il a changé pour moi sa destinée"; he convinced her that he "pouvait s'estimer heureux par la possession de mon cœur, mais que, s'il le perdait sans retour, il n'y survivrait pas." Théodore makes this same touching declaration. If indeed Théodore echoes Narbonne, then *Adélaïde* could date from 1790, when a pregnant Staël is left for several months by the man she loves. Feeling herself threatened with abandonment during this period we know poorly, she may have written *for Narbonne*, and not for us, this apology of a Célimène who asks her beloved if he has "pardonné le malheur, dont ma coupable légèreté fut la cause" (198). She will in fact write to Narbonne in February 1794, "Votre silence de Toul [October 1790] m'a fait abjurer la coquetterie." We would then be third parties in a private conversation.[14]

A series of coincidences leads us to consider this possibility, despite the ambiguous sentence the author puts in her preface – apparently the only evidence available for the traditional dating. Adélaïde, we read, marries, very young, a stupid, rigid, aged man. He dies! And she meets, like Staël, the man of her dreams: This man has loved gambling and women, but the text willingly excuses him for it; Paris celebrates him, he will die if Adélaïde does not accept him, but he has a difficult mother who detests her. All these details resurface in the story of Louis de Narbonne: "La duchesse de Narbonne voyait avec douleur son fils se rallier entièrement à La Fayette, aux Constitutionnels, épouser les rêves dangereux de Mme de Staël." Adélaïde is free, according to the plot, but the couple celebrates a "mariage du cœur" the very morning of the legal marriage (185), and the text refuses to say whether the legal marriage ever took place. This whole passage is bizarre. The marriage will remain a secret between the two of them (why?) and the new husband is twice named "son amant, son époux." When Adélaïde shines at the ball, the text adds, "Bientôt son époux, dont la grâce et l'esprit effaçaient tout . . . s'empressa de faire valoir Adélaïde" (186).

If she is already shining, how will he show her off? The remark makes sense if Staël has a reader of choice to flatter; and it is just this brilliance that displeases Théodore, as it does Narbonne at this period. Théodore leaves like Narbonne for his regiment, also leaving a pregnant heroine who will have not a daughter like every later Staël heroine but a son, a detail reproduced in *Pauline*. And in fact, Auguste de Staël is born on August 31, 1790. This would also explain Staël's haste to see Narbonne again, absent since April; on October 7, she passes through Besançon with Frédéric Séraphin de Gouvernet to rejoin her father at Coppet and finds Narbonne there. He then goes three weeks without writing.[15]

When Adélaïde is dying, the gardener, bizarrely, is astonished at the idea that she wants to put her urn alongside that of her husband. She explains that he "l'aurait permis." One might continue; Pauline comes from Saint-Domingue like Narbonne's wife, and the name Théodore appears like Mirza in two texts in this collection. We have here a fictive network close to Staël's heart; we also find, as in *Delphine*, a girlfriend whose multiple rendezvous at the innocent heroine's home cause the catastrophe. In sum: It seems more daring to attribute to Mademoiselle Necker in 1786 these foretellings of her future life, in a text written for no obvious reason or public, forgotten before 1793 and left ten years in manuscript, than to see in it Staël reworking a painful lived experience in a badly known moment of her life, to excuse herself to the man she adores, and deciding on publication in 1795 for reasons we shall see. Here in short is a hypothesis that needs to be considered.

Once the texts are written, what is to be done with them? From 1786 to 1795, Staël keeps *Mirza* without publishing it, and she may have done the same for her two other short stories. Or, if these texts concern Narbonne, she may have avoided publishing them while he was minister for war, from December 1791 to March 1792. In any case, she abandons the three texts in Paris on September 2, 1792, fleeing the September Massacres, and only finds them after October 1794. Her life has changed a good deal; in May 1793, "quatre mois de bonheur échappés au naufrage de la vie" end for Staël when she leaves Narbonne in England, where she had rejoined him in January; she soon feels he is escaping her, and during this summer while she works on the *Réflexions sur le procès de la reine* she meets the republican count Ribbing, the "beau régicide" of Guiseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. A first letter to Ribbing, from December 1793, features a refrain from *Pauline:* "Entre mes devoirs et mes torts, ou voulez-vous que je plaçasse un nouveau lien?" On October 3, 1794, Staël, still without her manuscripts, copies for Ribbing her entire "romance de Pauline" from

memory and must erase the slip *Adolphe* to put in the original name, *Edouard*. "Le passé s'attache à moi," says the romance.[16]

