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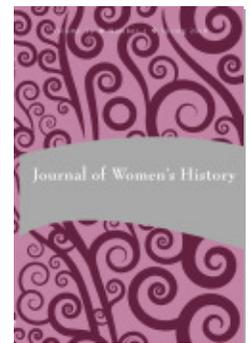
Gilt by Association: The Collaborative Celebrity of Germaine  
de Staël and Juliette Récamier

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Journal of Women's History, Volume 30, Number 1, Spring 2018, pp. 56-79  
(Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2018.0003>



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## GILT BY ASSOCIATION:

### *The Collaborative Celebrity of Germaine de Staël and Juliette Récamier*

Susanne Hillman

*This article offers a case study of gendered and collaborative celebrity performance on the cusp of French modernity. A prominent writer and a famous beauty respectively, Germaine de Staël and Juliette Récamier rose to public prominence during the volatile years of the immediate post-revolutionary period. Drawing on the literary scholar Lorraine York's concept of "situated agency," I argue for a reassessment of their celebrity as a collaborative performance under specific socio-historical conditions. This article complicates the individualist model propagated by the communication and media scholar P. David Marshall and others that understands celebrity in terms of discourses of individuality and articulations of the self. To illuminate the workings of "gilt by association," I examine how Staël's and Récamier's joint celebrity operated in the realm of textual and visual culture. Although their well-known friendship was not the only reason for their prominence, it heightened their attractiveness and thus constituted a valuable asset in their quest for fame and power.*

For the nineteen years of their friendship Germaine de Staël and Juliette Récamier were often talked about together. Whether they were recognized for the "union of mind and beauty" they supposedly represented, or likened to "oppressed queens" because of their exile, they were intimately linked in the public mind.<sup>1</sup> In a discourse delivered to the imperial academy of Metz, the Baron de Gérando who knew them both personally declared:

At the beginning of this century, two women who were closely united by the most tender and constant friendship also met each other in a common celebrity that has survived their memory. . . . One reigned by the irresistible grace of her person, her heart, and her *esprit* [wit]; the other by the rise of her genius. . . . One incarnated herself in [the figure of] *Corinne* ascending the Capitol to be crowned, the other in Dante's *Beatrice* whose name Canova gave to the bust he sculpted from memory.<sup>2</sup>

Gérando's eulogy appropriately pairs the two women under the umbrella of their associative celebrity. Where Staël enhanced the aesthetic appeal of her salon through her friend's celestial beauty and graceful presence, Récamier's own social stature gained by her close relationship with

the prominent writer. Gérando was not the only one to remark on Staël's and Récamier's associative celebrity. The statesman and historian François Guizot, another common friend, commented on the power of their mutual attraction:

These two individuals mutually seduced and fascinated each other, the one by her beauty and the charm that suffused her actions, the other by the power of her soul and spirit . . . Never, perhaps, have two celebrated women been as sincerely united and have rejoiced, in private as much as in public, in their very different celebrity.<sup>3</sup>

Apparently neither Guizot nor Gérando recognized the deliberate collaboration that went into the celebrity of their female friends. They do not appear to have been unduly concerned with the merit, or lack thereof, behind Staël's and Récamier's respective fame.<sup>4</sup> What fascinated them was the conjunctive and mutually enriching nature of this association. Staël's and Récamier's joint celebrity thus offers a perfect case study for a reconsideration of the vexing question of celebrity and power.

Notwithstanding the growing sophistication of the field of celebrity studies, scholars continue to spend an inordinate amount of energy trying to distinguish between merit-based fame and accidental or "empty" celebrity. In a pioneering anthology titled *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers* (1978), the film scholar James Monaco underscores the irrelevance of merit in becoming a celebrity: "It doesn't matter what material you start with—lilies or dandelions, 24-carat or dross—celebrity is ultimately a result of gilt by association."<sup>5</sup> As cleverly phrased as this denigration undoubtedly is, Monaco's flippant remark does not explore what this "gilt by association" entails or how it functions. Neither does he acknowledge celebrity's lengthy "pre-history." This seems a remarkable lacuna, since it is precisely in the realm of taxonomy that celebrity studies continues to engage in one of its most active debates.

Most theorists locate the origin of the modern meaning of celebrity in the mid-nineteenth century, although there is a growing amount of historical scholarship that documents its existence at least a century earlier. In the long eighteenth century, the adjective "célèbre," derived from the Latin *celebrem* ("thronged"), described someone "well-known in public."<sup>6</sup> By the 1850s, thus the consensus holds, "celebrity" took on connotations of inauthenticity, vulgarity, and notoriety—in short, everything that was supposedly distinct from the aristocracy, merit, and old wealth. As I hope to show, it is altogether too simplistic to view pre-modern fame in terms of honor and renown and to understand modern celebrity solely in terms of glamour and notoriety. In reality, as the historian Simon Morgan points out, "the distinctions between

different kinds of celebrity often break down in practice, even in the case of a single individual, and are themselves subject to change over the course of a career in the public eye."<sup>7</sup> Fame, I contend here, has always depended on chance factors as well as agency, and it cannot be conceptually separated from celebrity. As an intrinsically impure concept, fame depends as much on broader social forces as on gilt by *deliberate* association.

Celebrity, remarkably, has barely begun to make inroads into the writing of history, despite its status as a "glossy topic."<sup>8</sup> Judging from the state of the art, early celebrity studies are squarely in the hands of literary scholars.<sup>9</sup> This pronounced research bias that privileges English male writers and the English stage has the unfortunate effect of sidelining other geographical crucibles of celebrity as well as female celebrities who do not fit the mold, for example artists and *mondaines* (socialites) like Récamier.<sup>10</sup> It has, more importantly, neglected the significance of celebrity as "*the* idiom of the modern era," in the literary scholar Bärbel Czennia's evocative phrase.<sup>11</sup> As Morgan has argued, historians should beware dismissing celebrity as an "academic 'pseudo-event.'" As "one of the key drivers of the modernization process," according to Morgan, celebrity offers rich new insights into the tenuous position of women at the dawn of the modern era.<sup>12</sup>

Historians have long recognized that the French Revolution had an ambiguous effect on women's status. According to the interpretation advanced by scholars like the historians Joan Landes and Lynn Hunt, the fall of the Bourbon monarchy allowed unprecedented numbers of lower-class women to emerge into the public sphere, only to be forced out again after a few years. The Thermidorian Reaction marked a definitive return to conservative gender norms, and once Napoleon came to power chances for women's emancipation shriveled to nothing.<sup>13</sup> While true on the whole, this trajectory ignores the possibilities of self-advancement that the post-revolutionary period offered women of means and talent. It was indeed the Revolution and its turbulent aftermath that created the socio-economic and cultural conditions that enabled the rise to prominence of bourgeois women like Staël and Récamier. As I demonstrate, the years of the Directory and the Consulate were uniquely suited to elevate wealthy bourgeois to pre-eminence in the world of letters and fashion. Parisian salon culture and sociability provided the necessary setting for their performance. At a time when the Bourbon court had forfeited its traditional symbolic capital, women like Staël and Récamier answered the public's need for accessible objects of worship. Paris became the center of a modern celebrity culture decades before its advancement to capital of haute couture.<sup>14</sup> And it was in Paris that Staël and Récamier forged a relationship that was as emotionally felicitous as it was socially advantageous.

