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Madame de Staël And Schelling

De l'Allemagne is the most important general work about German culture published in the nineteenth century, not only in France but in the rest of Europe outside Germany. De Staël's opinions shaped both the reception of German literature and the development of European literature. It has been said that she revealed Germany not only to the French but to the Germans themselves.¹ Napoleon personally intervened to have *De l'Allemagne* seized and confiscated as unpatriotic in 1810. While the book seemed too German to Napoleon, the Germans and Germanists have had their own objections. One of the traits for which the work has been criticized ever since its appearance is an excessively general or simplistic presentation of idealist philosophy.

Mme de Staël is perhaps the most famous mediator in European literary history, but her work raises questions about the proper goals of mediation and has puzzled scholars because of the apparently casual way in which she collected her information and the paucity of evidence about her sources. Her own dependence on mediators makes it difficult to determine the extent of her knowledge and the independence of her judgment. Hostile critics have often assumed that she simply transcribed what she was told by experts like August Wilhelm Schlegel or Henry Crabb Robinson. Where her text lacks specificity, it has been taken to exemplify French or feminine superficiality. Her treatment of philosophy, and more particularly of Schelling, throws these issues into relief.

Criticism of her book began even before it appeared. The tone for subsequent reactions to her treatment of German philosophy was already set during her visit to Weimar in the winter of 1803-1804, in

¹ Comtesse Jean de Pange, *Mme de Staël et la découverte de l'Allemagne* (Paris, 1929), p. 125.

her conversational jousting about German idealism with Schiller. To Goethe he wrote, "In allem was wir Philosophie nennen, folglich in allen letzten und höchsten Instanzen ist man mit [ihr] im Streit und bleibt es, trotz alles Redens. Aber ihr Naturell und Gefühl ist besser als ihre Metaphysik" (21 December 1803).² A month later, she asked Henry Crabb Robinson, a young Englishman studying with Schelling at Jena, "to draw up in english (which she speaks exceedingly well) some acco^t of the new philosophy w^{ch} she will employ unquestionably ag^t this same Phil^y in a work she is now writing." Robinson wrote to his brother after his first two visits to Mme de Staël that winter that he could not resist her "blandishments" and "white Arm," but that "She has not the least sense of poetry and is absolutely incapable of thinking a philosophical thought" (January 30, 1804).³ (He later modified this view.)

Ten years later, when *De l'Allemagne* was finally published (London, 1813; Paris, 1814), criticism was equally sharp. In 1810, Varnhagen von Ense indignantly read part of the work in galleys passed on by his friend Chamisso, and found its author visibly incompetent in philosophy.⁴ Richter, in his misogynist review, mockingly quoted her introduction to Schelling as an example of naive misinterpretation and of her female tendency to reduce concepts to feelings.⁵ Heine in 1854 concluded that this "Sturmwind in Weibskleidern" had turned German philosophy into a foggy limbo of mysticism. This was not her own fault, but that of her sex: "Die Weiber, wie alle passive Naturen, können selten erfinden, wissen jedoch das Vorgefundene dergestalt zu entstellen, dass sie uns dadurch noch weit sicherer schaden als durch entschiedene Lügen." The fleshy, turbaned Sultanness of thought had swallowed Schelling like a harlequin ice cream: "Sie betrachtete unsre Philosophen wie verschiedene Eissorten und verschluckte Kant als Sorbett

² J. C. F. *Schillers Briefe*, ed. Fritz Jonas (Stuttgart, 1892-96), vol. 7, p. 104. (Letter to Goethe of 21 December 1803) Although Schiller criticizes Mme de Staël, he also praises her integrity, lucidity, and vitality, urging Goethe to meet her as soon as possible. To Körner he wrote two weeks later, "Man muss sie aber ihres schönen Verstandes, selbst ihrer Liberalität und vielseitigen Empfänglichkeit wegen hochschätzen und verehren" (Jonas, vol. 7, p. 108). For an overview of French and German reactions, see Ian Henning, *L'Allemagne de Mme de Staël et la polémique romantique, Première fortune de l'ouvrage en France et en Allemagne (1814-1830)* (Paris, 1929), pp. 235-56.

³ *Crabb Robinson in Germany, 1800-1805, Extracts from His Correspondence*, ed. Edith Morley (London, 1929), p. 134.

⁴ Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten und vermischte Schriften* (Mannheim and Leipzig, 1837-1859) 6: 138. Rahel exclaimed on reading the book, "Die blinde Henne!" (3 June 1814) *Briefwechsel zwischen Varnhagen und Rahel* 4 (1874; reprint, Bern, 1973): 5.

⁵ Richter, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Eduard Berend, Section 1, vol. 16 (Weimar, 1938), p. 325. He accuses this "Amazon" of "castrating" her sources.

von Vanille, Fichte als Pistache, Schelling als Arlequin!"⁶

Goethe stands out among Germans for his sympathetic response to *De l'Allemagne*. To various correspondents he praised her well-prepared intellectual repast: "Jenes Werk über Deutschland, welches seinen Ursprung dergleichen geselligen Unterhaltungen verdankte, ist als ein mächtiges Rüstzeug anzusehen, das in die chinesische Mauer antiquierter Vorurteile, die uns von Frankreich trennte, sogleich eine breite Lücke durchbrach." Since, as he put it, she had already criticized him to his face, he reacted somewhat less sharply than his friends to her failure to appreciate *Faust* and *Elective Affinities*. "Ich kannte einen grossen Theil desselben im Manuskript, lese es aber immer mit neuem Antheil. Das Buch macht auf die angenehmste Weise denken, und man steht mit der Verfasserin niemals in Widerspruch, wenn man auch nicht immer gerade ihrer Meinung ist." For all his moderation, Goethe also expressed his annoyance at her provocative persistence in conversation and her feminine, witty approach to philosophy: "Philosophieren in der Gesellschaft heisst sich über unauf lösliche Probleme lebhaft unterhalten. Dies war ihre eigentliche Lust und Leidenschaft."⁷

Like many contemporaries, Goethe called the work "das Staël-Schlegelsche Buch," referring to the long years of intellectual friendship between Mme de Staël and August Wilhelm Schlegel. At the same time, he sensibly maintained that the book showed her habitual independence in intellectual matters. "Sie hat sich eine unglaubliche Mühe gegeben, den Begriff von uns Deutschen aufzufassen, und sie verdient deshalb um so mehr Lob, als man wohl sieht, dass sie den Stoff der Unterhaltung mit vorzüglichen Männern durchgesprochen, Ansicht und Urtheil hingegen sich selbst zu danken hat."⁸ We have a paradox here: she relied frankly on all the help she could get from the best experts she could find, yet in the end wrote an independent analysis that contains relatively few traces of her debts.

The paradox has general implications for her goals as a mediator. It will be considered here in the specific context of Mme de Staël's knowledge of Schelling's poetics—a subject that is in one sense new, since two manuscripts discovered in Dresden reveal that she was familiar with Schelling's ideas about literature to an extent hitherto unsuspected. The

⁶ Heine, *Geständnisse*, in *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Hans Kaufmann (Berlin, 1962), 7: 103-106.

