

The Ethical Implications of Virtue in *De la littérature* by Madame de Staël

Soon-Hee Lee & Young-ho Lee

Abstract: At the exit of the revolutionary troubles, Madame de Staël publishes her *De la littérature* to diagnose the contemporary literature and to open its new possibility. In this work, she suggests a new literature which strongly participates in the establishment of the citizen ethics and thus consequently contributes to human perfectibility. In this perspective, “virtue” is a significant notion in the work, and it is represented as an element to promote ethical progress. In this paper, therefore, we tried to examine the relationship between the ethical implications of virtue and literary perfectibility that is represented in Madame de Staël’s *De la littérature*. First, we study various ethical implications of “virtue” which is a key point in the ideas presented by Madame de Staël as well as the relevant issue of philosophers in the eighteenth century. Additionally, we analyse through Madame de Staël’s discussions how “virtue” realized in the literary work functions as the core value of “progress,” in other words what are the relations between ethics and literary progress. Through this analysis, we were able to see that she had a very specific idea of the future literature based on virtue: if she stressed the importance of “empathy” and “understanding of others,” moral perfection of an individual and free will, it was to claim literature as a “sentimental education” wherein sentiment and reason simultaneously operate aiming for consolation and happiness of the social community beyond an individual, and wherein the Holy Trinity comprises morality, sensibility, and intelligence. Consequently, we identified that the discussion of “literature,” as illustrated by a woman’s intellect in a period of anxiety and confusion, continues to be relevant in certain aspects.

Key words: Madame de Staël; *De la Literature*; virtue; ethics and literary progress; perfectibility

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标题：斯塔尔夫人的《文学论》中美德的伦理学含义

内容摘要：在大革命的混乱时期之后，斯塔尔夫人执笔《文学论》，旨在分析当代文学，并为文学的未来展示新的可能性。在此，作者所展示的文学，是可以对市民伦理确立起作用的文学，同时更是可以为人类的完全可能性作出贡献的文学。因此道德作为可以维护伦理的一种价值，在文学作品中占据着重要位置，也被认为是伦理进步的要素。通过以上内容我们可以观察到包含在斯塔尔夫人作品当中的关于道德的伦理性含义与文学的完全可能性之间的相关关系。

笔者选取了作为十八世纪哲学家面的主要论点，同时也是作为斯塔尔夫人思想中的重要主要核心的道德来对它多样的伦理含义进行了分析，并且通过对斯塔尔夫人所提出的理论详细分析了在文学作品中体现的道德是如何作为“革新”的动因与“进步”的核心起作用——换言之伦理与文学的进步之间有何关系——的问题。此外，为了使感性与理性同时起作用的作为“情感教育”的文学、为了社会共同体成员的幸福的超越了个人的文学、道德与感性以及知性三位一体的文学的地位成立，笔者分析了斯塔尔夫人对“共感”与“对他人的理解”、个人的道德完善与自由意志的重要之处所进行的强调的意义。通过以上分析，我们可以观察到当时不安与混乱的时代中以为女性知识分子所勾画“文学”相关的讨论在今天的哪些方面来看依然有现实意义。

关键词：斯塔尔夫人；文学论；道德；伦理与文学进步；完全可能性

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Introduction

Madame de Staël—who strived to renew the spirit of French literature through the active acceptance and translation of foreign literature—is not unknown in the East Asian countries of South Korea and Japan. In case of Japan, her name and life were initially mentioned in the Meiji era. After 1948, Madame de Staël and her works began to be earnestly studied. However, after the 1990s, the translation of her works and research are even more animated. In South Korea, in the 1930s—comparatively later than in Japan—Madame de Staël was first mentioned as a western writer and liberal thinker who expressed the liberation of the self. Although the translation of

her works and research was not progressing as actively in South Korea as in Japan, since the 2000s, translations of her major writings and related research papers were being constantly published. Madame de Staël advocated the exchange of ideas between nations by emphasizing “the hospitality” of foreign literature and was an asset for one’s motherland’s literature. Importantly, she was initially introduced to South Korea and Japan when the two countries started preparing for modern times by introducing and translating foreign literature. The dynamism of her cosmopolitanism is thus confirmed in modern East Asia.