In what follows, I complicate the individualist model that remains a staple of celebrity theory by proposing the concept of celebrity as *collaborative performance* in the era of the French Revolution. At least since the communication and media scholar P. David Marshall's important study *Celebrity and Power*, celebrity studies have emphasized the ways celebrity draws on discourses of individuality and articulations of the self.<sup>15</sup> Indebted to the foundational work of the film scholar Richard Dyer whose study *Stars* (1979) set the stage for associating celebrity with individualism, Marshall's work advanced the "public individuality" thesis virtually to the status of an orthodoxy.<sup>16</sup> In his view, "the celebrity is the epitome of the individual for identification and idealization in society."<sup>17</sup> Linking modern celebrity with individualism, Marshall situates the advent of celebrity at the close of the long eighteenth century, which witnessed the emergence of mass democracy and consumer capitalism. His insight into the historical formation of celebrity is valuable, but it does not adequately address questions of agency. By positing Staël and Récamier's celebrity as *collaborative*, I shift the discussion to an issue that scholars have too long neglected: the power of individual celebrities to "actively negotiate" their public roles, to quote the literary scholar Joe Moran.<sup>18</sup>

In an insightful article on the challenges of theorizing celebrity agency, the literary scholar Lorraine York bemoans the "theoretical stalemate" that continues to plague celebrity studies. "There is a tendency to conceptualize celebrity as a markedly binary field, riven by the twin forces of production and consumption," she comments, "leaving the celebrity and any agency he or she may possess in a no-man's land lying between these two forces."<sup>19</sup> Drawing on Moran, York proposes the concept of "situated agency" as a necessary addition to the habitual emphasis on production and consumption that continues to dominate celebrity theory. The concept emphasizes the piecemeal rather than monolithic nature of celebrity agency, an agency that is best understood as a "web of relational, contextual agendas that may or may not satisfy the desires of the various agents involved."<sup>20</sup> It is just such a "web of agendas" that Staël and Récamier negotiated in their ceaseless common quest for fame. This quest was inextricably tied to their salons, which provided the appropriate cultural and social setting for the constitution of an emerging "celebrity cluster."<sup>21</sup>

Fame is never pure and pristine. Many sources, actors, and desires go into the making of a celebrity, and it is impossible to disentangle them completely. On the basis of Donne's famous saying we might posit that "no celebrity is an island, entire of itself." One thing seems clear: through the qualities individually brought to their association, each benefited from those of the other. Representing talent and beauty respectively, the brilliant poetess Corinne and the white-clad angel of the Abbaye-aux-Bois thus

joined in a glorious diptych, a carefully constructed dual image of enduring symbolic power.

### Germaine de Staël and Talent

Germaine Necker (1766–1817) was pretty much born famous.<sup>22</sup> The only daughter of the wealthy Genevan banker Jacques Necker, who held the position of Controller-General of France, and of the prominent Vaudois salonnière Suzanne Necker-Curchod, young Staël enjoyed advantages of wealth and social standing that laid the groundwork for her future celebrity. Her rivalry with her mother provided a crucial stimulus to her intellectual development. Endowed with a brilliant intellect and inspired by the *philosophes* frequenting Necker-Curchod's salon, Staël contemplated the significance of personal glory early on. At first, she seemed more interested in allying herself with a man of renown than dreaming of personal fame. Was it not a beautiful fate for a woman, she once wrote to Mme d'Houdetot, to spend her entire life with the celebrated men of her century?<sup>23</sup> The implication was obvious even if not explicitly stated: being associated with the famous resulted in vicarious celebrity. D'Houdetot responded by shifting the discussion to Staël's own responsibility as the daughter of a celebrated couple: "Heaven has given you, Mademoiselle, a great task to accomplish by making you the offspring of such a father and such a mother; it will not be beyond your abilities," she wrote. "You have all the graces, all the charms that are seductive; you will also have all the qualities, all the virtues which will be their recompense."<sup>24</sup> Without a doubt, great things were expected of the only child of Jacques and Suzanne Necker.

Where d'Houdetot seemingly encouraged Germaine to cultivate her talents, her parents' expectations primarily centered on an advantageous marriage. Ever the ambitious mother, Suzanne initially set her sights on William Pitt, the future British prime minister. To her chagrin, Germaine refused because marriage to Pitt would have necessitated a move to England. No such obstacle stood in the way of an alliance with Eric Staël-von Holstein, a choice the prospective bride accepted with resignation. A dashing but penniless Swedish nobleman with an ambassadorship in Paris and a penchant for gambling was, apparently, the best she could hope for. Yet she was far from enthusiastic about the alliance. She regretted not joining her fate to a great man, she confided to her journal, echoing her letter to d'Houdetot that "it is the only earthly glory for a woman."<sup>25</sup> Unable to marry a man she considered truly great, Germaine reminded friends and acquaintances of her intimate connection with another by consistently identifying herself as Necker's daughter and generally signing herself *Necker de Staël Holstein*, an unusual practice for women at the time.<sup>26</sup> To his uncritical daughter,

Necker manifestly personified the ideal of glory: a statesman-intellectual whose actions and ideas jointly influenced the people.

In any event, Necker's glory turned out to be short-lived. After less than two years in government service, he permanently retired and took up residence in the newly purchased château of Coppet on Lake Geneva. His daughter, meanwhile, plunged into a life of relentless enterprise. Over the next years, she engaged in politics, gave birth to several children, conducted a series of love affairs, and wrote her first important books beginning with *Letters on Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1788). Cognizant of the contagious effect of glory and celebrity, she seemingly "created her own pedestal," in the words of the historian Claire Brock, by writing about one of the most celebrated men of the age.<sup>27</sup> Her frenetic activities soon attracted the attention of journalists and muck-raking pamphleteers. By the time she published the first half of her treatise *The Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations* in 1796, she had experienced the vicissitudes of fame firsthand. In the foreword, she explained the reason she issued part of a larger yet unfinished work:

Since I am condemned to celebrity without being understood, I feel a need to make myself be judged through my writings. Constantly slandered, and finding myself so unimportant that I cannot resolve to talk about myself, I have given in to the hope that by publishing the fruit of my meditations I could offer some true notion of the habits of my life and the nature of my character.<sup>28</sup>

An extraordinary explanation for someone who loved to be in the spotlight and whose actions and life-style were not unduly constrained by inconvenient diffidence! By offering "some true notion" of her life and character, Germaine promised to reveal her authentic or "veridical" self and, in so doing, to reassert control over her image.<sup>29</sup>

Her tendency to attract scandal notwithstanding, Germaine Staël's public stature grew apace. As early as 1793, during her visit to England, Fanny Burney referred to her as a "celebrity character."<sup>30</sup> With the treatise *On Literature Considered in its Relationship to Social Institutions*, published in 1800, Staël expanded both her fame and her political notoriety. When exiled from her beloved Paris, she used the opportunity to enhance her reputation across Europe as the French scholar Angelica Goodden demonstrates. Talent was not the only source of her celebrity: "She could open, or dazzle in, salons all over the civilized world, trading on her *cachet* as Necker's daughter, her wealth, her literary fame, and the innumerable connections she forged in a life of ceaseless sociability."<sup>31</sup> The publication of the novels *Delphine* (1802) and especially *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) in their different ways both extended her meditations on the unfortunate lot of superior women and catapulted

her to pan-European literary stardom. For many readers, Staël indeed *became* Corinne, the eponymous heroine of her great novel.<sup>32</sup> Well-known paintings by Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun and Firmin Massot, which I discuss below, further enhanced this identification of the author with her heroine.