⁷ Goethe, *Tag- und Jahreshefte*, in *Poetische Werke* 8 (Stuttgart, 1952): 1093, 1091; cf. 1089-92, 1411-13. To Frau von Grotthuss, in Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten und Vermischte Schriften*, 4 (Leipzig, 1843): 653-54. Goethe received both printed and manuscript excerpts in December 1812 from Count Karl Friedrich Reinhard (via Villers). *Goethe und Reinhard, Briefwechsel in den Jahren 1807-1832* (Wiesbaden, 1957), p. 174.

⁸ Goethe to Heinrich Meyer, 7 March 1814, "Einunddreissig Briefe von Goethe," contrib. W. Arndt et al., *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 4 (1883, reprint 1967): 163.

gap between what she knew and what she chose to write illuminates her deliberate choice of methods as a mediator of German philosophy.

One might well ask why Madame de Staël's understanding and use of Schelling's philosophy matter. The answer is not difficult to find. Schelling's philosophy during the period in question, 1800 to 1804, has been described as the epitome of German Romanticism. His close working relationships with Romantic writers like Tieck and the Schlegels during his stay at Jena around the turn of the century exemplify Romantic "symphilosophizing." The *Athenäum*, August Wilhelm Schlegel's Berlin lectures, and Schelling's Jena lectures must be read together as documents in the development of an idealist aesthetics stressing the supreme value of art and the artist, the symbolic character of art (in correspondence to nature), and the organic unity of idea and expression or *Form und Stoff* in the individual work of art.⁹ This is the main program of nineteenth-century aesthetics, which may have taken clear shape first in Germany but was immediately embraced in England by Coleridge, Wordsworth, their friend and informant Robinson, and then Carlyle. The audience this aesthetic gradually found in France and the rest of Europe is in part due to the impact of Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*.¹⁰

The similarities and dissimilarities between *De l'Allemagne* and Schelling's posthumously published aesthetics have already been examined by Jean Gibelin in his book of 1934. Gibelin's goal, however, was rather different from mine. He wanted to identify as many parallels as possible, in a fairly conventional study of sources and influences. Consequently, Gibelin came to the disappointed conclusion that Mme de Staël had not "penetrated" Schelling. "Elle n'a indiqué que bien superficiellement des recherches importantes"; "pour Schelling Mme de Staël dut y renoncer; ce bloc de granit . . . n'offrait rien d'assimilable."¹¹ My aim here is to study not influences but *Rezeptionsge-*

⁹ See Heinrich Knittermeyer, *Schelling und die Romantische Schule* (Munich, 1929); E. D. Hirsch, *Wordsworth and Schelling, a Typological Study of Romanticism* (New Haven, 1960).

¹⁰ My conception of the idealist Romantic strand of nineteenth-century aesthetics depends on René Wellek's arguments, especially in *A History of Modern Criticism, 1755-1955*, vol. 2 (New Haven, 1955), pp. 2-3 and passim. I am also indebted to Armand Nivelle, *Frühromantische Dichtungstheorie* (Berlin, 1970).

The Schelling who appears in *De l'Allemagne* could be split into two personae: the scientific Schelling and the aesthetic Schelling. Mme de Staël's interest in the scientific Schelling is a rich and unexplored topic, which I shall not attempt to deal with here except to note that through the years this persona tended to displace for her the aesthetic side of Schelling's thought. Thus her text reinforced the importance of natural philosophy in Romantic thought.

¹¹ Gibelin, *L'Esthétique de Schelling et l'Allemagne de Mme de Staël* (Paris, 1934), pp. 14, 78, 88. Gibelin's work on Schelling has been judged rather harshly by the fine modern scholar Xavier Tilliette, who speaks of its "médiocrité inutilisable" in *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir* (Paris, 1970), vol. 1, p. 457.

schichte: a study of Mme de Staël's sources shows that she deliberately transcribed, transformed, and then elided her Schelling materials, specifically her materials on Schelling's theory of literary genres.

This is a process that Gibelin could not really examine. The critical edition with manuscript variants of *De l'Allemagne* was not published until 1958-60. Furthermore, Gibelin did not know precisely how Mme de Staël had gained familiarity with Schelling's unpublished aesthetics. Not until the 1960s were a notebook and two manuscript lectures by Henry Crabb Robinson uncovered at Dresden, materials which refute Gibelin's supposition that it was "peu probable que l'étudiant anglais ait donné à son illustre élève des notions bien claires sur l'esthétique de Schelling."¹²

The importance of these Robinson manuscripts leaps to the eye, when we consider how little we know of the other channels by which Mme de Staël may have gained knowledge of Schelling: conversations with other Germans, personal contact, or reading books. She had already studied German literature (for her book *De la littérature*, 1800) under the supervision of Wilhelm von Humboldt and worked on the German language sporadically at the turn of the century, acquiring enough skill to be able to puzzle out a text, if not to speak. To Charles de Villers; whose book on Kant she admired, she wrote in 1802, "J'étudie l'allemand avec soin, sûre que c'est là seulement que je trouverai des pensées nouvelles et des sentiments profonds . . . Quoiqu'il en soit, c'est le pays du monde aujourd'hui où il y a le plus d'hommes distingués comme philosophes et comme littérateurs."¹³ Before arriving in Weimar, she wrote to the philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, an old family friend, that she hoped to undertake a task parallel to that of Villers: "Moi, j'ai le projet de tenter cette importation de vos paisibles lumières parmi nous, et pour cela j'étudie l'allemand avec ardeur"¹⁴ (15 November 1803).

Once she had decided to write the book on Germany, conversations were of great consequence to her. She had familiarized herself with the French Enlightenment in her mother's salon in Paris, and exploited the give and take of conversation in her own salon to refine her ideas. En route to Weimar in 1803, in political exile, she stopped at Frankfurt to discuss philosophy for a week with Villers. At Weimar also, we know, she discussed Schelling with both Goethe and Schiller. According to the diary of Karl August Böttiger, a court functionary, she teased

¹² Gibelin, xii.

¹³ Mme de Staël, *Correspondance générale*, ed. Beatrice W. Jasinski (Paris, 1960—), 4: 541 (1 August, 1802).

¹⁴ Alfred Götze, "Unveröffentlichtes aus dem Briefwechsel der Frau von Staël," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 78 (1968): 199.

Goethe at their first meeting in January about his dependence on Schelling and the Schlegels, a tactic scarcely calculated to please the author of the Schellingian "Metamorphose der Pflanzen." Earlier, when unable to see Goethe, she conversed with Schiller about, among other things, idealism. Böttiger's note on these conversations deserves to be quoted in full:

Sie bekämpfte mit allen Waffen, die ihr Verstand und Witz darboten, die Idealitätslehre der Schellingschen Schule; ja sie veranlasste sogar ihren treuen Freund Benjamin Constant, der des Deutschen vollkommen mächtig ist, aus Frankfurt a.M. hierher zu kommen, damit sie mit seiner Beihülfe einige Einsicht in die Tiefen und Höhen dieser Schule zu bekommen möchte, und verdiente sich nun der auf diese Weise erhaltenen Aufschlüsse zur Verspottung jener "transcendentirenden Hirngeburten."

