1. Author information

Name: Stacie Allan

Address to be used for correspondence: Flat 5 Kendal House, 51 Bowness Avenue, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0AL

(Please also attach an up-to-date copy of your CV)

2. Book information

Title: Writing the Self, Writing the Nation

Subtitle (if any): Romantic Subjectivity in the Works of Germaine de Staël and Claire de Duras

3. Description of proposed book:

Please include as much information as possible, including an outline of the rationale for the book and a detailed chapter-by-chapter synopsis. If you have any sample material available for review, please send this to us as well.

If your book is an edited volume, please send us the Notes on Contributors, including university affiliations, and indicate which of the contributors have agreed in principle to participate in the project.

Overview
This monograph is the first significant study to consider how gender and nationhood were ideological battlegrounds in the search for identity and self-expression, as evidenced in the
novels published from 1789 to the ascent of Realism around 1830. The French Revolution represents a pivotal and complex moment within the history of personhood in France. The loss of the traditional markers of identity meant that the theoretical individualism of the eighteenth-century was played out in real life and its limits were tested. This multifaceted dislocation of individual subjectivity left an entire generation alienated from their past lives. The composition of the new French nation state, in contrast, was rooted in the binary of gender difference. Naturally, this tense co-existence of individual freedom and determinism and the melancholia it provoked preoccupied writers of the Romantic movement. The proposed monograph assesses the ways in which Germaine de Staël (1766–1817) and Claire de Duras (1777–1828), two of the most important writers of this period, portrayed these shifting parameters of selfhood. By studying form and theme, this book will assess how the novel was a vehicle for creating a more universal formulation of subjectivity at a time when people were increasingly defined in national and gendered terms.

Situating its analysis at the intersection of gender and nationhood, this monograph contends that Staël and Duras wrote the self through agents and sites of otherness, in terms that evidence a dialectical relationship between sameness and difference. The two authors challenge the construction and enforcement of binaries, such as male/female, French/foreign, and France/England, within contemporary legislation, discourse, and culture through their employment of the sentimental novel. Usually judged unfavourably by posterity, the form is reimagined through its potential for empathetic identification, providing Staël and Duras with a mediated strategy of political engagement to appeal for social change, and to plot individual emotional experiences of the disjunctions of historical time after 1789. Combining this framework with close textual analysis facilitates the development of a fluid and relational model of subjectivity that interacts with the Other and what one could term a Romantic selfhood.

This research builds on three prominent areas in contemporary scholarship: transnationalising the European Romantic movement (Hamilton, 2016, 2013); a revaluation of the French novel’s history (Astbury, 2012; Cohen, 1999; Hunt, 2007); and an increasing interest in the culture of Imperial and Restoration France (Bercegol, Genand, and Lotterie, 2016; Counter, 2016; the AHRC-funded French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era project at the University of Warwick, 2013–2017). Drawing together these three perspectives in this timely study enhances our knowledge of France’s tumultuous passage to becoming a modern nation and how that journey was reliant on defining Frenchness in opposition to neighbour countries, in this case England. Overall, this monograph reveals unexplored literary connections between Staël and Duras, and testifies to how the two authors engaged with the prominent philosophical concerns of their time including selfhood, national unity, and cosmopolitanism. Beyond the central intertextual relationship, this book provides commentary on an understudied period, and clarifies women’s role within French Romanticism.

Outstanding Features
➢ First comparative study of Staël and Duras
French Romanticism is often viewed through the lens of the melancholic man, struggling with his place in the world, whilst its two most prominent female writers (Staël and George Sand) are held up as exceptions and usually studied in isolation. Bringing two female Romantics together in this study sketches out an alternative view that expands our understanding of the movement and its findings might subsequently be applied to male-authored texts, thereby challenging the binaries that currently constrain scholarly analysis. The choice of Staël and Duras is particularly significant due to their close friendship, their intertextual relationship, and their proximity to Chateaubriand, the dominating male figure of
French Romanticism. Studying how Staël’s and Duras’s works might be positioned alongside or against Chateaubriand presents the movement in more diverse terms and reinserts women at its centre. Placing Staël’s and Duras’s works in dialogue also offers mutual benefits for the scholarship of each writer, deepening our understanding of Staël’s influence on and interactions with other women, broadening the existing perspectives on Duras, and offering a model for studying female authors in parallel.