Although the cosmopolitanism of Madame de Staël was concretely expressed in *De l’Allemagne* (1810), the draft of this book was already drawn in *De la littérature*, published in 1800. The year 1800 symbolized a period of transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century as well as a year initiating a new century. However, the situation changed with the occurrence of the French revolution. With a promise of stability and order, Consulat took over instead of Directoire suffering from constant difficulties of governing France from 1795 to 1799. Like most contemporaries, Madame de Staël also had an expectation from Consulat and Napoleon who was Premier Consul. This political situation also called for a transition in the literary world.

The literature of the Ancien Régime was swayed by the tempest of the French Revolution and subsequently disappeared. Based on “the freedom of expression” that was stipulated in Article 11 of “Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen,” writings reflecting the contemporary trends, such as pamphlets, writings for slandering, newspaper articles, etc., freely expressed their views. This situation that “exists only by revolution, suits only to revolution, and will disappear with revolution someday”¹ created a wave of awakening among literary persons. Regardless of their political stance towards the Revolution, they shared their views on bringing order back to literature filled with disorder and confusion. François-René de Chateaubriand insisted on Christianity as the spiritual foundation for reconstructing society and wanted to reform French literature through religious inspiration and sensibility. He diagnosed the contemporary literature and opened the possibility of improvement through *Génie du Christianisme* (1802), while Madame de Staël advocated a collaborative literature with the ideology of a strong government in a new and progressive society based on equality and freedom.

As soon as *De la littérature*—with its belief in “perfectibility,” that is, knowledge, reason, and the linear progress of civilization—was published, it was

1 Jean-François de La Harpe. *Lycée ou cours de littérature anciennes et modernes*, t. II. Paris: Didier (1834) 642.

faced with fierce controversy. Ideologies succeeding the ideas of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, and the philosophy of perfectibility advocated by Madame de Staël who had the same ideology, were regarded as insufficient explanations for the violence of the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, as well as the contemporary literature, which became the target of harsh condemnation as “the political and philosophical fantasy” and “the amusement of the imagination” (Cf. Lotterie, “Chateaubriand contre Staël” 9–22). However, Madame de Staël was also aware of the problems surrounding the current situation of France. According to her, contemporary literature seemed to retrograde the progress of the intellect instead of guaranteeing it as “the deviation” of history and transform the biggest cause into passionate actions. To overcome the conflict caused by passions, in *De la littérature*, she suggested the reclamation of virtue as the intrinsic inclination of human beings towards goodness, and through this, the realization of “the ideal beautiful of the moral world”¹ (DL 67).

Accordingly, in this paper, we will consider virtue — a key component of the literary spirit and crucial for the progress of the literature —, its ethical implications as well as the literature programme designed by Madame de Staël based on virtue. Through this, we can identify the positive future of French literature illustrated by a creative mind based on a firm belief in human beings in the early century when stability and order seemed to be promised but anxiety and confusion still remained and the draft of the contemporary literature that followed.

I. The Implication of Virtue

It is not only impossible to draw one unified meaning from the word, virtue, which is defined in various ways according to the context, but it is also difficult to comprehend the nature of the value. Madame de Staël’s idea of virtue is not easy to define in a word: it is “a principle of action” expressed as “impulse” (DL 378) preceding rational reasoning and is also called “morale.” Ahead of examining virtue as expressed by Madame de Staël, let us review the encyclopaedic definition of the word.

In *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, the representative French language dictionary, from the first edition (1694) to the fifth edition (1798), the definition of virtue is consistently explained as the “habit to avoid evil and to do a good deed,

1 The work of Madame de Staël referred to in this paper is *De la littérature*, eds. by Gérard Gengembre and Jean Goldzink. Paris: Garnier Flammarion. 1991, *De l’Allemagne*, ed. by Simone Balayé. Paris: Garnier Flammarion. 1968. We also notify that when quoting works, we indicate the former in the parenthesis as DL corresponding page, and the latter as DA corresponding page.

and such mental attitude.” Only when considering various modifiers, for example “Christian,” “ethical,” “intellectual,” “acquired,” etc., we can assume that virtue has an extensive meaning.