She argued "mit unverholener Indignation gegen die Tendenz dieser Schule zum Mysticismus und zur Verfinsterung, und sie klagte mit Bitterkeit über diesen Seelenschnupfen, der gerade in diesem Augenblick in Deutschland epidemisch werde." She was equally mocking to Robinson at a "philosophic dinner," where neither converted the other. "Robinson steckte im Wasser, während sie in der Luft schwebte."¹⁵

This ironic banter was nevertheless entirely consistent with a serious attempt to inform herself. She wrote her father that when she had conversed with Goethe or Schiller, she always jotted down notes in her diary. In her "Journal sur l'Allemagne," we find she recorded Schiller's thoughts on the subject of Henry IV, active verbs, positive and negative taste, and Kant: "Il s'est jeté dans le gouffre de la métaphysique pour le combler."¹⁶ There are no notes on Schelling, however, that we can directly attribute to Schiller or Goethe.¹⁷

Although there is no direct evidence of her conversations with A. W. Schlegel, whom she met in March in Berlin and brought back with her to become the tutor of her children, we must assume that the years she spent with Schlegel also enriched her understanding of German philosophy.¹⁸ Unfortunately it is difficult to draw more specific conclusions

¹⁵ "Frau von Staël in Weimar im Jahr 1804, aus K. A. Böttigers Nachlass," *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* (1855), pp. 658, 627. Since Robinson believed "She can not underst^d properly speaking, a syllable of the new Phil," as he explained to his brother, at first "it was often my sole effort to evade not to answer her questions." *Crabb Robinson*, ed. Morley, p. 134. We may imagine Mme de Staël's frustration.

¹⁶ Mme de Staël, *Carnets*, ed. Simone de Balayé (Geneva, 1971), p. 90.

¹⁷ The notes on Schelling in the *Carnets* can be linked directly to Henry Crabb Robinson's lectures. Even before she had Böttiger invite Robinson to dinner, Mme de Staël "busied" herself with his "cahier" of lecture notes on Schelling (discussed below). *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, sel. and ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (London, 1869), 1: 173.

¹⁸ A. W. Schlegel may have shown her or presented orally to her a summary of his Berlin lectures on aesthetics, and she surely heard in some version his

about the content of any of these conversations and their possible contribution to her grasp of Schelling.

More important than discussions about philosophy were direct, personal contacts with the philosophers. On December 14, 1807, Mme de Staël met Schelling at Munich, en route to Vienna in the company of A. W. Schlegel; they had lunch together with the doctor Johann Wilhelm Ritter.¹⁹ In all likelihood this meeting modified her conception of Schelling's thought, giving her a much stronger impression of his scientific concerns. We may guess that with Ritter present the conversation touched on natural philosophy, galvanism, and magnetism. The final version of *De l'Allemagne* emphasizes these subjects, showing Mme de Staël's concern to be up-to-date and accurate about Schelling. Important as it is for the overall appreciation of her view of Schelling, this personal contact marks the limit of my subject, since the materials I shall be focusing on here involve Schelling's aesthetics.

A third channel by which Mme de Staël could have gained knowledge of Schelling would have been his printed works or books about his work. Did she read Schelling? Perhaps. In the library at Coppet there are seven of his books, all published before 1804: *Einleitung zu einem System der Naturphilosophie* (1799), *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800), *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* (1800-1801), *Neue Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* (1802), *Bruno* (1802), *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1803), and *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803). The Comtesse de Pange suggests that these books were brought or acquired by A. W. Schlegel; and she does not report any marginalia like those in Mme de Staël's copy of Jacobi's book *An Fichte*.²⁰ In any case, these volumes represent primarily Schelling's natural philosophy and not his conception of art or literature. Although she may have read the discourse of 1807 on the relationship of the plastic arts to nature, even this would not have given her a detailed knowledge of Schelling's aesthetic system, which remained unpublished until after his death. In addition, none of the published critiques of Schelling referred to in her correspondence left a trace in *De l'Allemagne*.²¹ This does not necessarily mean that she did

Vienna lectures of 1808 to 1809. But these lectures do not discuss Schelling, and the treatment of genres, particularly of dramatic modes, did not particularly color Schelling's. Friedrich Schlegel gave her lessons on German philosophy of an esoteric sort, which similarly lack any discussion of Schelling's aesthetics.

¹⁹ Pange, *Auguste-Guillaume Schlegel et Mme de Staël, d'après des documents inédits* (Paris, 1938), pp. 213-16. Schelling invited Mme de Staël to a "déjeuner physique," which Pange dates December 18, 1807.

²⁰ Pange lists these publications by Schelling at Coppet, *Auguste-Guillaume Schlegel*, p. 572.

²¹ She read Charles de Villers' works, but he was important to her as mediator of Kant, not of Schelling. The attacks by Jacobi, Köppen, and Fries (Robinson's

not know them. Like her predecessors Villers, Ancillon, and Köppen, she aligns and compares Schelling with Kant and Fichte, but she uses no details of their critiques.

Rich as they may have been, all these sources—conversations, readings, and personal encounters—remain elusive. Not surprisingly, many of her critics have therefore assumed that she did not in fact have a very certain knowledge of her subject. We now know that she did, because we can now refer to a fourth source: Schelling's student, Henry Crabb Robinson, and more particularly several Robinson manuscripts on Schelling, one of which clearly left its mark on *De l'Allemagne*.

Robinson is familiar to students of English Romanticism as a chatty, sociable journalist and barrister who lent Coleridge books on German philosophy and even visited Blake. Necessarily, he figures in the recent "biography" of Marbot. In 1804, for Benjamin Constant he was simply an "écolier" or "disciple de Schelling," "un jeune Anglais, enthousiaste de Goethe et de Kant, et réunissant à de l'esprit et à du mouvement l'absence de finesse des Anglais et l'amour des idées absolues des Allemands."²² In 1802-1803 Robinson had attended Schelling's lectures at Jena on aesthetics and on methodology, taking detailed notes; by 1804 he was already the author of several articles on Kant, the Schlegels, and German literature written for English magazines. Even today he remains in the opinion of specialists like Ernst Behler and René Wellek a very good interpreter of German thought.²³

Böttiger introduced Robinson to Mme de Staël. In the course of six visits to her at Weimar between January 22 and February 25, 1804, Robinson gave several lectures on German literature and philosophy.²⁴ She was struck by the clarity of his expositions, or at least, that is what Robinson tells us. He explains in his *Reminiscences* that she told Duke Karl August of Weimar, "J'ai voulu connaître la philosophie allemande, j'ai frappé à la porte de tout le monde, Robinson seul me l'a ouverte."

friend at Jena) were perhaps too negative to be of use to her, and their scholarly approach may have seemed to her pedantic. If the texts by and about Schelling in the library at Coppet affected her interpretation at all, it was probably via a reading by Schlegel, since it was an effort for her to read German, particularly the new philosophic jargon.

²² Constant, *Oeuvres* ed. A. Roulin, Pléiade ed. (Paris, 1957), p. 225 (22 January, 1804).