By the time Staël wrote her masterpiece *On Germany* (1813), she was well aware that the work would create a sensation that even Napoleon could not ignore. In the apocryphal memoirs of a so-called "woman of quality," in actuality penned by Étienne-Léon de Lamothe-Langon and published in 1826, Staël delivers the following panegyric on her own behalf: "How they will read me, laud me, and critique me for two months. The emperor himself will evaluate me in the *Moniteur*. In Paris they will busy themselves solely with *De l'Allemagne*." Staël's well-known obsession with fame and glory made her the perfect target for satire. In this case, the writer does not spare his vitriol. "O Atheniens," he has her exclaim to her imaginary audience, "how your votes please me, I prefer even your criticisms to your silence! When no one thinks of pronouncing my name, life is already a closed coffin; an eloquently written page marks the beginning of immortality."<sup>33</sup> Lamothe-Langon's biting depiction is an indication of the gossip that swirled around Staël even after her death.

As it happened, reality surpassed her wildest dreams. Instead of limiting himself to writing a scathing review, Napoleon who had come to fear the power of her pen gave orders to have the first print-run of her book destroyed. As a result, Staël could only publish the book in England several years later, after she undertook a perilous escape through Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. When Staël arrived in London in the early summer of 1813, a crowd received her "like a princess," in her own words, and lionized her like a star.<sup>34</sup> The first ladies of the kingdom climbed on chairs and tables to see her. Within the space of a mere four days, she received three hundred visits and twenty invitations, she reported to the queen of Sweden.<sup>35</sup> All this was immensely flattering, to be sure, but also wearisome. *Vis-à-vis* her close friend August Wilhelm Schlegel, she sounded a note of unmistakable fatigue: "I have been received like a princess, but there is such a crowd, such a number of women, such a great monotony of society, that it benumbs rather than amuses me."<sup>36</sup> As she likely realized, her grand reception was as much due to her colorful reputation and her heroic defiance of Napoleon as to her literary talent.

At the time of her premature death in 1817, Staël seemed to have achieved her life's goal: she won for herself literary glory and was a pan-European celebrity. Reading her extensive correspondence, however, one cannot ignore the recurring despair and loneliness that plagued her to the end. As she painfully reiterated in her writings, there was simply no place for superior women in contemporary society. Yet social constraints were

not the sole reason for her dissatisfaction. She repeatedly lamented her lack of good looks, and like almost everybody else, she marveled at Récamier's "magical" ability to charm. This ability was nothing less, she assured her friend, than "sublime earthly happiness."<sup>37</sup> She went even further in claiming that she would give up "pretty much everything" she was to be Récamier.<sup>38</sup> "When you talk of me," she confessed to Récamier, "it seems to me that you lend me your charm."<sup>39</sup> What she considered the true source of happiness—the ability to evoke love, which was an indefinable quality born of charm and beauty—forever eluded her. It was this quality, she believed, that made Juliette Récamier unique among her contemporaries and that made her own association with the "*belle sainte* [beautiful saint]," as she once addressed her, so valuable. Récamier's ethereal grace seemed to rub off on her by sheer magic.

### Juliette Récamier and Beauty

Unlike Germaine Necker, Jeanne-Françoise-Julie-Adelaide Bernard (1777–1849) was not born to riches and reputation. Her father was a Lyonnais notary, her mother a housewife and hostess of a minor salon. After spending part of her childhood in a convent, Juliette rejoined her parents who had meanwhile moved to Paris. In the capital, her ambitious mother took her in hand. Where Suzanne Necker labored to turn Germaine into an intellectual prodigy, Juliette's mother focused most of her energies on her daughter's looks. "Madame Bernard, who was quite as proud of her child's beauty as she was of her own, attached the highest importance to dress," we read in Récamier's earliest biography; "consequently, every time she took her daughter to the play, or into society, occasions which in her maternal vanity she multiplied, the poor child was obliged to pass long hours at the toilette."<sup>40</sup> Madame Bernard's sartorial training and Juliette's unerring sense of style soon paid off.

In 1793, barely fifteen years old, Juliette married Jacques-Rose Récamier, one of France's wealthiest bankers, twenty-seven years her senior, and probably her biological father.<sup>41</sup> Within an astonishingly short time, Juliette became one of France's best-known *merveilleuses* (literally "marvelous women"), the women who dominated upper-class social life under the Directorate and the Consulate. Her husband's position and wealth were the essential prerequisite for her rise to social prominence. In 1798, the Récamiers purchased the hôtel Necker in the Rue du Mont-Blanc. Fully remodeled in the neoclassical style then favored by the elite, the house of the "divine Juliette" soon became one of the sights of Paris and her stylish bedroom a major attraction. Besides enabling Juliette to launch her career as one of the capital's most influential mondaines, the purchase of the hôtel was signifi-

cant in that it introduced her to Staël, the woman whose name would shortly be linked inextricably to hers. Benefiting from the "interactional privilege" that celebrity conferred, Récamier's relationship with Staël presented her to luminaries like Benjamin Constant and François-René de Chateaubriand, both of whom became important contributors to her legend.<sup>42</sup>

On the surface, Récamier's stunning beauty was the main source of her fame.<sup>43</sup> In memoirs of her aunt, Amélie Lenormant described the extraordinary effect that her appearance produced in public:

Wherever she went, her beauty called forth a murmur of admiration, curiosity, and enthusiasm. The success of a woman did not depend at that time on the decision of an exclusive society that the revolution had swept away. Salon life no longer existed. People met each other only in public, at the theatres, in gardens, and subscription balls; and at all these places Mme. Récamier's presence was looked upon as an event. It was the epoch of a very decided revival of art, which, through the influence of David and his school, had extended to all ranks, affecting, in its idolatry of beauty, pagan forms. All these circumstances will serve to explain the quickness with which the beauty of Mme. Recamier became *not only famous but popular*.<sup>44</sup>

Her "well-knownness," unsurprisingly, was not limited to Paris. When she traveled to England after the peace of Amiens (1802), her mere appearance created a sensation. Benjamin Constant put it well: "Mme Récamier did not need to be fashionable, but perhaps fashion contributed to the universal eagerness [to see her]."<sup>45</sup> As in Paris, the sale of her lithographed image made her face familiar to a large number of people.

In many ways, Récamier's carefully scripted and staged public persona foreshadowed a phenomenon generally associated with a later age. Enamored with the idea of fame, she pushed her own immortalization through soliciting countless portraits, sculptures, and miniatures. Lenormant's reference to Jacques-Louis David, the foremost painter of the day, was therefore no accident. In 1800, Récamier commissioned David to paint a portrait of her, testimony not only to her husband's financial clout but also to her conviction of her own social significance. As it happened, the painting remained unfinished, and Récamier turned to one of David's disciples, François Gérard. The resulting full-length portrait is a masterpiece of nubile eroticism masked by childlike innocence. It is not exaggerated to say that the sitter owed much of her fame, then and now, to this stunning portrait, although she later deplored her risqué pose and attire.