The eighteenth century directly affected Madame de Staël, and even though many writers reconsidered several relationships between an individual and society, they emphasized the moral value and attitude among members of society, and developed diverse discussions about the social and ethical dimensions of virtue (Antoine 128–129). *Encyclopédie* summarized the ideas of the Enlightenment and philosophy and explained the concept of virtue as follows:

As virtue is an abstract word, when people encounter this word, it is difficult to have a clear thinking. Virtue is usually everything that becomes all duties of human being and the driving force of ethics. However, due to this ambiguous meaning, people have an arbitrary judgment in many cases. [...] In order to clarify the concept of virtue more, it is necessary to judge the motives of the deed. The more pure the motive is, the more sincere virtue is. [...] The mind of human being is fascinated by various kinds of passions and the spirit has no consistency, but it is fluid. The tranquility of one moment is necessary. When various kinds of passions stop roaring, and when the consciousness speaks to us with unignorable tone, the clear concepts of virtue brightly shine in the glittering sparkle. [...] We know the fact that the etymology of virtue resonates with “power,” and “courage.” It is applied to the existence that is originally weak but is going to be strong with its own will. Persuading oneself and putting one’s inclination under the domination of reason, this is the consistent effort of virtue right away.

Since the concept is abstract and ambiguous, to understand it, we have to pacify our passions and listen to the voice of consciousness. Etymologically, virtue has originated from Latin “virtus” meaning “courage” and “mental energy.” Thus, an idealistic approach and efforts are required to awaken and maintain virtue in oneself. In this concept of virtue, the social function is clarified through the contrast with “wisdom.”

Wisdom is to recognize accurately what is beneficial and to distinguish and select well what seemed to be a benefit in appearance. Virtue goes forward further. Virtue sincerely bears goodness toward the society. In case of need, for goodness of the society, it sacrifices its benefit and thinks to receive rewards in

the middle of feeling it as beautiful. In need of sacrifice, it does not hesitate.

Here, it is specified that virtue prioritizes the benefit of a community and is willing to sacrifice its own benefit to achieve this. In his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), Voltaire criticized the speculative characteristic of *Encyclopédie* and attempted to eliminate unnecessary explanations; a similar concept of virtue can be identified here. While Voltaire briefly defines virtue as “goodness toward neighbors”,¹ he also refers to virtue as extending a warm helping hand to those who are in trouble and comforting those who are neglected. Therefore, according to Voltaire, virtue can be alternatively called “charity,” the essential goodness of the society for as long as we constitute society, and the good deeds exchanged among people. The concept of virtue understood by Montesquieu is almost similar. Virtue is acquired through individual ethical choices, through their temperance of passion and implies pursuing the benefits for a community. Virtue, the essential value required for a functioning society, is continuously threatened by passions. However, it is also the root of happiness and affection for mankind (Dornier).

Although Jean-Jacques Rousseau is regarded as a writer whose sensibilities are different from philosophers contributing to *Encyclopédie*, he had an identical opinion about virtue. Yves Vargas had classified the ethical, political, and philosophical dimensions of virtue revealed in Rousseau’s works (Vargas). According to him, virtue’s ethical dimension comprised governing passions without revealing sensuous desires, and its philosophical dimension comprised adjusting the will of an individual to that of the universe and the ability to desire and maintain freedom. The similarity found in these three layers of virtue indicates an effort to illustrate the term as an inclination that exists in human instincts and maintain it. Like philosophers of *Encyclopédie*, Rousseau placed virtue’s standard in “the consciousness,” and as mentioned in *Emile* that “I have to ask myself what I want to do. All that feel good is good. All that feel bad is bad,”² he held sensation and emotion as standards of judgment for aptly selecting consciousness. Thus, for Rousseau, virtue is closely related to reasons, consciousness, sensations, and emotions.

Similarly, in the discussion about virtue, we can identify virtue as the moral value operating in the dimensions of individual and society. Virtue, intrinsic

1 Voltaire. *Dictionnaire philosophique*, eds. by Raymond Naves and Olivier Ferret. Paris: Classiques Garnier (2008) 386.

2 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Émile ou de l’éducation Émile et Sophie*, eds. by Charles Würz and Pierre Burgelin. Paris: Gallimard (1969) 594.

inclination of human beings towards goodness but due to his ethical choices, is essential for the moral development of an individual and for realizing the goodness of a community. While reconsidering the problem of an individual and society, for writers in the eighteenth century who inquired into the progress and development of human history, virtue was the most fundamental value that guaranteed the happiness of an individual and a community (Domenech 448; Mauzi 580). However, to realize the common good, they carelessly dealt with the problem of an individual as the main body of society that could actively participate in everyone's happiness. In this sense, Madame de Staël's concept of virtue was different from the philosophers in the eighteenth century. While she shared various aspects of virtue, she focussed on the inner morality of an individual as a result of his ethical choices. Similarly, *De la littérature* will emphasize on the interaction of virtue consisting of an author, a work, and its readers.