The *Histoire de Pauline* turns out as a text to be almost more mysterious than *Adélaïde*. Like Staël when she meets Ribbing, Pauline meets the comte de Cerney after a marriage (at twelve, to a slaver, like the first husband of Elise de Lebensei in *Delphine*: Does one see M. de Staël here?) and a later liaison. This first liaison provokes remarks that curiously recall the rupture with Narbonne: "[E]lle lui écrivait sans cesse de longues lettres dans lesquelles son âme jeune et tendre se peignait"; "[I]l avait l'âme trop tendre pour supporter le spectacle de sa douleur; il trouva plus simple de la porter au comble en s'éloignant" (202). Cerney, like Ribbing in 1794, fights a duel to defend the honor of this guilty woman: "[J]e mérite le mépris de tout le monde," repeats Pauline; "[L]a honte est ineffaçable." She adds, as later Staël's Delphine or Constant's Adolphe – for whom Constant borrows Ribbing's first name – that "sans doute une première faute rend la seconde nécessaire" (208, 223). Pauline is obliged to spend the night with a man she abhors, but "prétextant un grand mal de tête elle échappa à la nécessité de feindre; art coupable qu'elle ignorait, auquel l'amour illégitime condamne, et qui fait peut-être son plus grand crime" (208). I cannot see the teenaged Mademoiselle Necker easily coming up with that detail. On April 29, 1794, Staël speaks to Ribbing of "ce qui souille le présent que mon cœur a voulu te faire": This secret shame will return in all her later work. A mutual friend, as in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, asks Cerney "s'il ne croyait pas possible d'aimer et d'estimer une femme qui, revenue des premiers égarements de la jeunesse, les aurait expiés par son repentir?" (217); like Léonce in *Delphine*, Cerney attempts to overcome this sentiment but shows himself unable to; like Ximéo or the hero of *Adolphe*, he remains alone after the death of his beloved. Cerney, who like Ribbing combines softness with force, lives on in all Staël's later heroes. All this illustrates the danger of keys because it is incontestable that *Pauline* dates from before 1792; but Staël may well have transformed her original text after October 1794. In such cases, one might mistrust easy conclusions.[17]

Zulma is presented to us, after *Paul et Virginie* and before François-René de Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René*, as a fragment taken from a philosophical text: *De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations*, a treatise published by Staël in 1796 but begun by 1792. The *avertissement* of *Zulma* is dated, as noted, "ce 10 mars 1794" (*RMD* 103). Around the middle of March, Staël hardens in her letters to Narbonne: "Homme barbare, dur par faiblesse, appelant fermeté la résistance aux absents," she writes. By April, she has arrived at sarcasm, writing of the "succès

étonnants que vous avez depuis 8 mois dans l'affaire de St Domingue." Narbonne had sent his intendant Félix Ferdinand to Saint-Domingue in revolt, to save the lands of his wife; on the banks of the Orinoco, Fernand abandons Zulma for Mirza. But *Zulma,* like *Pauline* a text where one almost sees the blood on the pages, lacks the sarcasm of the letters. It even seems addressed less to an ungrateful lover than to Madame Necker, mother of the author. For whom is a text written? A primordial question, for Staël, and too little asked. For whom did she write the *Lettres sur Rousseau*? On March 19, 1794, Staël writes to Narbonne that she is tired of "entendre dire à ma mère que mon attachement pour vous l'a conduite au tombeau"; Madame Necker in fact dies on May 14, 1794, refusing to see her daughter. *Zulma* appears before April 10 and seems to prepare a liberation: On April 12, Staël leaves her parents to rejoin Ribbing in Zurich; on the 24th, they are at Schaffhausen with Madame Necker de Saussure, author of the *Notice*; on the 29th, Staël gives herself to Ribbing. Thus, a melancholy circle closes; *Zulmé*, *Mirza*, *Zulma*, this is the story of Staël as heroine.[18]