- **Explores the political applications of sentimental fiction’s universality**
  
  The Realist novel’s rise as the dominant and emblematic literary form of the nineteenth century impacted on the posterior fortunes of the literature produced in the aftermath of the Revolution: Balzac and Stendhal denigrated sentimental fiction by linking it to female frivolity, whilst major histories of French literature continue to dismiss its value. Drawing on the work of Lynn Hunt (2007), this monograph explores how the sentimental novel’s key features — lack of central position, focus on the emotions, multivocality — can replicate the structures of democracy, develop empathy in the reader, and traverse the boundaries that gender and nationhood construct. Contributing to the ongoing feminist revision of nineteenth-century literary history, I reveal that Staël and Duras drew on yet adapted the sentimental model of their eighteenth-century predecessors to disseminate intellectual ideas and encourage the reader to reflect on philosophical and moral dilemmas.

- **Brings to light the transnational dimension of the *mal du siècle***
  
  Within French cultural studies, spleen, understood as a melancholic disposition, is most readily associated with Baudelaire, as a member of the third generation suffering from the *mal du siècle* (Hoog, 1954). The condition has almost invariably been characterised as the preserve of men in French Romanticism (Holmes, 1977; Ridge, 1959) and melancholy, more generally, is traditionally a privileged male state (Schiesari, 1992). In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, splenetic melancholia was considered an English malady. Indeed, Staël centres her theory of melancholia upon England’s modernity, as evidenced in the prevalence of melancholic philosophical reflection in works of English literature — a position that differs from Chateaubriand’s Christianity-based approach and adds a transnational dimension when applied to France. By exploring how Duras incorporates Staël’s ideas into her depictions of melancholia, the diverse roots of the *mal du siècle* are revealed and its overriding gendered connotations are removed. Previous debates on the question of whether female authors and fictional women suffer from the *mal du siècle* in its original terms (Naginski, 1991; Waller, 1993; Bertrand-Jennings, 2006) are either inconclusive or develop a feminised version of the condition. In contrast, my expanded reading of the *mal du siècle* identifies a universal psychological experience, whilst not denying its gendered aspects arising from the differing lived experiences of men and women.

- **Resituates England as a key reference point for the French Romantics**
  
  In C.W. Thompson’s *French Romantic Travel Writing* (2011), references to England are by far outnumbered by journeys to Southern Europe or the Orient. In studies of Staël, her primary concerns are often considered to be with Italy and Germany, whilst scholarship on Duras usually limits itself to focusing on non-European subjectivity in her most famous novel, *Ourika*. Many of the most prominent Romantics, however, spent long periods of time in England as émigrés (Staël, Duras, Chateaubriand) or travellers (Stendhal), and following the Revolution, the country served as a foil against which a French national identity could be developed, whilst its political institutions provided a model for some moderate thinkers. Thus, in addition to informing an expanded view of the *mal du siècle*, resituating England as
a key reference point for the French Romantics provides insight into ideas of Frenchness and nation-building through Staël’s and Duras’s exploration of English history and literature.

Chapter Synopses
The proposed study would begin with a short, focused Introduction that offers a brief historical contextualisation, overviews of its chapters and primary sources, and establishes the monograph’s themes and approaches.