II. The Operation of Virtue and the Ethical Progress

Madame de Staël emphasized virtue as a driving force for restoring and renewing the literature in the 1800s that seemed to escape from the chaotic period of the French Revolution because of the political and literary situation at that time. Although Madame de Staël supported the French Revolution and the republicanism established in 1792, she focussed on the Reign of Terror that "destroyed the people, personality, emotion, and thought of France" (*DL* 298–299). However, instead of frustrating this situation, the author asserted, "it is the nature of a revolution to check, for some years, the progress of mental improvement, and to give it afterwards a new impulsion" (*DL* 299). She refuted the conventional wisdom about the Middle Ages that was regarded as the Dark Ages. In this context, she argued, "I do not conceive that the human species have retrograded during this epoch, on the contrary it is admitted, that in the course of above ten centuries great efforts have been made in the propagation of knowledge, as well as in the development of the intellectual faculties" (*DL* 162–163). For Madame de Staël, when barbarians invaded the Roman Empire, that is, when the civilization of northern and southern regions crossed paths, it formed an important inflection point of European history. Immigrants filled with the energy of conquest invaded the Roman Empire. During this period, contemporary Romans regarded the invasion as a great misfortune, but the southern people had become weak and felt energetic by interacting with the northern people, while simultaneously adding their southern mildness to this fusion. The fate of modern literature starts from this point. "The successful fusion" motivating movement in the intellect and civilization of Europe presented a positive

indicator to France suffering from confusion (Lotterie, “L’année 1800-Perfectibilité” 16).

The collision and process of harmony due to the inflow of immigrants transformed confusion into abundance:

That a new social class entered into the French politics will produce the similar result. This revolution may, in the course of time, enlighten a larger proportion of mankind, but for many years vulgarity of manners and opinions, must in many respects cause both taste and reason to become retrograde. (298)

Contrary to royalist writers who blamed the philosophers in the eighteenth century for such a situation in France, Madame de Staël viewed the French situation—wherein customs and literature were victimized—from the perspective of philosophical faith about “perfectibility.” This is caused by “accidental incidents” (DL 157) where history took a temporary detour, but she assured that linear and consistent progress would be regained.

Apparently, Madame de Staël succeeded the concept of progress inquired by the philosophers in the eighteenth century, but the experience of the French Revolution made her consider a different level of progress, that is ethical progress, than that advocated by them. While the philosophers in the eighteenth century focused on the academic and critical thinking ability that became even more affluent and concrete, for Madame de Staël, progress means more than the progress of intelligence (Lotterie, “L’année 1800-Perfectibilité” 17). Madame de Staël had watched the confusion caused by unrestrained expression of passions, in particular, the terrible disaster of the Reign of Terror. Thus, she had no alternative but to focus on the human feeling from a perspective that was different from that of the writers in the eighteenth century. Accordingly, for her, the progress of civilization was inseparable from the understanding of human beings. As she thought that the French Revolution had deviated due to “immoderate passions,” she questioned how man could be free from it, and what literature could do to construct a harmonized progress between freedom and order and create a balance of passions. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration that *De la littérature* contains her introspection about these questions.

Understanding the kind of human being who is demanded by such times will guarantee the ethical aspect of progress that is drawn in *De la littérature*. The writer suggested an idealistic work that elevates affection to a sublime level in the minds of readers by stimulating their virtue and boosts their spirits. This practical approach

to the literature may seem to be banal at a glance. However, Madame de Staël takes a step further. She explains the dynamic process wherein literary works awaken the inherent virtue inside the readers, who face those works as follows:

Our organs are also acted upon by eloquence, poetry, the incidents of the dramatic scene, the gloom of melancholy thoughts, altho' they are properly, the objects of reason and reflection. It is then that Virtue becomes a voluntary impulse, a movement that communicates itself to the blood, and hurries us irresistibly along like the most violent and imperious passions. (*DL* 69)

The works containing "the voice of truth" (*DL* 396) function in our existence triggering movement after passionate "enthusiasm," with its moral beauty permeating our spirit. Since we are seized by enthusiasm, we are inspired, and we are simultaneously compelled to move beyond the state of this inspiration and are filled with enthusiasm. According to Ann Amend, enthusiasm is the dynamic energy that makes us behave and lead intense and developed lives (Amend 270-271).