As Récamier's celebrity increased, so did her troubles. The years of the Empire were marked by financial difficulties and Napoleon's growing

suspicious of the woman who had brazenly refused to join the imperial household as a lady-in-waiting and who seemed to flaunt her friendship with the notorious Mme. de Staël. To escape the emperor's wrath, Juliette moved between Paris, Lyon, Switzerland, and Italy. Everywhere people received her with open arms. Being reduced to exile undoubtedly added further luster to her already brilliant name. The Restoration witnessed a short-lived revival of her salon at the Rue Basse-du-Rempart, and her popularity was greater than ever. "Her joy at being restored to Paris and her friends lent another charm to the seduction of her manners," recalled Amélie Lenormant, "and the elite of European society acknowledged her as the queen of beauty and fashion." There were tangible benefits to her renewed financial security as well: "She kept her carriage, which with her was a positive necessity, as she never walked in the street. She had a box at the opera, and on opera nights held her receptions after the performances."<sup>46</sup> Once more, however, her glamorous life-style was not destined to last. After Jacques Récamier suffered yet another business disaster in 1818, Juliette separated from him and settled at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, a Bernardine convent that rented apartments to high-society ladies.

Besides entertaining guests, Récamier devoted the remaining decades of her life to the elaboration of her own legend. Whether the admirer who fashioned her literary portrait was her faithful devotee Ballanche, the impetuous Constant, or the love of her later life Chateaubriand, she oversaw the process of writing and made sure that her image conformed to her ideas.<sup>47</sup> The strong hagiographic tone in these texts does not portray a real woman as much as an icon or a dream woman—an angel. The role she performed—a peculiar combination of virginal modesty and seductive allure—not only came across as non-threatening but was enhanced by her notable intellectual passivity. "Apparently no very extraordinary gift was required to run the most frequented salon in Paris," commented the Vicomtesse d'Agoult wryly, "and to bewitch the *great men*."<sup>48</sup> On the one hand, even if she lacked genuine talents, Récamier possessed the supreme ability to please, and that was enough. Staël exhorted her to reflect on this "happily and proudly," since it was "a gift more precious than worldly power."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, performing "la divine Juliette" meant giving up all pretense at having a personal opinion. The historian Steven Kale is surely right when stating: "In the end, Madame Récamier was both praised and eulogized not for her own qualities—except her beauty—but for her complete self-effacement."<sup>50</sup> In this, too, she provided a perfect foil for Staël's intellectual enterprise.

There can be no doubt that Récamier's life and especially her afterlife benefited significantly from her association with Staël. How did their collaborative celebrity work in practice? In other words, how do we join the brilliant intellectual and the beautiful salonnière into a common narrative,

allowing the intellectual gifts of the one to illuminate the seductiveness of the other? It is to this question that I devote the next section of this article.

### Collaborative Celebrity: Staël as Corinne as Récamier

The collaborative celebrity of Staël and Récamier chiefly operated in the realm of textual and visual culture. In other words, it was in and through the medium of writing and art that the two women staged their respective celebrity. They were both shrewd enough to recognize the social possibilities that a carefully constructed and mutually performed "double-persona" could offer. Staël exploited the potential of her alliance with the celebrated beauty almost from the beginning of their acquaintance. Envious of Récamier's stunning looks, she infused her fictional heroines with her friend's physical attributes and her own esprit. Scholars can thus read both Delphine and Corinne, the heroines of her two major novels, as composites of the superior woman. Consider the description of Delphine as "the most charming person in the world" who impressed her admirers with "the charm of her conversation, the sociability and goodness of her character."<sup>51</sup> These were precisely the traits Staël so often praised in her friend. Add grace, beauty, elegance, and modesty, and the portrait of Récamier is complete. In having Delphine perform the shawl dance popularized by Récamier, Staël further solidified the association between the two women (fictional and real) and reminded her readers of her own intimate connection with the beautiful socialite. The figure of Corinne, the heroine of Staël's second great novel, exploited this connection to the fullest.

Often taken as the author's alter ego, Corinne is a poetess, writer, improviser, and "the most famous woman in Italy." What attracts her admirers is not her physical appearance but her talent and genius. This is unusual, we learn: "As a rule, the common people gather only in the wake of power and wealth, but here they were almost clamoring to see a person superior by her mind alone."<sup>52</sup> There is a bit of wishful thinking in this portrayal of an extraordinary woman. One simply has trouble imagining Corinne as ugly or even just plain. Corinne enchants not only by virtue of her talent but also through her grace and beauty. This becomes clear in book six where Staël describes her enchanting performance of the tarantella. In the scene in question, Corinne inspires and seduces her audience through her dancing. Staël writes: "She began to dance, shaking her tambourine in the air, and in all her movements there was a graceful litheness, mixing modesty and sensual delight, that might suggest the power exercised over the imagination by the *Bayadères*—the temple dancing girls in India."<sup>53</sup> In an explanatory note appended to the text, Staël referred to the woman who supposedly inspired the scene, the beautiful Madame Récamier whom she praises for her

“touching” resignation and selflessness in the face of adversity.<sup>54</sup> In reality, the description of the dance was probably indebted to the tarantella Staël witnessed while in Naples.<sup>55</sup> Was the reference to Récamier the result of an oversight or a deliberate move? Whatever the reason, associating herself with Récamier, a paragon of virtue, automatically heightened Staël’s own renown as an intimate of this unusual woman. At the same time, depicting her charming friend in the guise of her fictional heroine boosted the former’s social stature as well. The celebrity effect worked both ways.

What could be more natural, then, than lending her friend’s physical traits to the pictorial representations of Corinne? When Elizabeth Vigée-Le Brun contemplated painting Staël as Corinne, Staël demurred, evidently considering Récamier a more suitable sitter. “I do not know if I would dare have myself painted as Corinne by her,” she claimed, “but Madame Récamier would be a charming model.”<sup>56</sup> In the event, Vigée-Le Brun preferred to abide by her initial plan. The result was a painting that highlighted Corinne’s (and by extension Staël’s) genius and inspiration rather than the heroine’s physical loveliness. Staël professed to admire the painting, pointing out that Vigée-Le Brun’s Corinne was “truly more poetic” than the literary original.<sup>57</sup> Although she lauded the final product as “magnificent,” she changed her mind about the engraving she originally requested, citing financial difficulties. Despite her praise, everything points to her dissatisfaction with the final result, and within the year she commissioned the Genevan artist Firmin Massot to execute the same motif.<sup>58</sup> “The portrait will be true to life,” an acquaintance who accompanied Staël to the studio wrote to Récamier, “without the exaggeration of inspiration that, among other things, mars Mme Lebrun’s portrait.”<sup>59</sup> The result bore an astonishing resemblance to a portrait of Récamier that Massot had completed a few years before: the same posture, bare shoulders, and flawless skin; and the same soft features, dark curly hair, dark brown eyes, and pretty lips. In short, the painting contained the same expression of innocent youthfulness. Where Vigée-Le Brun painted her model in a tunic reminiscent of antiquity, Massot clad the young woman in a fashionable empire gown of the kind Récamier liked to wear. If Staël had lent Récamier’s traits to her fictional heroines, Massot was the first to pictorially amalgamate the writer, her friend, and the fictionalized heroine.<sup>60</sup>