²³ René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1793-1838* (Princeton, 1931), p. 144. Behler, "Schellings Aesthetik in der Überlieferung von Henry Crabb Robinson," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 83 (1976): 147.

²⁴ Böttiger invited Robinson on behalf of the Frenchwoman to speak specifically about Schelling: "Hofft Frau von Staël vergebens auf einige Ansichten der Schellingschen Naturphilosophie durch ihr erleuchtendes Medium?" Hertha Marquardt, *Henry Crabb Robinson und seine deutschen Freunde, Brücke zwischen England und Deutschland im Zeitalter der Romantik* (Göttingen, 1964) 1: 158. Cf. *Crabb Robinson*, ed. Morley, p. 139, and *Diary*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 1: 273.

According to Robinson again, she told him "L'esprit anglais tient le milieu entre l'esprit allemand et l'esprit français et est un moyen de communication entre les deux. Je vous comprends mieux qu'aucun Allemand." Indeed, in one of her flowery letters she wrote, "Je n'entends rien qu'à travers vos idées."²⁵

Robinson's personal qualities earned him the confidence of Mme de Staël. We know that his modesty and frankness pleased her (while Constant criticized his English lack of finesse). When he pointed out that she had misunderstood a text, she responded, "Robinson seul m'a corrigée; Robinson, je vous remercie."²⁶ The mixture in his temperament of impartial lucidity and pragmatism, as well as his concern for moral and aesthetic questions, surely appealed to her. As we shall see, in his lectures for her he attempted to link the idealist aesthetic to practical questions of morality and of literary criticism, so that she could weigh the fruitfulness and import of this theory.

Mme de Staël either read or heard three texts by Robinson concerning Schelling. We could perhaps compare these three texts to the three bears' chairs in the children's tale. The first was too hard, too direct and detailed a summary of Schelling's arguments; the second was too "soft," too general; and the third was just right.

The first and least important text is Robinson's student notebook, giving a German précis of Schelling's 1802-1803 Jena lectures on aesthetics, lectures which would not be published until 1859.²⁷ The notebook provided a kind of *samizdat* version which Robinson loaned to Böttiger, who in turn passed it to Mme de Staël and Constant before introducing them to Robinson. Mme de Staël probably read this *cahier* in the first part of January and with Constant's help translated the first twenty paragraphs on the philosophy of the absolute. Her translation appears to have vanished along with her other materials, perhaps surrendered as a decoy to the police who came to seize the book, while her son Auguste slipped out over the back wall with the more valuable manuscripts and a proof copy of the book.²⁸ Although Mme de Staël had

²⁵ *Diary*, 1: 175, and *Correspondance générale*, 5: 240.

²⁶ *Diary*, 1: 173.

²⁷ Robinson's notebook, preserved at the Dr. Williams Library, has been published by Behler, "Schellings Aesthetik," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 83 (1976): 153-83. Since Behler announced in 1969 a project to publish the lecture notes preserved at Dresden, only excerpts will be quoted here. I am grateful to the Dresden Landesbibliothek for permission to use materials from MS Dresd H 37, Bd 174 Nos. 61 and 62.

²⁸ According to the Comtesse de Pange, "Les brouillons de la troisième partie ont pu être laborieusement écrits en 1803 et 1804." In July 1808 she began to write out a manuscript. Mme de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, ed. Comtesse de Pange with Simone Balayé, 5 vols. (Paris, 1958), 1: ii, xx, xxii, xxiii. Further references to *De l'Allemagne* will be included in the text.

a prodigious memory, it seems most likely that she worked from her translation and from the original text of Robinson's lectures (the copies preserved at Dresden are not in his hand). The journal she kept contains mere hints about Schelling, not extensive enough to explain the elaborate verbal echoes in her Manuscript A of Robinson's presentation.

Robinson's outline of Schelling's lectures does not include Schelling's theories about literature. When she wrote the first draft of *De l'Allemagne* she probably relied exclusively on Robinson's two lectures on Schelling, which he wrote in English specifically for her and Constant (both of whom were fluent in English). He probably gave one lecture at his first serious, or non-social, visit on January 28, 1804. This unpublished ten-page manuscript, preserved at Dresden in the collection of Böttiger and discovered by Ernst Behler, is a general exposition of Schelling's philosophy of identity and of certain Platonic or Spinozistic elements in his thought.

In his first lecture, Robinson sets Schelling's philosophy in historical context, contrasting it both to Kant's idealism and to Locke's empiricism. Realizing that Schelling's "intellectual intuition" of the absolute is a stumbling block to his students, Robinson attempts to show that this fundamental assumption is "reasonable," for it is another way of formulating the interdependence of our conceptions and our senses, of the one and the many. To give poetic substance to this notion he quotes Schiller, Goethe's *Tasso*, and Pope's "Essay on Man."

In the last pages he stresses the triadic pattern typical of Schelling's philosophy of identity, whereby the absolute is the balance, or as Schelling puts it, the "identity" or "point of indifference" of spirit and matter, of active and passive, of the one and the many, of the ideal and the real, or of God and nature. This triadic mode of analysis (Schelling was the first to use the term "Dialektik") is central to Robinson's exposition in the second lecture also, where he develops its implications more fully. Mme de Staël certainly grasped this point, but she presents it in the context of materials taken from the second lecture.

Two points in Robinson's first lecture have a special interest for a modern audience. The first is that he grounds Schelling's intellectual intuition in a way that is prophetic of Merleau-Ponty, in our consciousness of ourselves, as having an objective reality independent of our subjective notions and sentiments. This primal, dualistic self-consciousness validates the postulate of absolute unity. The second point is the explanation of our perception of multiplicity in terms which foreshadow the structuralist stress on binary definitions. For, as Robinson puts it, "The human Mind is so constituted that it can recognize objects only by their being bounded and by their offering a diversity or duality to the thinking faculty. Viz. were there not darkness there could be no

notion of light" (MS 8). This cybernetic principle seemed so important to Robinson that he repeated it in his second Schelling lecture; it becomes there the psychological principle that unites the one and the many and thus grounds all the Schellingian triads.

Given Robinson's stress on these points, it is certainly worth noting that Mme de Staël makes nothing of them. Her presentation of Schelling's version of idealism is strictly subordinated to her discussion of Kant, whose philosophic dualism is in her opinion—and she of course is not alone—the great achievement of contemporary German philosophy. A more elaborate presentation of Schelling's or Fichte's theories would presumably have detracted from her stress on Kant.

What struck Mme de Staël in this first lecture was the delineation of Schelling's historical position. In what is probably an echo of Robinson, *De l'Allemagne* underscores his point that Schelling's monism belongs to the tradition of Platonism and "genuine Spinozism." The system of Schelling "rentre nécessairement dans celui de Spinoza" (4: 179). "Il a pour but de réduire l'existence à un seul principe" (4: 181). Robinson had said, "the World is one and indivisible," divided into "Nature" and "Spirit or God" "merely to facilitate our thinking." In Manuscript B she gave this idea lively expression: Schelling felt "le besoin d'identifier la nature avec l'âme"; "il a d'abord développé l'analogie qui existe entre les deux enfants de Dieu, l'homme et l'univers" (4: 181n). (The final version is simpler, further removed from the lecture.)