"J'étais prisonnier chez les Sauvages" (107) begins the astonishing *Zulma*, in which the heroine goes so far as to suck her lover's wound (117); love, she writes, "est la vérité, la flamme, le pur élément, l'idée première du monde moral" (119). Zulma makes her story public to the crowd, as Staël makes this text public, and explains herself: "Le désespoir de ma famille a pu *seul* me rappeler à moi" (118). "Arrêtez, s'écrie-t-elle après avoir parlé, ma famille est-elle absoute? Jamais le nom de leur fille ne leur sera-t-il reproché?" – "[L]e long travail est fini," she says after the guarantee of the crowd, and commits suicide (120). Staël may have sought in her publication of this fragment a similar guarantee of her own exoneration. Fernand's mother particularly recalls the inexorable Madame Necker: "[C]'est à toi seule que je m'adresse," Zulma says to this "mère désolée qui frémissait d'horreur à son approche" (109). Zulma ends painfully, "[A] la trace de mon sang, n'ai-je pas le droit d'avancer vers vous?" And she falls lifeless at her feet.

The *Epître au malheur*, which also dates from spring 1794, is addressed to the city of Geneva and ends, "Malheur à qui voudrait agiter son pays! / Les Français n'avaient pas leur exemple à juger." The Terror reaches Geneva on July 19, at the moment it ends in France. This oneiric Switzerland offers a pastoral vision that is quite rare in Staël: "Quoi! disais-je, ce calme où se plaît la nature / Ne peut-il pénétrer à mon cœur agité? / Et l'homme seul, en proie aux peines qu'il endure, / De l'ordre général serait-il excepté?" The author passes from elegy to satire as she approaches this incommensurable time, and her poem floats between awkwardness and force, even hazarding a periphrasis for the guillotine:

"Comment fixer, ô ciel! cet instrument funeste, / Où le fer contenu dans des ressorts nouveaux . . ." That is a problem with the genre she has chosen. Elsewhere, this long Staël poem presents a history of the suffering of the French outside France, speaking on a single page of the émigrés, of her mother's death, of her own experience: "Aux yeux du préjugé, qui pensait est coupable, / Et qui raisonne encor sans doute veut trahir"; "La mort comme autrefois se montre impitoyable, / Et l'hymen le plus saint n'en est pas respecté"; "L'amour peut être ingrat, ou l'amitié légère." At publication in 1795, Staël places this poem she values at the head of her *Recueil*, insisting on its timeliness.

Death is present in all these texts, as it is in the *Corinne* or *Delphine* they announce, Staël's two great novels. Mirza commits suicide in front of her lover, Adélaïde in front of her friend – a selfish and violent act, echoing classical theater, which Valorbe will return to in the manuscripts of *Delphine* – while Adèle like Delphine follows her lover to execution. Almost alone in Staël's works, Zulma survives her lover but kills herself on his dead body. These triumphs are not Staël's and their fire comes from elsewhere, from a certain gothic tradition that attracts her and that above all allows her a new Romantic morality, where passion itself defines virtue, rather than the struggle against passion of a Julie. Pain purifies. "En mourant," says Pauline, "je me crois digne de toi," and she evokes "les vertus qui m'honorent" (202), the first of which appear to be her love for Cerney and her suicide. This story of Pauline can in fact be read as a Freudian text or as a religious conversion; superego or conscience, Madame de Verseuil wants to save the heroine, like Madame de Lebensei later with Delphine, and comes seeking her on the isle of passion she inhabits. Pierre Choderlos de Laclos and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Cécile and Virginie also appear in profile behind the aptly named Pauline; Bernardin had read his novel before publication in Madame Necker's salon.

Of all this work, Staël in 1794 publishes only *Zulma*, even if her *Epître* circulates in manuscript. She then moves on to the *Essai sur les fictions*. This study that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe translated, that Friedrich Schiller published in spring 1796 alongside his *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, and that Friedrich Schlegel reviewed offers an elegant proof that Staël may have influenced the German Romantics ten years before seeing herself influenced by them in *De l'Allemagne*. One does not see it cited by German critics, and the translation is generally missing in Goethe editions, but the topic deserves study, the sort that is not lacking to argue that Staël copies others.