Prince Augustus of Prussia, Récamier’s one-time fiancé, further strengthened the link between Staël, Récamier, and Corinne when he commissioned a painting of Staël as Corinne, intended as a gift to her friend. The artist Augustus initially approached for the work was none other than David whose portrait of Récamier had displeased his sitter. David selected Corinne’s coronation at the Capitol as the most effective scene to do justice to the memory of the celebrated author. After stipulating his condition, he

demanded "a good portrait of this illustrious lady in order to make her the principal figure of the picture."<sup>61</sup> According to Lenormant, the prince was not pleased with the projected dimensions of the painting (15 by 12 feet) and the length of time it would take to complete the work (eighteen months), but perhaps Récamier also dreaded the prospect of once again letting a painter model Corinne on Staël. May she have hoped to have her own traits immortalized in the portrait dedicated to the glory of her friend? A massive depiction of the coronation and of the "immense throng that had followed" Corinne into the palace would have emphasized the singularity of her genius—and thus have detracted from the collaborative aspect of Staël's celebrity.<sup>62</sup> In the end, Récamier solved the problem of Corinne's appearance and of the setting by entrusting the work to François Gérard. Once again, Gérard was shrewd enough to anticipate his patrons' desires.

Ostensibly intended to honor the memory of the recently deceased, the painting presents a striking vision of the power of collaborative celebrity. From size to setting, everything brings Corinne down to earth, directly among her admirers. Where David had wanted to paint Corinne at the Capitol, Gerard chose to situate Corinne in the more elegiac setting of Cape Miseno. It was no coincidence that the painting's protagonist bore only a slight resemblance to Staël. Dressed in a white robe, gold-embroidered sandals, and a voluminous red shawl, the pictorial Corinne interrupts her improvisation to drop her lyre and lift her gaze heavenward. Her regular features, rather than resembling those of Staël, are actually closer to Récamier's.<sup>63</sup> A woman and a girl who are among the enchanted spectators follow the direction of her eyes. Heaven, we remember, is the abode of angels, and Récamier was frequently compared to an angel. To the right of the group a woman is dancing the tarantella—another tribute to the novel's shawl dance scene and thus to Récamier. The portrait, although professedly dedicated to a fictional figure, ingeniously combines an accolade to Staël and Récamier. Adolphe Thiers, at the time still a young art critic, noted the modernity of this idealized figure. "This Corinne," he wrote in his survey of the Salon of 1822 where the painting was exhibited, "is your contemporary."<sup>64</sup>

Récamier must have been pleased with the gift. In exchange for the tableau, she gave Prince Augustus Gérard's earlier masterpiece of herself and hung the new one in her apartment at the Abbaye-aux-Bois. Several years later, François-Louis Dejuinne painted Récamier's living room complete with its inhabitant and Gérard's Corinne. The result is an interesting departure from traditional Récamier iconography. To be sure, the lady of the house is still dressed in white and reclining on a sofa of the type that eventually bore her name. But instead of resting empty at her side, her hand now holds an open book, possibly a salute to the creator of Corinne. Her



Figure 1.

customary shawl lies on a chair some distance away, and her feet are clad in white cloth shoes. A huge bookcase, filled to the brim, takes up a sizable part of the wall behind her. To the right of the open window, which looks out on a church, we see Gérard's *Corinne*, massive in size yet its details and colors barely distinguishable. By placing the painting in the shade, Dejuinne directs the spectator's initial glance to the figure of Récamier rather than *Corinne*. When the painting (officially known as *La Chambre de Mme Récamier à l'Abbaye-aux-Bois*) was first exhibited in public, it was remarkably titled *Mme Récamier regardant le portrait de Mme de Staël par Gérard* (Madame Récamier Gazing at the Portrait of Madame de Staël by Gerard)—and this despite the fact that the gaze of the pictorial Récamier undeniably does not rest on *Corinne* but lingers somewhere above the eyes of the spectator.<sup>65</sup> The painting's exhibition title brings us full circle in our examination of associative celebrity.

The figure of *Corinne* is only one instance of the manifold ways Staël's and Récamier's fame intertwined. The fact that they seemed to complement each other magnified the allure of them as individuals. Contemporaries clearly perceived something magical in their connection. They were well aware of the amplifying effect of their celebrity and eagerly sought them out

together. After Staël's death, they basked in her afterglow that, via Gérard's painting, suffused Récamier's salon. This point did not escape the attention of a perceptive observer like Alphonse de Lamartine, a regular visitor at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, who remarked on the portrait's location: "In this way Madame Récamier reminded her guests that she had been Madame de Staël's friend and that she herself had served as model for Corinne's beautiful head in the picture."<sup>66</sup> What is more, in placing herself in front of "her beautiful Corinne," as Récamier wrote to a friend, she may have been contemplating Chateaubriand's ongoing work on her own *literary* portrait, a portrait that would rival Gérard's immortalization of her friend.<sup>67</sup>

If Corinne crystallized "chains of attraction" starting with her creator herself, Delphine Gay exemplifies the type of fan behavior this chain invited.<sup>68</sup> The daughter of a Parisian salonnière, Gay was a frequent guest at the abbey. Known by her friends as "Corinne," she aspired to be a writer and was so infatuated with her idol that she undertook a pilgrimage to Naples and Cap Miseno. In so doing, she imitated Récamier, that *other* Corinne, who, years before, followed in Staël's and the fictional Corinne's footsteps.<sup>69</sup> "Thus life imitated art," writes the art historian Helen Ostermann Borowitz, "and Delphine Gay improvised poetry to the sound of the lyre-guitar in Mme. Récamier's salon under the painting by François Gérard of *Corinne at Capo Miseno*."<sup>70</sup> The Corinne who performed at the Abbaye-aux-Bois was no longer the original one. As Marie d'Agoult wrote, Récamier's salon did not allow for the discovery of the authentic Staël. The Corinne of the Abbey was "a Corinne of convention and according to the world [*selon le monde*], very inferior to the other, to the great, to the true Corinne."<sup>71</sup> The question is: was there ever a true Corinne? Or put differently: who did her admirers really worship when paying tribute to the talent of Germaine de Staël and the beauty of Juliette Récamier?