This energy possessing the power is soft and permanent: it is an honourable power that raises human beings suffering from passions and becoming lethargic witnesses with barren minds. We have all kinds of boiling emotions, such as ambition, conceit, love, etc., and these passions are obstacles to our happiness due to the gap between reality and the ideal — becoming the foundations of our sufferings. However, by concentrating on energy, we can inspire enthusiasm from these deep-seated passions. As Kant said, enthusiasm for Madame de Staël is a passion for the moral beauty, and like duty, it is demanded from an individual. Just as we rely on a sacred existence, with enthusiasm we encounter a life with the power that has been cultivated in us. Through enthusiasm, the kinetic energy of virtue, Madame de Staël wanted the morality of an individual to transcend political utilitarianism. For society to restore order and regain stability, the new legislation and political system are not enough. The good will of each social member along with their effort is also required. Each individual has to control their passion and accept the extensive transformation of society and the introduction of new values. When each individual fulfils their duties, they will block the deviation of passions, participate in progress, and have a communal political vision.

III. The Unity of Morality, Sensibility, and Intelligence

Poetic enthusiasm is a "noble melancholy" and is expressed as "deep and terrible meditations" in the text (*DL* 238–239), focussing on balanced emotion that neither

misses nor overflows. The tension arising from the restraint and harmony of this emotion gives us a feeling of sublimity. As stated by Madame de Staël, “it is not enough to affect the heart, we must enlighten the mind.” (*DL* 352) The emotion of sublimity leads us to the realm beyond the pure ideal, prepares us to face our limitations, and possess the power and courage to transcend.

In that case, what literary works can concretely lead our soul towards virtue and enlightenment? As a work that fits “the current situation,” the writer suggests a literature of “sensible philosophy,” one with an emotional description and balance between philosophy and analysis, wherein emotion and reason simultaneously operate. These works necessarily deal with all kinds of human passions, such as love, jealousy, revenge, ambition, conceit, and etc. However, as “a certain degree of passion inspires poetry, a degree more destroys it” (*DL* 355), these emotions have to be regulated by reason. This is because an emotional description followed by a philosophical analysis can provide the appropriate “sentimental education” to regulate the emotional tempo in the current era of passions.

Importantly, the delicate expression of personalities and sentiments of characters guarantee “the plausibility.” Madame de Staël sees the possibility in the emerging genre of the novel and emphasizes that a novel appropriately reproduces an individual’s situation in the current society. While the writers in the eighteenth century reproduced the reality, regarded the novel with an artistic value to transcend this, and tried to explain the interaction of circumstances between an individual and life in their literary works (Maeder Metcalf: 43), Madame de Staël takes a step further. Based on her understanding of the human heart and emotions, she thinks that revealing the intrinsic cause in the behaviour of characters is a novelist’s duty (Lotterrie, “Madame de Staël” 23). As she reveals in *De l’Allemagne*, “the most important thing is to know other, that is, to understand why they have different way of thinking and emotion from me” (*DA I* 140), the novel prepares us for understanding the other through sympathy.

Of the human emotions, “compassion” and “sympathy” repeatedly appear in *De la littérature* because these emotions can protect a society from all kinds of terrible disasters involved in political disputes and violence (Fontana 180). As mentioned above, in the foundation of literature as the sensible philosophy that Madame de Staël suggests, the experience of the French Revolution is situated. Compared with the ancient society, an individual of modern society experienced “the suffering from the isolation, the suffering without hope to rely on, and the suffering that nature and society create” (*DL* 107), and the unprecedented mental shock caused by the French Revolution intensified this mental suffering. Their suffering

receives “consolation of salvation” (*DL* 84) in the literary works. The literature “will elevate their spirit, lead toward the universal meditation, and escape from the thought about the personal suffering” (*DL* 84), pursuing universal happiness through consolation. This is possible because humankind was developed from the happiness of an individual and family to seeking happiness of the other, nation, and everyone else. Raising the sensibility for virtue becomes mutual happiness and consolation. For Madame de Staël, the aim of thought is to escape from the emotion confined within an individual by elevating one to include the other and to pursue mutual happiness.