A note in the *Essai* gives a résumé of this rich text that mentions fifty-odd different European authors, from Homer to the anarchist William

Godwin. Staël promotes the novel of manners as the only genre adapted to postrevolutionary society, and there her goal emerges: "[C]ette utilité constante et détaillée qu'on peut retirer de la peinture de nos sentiments habituels, le genre seul des romans modernes me paraît y pouvoir atteindre." As always, she adds echoes of her personal life, mentioning *Caroline de Lichtfield*, which she had read in proof, *De l'esprit des religions* by Benjamin Constant, and *Camille* by Samuel de Constant, Benjamin's uncle.[19]

In December 1794, Staël decides to publish the *Réflexions sur la paix*, which Charles James Fox quotes in answer to William Pitt in Parliament. On February 10, 1795, she asks Meister to have her manifesto reprinted; on March 17, she writes to Ribbing, who wants to do the same in Denmark, and notes Narbonne's reproach that "vous m'avez rendue républicaine." Returning thus to public life, Staël faces an increasingly painful problem in the person of her husband: "[I]l faut que je force M. de Staël au divorce," she writes to Ribbing on January 8, 1795, "*par une déclaration qu'aucune femme délicate ne peut se permettre*." But fiction permits any number of masks, and it is not impossible to see here an excellent reason to let this collection appear. In 1795, a new life begins for Staël; less concerned as to the sentiments of her husband, she can in this publication break with the woman she once was. The *Recueil* thus offers a ground-clearing, a tabula rasa of the lived self that prepares the abstraction of *De l'Influence des passions*. And yet, a delicate woman does not explain such matters in a preface; might one not prefer to let it be understood that the texts date from before the marriage, as is done so happily by the sentence she chooses? Staël thus avoids scandal, for herself and those near to her, and her husband will know where things stand. One might wish in sum for other proofs than the notorious preface for the dating accepted until today.[20]

Curiously, the effect produced on the public by this collection, which appears after the Prairial coup d'état toward May 15, 1795, may seem very different; the volume offers Directorial France a proof that Staël remained a settled woman, despite the *Lettres sur Rousseau,* despite the *Réflexions sur la paix*, and thereby assures whoever would hear it that she is not the intriguer – "célèbre sans être connue" – with whom the Jacobin and royalist presses continue to regale their readers. *De l'influence des passions* will take up the same futile struggle in 1796. Lastly, there remains a fundamental question, given that Staël often speaks of utility: What profit will the public have, according to her, from this reading? For her whole life, Staël tried to shape her public to virtue and liberty, and the new ethics she presents seeks to contribute to that. The reaction of the Thermidorian press to this harvest from the past would make for an interesting study.

APPENDIX

Editions of the Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The *Lettres* appeared clandestinely toward December 1788 (A/X^A). But each edition contains an author's preface, proof that Staël encouraged a more or less public reedition, as Madame de Créqui said, and even that each unacknowledged edition comes after that. The response to Barruel-Beauvert, in February 1789, also allows one to think that the text was then unfindable – that would be to say that every remaining edition dated 1788 is in fact from February–March 1789 at the earliest ($B–D^C$). F.-C. Lonchamp calls C and D^C identical apart from the length of the lines on the title page, E^C likewise apart from the date 1789. Aside from the title page, the three seem thus to come from the same forms. Merhab, our point of reference, has shown that each later edition follows the variants of B or of $C–E^C$; he notes five substantive variants between B and C, including a typo, each of just one word, seeing in them two editions from the same publisher (50). Perhaps. Two variants in B repeat A: A, 29 (*re*trouvent) and 121 (rêver, *aimer*). Might B, which Slatkine published in a curious facsimile reprint, be the author's reedition? The four editions B, $C–E^C$, I, and J neglect the exchange with Madame de Vassy that also dates from February; all seem to date from March 1789, unless one of them had an uninformed publisher, like copy I perhaps, Swiss and the only edition with a publisher's name. Madame de Charrière in Neuchâtel again cites Madame de Vassy in December without the reply (84–87). Copy I reproduces the four variants of C, and adds only two slight variants; the whole series $F–M^L$ reproduces those of B (58). The *Remerciements* dated – as a mystification? – to April 1 quote the exchange and follow H^G. F adds the exchange at the last moment, on an independent bound sheet; H^G incorporates it; G lacks it, but G's eighty-eight pages are identical in H^G, and in the title page, just three lines have been recomposed. That is to say that G and H^G also come from the same forms, probably from March or April. Their publisher reveals the author's name and alleges that Staël has reviewed his text; the typo *Mouton* and Staël's refusal to publish this