Like Robinson, she insists that Schelling grounds thought and reasoning in intuition or sensation, more specifically that he grounds ethics in a "moral sense of right and wrong." "Love is pure Sense," i.e., intuitive, explains Robinson. The first drafts of her chapter III: 4 on English empiricism contrast sensationalism, which concerns only "l'histoire de la vie animale," to transcendentalism, which connects our physical nature to our free will and feeling. It is just such an emphasis on "le sentiment intérieur" in Mme de Staël's interpretation of German idealism which has provoked criticism of her tendency to mystify and sentimentalize. It may be that Robinson's slant strengthened her resistance to a more intellectual interpretation by A. W. Schlegel.

Also congenial to her views was Robinson's attempt to combine personal distance with a sympathetic, positive presentation. Thus Robinson remarks at the outset:

Schelling's Philosophy is generally reproached for its unintelligibility and the present desultory remarks have for their object not to vindicate but to explain this new System, by shewing that tho' as a System it is new, the parts are known and familiar to every one of liberal Education.

And in his conclusion he argues that Schelling's "triune" philosophy

may be held "to be mere fancy without any real truth whatever," but if properly approached within the context of idealist philosophy and Spinozism, it will seem necessary and natural, a logical method "possessing great advantages of clearness and uniformity," whose fruitfulness may be discovered in its application to the specific sciences.

In her presentation of German philosophy Mme de Staël adopts a similar attitude; she wishes to present as clearly and as positively as possible thinkers with whom she certainly does not always agree. In her final version she will maintain

Cette harmonie, dont les deux poles et le centre sont l'image, et qui est renfermée dans le nombre trois, de tout temps si mystérieux, fournit à Schelling les applications les plus ingénieuses . . . Ce qui intéresse surtout dans ces systèmes, ce sont leurs développements. La base première de la prétendue explication du monde est également vraie comme également fausse dans la plupart des théories; . . . mais dans l'application aux choses de ce monde, ces théories sont très-spirituelles, et répandent souvent de grandes lumières sur plusieurs objets en particulier. (4: 181-83).

Robinson's first lecture was important to her for its general overview. But the passages of *De l'Allemagne* related to his notebook and first lecture overlap with his condensed review (in the later lecture) of Schelling's idealism, "Spinozism," and "triune" methodology. She did include one of Robinson's illustrations in a discussion of Schelling on February 20, some three weeks after the probable date of this first lecture.²⁹ The very brevity, however, of her final presentation means that there is scarcely any verbal trace of the earlier texts. A superficial juxtaposition might suggest that any other general source could have served her purpose just as well.

If the notebook was too detailed and too faithful to Schelling's confusing terminology for Mme de Staël, and the first lecture on Schelling too general, Robinson's February 19 lecture "On the German Aesthetics or Philosophy of Taste" struck her main interests. It is this text

²⁹ In Robinson's manuscript, p. 10:

"It may be an amusing illustration of this form (triune formulary) to state Schelling's explanation of the christian Trinity.

Jesus Christ is the absolute Being, consider'd as real or as nature, and as such he is subject to the conditions of mortality, Christ is the finite.

The holy Ghost is the same absolute Being considered as ideal or as pure spirit or the infinite.

The Father is the absolute consider'd as the absolute, the supreme out of which both word and spirit are sprung. But both, Father, Son and holy Ghost are essentially one and the same absolute Being, that is, they are all God, each is absolute in himself."

On Mme de Staël, see Böttiger, *Morgenblatt*, pp. 662-63: "Abends erklärte sie . . . das ganze System der Schelling'schen Aesthetik und seines Indifferentialpunktes, wo das Ideale und das Reale im Ruhe und Gleichgewicht kommen. Selbst die Dreieinigkeit ist in diesem Indifferentialpunkte."

which matters most for the close analysis of Mme de Staël's treatment of her sources.

This lecture, which combines the general triadic scheme with a detailed poetics, was followed by at least an hour of discussion.

19. Feb. Robinson aus Jena brachte ihr einige neue Hefte über die neueste Aesthetik und ging sie mit ihr einige Stunden lang durch. Sie gestand nachher bei Tische, dass die Metaphysik ihre Nerven so sehr angreife als die Mathematik. Dennoch ist sie unermüdet, um sich die Hauptideen derselben geläufig zu machen. Ausserordentlich gefiehl ihr Schellings Definition der Tragödie und Komödie.³⁰

The Robinson manuscript preserved at Dresden is long (21 pages), and discusses Kant, Schiller, Schelling, and the Schlegels, the Schelling section occupying seven pages, or one-third of the total. Like the preceding lecture, this text does not justify Schelling's philosophy. Robinson's impartial and concise summary of Schelling's thought falls into three parts: metaphysics, aesthetics, and poetics.

In discussing Schelling's metaphysics, Robinson summarizes the principle of "alter et idem" already expounded in his last lecture. "The Universe is essentially one and the same"; distinctions between the One and the Many, between Matter and Spirit, between the finite and the infinite are simply appearances that arise from the limitation of our Understanding. "In like manner what actually is for ourselves is the *real*, what we think as opposed is the *ideal*. The indifference of these two or the essential identity of them is the *absolute*. And these three gradations or powers form that triplicity which is ever repeated in the Philosophy of Schelling" (MS 11).

Mme de Staël will not begin from Schelling's major epistemological principles but rather from the tripartite system Robinson describes, in which the antithesis between real and ideal or object and subject is transcended by the absolute as their unity, identity, or "point of indifference." The triplicity of real/ideal/absolute generates Schelling's analyses of specific sciences such as the philosophy of art: "The Aesthetick is one of those infinite repetitions and applications of which S. Philosophy is susceptible" (MS 10).

In his journal for 19 February 1804, Benjamin Constant noted only the first part of the lecture: "Esthétique de Schelling. La grande pensée de la nature, l'union du réel dans l'idéal."³¹ On the same day, drawn by the talk on Schelling, Mme de Staël playfully used the general dynamic of real and ideal in a note to Wieland: "Le monde de Weimar est tout à fait selon la philosophie de Schelling: c'est le repos ou plutôt le sommeil de l'idéal, dans le réel."³² And she finally condensed her dis-

³⁰ *Morgenblatt*, p. 662.

³¹ Constant, *Oeuvres*, p. 270.