Celebrity tends to rub off on those who come in touch with it, be it fans or fellow stars.<sup>72</sup> Scholars in the field have not sufficiently recognized this contagious and cumulative effect. Nor have they properly acknowledged "impure fame," the volatile mixture of "raw material," merit, and ephemeral success in the construction of celebrity. I am certainly not suggesting that Germaine de Staël and Juliette Récamier became celebrities only or even primarily because of their relationship. But having individually been on the road to stardom, their association undoubtedly helped enhance their respective reputations. For if Staël and Récamier were interesting and sought after individually, together they were utterly enchanting. None other than Benjamin Constant who knew them both intimately had this to say on the power of their association: "Nothing was more entrancing than Mme de Staël's conversations with her young friend. The rapidity with which the one expressed a thousand novel thoughts, the rapidity with which the

other seized and judged them; a spirit at once masculine and strong that revealed everything, and a spirit at once witty and sensitive that grasped everything: all this formed a union which it is impossible to paint without having had the happiness of witnessing it oneself."<sup>73</sup> And Staël's biographer J. Christopher Herold commented on their relationship as follows: "Far from eclipsing each other, each enhanced the fascination of the other in the eyes of the onlooker—a fact of which they were quite conscious and which no doubt contributed to the growth of their friendship."<sup>74</sup> We need not wonder that the mention of one of their names frequently conjured the other. To quote but one example, which is interesting for its exotic context; when the French-German writer Adelbert von Chamisso passed through Kamchatka in 1816 and happened to dine at the house of an American expatriate, an interesting object caught his attention: "Painted delicately on glass by a Chinese hand, it was the portrait of Madame Récamier, the dear friend of Madame de Staël, at whose residence I enjoyed intimate contact with her over a long period of time. When I observed this picture here," Chamisso mused, "our whole voyage seemed an amusing anecdote, sometimes told in a tedious manner, and nothing else."<sup>75</sup> Within the space of two sentences, Chamisso managed to convey the "chains of attractions" that linked him to Staël and Récamier (whose image had traveled all the way to the Russian Far East) and to insert himself modestly in their narrative of greatness and fame.

Nothing could illustrate the curious juxtaposition of their celebrity and its diverse sources better than the following report from the British newspaper *Argus*, compiled by the French historian François-Alphonse Aulard, a tireless collector of primary documents: "We are sorry to hear that Madame Récamier is very ill with the *masonic* or fashionable complaint, called the *grip*'—Mme de Staël's novel has been translated into English; the price is twenty four shillings."<sup>76</sup> The report beautifully demonstrates that the two women were somehow linked in Aulard's mind—hence his juxtaposition of two separate excerpts—and highlights the contrasting reasons for their respective fame.

Staël, for one, was well aware of the symbolic power of this association. In her posthumously published treatise on the French Revolution she wrote: "The most beautiful woman in France, who on this ground alone should have found defenders everywhere, was exiled because she had come to the country seat of an unfortunate friend a hundred and fifty leagues from Paris. This coalition of two women settled on the shore of the lake of Geneva appeared too formidable to the master of the world, and he incurred the ridicule of persecuting them."<sup>77</sup> Staël was right to describe her association with Récamier in terms of a coalition: the word carries appropriate connotations of a serious, even bellicose confrontation, which this undoubtedly was. Where she erred, however, was in dismissing Napoleon's persecution

as ridiculous. Perhaps Napoleon *ought* to have incurred the public's ridicule, but it is unlikely that he did. For as Staël herself quotes him: "*Power is never ridiculous.*"<sup>78</sup> In persecuting these two women, the subject of an imaginary glorious diptych, Napoleon unwittingly paid tribute to the power of their collaborative celebrity.

### Conclusion: The Power of Collaborative Celebrity

In this article, I demonstrated the value of studying celebrity in terms of collaboration. Collaboration implies agency, and agency, as we have seen, is something that the scholarship has largely disregarded. If celebrities "articulate agency and activity in democratic culture," as Marshall rightly claims, then we need to take a closer look at the ways certain individuals attempted to "achieve autonomous status."<sup>79</sup> An exclusive emphasis on institutional structures does not adequately recognize human agency. This is especially true when we consider the power residing in narrative self-fashioning. As both process and product, celebrity depends on a narrative that is at once legible and credible. In other words, celebrity narratives need to be interesting enough to appeal to a broad audience.<sup>80</sup> In Staël's and Récamier's case, their well-known friendship constituted an essential aspect of their celebrity narrative. They jointly wielded a great deal of influence in the way they first crafted, then propagated their public persona. Without romanticizing their ability to shape the story of their life, it is important to recognize the considerable cultural and symbolic capital that they accumulated in the course of their public career.

When Gérando and Guizot remarked on the joint celebrity of Staël and Récamier, they were probably unaware of the deliberate impulse behind it. Rather than viewing pronouncements like the ones cited at the beginning of this article as accidental, however, we should understand them as evidence of a careful strategy. Put differently, Gérando's and Guizot's comments demonstrate the success of an elaborate collaborative performance intended to enhance the respective celebrity of the performers. My emphasis on Staël's and Récamier's collaboration in the textual as well as the visual realm is important for the light it throws on the possibility of women's agency in the French Revolutionary period. While the political reaction setting in after 1793 certainly restricted women's participation in the public sphere, not all women were completely excluded. Talent and beauty, coupled with the new opportunities offered by the literary and artistic market place, offered possibilities for self-fashioning that did not depend on rank.

Depending on a woman's abilities or looks, it was possible to achieve fame, and thus social importance, on a level that the emperor himself perceived as threatening. It is clearly problematic to ignore the amount of

agency that some women had at their disposal. Where Staël saw herself as a modern Corinne celebrating the life of the mind, Récamier became an active agent of her own representation.<sup>81</sup> Beginning in the late eighteenth century, celebrity increasingly offered women the opportunity to make a social and cultural impact, even if an ambiguous one. "Celebrity has its dangers and its thorns," Amélie Lenormant observed at the beginning of the preface to her aunt's biography; "In life, it offers a thousand disadvantages to those who enjoy it, and when they are no more, it is not always easy to protect their memory from error and false interpretations."<sup>82</sup> Récamier not only managed to preserve her own fame—or so we are supposed to believe: she also harbored a "passion for the glory of her friends" that made her dedicate her life to the worship of their memory.<sup>83</sup> Instead of attributing Récamier's obsession with celebrity to narcissism and the desire for social significance, Lenormant gilded it with the gold leaf of her sanctimonious rhetoric, ignoring more worldly explanations. Not everyone was as undiscerning.

Gilt by association is no accident but an expression of the "will to power," as the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche might have said. At least some of Staël's and Récamier's contemporaries took note of this. The Baron de Trémont, for example, felt that there was something off with Récamier's customary show of extreme modesty: "There was a certain affectation about it, you felt she was trying to attract attention."<sup>84</sup> Staël faced a similar charge. Her lack of pretension notwithstanding, Lord Byron noticed her propensity to capture the limelight: "She was always aiming to be brilliant—to produce a sensation, no matter how, when or where. She wanted to make all her ideas, like figures in the modern French school of painting, prominent and shewy—standing out of the canvass, each in a light of its own."<sup>85</sup> There is something uniquely fitting about Byron's comparison of Staël's ideas to figures in a painting. Whether in fiction or on canvas, Corinne endures as a testament to the collaborative celebrity that united two women in pursuit of power.

## NOTES

I am grateful for the helpful suggestions of Madelyn Gutwirth, Karyna Szmurlo, and Cynthia Truant that aided me in the preparation of this article.

<sup>1</sup>Maurice Levallant, *The Passionate Exiles: Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier*, trans. Malcolm Barnes (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958), xiii–xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Gustave Baron de Gérando, *Souvenirs épistolaires de Mme Récamier et de Mme de Staël* (Metz: F. Blanc, 1864), 1–2.

