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Staël, Germaine de. *Œuvres complètes, série I: Œuvres critiques, tome II, De la littérature et autres essais littéraires*. Ed. Stéphanie Genand. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013. Pp. 795. ISBN: 9782745325181

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Germaine de Staël's *Œuvres complètes, série I: Œuvres critiques, tome II, De la littérature et autres essais littéraires* collects the second half—chronologically speaking—of Staël's critical works. Stéphanie Genand performs a valuable service to Staël scholars by editing, presenting, and grouping these texts that together deliver quite a complete and comprehensive portrait of Staël's philosophy. The first half of this volume presents "Essai sur les fictions" (1795) and *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800) and the second half is comprised of fifteen *comptes rendus* and essays.

In the "Introduction générale," Genand points out that the task of compiling Staël's complete works is an ongoing one, as scholars continue to discover additional writings. She credits Simone Balayé and John Isbell for having enumerated the *comptes rendus* and essays in number 46 of the *Cahier staëlien* (1994), which has made this section of the volume possible. The works in this volume of the *Œuvres* are a testament to Staël's dedication to diversity, freedom, and perfectibility. Genand also reminds readers that "Essai sur les fictions" was initially overlooked by her contemporaries due to the tremendous success of *Lettres sur Rousseau* and *De la littérature*. This work, however, illustrates Staël's ability to make her point without incurring censorship. Choosing "fiction" over "roman" and imagination over imitation (25), Staël smoothed the way for writing that would "désormais franchir de nouvelles frontières" (28).

Jean Goldzink introduces and comments on *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800), explaining that it is, above all, a philosophical work that contains not a history of literature, but rather "un survol de l'esprit des différentes littératures" (71). Goldzink points out that Staël arrives at her definition of perfectibility through her understanding of the reciprocal rapport between literature and society. While supporting Montesquieu's belief that literature is influenced by society, Staël insists that the obverse is also true: literature can and must also influence society. It is thereby empowered to change and improve society. The second part of *De la littérature*, according to Goldzink, is both "un bilan amer de la décennie révolutionnaire" and a fervent plea for reason guided by moral sentiment and experience (93). Goldzink points out that Staël's approach is in direct contrast to Chateaubriand's. Whereas he looked back to recreate a Christian past, she looked forward to a republican anti-conformism (93-94).

The second half of this volume, *Mélanges littéraires*, begins with Staël's *comptes rendus*. Genand describes Staël's style in these writings as one that "confronte au lieu d'opposer" (12). This explanation holds true time and again in Staël's careful and calculated manner of suggesting oversights or questioning the works of her contemporaries rather than rejecting or discounting them. The authors she chooses to examine range from those long associated with Staël and the Coppet group like Bonstetten, Sismondi, and Schlegel to others who are often overlooked today, Degérando and Barante to name just two. An introduction and analysis accompanies each *compte rendu* and gives excellent information on the historical and literary framework within which the works in question were written, thereby placing the works in both a general historical context and a more specific context with regards to the life, writing, and thought process of Staël at these moments. In some of these texts, Staël demonstrates the sense of community and commonality she holds with her fellow philosophers. In her introduction to the *compte rendu* on Gérando's work, Florence Lotterie

explains this phenomenon as being due to Staël's unwavering interest in literature's power to return to "un universel de la pensée, marqué par la valeur du désintéressement républicain" (411).

Two common themes appear throughout the *comptes rendus*, essays, and bibliographic entries. First, there is a continual push toward cosmopolitanism and the perfectibility that can only be attained by reading literature written not only in France, but also in Germany, Italy, and England. Second, friendship—in various forms and for various reasons—is of great importance to Staël. She finds inspiration in her friends' writings (457, 481), maintains friendships to promote her own status (395), carefully maneuvers so as not to hurt her own prospects or insult her friends (453, 470), and nurtures talent where she sees it—even in the work of her then fourteen-year-old son (524) when he published his French translation of a medieval German text, *Lothaire et Maller*, for which Staël wrote the preface.

This volume is an excellent and needed addition to Staël studies. It deserves a place on the desk of every scholar of early nineteenth-century philosophy, literature, and history. The works included and the accompanying introductory analyses are both well-researched and well-written by the editor and contributors.