However, a question to be settled first for achieving the happiness of a community pursued by Madame de Staël. Incidents occurred that made her feel the necessity to cope with fatalism that reigned over her contemporaries, who say: “if the situation makes present us, we cannot defy the control of the situation” (*DA II* 92). The misfortunes that ancient people with “dream, foresight, and oracle” could not undo were inexistent, and they could rely on a miracle in certain unfortunate situations. The “supernatural thing” that existed in them enabled them to hold on to hope (*DL* 106). However, the contemporary man is only left with their free will in this desperate situation. The literature as the mimesis on reality, the inner and external restrains spreading within the human heart, and the harsh situation arising from it will provide us with an opportunity to introspect on our free will. Noticeably, we can only exercise the freedom of selection in an extreme situation, which will eventually boost our soul. If “the ethicality that a novel has exists in emotion that a novel instills” (*DA II* 47), the novel designed by Madame de Staël is minutely concerned with the happiness of an individual and a community and preferentially aims for the moral completion of each individual. This is because happiness is not the only aim of humanity, which should be to lead the moral ability of the human being to a sustainable completion (Chanal 578).

For Madame de Staël, the novel of the French “republic” had to be regarding a philosophical, sentimental, and simultaneously, social function. Through the novel’s delicate portrayal of the personality and emotion of characters, she hoped that it would contribute towards understanding human beings and the relationship between oneself and a community. In addition, she hoped that the novel embraces the emotions of sympathy and affection by evoking an awakening and boosting the heart. Furthermore, she hoped that the novel takes virtue as the target of enthusiasm in republicanism wherein social status and blind religious faith would be abolished, and forms the moral sense of people. The literature that harmonizes morality, sensibility, and intelligence “is valid for the completion of soul” (*DA II* 47) and can

contribute to the progress of literature and humanity.

Conclusion

In the early nineteenth century undergoing a rapid change, Madame de Staël wrote *De la littérature* to diagnose the contemporary literature and open a new possibility for it. Through her work, the writer attempted to send a message to the contemporaries experiencing the deviation of the French Revolution that the recent situation was only “accidental,” and humanity would once again walk along the course of progress with the power of literature. For this, while Madame de Staël illustrated how the literature had guaranteed the progress of the civilization, she suggested a necessary literature programme that consolidated the establishment of republicanism. Regarding this, literature regarded as “literature program of republic” emphasized the instillation of ethicality for citizens through literature. She judged that to correct the harmful effect of the French Revolution brought forth by excessive passions, people need to calm their passions, make the ethical choice and restore virtue, which is the inclination towards our intrinsic goodness. For this, Madame de Staël demonstrated that the passion for moral beauty can be delivered by an author to their readers through literary works and thus contribute to the moral completion of an individual. She expected that literature as an appropriate “sentimental education” wherein emotion and reason simultaneously operate — that aims for the consolation and happiness of the entire social community beyond an individual wherein morality, sensibility, and intelligence consist of a Holy Trinity— could pursue the happiness of humankind through the completion of the human soul.

Unfortunately, the stability of the republicanism that Madame de Staël aspired for was not realized. A few years after the publication of *De la littérature*, the dictatorship of Napoleon was established. As questioned by Sainte-Beuve, did her literature programme that was prepared for the stability of republicanism encounter a big failure? We do not think so. The novel’s theory suggested by her prepared the theoretical foundation for a new genre of novel that would soon blossom and foretold novels of Honoré de Balzac vividly reproducing their fanatical passions. “The sensible philosophy “ put forth by Madame de Staël that existed in the ethical dimension of a human being will be extended into the social dimension by Victor Hugo, and “groupe de Coppet,” indirectly participating in the writing of *De la littérature* by Madame de Staël and significantly influenced the intellectual works of the youth of “generation of 1820.”

This nineteenth-century female writer fiercely lived in the upheavals of the

French Revolution and generously shared her “intellectual enthusiasm.” She receives attention in the East Asian countries of South Korea and Japan as the writer who remained the inexpungible vestige in the stream of French literature and ideas. The reception history study focussing on the translation of Madame de Staël’s works undertaken by South Korea, Japan, and further East Asia as well as research on her works provide an opportunity to explore her works and ideas within the geographical and cultural context of East Asia.

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