³² *Correspondance générale*, 5: 235.

cussion of Schelling's metaphysics to a display of the triad :

L'idéal et le réel tiennent, dans son langage, la place de l'intelligence et de la matière, de l'imagination et de l'expérience ; et c'est dans la réunion de ces deux puissances en une harmonie complète que consiste, selon lui, le principe unique et absolu de l'univers organisé. (4: 181-82)

Manuscript A, the first draft of *De l'Allemagne*, connects, as Robinson had, this formula to Schelling's aesthetics :

Schelling, dans sa théorie des beaux-arts mit une note tout à fait spéculative. Il croit que la triple force qui est la base de son système en physique s'applique aussi à tous les objets intellectuels de la nature. Il voit partout trois tendances distinctes : l'idéal, le réel et la réunion de tous les deux qui forme une harmonie complète. Cette même analyse se reproduit dans ses écrits sous mille apparences diverses. (4: 140 n)

In this manuscript Mme de Staël took over many other features of this lecture by Robinson as well. Like Robinson, she compares art and philosophy, but significantly, she inverts their relationship to the ideal and the real. Whereas in Robinson's account of Schelling, art has to do with the real and philosophy with the ideal, in Mme de Staël's, "La beauté . . . qui est l'objet de l'art est l'idéal. La vérité, qui est l'objet de la philosophie, est le réel" (4:140n). Robinson expressed "modest and inquiring scepticism" about Schelling's "hunting after Analogy," but then concluded with a defense of the systematic idealist approach to knowledge against what he considered to be the current alternative, i.e., purely empirical research :

tho' on the one side it may be acknowledged that some violence seems to be done to the subject brought into this relation, on the other side it must be confessed that all our notions, definitions, and [? omission] which are the result only of casual observation are arbitrary, and want that Authority and weight which those modifications possess which are grounded on the first principles as well of mind as of nature, principles that are grounded on that obvious correspondence between the external and internal world which Leibnitz explains by means of an praeaestablished Harmony. (MS 17)

Mme de Staël also expresses her reservations about Schelling's system : "C'est à chacun à juger du degré de vérité qu'on peut y trouver" (4: 142n). And like Robinson, she links to Schelling this contrast between idealism and empiricism (which Charles de Villers had already made in his book on Kant) :

Schelling se plaint que dans la méthode actuelle suivie dans les sciences, il n'y ait point de suite tracée pour marcher en avant, que toutes les découvertes sont le résultat du hasard, mais qu'il n'existe pas un système général indiquant la marche qu'il faut suivre pour arriver à ces découvertes. (4: 235-36n, MS A ; cf., 4: 182n, MS B)

But the most important feature of the lecture for Mme de Staël was

the presentation of Schelling's literary theory. She was struck by Schelling's obsessively tripartite schematization of the arts. These categories had already been presented in great detail in Robinson's notebook résumé of Schelling's lectures, but even if Mme de Staël read all the way through it with Constant's help, she probably couldn't see the forest for the trees. By contrast the February 19 lecture gives a relatively clear outline of Schelling's complicated scheme for the relations among the arts. A few examples may suffice.

For Schelling the arts are divided into real and ideal, "bildende" and "redende Künste," untranslatable terms, as Robinson says, which he nevertheless proceeds to translate as the "forming arts" and the "arts of language." The forming arts are subdivided in accordance with the basic triplicity of real/ideal/absolute. Music is the real, painting the ideal, and sculpture or the "plastick" arts the absolute. Each of these arts has its own real, ideal, and absolute subdivisions, also identified as musical, picturesque, and plastic. These schemes, while soporific in their relentless application, are curiously provocative, not unlike McLuhan's hot and cold media. Music thus contains its three so-called powers: Rhythmus is the real, modulation the ideal, and melody or harmony the absolute.³³ Painting like music has three powers: Drawing is real, chiaroscuro is ideal, coloring is absolute.

Mme de Staël summarized two of these triadic schemes for the fine arts, leaving aside Robinson's further elaborations.

Ces mêmes distinctions toujours fondées sur le monde extérieur, l'existence intime et l'harmonie de tous les deux se répètent dans les arts et dans l'analyse des différentes parties de chaque art . . . C'est ainsi, par exemple, que dans la musique, le rithme est le réel, la modulation, l'idéal et l'harmonie la réunion de tous les deux. Dans la peinture, le dessin est le réel, le clair-obscur l'idéal et le coloris la réunion des deux. (4: 142n)

Mme de Staël's main interest in the arts, however, was the "redende Künste," i.e., Schelling's literary theory.

Schelling's application of his system to the verbal arts was, according to Robinson, still sketchy; indeed we know from Schelling's correspondence with A. W. Schlegel in this period that Schelling's lectures were hastily patched together, in part drawing on Schlegel's lectures at Berlin of the preceding year.³⁴

What Robinson stresses in his outline of Schelling's poetics is the

³³ Schelling's musical terminology is obsolete, since he means by "modulation" shifts not in key but in notes. Thus he is contrasting rhythm as temporal unity in multiplicity or as quantity to modulation as the quality of sound. In modern terminology melody and harmony would not fall in the same category. Understandably, Mme de Staël slipped in transcribing the second draft of this passage and substituted melody for modulation.

³⁴ Behler, "Schellings Aesthetik," pp. 137-38.

attempt to determine the systematic relationships among the literary genres, and this is the part of his text that was most important for Mme de Staël. His classification and description of the three genres—lyric, epic, and dramatic—are idealist. He starts from the polarities of subject-object and liberty-necessity in the lyric and epic and advances to their “indifferentiation” in the drama. For Schelling, of course, the organizing principle is the progression from duality to triplicity and the absolute, as Robinson points out :

In the Illustration of these three poetick forms [lyric, epic, and dramatic] much is made of the great Antithesis in the System of Idealism between the subjective and the objective.

Lyrical poetry is entirely subjective, it goes from and returns to the subject. And it exhibits the objective or necessary of nature, only as it appears in the free mind of the poet himself.

Epick poetry on the contrary is objective, it displays the external world or Nature, and the poet far from mixing his sentiments is absolutely cold and indifferent, he has not even moral feeling, but exhibits the good and bad with like unconcern.

Freedom and Necessity are not opposed to each other in the Epick—they are not even distinguished.

On the contrary the *Drama*, in which the subjective and objective are united, exhibits the contrast between the subject and object, that is mind and nature, or freedom and necessity. (MS 14)

The first pole is lyric poetry, which is subjective and free, since in it the objective world is mediated by the free mind of the poet. By contrast, epic poetry is objective, since the epic poet “displays the external world or Nature” as well as moral good and evil without injecting his own sentiments.

The duality of lyric and epic leads to a triplicity in which drama unites the antitheses of subject and object, mind and nature, freedom and necessity. Robinson here proceeds to a division of drama into tragedy and comedy, using principles which show Schelling’s reliance on Schiller and which according to Böttiger especially pleased Mme de Staël.

Tragedy exhibits freedom as subjective and necessity as objective.

Comedy is tragedy reversed, here the freedom is objective and necessity subjective.

It may be worthwhile to illustrate this: The Characteristick of Tragedy was given by Schiller with great force and excellence; he showed how it exhibited man struggling with fate, observing that in the context both were victorious. Fate or Necessity conquer’d in the event, but freedom was victor in the Sentiment and mind it displayed—either the heroism of Virtue or the homage paid to truth by remorse, or at all events the power of intellect even in a false direction were the counterbalance against the all-crushing weight of necessity. (MS 15)

In tragedy, subjective liberty triumphs with the value granted the hu-

man spirit, at the same time that objective necessity triumphs in the death of the hero. Comedy is the reverse:

Freedom is here said to be objective. But Freedom considered as objective is *chance* and in Comedy, accident plays a principal part.