Chapter 1
Emotions and the Novel: Developing a Universal Literature
Chapter 1 reassesses the sentimental novel as a site through which early nineteenth-century authors, male and female alike, mediated their political engagement. At a time when women were barred from the public sphere, they could metaphorically transcend biological determination in writing and, thereby, address the most pressing concerns of their day. Often negatively contrasted with the visual, universalist, objective, and masculine perspective that Realism purports to offer, the sentimental novel’s emotional lens instead is characterised as having a philosophical dimension that engages the reader in reflection. Drawing on Staël’s definition of philosophical literature, the novel is thus considered as a space in which Staël and Duras could write against categorical masculinist thinking by presenting their own visions of selfhood and social cohesion that transcended the constraints of gendered and national identities.

Chapter 2
The English Malady: Towards a Transnational Mal du Siècle
Chapter 2 sets out an expanded view of the mal du siècle that takes into account the broad psychological effect of the Revolution’s break with the past, and develops a relational concept of selfhood that is premised upon the incidence of loss or multiple losses. Reassessing the most famous formulation of the condition, Chateaubriand’s René (1802), from socio-historical and Freudian psychoanalytical perspectives exposes the tensions surrounding the gendering of melancholia and loss as male. Studying Staël’s own theorisation of melancholia as a by-product of global modernity in De la littérature offers a counter-position that uproots it from its usual male and French determinants, and therein it becomes available for women to adopt. Assessing Duras’s integration of Staël’s references to melancholic English poetry into her literary works provides the evidence for how these principles are put into practice through close textual analysis.

Chapter 3
Patrie and Père: Shaping Masculinity
Chapter 3 argues that Staël’s and Duras’s depiction of melancholic Romantic heroes permits their Revolutionary trauma to be considered within the traditional mal du siècle canon alongside their male counterparts. The chapter balances depicting masculinity’s perpetual state of crisis of unrealisable and conflicting ideals from sociological and psychoanalytical perspectives with the historical specificity of early nineteenth-century France. The incorporation of contemporary legislation into their characterisations shows Staël and Duras to be acutely aware of the contradictory and damaging expectations placed upon men in post-Revolutionary France. Its dual focus on national military duties and fatherhood challenges the masculine ideal of self-determination by revealing tense ties to the past, patrilineal structures, and family heritage. In turn, it reflects back onto the two authors and their own conflicting relationship to patriarchal authority.
Chapter 4
Women, the Nation, and Marriage (Provided as a sample chapter)
Chapter 4 considers Staël’s and Duras’s manipulation of contemporary female national allegory and women’s familial attachments as appeals to grant greater freedoms in the private sphere. In Revolutionary France, women’s bodies were used to represent the nation, which presents a clear conflict between their legal status and cultural capital. Emotional commonality across borders justifies Staël’s and Duras’s references to England, where, despite a tension between marital congeniality and domesticity, marriages offer more equality, especially for educated women. Staël and Duras project their desires for equalising male-female relationships within a patriarchal framework onto England, utilising the country’s difference to show France’s lack of opportunity for female emancipation.

Chapter 5
On England: Cosmopolitan Emotions and National Histories
In Chapter 5, the analysis of England is extended to the nation’s social institutions, history, and literature to examine the formation of national specificity. Whilst Chapters 3 and 4 foreground gender against national concerns, Chapter 5 reverses this structure and places nationhood at the fore. Discourses of national difference are inherently gendered and dismiss the cosmopolitan thought that Staël and Duras found productive. Finding themselves alienated from the new masculinist French state, the two writers filter questions of nation-building through England. Staël and Duras show myths of the nation’s eternal existence to be unfounded. They highlight that no nation develops in isolation, but draws upon its neighbours in its construction, whether through difference or cultural exchange. The final section revisits the development of the novelistic form to analyse Staël’s and Duras’s engagement with English literature, and explains why they shied away from historical narratives of national specificity in favour of transnational perspectives.