exchange, which she respects in 1798 and 1814, make us doubt it. Finally, the group G/H^G, "Dernière édition, revue et corrigée," contains fifteen variants of which thirteen appear only here: They are typos and gross errors (56). Let us recall that Prault published only after April 20, without signing his work or consulting the author, it seems; might he have made G before, H^G after this date, or must one believe the date of the *Remerciements*? Of the nine variants in F, "Nouvelle édition augmentée," J reproduces six, of which five recur in 1798 (54), but without the exchange with Madame de Vassy. J is well printed and on fine paper; alas, it is also full of typos, even more than G (60). In 1798, L/M^L follows J, keeping three variants and correcting all but five typos – arduous work, because none of the multiple corrections follows another base text (67, 164–165). N and O, whose base text appears to be C, share more than sixty new variants and have a dozen little substantive differences, perhaps author's edits to N, on proof and which return in P (69–70, 166–167, 173).

To conclude: Toward December 1788, Staël has twenty copies of her work printed (A/X^A). Toward March 1789 appears first a reedition augmented with an author's preface, then a group of unacknowledged editions that profit from this, all anonymous and without royal privilege (B–E^C), and at least one unacknowledged edition containing the exchange with Madame de Vassy; the second could be Prault's, with privilege and after April 20 (F–H^G). Other editions lastly (I–J) may have come later. In sum, the author contributed to two early editions, without acknowledging the second, and seems only to have returned to her text in 1798. One can also lay out these conclusions in two genealogies: ABGH^G/BFJLM^L; BC$D^C$$E^C$/CI/CONP. In total, there are twelve editions and two possible reprints, 1788–1820, of which nine appear to date from 1789.

I give the *sigles* of **Merhab**; then **Lonchamp**; then the description. My ***sigles***: text not consulted [*]; reviewed by the author? **[!]**; reprint, with its source **[+]**; Bibliothèque nationale, Paris **[BN]**; *National Union Catalog* **[UC]**. In his illustrations, Merhab flips L and M^L; he does not know A. Let us add that WorldCat contains three phantom editions: **1788:** 328 pp., WorldCat, *Lettres sur Rousseau*, 37: University of Wisconsin, Madison; **1788:** 156 pp., WorldCat, *Staël*, 57: University of Notre Dame (in fact B); **1789:** 12°, ii-118 pp., "Dernière edition [. . .]," WorldCat, *Staël*, 34 (in fact J). Lastly, Lonchamp notes an unlikely fourth edition, as is his habit: **12–10**. 1793: Aux Deux Ponts, Sanson, 8°; at **4–2**, he falsifies Antoine-Alexandre Barbier, his source, by adding a false pagination; and his **8–6b** and **11–9**, which are not duodecimo, are identical to his **8–6** (Merhab, *Lettres* 63).

For three attested texts, I was unable to reproduce the title page:

***X^{A}: [4–2].** 1788: 12°, iv-141 pp. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris.
***+E^{C}: 6–4.** 1789: 12°, iv-123 pp. Not located.
***P: 15–13.** 1820: Paris, Treuttel et Würtz, 12°, ii-102 pp. Not located; but in 1829, the *Œuvres diverses* of Auguste de Staël offer it for sale for 1F20.

Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Twelve title page transcriptions

Jean-Daniel Candaux, a leading authority, published a brief review of four early editions including the *editio princeps* in "Les Premières éditions des *Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau*," in *Germaine de Staël et Benjamin Constant, l'esprit de liberté*, ed. Léonard Burnand, Stéphanie Genand, and Catriona Seth (Paris and Geneva: Perrin, Fondation Martin Bodmer, 2017), 51–54. Our original article, published in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 371 (1999), 189–219, reproduces photographs of the twelve title pages transcribed here. Bibliographical description in **bold**.

!A: [4-2]. 1788: 12°, iv-141 pp.: iv/A-E, F [121-41]. Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, Geneva.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / Vous, qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons et des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons et de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez, je le confie à vous. / L'abbé De Lille. / 1788.

!B: 5-3b. 1788: 12°, iv-127 pp.: iv/A-E, F [121-7]. BN, British Library, UC.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'Abbé De Lille. / 1788.

C/D^{C}: 3-1/5-3. 1788: 12°, iv-123 pp.: iv/A-E, F [121-3]. British Library.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTERE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'Abbé De Lille. / 1788.