Necessity is said to be subjective, that is, the mind is enslaved by its own follies and passions. The ridiculous is the absurd and unfitting—and what is more absurd than that Nature sho'd *appear* to be free, and man appear enslaved. (MS 16)

Comedy presents liberty in the form of chance or accidents in the objective world, but betrays subjective necessity in the mind of man “enslaved by its own follies and passions.”

These distinctions may appear to us today rather abstract and complex, so that it is no surprise to find Robinson attempting to make them more digestible by illustrating them with some examples drawn from Shakespeare—*Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. The presentation may have been accessible to Mme de Staël for other reasons as well. Throughout her career, she took special interest in drama, a subject she had already discussed theoretically in *De la littérature*. While at Weimar she attended the theater, requested particular productions of works by Schiller and Goethe, and declaimed scenes from Racine. At Coppet she and her friends put on both classic tragedies and contemporary plays; her friend Benjamin Constant wrote a clumsy, condensed Alexandrine version of *Wallenstein* with a theoretical introduction that is a major Romantic manifesto. Schelling's definition of genres in terms of freedom and necessity, which Mme de Staël could discuss with Schiller (from whom Schelling had drawn his categories) surely had political as well as ethical implications for a contemporary of the French Revolution. The appeal of Robinson's exposition for Mme de Staël, therefore, lay primarily in the discussion of drama, whose details she used years later in her first complete draft of *De l'Allemagne*.

She astonished the court at Weimar the night after Robinson's lecture with an emphatic summary of Schelling's ideas, particularly with her application of those ideas to the poetic genres, in terms that must have been taken from Robinson's outline.

[20. Feb.] Abends erklärte sie beim Engländer Gore dem Herzoge das ganze System der Schelling'schen Aesthetik und seines Indifferentialpunktes, wo das Ideale und das Reale in Ruhe und Gleichgewicht kommen. Selbst die Dreieinigkeith ist in diesem Indifferentialpunkte . . . Goethe in seiner Schrift über die Pflanzen, Brown in seinem System der Irritabilität und Sensibilität, selbst Leibnitz in seiner prästabilirten Harmonie sind Schellingisch. Wer nur von einer Peripherie ernstlich in ein Centrum vorrückt, kommt auf eine Schelling'sche Idee. Sie erklärt die Anwendung der Schelling'schen Lehre auf die Poesie (Lyrisch ist ideal, episch ist real, der Indifferentialpunkt—*le repos de l'idéal et du réel*—ist die dramatische

Poesie), die Musik, die Malerei, die Plastik, u.s.w. mit solcher Klarheit und Präcision, dass wir uns alle davon ergriffen fühlten.³⁵

Her German diary, however, preserves only the faintest trace of a phrase about Schelling's theory of drama.

Ce n'est pas la [réunion] du réel dans l'idéal, comme le dit Schelling, qui fait l'art dramatique; c'est plutôt la combinaison de l'esprit de société avec le talent solitaire.

Her objection reveals the priority of a social interpretation in her literary theory: it is the relation of individual to society that is the main-spring of drama. A bit later, in her *Carnet*, under the heading "Caractéristiques de Schelling," she objects again to the abstract Schellingian definition of drama:

Le système des Allemands va très bien au lyrique et à l'épique qui trouvent l'homme solitaire; mais pour l'art dramatique, il faut calculer ce qui fait effet pendant trois heures d'attention sur tel public, avec de telles machines, de tels acteurs, et dans tel temps, et selon les moeurs du pays où vous êtes.³⁶

She was not persuaded. It is therefore all the more striking that she scrupulously repeated Schelling's dramatic theory in Manuscript A.

Robinson's lecture passed directly into the first draft, Manuscript A, of a chapter (III: 6) on Kant and his aesthetics. The exactitude with which she reproduced the details of the lecture suggests her initial desire to record accurately Schelling's extremely complex system. At the same time one can already see in this first version a mastery of the materials, since she reworked them for her own purposes, condensing, reorganizing, translating, and evaluating.

Mme de Staël radically condensed Robinson's exposition, especially his elaborate classification of the fine arts, which she cut and subordinated to the theory of literary genres. Literature thus moves up to first place after a brief discussion of the basic principle of triplicity. The version that she then gives of this theory of genres remains very close to that of Robinson, and like him she gives prominence to Schelling's triadic schematization.

... Schelling, appliquant la distinction connue en philosophie du sujet et de l'objet, regarde la poésie lyrique comme une dépendance du sujet, c'est-à-dire comme exprimant les sentiments du poète lui-même. Il les classe sous ce rapport comme poésie idéale, parce qu'elle prend naissance en nous-mêmes, et considère la poésie épique comme dépendant de l'objet, c'est-à-dire comme peignant ce qui est hors de nous, et sous ce rapport elle est classée dans la poésie réelle; et l'art dramatique consistant tout à la fois dans notre inspiration personnelle et dans nos observations extérieures peut être donné pour le modèle de la réunion des deux genres. (4: 141-42n)

³⁵ *Morgenblatt*, pp. 662-63.

³⁶ *Carnets*, pp. 86, 87.

She meticulously follows Robinson's summary in subdividing tragedy and comedy :

Dans l'art dramatique, une seconde division a lieu. La tragédie représente la lutte de la liberté morale contre la destinée, et la liberté morale triomphant toujours sur les sentiments, soit que la destinée triomphe en nous dans l'événement. Tandis que dans la comédie, c'est la destinée travestie par hasard qui est la maîtresse, et l'homme qui est l'esclave du sort . . . (4 : 142n)

Far from being superficial, Mme de Staël was at once perspicacious in her selection of materials and extremely accurate in her presentation of them.

Yet accuracy alone would not meet her goals of stimulating her countrymen. Like Robinson, who alluded to Shakespeare's plays and Goethe's "Metamorphose der Pflanzen," she strives for the lively detail : "C'est ainsi que dans la tragédie le coup de poignard laisse l'âme libre, tandis que dans la comédie les coups de bâton l'asservissent" (4 : 142n).

Mme de Staël was certainly not comfortable with Schelling's system. She finds it necessary to translate, as she puts it, the polarity of real and ideal into everyday terms, "en idée commune" : "On peut dire que cela signifie seulement que le fond d'art est vrai, la forme belle," a very French translation indeed. Elsewhere she acknowledges the resistance of German thinkers to separating form from content, *Gestalt* from *Gehalt*, or in Schelling's terms, *Form* from *Stoff*. Here, however, knowing how the French may react to idealist terminology, she sacrifices nuance in order to accommodate German idealist poetics to French modes of thought.

Furthermore, following her commentary on Schelling, Mme de Staël moves in directions that reveal her preoccupation with renewing French culture. She has used several times, for example, Robinson's contrast between idealism and empiricism. But what interests her for the moment in idealist literary theory is the possibility of attacking the mechanistic rules of neo-classicism, a petrifying system imposed from outside. She therefore proceeds from the contrast between types of philosophy to one between types of poetics, opposing philosophy (and understanding of man) to mere rules :

Il vaut infiniment mieux pour un pays que sa poétique soit fondée sur des idées profondément philosophiques que sur de simples règles religieuses qui ressemblent beaucoup plus à des barrières pour empêcher les enfants de tomber, qu'à des encouragements pour les hommes. (4 : 142n ; MS A de III : 6, moved to III : 9)

Thus in version A of her book Mme de Staël had already recast Robinson's text on Schelling. She condensed the schematization of the arts. She reorganized the materials to give primacy to literature. She added witty examples, commentary on the implications for French normative

poetics, and a translation into concepts more familiar to French readers.