Conclusion
The Conclusion affirms that, in comparing Staël and Duras, the European nature of early French Romanticism is brought into sharper focus. It underscores Staël’s and Duras’s participation in the Anglo-French invention of the novel (Cohen and Dever, 2002) and challenges their ongoing marginalisation from accounts of nineteenth-century French literary history. Thereby, I highlight women’s centrality within Europe’s cultural and political networks, and offer a model of intertextual exchange within women’s writing, which might be applied to other writers of the period. Approaching Staël and Duras in this way contributes to breaking down the hierarchy of exceptionality and influence within women’s writing — a structure that is replicated within Romanticism itself.

4. How long do you expect the book to be? Please provide this information as a word count rather than a page count, and include the references and bibliography in your estimate.

In total, it is envisaged that the book will be approximately 76,500 words long, including footnotes and divided as follows:

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<td>Chapter 1</td>
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5. Are you planning to include illustrations? Please indicate the type and approximate number:

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6. If the book is likely to include any unusual fonts or characters (e.g. Hebrew, Greek or Arabic) please list them.

N/a

7. Are you planning to include work of your own which has previously been published elsewhere? Please give details if possible. You will be required to clear permission for re-publication of this work in both print and electronic form.

Material from Chapter 2 reframed around the subject of mourning is to be included for an essay in an edited collection under review with Garnier. An earlier version of material found in Chapter 4 on using the female body to depict national ideals is under review with the journal *Dix-Neuf*. Further content from the same chapter on equality in the private sphere will be used in an article currently in preparation for submission to the *Forum for Modern Language Studies*.

8. Are you planning to include third-party material which is under copyright? This applies not only to text, but also to tables, figures and images. Please give details if possible. You will be required to clear permission for the use of this material in both print and electronic form.
9. When do you estimate that you will be able to deliver the final manuscript?

Research for this monograph was carried out as part of my doctoral thesis, entitled ‘Romantic Selfhoods: Gender and Nationhood in the Works of Germaine de Staël and Claire de Duras’ (degree awarded 2017, University of Bristol). Reframing and restructuring the existing material makes up the bulk of the revision work. In particular, much of the material appearing in Chapter 1 of the thesis relating to the historical context and modes of female political engagement will be removed for publication elsewhere and content from the introduction and Chapter 4 will form the revised chapter. Chapter 2 will be streamlined and refocused primarily around the theme of the *mal du siècle*. With this work already underway, the full manuscript could be delivered in January 2018.

10. What readership do you envisage for your book and what would be their reasons for buying it?

The book’s primary readership would likely be scholars and students in the French Studies academic community in the UK, France, and the United States. However, as the list of courses below attests, there is much interest in pan-European Romanticism in English and Comparative Literatures. Staël, in particular, is often a key component on courses in these areas at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and regularly features in publications by English literature specialists (see Franklin, 2013; Wohlgemut, 2009; Bordoni, 2007). The book’s main appeal would perhaps differ according to these diverse audiences: within French Studies, the focus on selfhood, gender, and the nation would be of interest for the many courses addressing French identity and the construction of France; whilst comment on Staël’s interactions with England would provide further insight for those interested in Romantic cosmopolitanism. More generally, the monograph will also appeal to those researching the rise of the novel, the experience of exile, or francophone women’s writing.

11. Please list any courses for which your book may be suitable, including the names of the institutions which run them.

- **French Critical Contexts, Claire de Duras, Ourika**
  Optional first-year undergraduate French Studies module, University of Sheffield
- **Revolutions in writing, 1700-1900**
  Optional second-year undergraduate French Studies module, University of Cambridge
- **How to Think in French**
  Optional second-year undergraduate French Studies module, University of Reading
- **Romantic Britain and Italy**
  Optional second-year undergraduate Comparative Literature module (includes Staël), King’s College London
- **Women Writing in the Romantic Period**
  Optional second-year undergraduate English Literature module (includes Staël), Queen Mary, University of London
- **French Identities: France, Europe and the World, C. 1720–1830**
  Optional final-year undergraduate French Studies module, University of Liverpool
- **First-Person Outsiders in Modern French Literature**
  Optional final-year undergraduate French Studies module, University of Exeter
- **Romantic Travellers in Europe**
  Optional final-year undergraduate English Literature module (includes Staël), Queen Mary, University of London
- **Introduction to Pan Romanticisms**
  Core module on the MA in European Gothic and Romantic Studies course, University of Warwick
In addition, Staël and Duras are regularly taught in the United States, particularly at graduate level. A volume on Ourika is included in the MLA’s Approaches to Teaching World Literature series (Birkett and Rivers, 2009).