<sup>3</sup>François Guizot, *Mélanges biographiques et littéraires* (Paris: Michael Lévy, 1868), 108. Translations from French are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup>For stylistic and conceptual reasons, I will use the terms "fame" and "celebrity" interchangeably.

<sup>5</sup>James Monaco, *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1978), 4.

<sup>6</sup>P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 5–7.

<sup>7</sup>Simon Morgan, "Celebrity: Academic 'Pseudo-Event' or a Useful Concept for Historians?," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 95–114, 97–98.

<sup>8</sup>See David Beer and Ruth Penfold-Mounce, "Researching Glossy Topics: The Case of the Academic Study of Celebrity," *Celebrity Studies* 1, no. 3 (November 2010): 360–65.

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Cheryl Wanko, "Celebrity Studies in the Long Eighteenth-Century: An Interdisciplinary Overview," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 6 (2011): 351–62. The study of French celebrity is still in its infancy. The notable exceptions are Lenard R. Berlanstein, "Historicizing and Gendering Celebrity Culture: Famous Women in Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 65–91; Antoine Lilti, "The Writing of Paranoia: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Celebrity," *Representations* 103, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 53–83; and Michel D. Garval, *Cléo de Mérode and the Rise of Modern Celebrity Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>10</sup>Bärbel Czennia, "Introduction: Towards an Interdisciplinary History of Celebrity," in *Celebrity: The Idiom of the Modern Era*, ed. Bärbel Czennia (Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, Inc., 2013), xiii.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Morgan, "Celebrity," 96 and Ibid., 104.

<sup>13</sup>See Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). Also see Madelyn Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

<sup>14</sup>I argue against Fred Inglis's reading, which links Paris as a center of celebrity culture to the era of Haussmannization in the mid-nineteenth century. See *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 84–85.

<sup>15</sup>Key works in the burgeoning field of celebrity studies are Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1987); Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Giles, *Illusions of Immortality: A Psychology of Fame* (London and New York: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000.); Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001); and Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage, 2004).

<sup>16</sup>Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI Pub., 1979).

<sup>17</sup>Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 19.

<sup>18</sup>According to Moran, “authors actively negotiate their own celebrity rather than having it simply imposed on them.” See Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>19</sup>Lorraine York, “Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 46, no. 6 (2013): 1330–47, 1332.

<sup>20</sup>York, “Star Turn,” 1341.

<sup>21</sup>Czennia, “Celebrity: A Final View,” in Czennia, *Celebrity: The Idiom*, 292.

<sup>22</sup>On Staël’s life see J. Christopher Herold, *Mistress to an Age. A Life of Madame de Staël*, first edition (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958); and Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staël* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publishers, 2005). On her writings see Madelyn Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël, Novelist: The Emergence of the Artist as Woman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); and Simone Balayé, *Madame de Staël. Lumières et Liberté* (Paris: Lkincksiek, 1979). On Récamier see Amélie Lenormant, ed., *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame Récamier*, trans. Isaphene M. Luyster (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1867); and Édouard Herriot, *Madame Récamier*, 2 vols., trans. Alys Hallard (London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1926). Also see Lenormant, ed., *Souvenirs et Correspondence Tirés des Papiers de Madame Récamier*, 2 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860). The most important recent works are the magnificently illustrated exhibition catalogue *Juliette Récamier. Muse et mécène* (Hazan: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, 2009) and *Juliette Récamier dans les arts et la littérature. La fabrique des représentations*, ed. Delphine Gleizes et Sarga Moussa (Paris: Hermann, 2011).

<sup>23</sup>Germaine Necker to Mme d’Houdetot, May 18, 1785, in Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, ed. Georges Solovieff (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1970), 35.

<sup>24</sup>Mme d’Houdetot to Germaine Necker, 1785, in Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, 36.

<sup>25</sup>Germaine Necker, “Mon journal,” *Cahiers Staëliens* 28 (1980), 57–97, 73.

<sup>26</sup>In her journal Germaine wrote: “je suis fille de M. Necker, je m’attache à lui; c’est là mon vrai nom” (I am M. Necker’s daughter. I am attached to him; this is my true name). See “Mon Journal,” 73.

<sup>27</sup>See Claire Brock, *The Feminization of Fame, 1750–1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 142. On the beginning of Staël’s literary fame see Simone Balayé, “Comment peut-on être Madame de Staël? Une femme dans l’institution littéraire,” *Romantisme* 177 (1992): 15–23, 16 f.

<sup>28</sup>Germaine de Staël, “Foreword” to “The Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations,” in *Major Writings of Germaine de Staël*, trans. Vivian Folkenflik (New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1987), 151.

<sup>29</sup>For “veridical self,” see Rojek, *Celebrity*, 11.

<sup>30</sup>Joyce Hemlow and Althea Douglas, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (madame d’Arblay)*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

<sup>31</sup>Italics in original text. Angelica Goodden, *Madame de Staël: The Dangerous Exile* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 293.

<sup>32</sup>Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël, Novelist*, 259.

<sup>33</sup>Étienne Léon Lamothe-Langon, *Memoires et souvenirs d'une femme de qualité sur le Consulat et l'Empire*, vol. 4 (Paris: Mame et Delaunay-Vallée, 1830), 47–48.

<sup>34</sup>Staël to A.W. Schlegel, July 2, 1813, in Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, 448. For a lively account of her stay in London see Goodden, *The Dangerous Exile*, chap. 8.

<sup>35</sup>Staël to the Queen of Sweden, July 8, 1813, in Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, 450.

<sup>36</sup>Staël to A.W. Schlegel, July 2, 1813 in Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, 448.

<sup>37</sup>Staël to Récamier, May 31, 1808, in Madame de Staël, *Correspondance Générale*, vol. 6, ed. Béatrice Jasinski (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), 442. Also see Staël to Récamier, April 30, 1808, in Madame de Staël, *Correspondance*, 6:411.

<sup>38</sup>Staël to Récamier, November 17, 1806, Madame de Staël, *Choix de lettres*, 333.

<sup>39</sup>Staël to Récamier, postmarked January 23, 1810, in Étienne Beau de Loménie, ed., *Lettres de Madame de Staël à Madame Récamier* (Paris, Domat, 1952), 166.

<sup>40</sup>Amélie Lenormant, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame Récamier*, trans. and ed. Isaphene M. Luyster (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1867), 4.

<sup>41</sup>Scholars usually attribute this marriage to Récamier's desire to preserve his fortune during the dangerous days of the revolution.

<sup>42</sup>On interactional privilege see Charles Kurzman, et al., "Celebrity Status," *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 4 (December 2007): 347–56, 355f.

<sup>43</sup>On Récamier's celebrity see Susanne Hillman, "Empty-handed Beauty: Juliette Récamier as Pseudo-Event," *Celebrity Studies* (2015): 203–20.

<sup>44</sup>Lenormant, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame Récamier*, 8. Emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup>Benjamin Constant, "Mémoire de Juliette," redaction abrégée, in Constant, *Principes de politique et autres écrits (juin 14–juillet 1815)*, ed. Olivier Devaux and Kurt Kloocke (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), 331.

<sup>46</sup>Lenormant, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, 103.