F: 7-5. 1789: 12°, iv-141+10 pp.: iv/A-E, F [121-41]+A [1-10]. UC. No connection to A.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'Abbé De Lille. / NOUVELLE ÉDITION AUGMENTÉE. / 1789.

G: 9-7. 1789: 8°, iv-88 pp.: iv/A-E, F [81-8]. BN, Harvard.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTERE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / DERNIÈRE EDITION, / REVUE ET CORRIGÉE. / Par M^me^ la Baronne de S***. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ses pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'abbé DE LILLE. / 1789.

+H^G^: 8-6/8-6b/11-9. 1789: 8°, iv-92 pp.: iv/A-E, F [81-8]+G [89-92]. BN, British Library, UC.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTERE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / DERNIERE EDITION, / Augmentée d'une Lettre de M^me^ la Comtesse / ALEXANDRE DE VASSY, & d'une / Réponse de M^me^ la Baronne de STAEL. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ses pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'abbé DE LILLE. / 1789.

***I: 8-6c. 1789: Lausanne, Jean Mourer, 12°, vi-155 pp. [55 pp., according to Lonchamp]: A-F [vi, 7-144], G [145-55]. Harvard, UC.**

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTERE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous qui lui devez des leçons & des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons & de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez: je le confie à vous. / L'Abbé De Lille. / A LAUSANNE. / Chez JEAN MOURER. Libraire. / 1789.

J: 10-8/10-8b. 1789: Au Temple de la vertu, [etc.], 8°, vi-118 pp.: A-G [vi, 7-112], H [113-8]. BN, Princeton.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTERE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU, / Par M^me^ la Baronne de STAEL-HOLSTEIN, / Épouse de M. l'Ambassadeur de Suede / auprès du Roi de France, FILLE UNIQUE / DE M. NECKER. / Vous qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes; / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons et des larmes;

/ Pour prix de ces leçons, et de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez; je le confie à vous. / L'Abbé DELLILE. / AU TEMPLE DE LA VERTU, / Chez le premier Restaurateur de la France. / 1789.

!L: -. 1798: Paris, Pougens, 12°, xi-159 pp.: xi/A-F, G [145-59]. Harvard, Princeton.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU; / PAR M^me.^ DE STAEL. / Publiées pour la première fois en 1788. / Vous, qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons et des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons et de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez, je le confie à vous. / de Lille. / SECONDE ÉDITION. / PARIS, / CHARLES POUGENS, Imprimeur-Libraire, / rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre, N°. 246. / AN VI. (1798.)

!M^L^: 13-11. 1798: Paris, Pougens, 8°, vii-106 pp.: vii/A-F, G [97-106]. BN, UC.

LETTRES / SUR LES OUVRAGES / ET / LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU ; / PAR M^me^ DE STAEL. / Publiées pour la première fois en 1788. / Vous, qui de ses écrits savez goûter les charmes, / Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons et des larmes, / Pour prix de ces leçons et de ces pleurs si doux, / Cœurs sensibles, venez, je le confie à vous. / de Lille. / SECONDE ÉDITION. / PARIS. / CHARLES. POUGENS, Imprimeur-Libraire, / rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre, N°. 246. / AN VI. (1798.)

!N: 14-12. 1814: Paris, Nicolle, 8°, xii-270 pp.: xii/1-17 [1-270]; 143-270 for the text. Harvard.

RÉFLEXIONS / SUR / LE SUICIDE, / SUIVIES / DE LA DÉFENSE / DE LA REINE, / Publiée en août 1793; / ET / DE LETTRES SUR LES ÉCRITS / ET LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / PAR M^me^ LA BARONNE DE STAËL-HOLSTEIN. / PARIS, / H. NICOLLE, RUE DE SEINE, n° 12. / MAME FRÈRES, RUE DU POT-DE-FER, n° 14. / MARTINET, RUE DU COQ-SAINT-HONORÉ. / 1814.

!O: -. 1814: Paris et Londres, Colburn, 12°, xii-103 pp.: xii/B-G [1-96], H [97-103]. British Library, UC.

LETTRES / SUR LES / ÉCRITS ET LE CARACTÈRE / DE J. J. ROUSSEAU. / PAR / M^me^ LA BARONNE DE STAËL-HOLSTEIN. / PARIS : / ET LONDRES, CHEZ COLBURN, LIBRAIRE, / CONDUIT STREET. 1814.