But the gap between the first draft and the final version of her book is much more remarkable. In effect, the passages devoted to Schelling's triadic system, his transcendental scientific methodology, and the superiority of idealist poetics to normative poetics are dispersed over several chapters. What is even more astonishing, the theory of literary genres, which had at first dominated her attention (to judge both by the testimony of Böttiger and by the weight given it in Manuscript A), is preserved in B, but is cut in C and simply disappears altogether in the printed version.

How can we explain this second phase in the transformation of her materials? For one thing, without question, the revisions of her manuscript reveal her concern for better organization. Certain passages are removed from the chapter in part III on Kant (III: 6), and some are put into a later chapter on German philosophers other than Kant (III: 7), others into a chapter on the fine arts and literature (III: 9), and still others into the chapter on the influence of the so-called new philosophy of the sciences (III: 10). This restructuring of the chapters permits her to stress Kant, subordinating his precursors and followers. It also gives more importance to natural philosophy.

A second possible motive for the revisions may be a desire to remain up to date. By granting more room to the philosophy of nature and to the sciences while reducing the discussion of aesthetics to one or two phrases, Mme de Staël brought to the fore the Schelling she had met in Munich; this is the Schelling whom she saw primarily in his scientific persona, as "physicien philosophe" rather than "philosophe métaphysicien" (4: 179n). (In fact, one might argue, Schelling was already working out in reaction to Hegel the "positive philosophy" which has in recent years interested existentialists like Jaspers.)

A. W. Schlegel, who might have been able to inform Mme de Staël about this evolution in Schelling's ideas, had by 1809 turned against Schelling, telling her apropos of the 1809 *Philosophische Schriften*, "Toute cette philosophie n'est qu'une nourriture creuse."³⁷ It is possible that Mme de Staël allotted a lower place in her German pantheon to

³⁷ Comtesse de Pange, *Auguste-Guillaume Schlegel*, p. 249. Schlegel also wrote to Hardenberg, "Dieser Mensch hat in allen andern Stücken eben so schlechte Grundsätze als in der Philosophie, wozu ich freylich durch die Gesellschaft, die ich ihm beygegeben, das meinige gethan haben mag." *Briefe von und an A. W. Schlegel*, ed. Josef Körner (Zurich, 1930) 1: 236. By 1806 Friedrich wrote to Mme de Staël from Cologne, "Il faut se féliciter à présent de ne pas être en Allemagne. Je parle de la littérature et de l'opinion publique. Le peu d'esprit qu'il y avait paraît s'éteindre totalement avant de s'être développé. Goethe est mort, non pas civilement, mais pour la poésie. La philosophie de Schelling est devenue une frénésie, une absurdité." *Krisenjahre der Frühromantik: Briefe aus dem Schlegelkreis*, ed. Josef Körner, vol. 1 (Brünn, 1937), p. 272.

Schelling because of this change in her friend's attitude. Already in 1804, it should be remembered, her informant Robinson clearly distanced himself from Schelling. As he wrote on March 29, 1804 to his brother, "Here I am gradually settling into a system, not far removed from Kantianism, but directly opposed to Schelling."³⁸ It seems probable that Mme de Staël always intended to subordinate her discussions of Schelling and Fichte, but waited to gain an overview of her manuscript before cutting out those materials.

More general principles as well are surely operating in the simplification and abridgement of the text, principles which explain why she also reduced the specificity of her analyses of Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, and Herder (to Schlegel's annoyance). The principle of simplification applies both to large blocks of materials and to the stylistic refinement of individual sentences. We may see in her decision to excise the passage on Schelling's literary theory her concern for her public, a French public which did not appreciate lengthy analysis, stuffy details, obscure allusions—in a word, pedantry. She calculates her effect like a dramatist. "Ce n'est pas de la métaphysique que je prétends faire," she explains to de Gérard, "mais pour donner une idée du caractère des Allemands et de l'esprit qui distingue leur littérature, il faut donner une idée simple et populaire de leurs systèmes philosophiques" (26 February 1804). With characteristic frankness she wrote to Villers that he would have succeeded better if he had been more adroit in arguing with Kant's adversaries.³⁹ And Villers himself wrote in his "Introduction" to her book, "Je me suis adressé dans quatre de mes principaux écrits à l'école: Mme de Staël, dans celui-ci, s'est adressée au monde."⁴⁰

It was not enough for her to simplify her technical German materials for her general audience. She also wanted to reinforce her own ideas. When she suppressed the résumé of Schelling's system of genres, it may well have been because this new schematization had itself a mechanical aspect and thus obscured her own aim, the attack on the hierarchic system of genres which in her opinion was smothering French poetic creativity. In stressing, to the contrary, Schelling's contribution to a theory of the correspondences between man and nature, and the organicist features of his philosophy, she expressed her new interest in *Naturphilosophie*, which she hoped might become a source of literary inspira-

³⁸ Crabb Robinson, ed. Morley, p. 141.

³⁹ Mme de Staël, *Correspondance générale*, 5: 247; 4: 539-40 (1 August, 1802). To Jacobi she commented on Villers, "C'est un homme de beaucoup d'esprit et singulièrement propre à faire connaître la philosophie et la littérature allemande en France, s'il voulait se conformer un peu à notre goût et flatter notre amour propre." Götze, "Unveröffentlichtes," p. 199 (15 November, 1803).

⁴⁰ Louis Wittmer, *Charles de Villers (1765-1815). Un intermédiaire entre la France et l'Allemagne et un précurseur de Mme de Staël* (Geneva, 1908), p. 450.

tion to the French. The French spirit, she wrote, needed to be renewed, and she focused in her image of Germany on those positive aspects which could help the French rediscover the sources of great beauty.

To sum up then, Mme de Staël's manipulation and purging of Robinson's texts on Schelling testify to her formal concern with organization and style, to her dramatic strategy of adapting her German materials to her French public, and—most important—to her energetic search for those elements in German culture which might lead to a literary French Revolution.

Mme de Staël was a notorious woman, outspoken, liberal, cosmopolitan, and in her private behavior no moralist. For the French she was a foreigner. For the Germans she was very French. Contemporaries attacked *De l'Allemagne* before they had read it, and critics were able to attack it because they did not know her manuscripts or her sources. It is still possible to object to her simplification of German idealism, but it makes little sense to argue that she did not understand it. In fact, the unrivaled success of *De l'Allemagne* shows that the strategy she formed even before she went to Germany, and which she applied in her revised manuscript, was perfectly sound.⁴¹ Her importance as a cultural mediator warrants a more precise study of her methods. The questions that we have raised here could lead to a reappraisal of her work as a whole.⁴²

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⁴¹ The wisdom of her strategy is argued by Ian Henning, pp. 78, 109 and passim.

⁴² I wish to thank Simone Balayé and the Marquis de Villaines for their kind assistance.