<sup>47</sup>On how this process worked see Maurice Levaillant, *Chateaubriand, Madame Récamier et les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe (1830–1850)* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1947), 284 f.

<sup>48</sup>Daniel Stern (Madame d'Agoult), *Mes souvenirs 1806–1833*, 3rd edition (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1880), 361. Italics in original.

<sup>49</sup>Staël to Récamier, December 2, 1807, in *Lettres de Madame de Staël à Madame Récamier*, ed. Emmanuel Beau de Loménie (Paris: Domat, 1952), 118.

<sup>50</sup>Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 155–56.

<sup>51</sup>Germaine de Staël, *Delphine*, translated with an introduction by Avriel H. Goldberger (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1995), 51.

<sup>52</sup>Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. Avriel H. Goldberger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 20.

<sup>53</sup>Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, 92.

<sup>54</sup>Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, 425.

<sup>55</sup>See Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, 425n1.

<sup>56</sup>Staël to Henri Meister, August 7, 1807, in Madame de Staël, *Correspondance*, 6:289. Mary D. Sheriff comments: “In proposing Madame Récamier as Corinne (or Corinne as Madame Récamier), Staël, it seems, is thinking not so much about her own portrait, but that of her heroine gifted with womanly beauty.” See Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 259–60. Another possibility suggests that Staël’s Corinne was in some crucial ways a fictional representation of her beautiful friend, and Staël was clearly aware of their similarity.

<sup>57</sup>See Staël to Meister, September 18, 1807, in Madame de Staël, *Correspondance*, 6:306 where she writes: “Mme Lebrun a fait un portrait de moi qu’on trouve tres remarkable.”

<sup>58</sup>In one of his letters Prosper de Barante wrote to Staël: “Je savais bien que vous trouveriez ce portrait de Mme Le Brun mauvais et disgracieux” (I well knew that you would find Madame Le Brun’s portrait bad and unsightly). Quoted in Yvonne Bezard, *Madame de Staël d’après ses portraits* (Paris: Éditions Victor Attinger, 1938), 19.

<sup>59</sup>Voght to Récamier, November 12, [1810], in *Madame Récamier. Les amis de sa jeunesse et sa correspondance intime*, ed. Amélie Lenormant (Paris: Michael Lévy Frères, Editeurs, 1874), 64.

<sup>60</sup>Massot’s acquaintance with Staël went back to 1794 when he took up lodgings at Mézéry near Lausanne. In the fall of 1807 he traveled to Paris where he would meet François Gérard, among other painters. It would obviously take a detailed study to establish the mutual influence of the two artists; but given their common acquaintance with Staël and Récamier, an aesthetic cross-fertilization cannot be excluded.

<sup>61</sup>David to Récamier, September 14, 1818, in Lenormant, *Souvenirs et Correspondence*, 1:150.

<sup>62</sup>For the scene see Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, 22.

<sup>63</sup>Stéphane Paccoud and Sophie Picot-Bocquillon make this valid point in their discussion of Gérard's painting. See the relevant section of "Notices d'oeuvres," in *Juliette Récamier. Muse et mécène*, 233.

<sup>64</sup>Adolphe Thiers, *Salon de Mil Huit Cent Vingt-Deux* (Paris: Maradan, Libraire, 1822), 85.

<sup>65</sup>For the title at the exhibition see "Notices," in *Juliette Récamier. Muse et Mécène*, 88.

<sup>66</sup>Alphonse Lamartine, *Cours familier de littérature, XLIX entretien* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1860) 57. See *Juliette Récamier*, 16. Interestingly—and proving my point—Corinne's contagious celebrity is at work even in the most recent scholarship. Thus the very first essay in the exhibition catalogue *Juliette Récamier. Muse et mécène* opens with a full-page illustration of Gérard's painting *Corinne* and this occurs despite the fact that the essay focuses primarily on Récamier. See Marc Fumaroli, "La 'Dame blanche' de Lyon et le Paris des Arts," in *Juliette Récamier. Muse et mécène*, ed. Stéphane Paccoud (Lyon: Hazen; Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon, 2009), 17–23, 16.

<sup>67</sup>The phrase is from a letter to Madame Salvage, written in 1835. See Levaillant, *Chateaubriand, Madame Récamier et les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, 290: "Assise devant 'sa belle Corinne,' Mme Recamier pouvait à son tour contempler ses traits dans le tableau longuement travaillé que Chateaubriand venait d'exécuter d'elle" (seated in front of "her beautiful Corrine," Madame Récamier could in turn contemplate her features in the picture Chateaubriand had so long worked on and recently completed). Levaillant's chronology is off by several years here. The part of the *Memoires d'Outre-Tombe* dedicated to Recamier is dated 1839. See François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. 2 (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 1997), 1857.

<sup>68</sup>I am borrowing the phrase "chains of attraction" from Chris Rojek who writes: "Celebrities are cultural fabrications. Their impact on the public may appear to be intimate and spontaneous. In fact, celebrities are carefully mediated through what might be termed chains of attraction. No celebrity now acquires public recognition without the assistance of cultural intermediaries who operate to stage-manage celebrity presence in the eyes of the public." See Rojek, *Celebrity*, 10.

<sup>69</sup>On Girardin's adulation and emulation of Corinne see C. A. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, vol. 3 (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1929), 386 f. Sainte-Beuve notes that Corinne was the "grand ideal of every celebrated woman." *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>70</sup>Helen Ostermann Borowitz, *The Impact of Art on French Literature: From de Scudéry to Proust* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 73.

<sup>71</sup>D'Agoult, *Mes souvenirs*, 361.

<sup>72</sup>Translated into modern terms, this means that even if Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were individually famous, they were exponentially more so as the composite "Brangelina."

<sup>73</sup>Benjamin Constant, "Mémoires de Mme Récamier," in *Oeuvres*, ed. Alfred Rolin (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957), 938.

<sup>74</sup>J. Christopher Herold, *Mistress to an Age: A Life of Madame de Staël* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1958), 355.

<sup>75</sup>Adelbert von Chamisso, *A Voyage Around the World with the Romanzov Exploring Expedition in the Years 1815–1818 in the Brig Rurik, Captain Otto von Kotzebue*, trans. and ed. Henry Kratz (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 75.

<sup>76</sup>Quoted in François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris sous le Consulat. Recueil de documents pour l'histoire de l'esprit public à Paris*, vol. 3 (Paris: Le Cerf, 1903–1909), 634.

<sup>77</sup>Germaine de Staël, *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, ed. Aurelian Craiutu (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2008), 472.

<sup>78</sup>Staël, *Considerations on the Principal Events*, 472. Emphasis added.

<sup>79</sup>Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 242.

<sup>80</sup>For the notion of celebrity as narrative see Neal Gabler, "Toward a New Definition of Celebrity," 10, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://learcenter.org/pdf/Gabler.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup>On the power of self-representation see E. Claire Cage, "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797–1804," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 193–215, 208.

<sup>82</sup>Lenormant, "Avant-propos," in Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondance*, 1:i.

<sup>83</sup>Lenormant, "Avant-propos," in Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondance*, 1:vii.

<sup>84</sup>Baron de Trémont quoted in Herriot, *Madame Récamier*, 1:31.

<sup>85</sup>Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, second ed. (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), 224–25.