12. Please list any publications which might be seen as similar to or competing with your book.

Astbury, Katherine, Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution (Cambridge: Legenda, 2012)
Finch, Alison, Women’s Writing in Nineteenth-Century France (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
Louichon, Brigette, Romancières sentimentales (1789–1825) (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2009)
Reid, Martine, Des femmes en littérature (Paris: Belin, 2010)

13. What makes your book distinctive in comparison with the competing titles listed above?

Staël and Duras feature prominently in the growing body of scholarship on nineteenth-century francophone women writers produced over the past twenty years (a selection of which is cited above). Many of these works do not look far beyond the question of gender as a unifying factor, and directly comparative work remains rare, with single author chapters being the norm in both monographs and essay collections. Furthermore, some of this scholarship resists considering Staël alongside other female authors. Nevertheless, this critical field provided the necessary foundations that allowed me to place Staël’s and Duras’s writings in dialogue within my own research. Comparing Staël with Duras can only deepen our knowledge of her work by highlighting what is specific to women and what is more broadly part of shared experience, thereby providing a novel perspective on gender and offering nuanced insight into life in post-Revolutionary France.

In terms of the development of the novelistic form and cultural responses to the Revolution, this monograph sits in between the primary temporal focuses of Astbury’s and Cohen’s studies: the Revolutionary decade and the 1820s onwards respectively. Furthermore, I uniquely identify how the novel was bound up with writing the self and writing the nation. Combining concepts of selfhood with gendered and national selves draws upon Goldstein’s assertion that the non-unitary nature of subjectivity was a key concern in the aftermath of the Revolution long before modernism, the movement with which the fragmented self is normally associated. Applying this notion to nineteenth-century literary works, I show that, far from being a worry, Staël and Duras drew on the advantages of multiplicity to challenge masculine determinism. This cosmopolitan view of early French Romantic texts builds upon Cohen and Dever’s edited volume on the Anglo-French invention of the novel. However, by including Duras who was writing in the 1820s, I show that cross-Channel cultural production endures after their cut-off point of 1814, and I suggestively allude to its continuation further into the nineteenth century.
14. Is your proposal currently under review with another publisher?

No

15. Please provide the names, affiliations and contact details (if available) of 3-5 experts in your field. We may consider using these as peer reviewers. Please do not include members of your own institution or individuals who have advised you in the process of preparing your book proposal.

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Katherine Astbury</td>
<td>University of Warwick</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Katherine.Astbury@warwick.ac.uk">Katherine.Astbury@warwick.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Cohen</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td><a href="mailto:macohen@stanford.edu">macohen@stanford.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doris Y. Kadish</td>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dkadish@uga.edu">dkadish@uga.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Rowe</td>
<td>University of Leeds</td>
<td><a href="mailto:p.rowe@leeds.ac.uk">p.rowe@leeds.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandra K Wettlaufer</td>
<td>University of Texas at Austin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:akw@austin.utexas.edu">akw@austin.utexas.edu</a></td>
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16. If applicable, please list any of your previous works that were (a) written in another language or (b) translated into another language. Please make sure to include the title of the respective work(s), the language and the name of the publisher.

N/a

Please note that in almost all cases we ask authors and volume editors to provide some funding towards the production costs of their book. Please contact your commissioning editor for further details.

Works Cited

‘French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era’
  <https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre/>


