Adolphe Benjamin Constant


Benjamin Constant (1767-1830) was born in Switzerland and became one of France's leading writers, as well as a journalist, philosopher, and politician. His colourful life included a formative stay at the University of Edinburgh; service at the court of Brunswick, Germany; election to the French Tribunate; and independent opposition and subsequent support for Napoleon, even the drafting of a constitution for the Hundred Days.

Constant wrote many books, essays, and pamphlets. His deepest conviction was that reform is hugely superior to revolution, both morally and politically. While Constant's fluid, dynamic style and lofty eloquence do not always make for easy reading, his text forms a coherent whole, and in his translation Dennis O'Keeffe has focused on retaining the 'general elegance and subtle rhetoric' of the original. Sir Isaiah Berlin called Constant 'the most eloquent of all defenders of freedom and privacy' and believed to him we owe the notion of 'negative liberty', that is, what Biancaminara Fontana describes as "the protection of individual experience and choices from external interferences and constraints." To Constant it was relatively unimportant whether liberty was ultimately grounded in religion or metaphysics -- what mattered were the practical guarantees of practical freedom -- "autonomy in all those aspects of life that could cause no harm to others or to society as a whole." This translation is based on Etienne Hofmann's critical edition of Principes de politique (1980), complete with Constant's additions to the original work.

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This study takes the theme of alienation as the research nucleus of analysis. Alienation is a classificatory device rather than an ideological or philosophical idea; it serves as an «archítheme» which is broken up into concrete manifesting units. These units are semantically and syntactically investigated. The study also exemplifies possible methods of criticism, it is thus critical and metacritical.Adolphe enjoys all the advantages of a noble birth and an intellectual ability, yet he is haunted by the meaninglessness of life. Thus, he merely seeks distraction in the pursuit of the beautiful, but older and married Ellenore. The young Adolphe, inexperienced in the language of love, falls for her unexpectedly and falters under the burden of an illicit love that is destructive to his public career. Unable to commit himself fully to Ellenore, and yet unwilling to face the pain he would cause by leaving her, Adolphe finds himself incapable of resolving an increasingly tragic situation. Written in a clear and thoughtful style, Adolphe (1816) reveals Constant's own experiences in love, while reflecting his anxieties for the possibility of any authentic commitment to someone other than ourselves, whether emotional or political, in a disenchanted world.Mathilda (1959) is a posthumous novella by English writer and Romantic Mary Shelley. Written as a means of self-distraction following the deaths of her young children in Italy, Mathilda is a work haunted by tragic loss. Unpublished for over a century, its posthumous appearance helped Shelley's reputation as a leading Romantic, an artist unafraid of confronting such themes and taboos as incest and suicide in her work. Mathilda, named after its narrator, traces a young woman's troubled life from birth to her premature deathbed. Following her mother's death during childbirth and her father's subsequent abandonment, Mathilda is raised by her aunt in rural Loch Lomond, Scotland. A gifted reader and promising intellectual, she rises from her difficult circumstances to lead a relatively happy childhood. When, at the age of 16, her father reenters her life, the two reconnect and eventually move together to London. As she begins to receive suitors however, her father's strange jealousy and irrational behavior conceal a terrible secret. When he reveals his incestuous desires to Mathilda, she rejects him, resulting in his suicide and leaving her unmarried, orphaned, and financially unstable.

Living in self-imposed exile, she befriends the similarly melancholy Woodville, a young widower and poet who does his best to care for her despite her crushing bouts of depression and frequent suicidal thoughts. Mathilda is an emotionally complex and ultimately difficult novella recognized for its controversial themes and for its parallels to Shelley's own tragic life. With a beautifully designed cover and professionally typeset manuscript, this edition of Mary Shelley's Mathilda is a classic of English literature reimagined for modern readers.A spirited look at life and Romantic sensibilities on the eve of the nineteenth century, this narrative is a priceless document and a fine example of early autobiographical writing.Tout ce qu'il faut savoir sur Adolphe de Benjamin Constant! Retrouvez l'essentiel de l'œuvre dans une fiche de lecture complète et détaillée, avec un résumé, une étude des personnages, des clés de lecture et des pistes de réflexion. Rédigée de manière claire et accessible, la fiche de lecture propose d'abord un résumé chapitre par chapitre du roman, puis s'intéresse tout particulièrement aux personnages d'Adolphe et d'Ellenore, héros romantiques par excellence. On aborde ensuite l'appartenance de l'œuvre au Romantisme, ainsi que son inspiration autobiographique. Enfin, les pistes de réflexion, sous forme de questions, vous permettront d'aller plus loin dans votre étude. Une analyse littéraire de référence pour mieux lire et comprendre le livre!Introduction : p. 1-42Examen, chapitre par chapitre, des concordances et des divergences entre le roman et la réalité du point de vue d'Ellenore.'For forty years I have defended the same principle: freedom in everything, in religion, in philosophy, in literature, in industry, in politics - and by freedom I mean the triumph of the individual.' Constant thus summarized his beliefs at the end of his life. A political theorist and a passionate defender of individual liberty, he was also the author of one of the greatest French novels of psychological insight, Adolphe. In a major new biography Dennis Wood traces the development of Constant as a writer centrally preoccupied with the problematic of freedom, not only in the fields of politics and religious belief but also in his own troubled relationship with several women.Professor Rosenblatt presents a study of Benjamin Constant's intellectual development into a founding father of modern liberalism, through a careful analysis of his evolving views on religion. Constant's life spanned the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Napoleon's rise and rule, and the Bourbon Restoration. Rosenblatt analyzes Constant's key role in many of this era's heated debates over the role of religion in politics, and in doing so, exposes and addresses many misconceptions that have long reigned about Constant and his period. In particular, Rosenblatt sheds light on Constant's major, yet much-neglected work, De La Religion. Given that the role of religion is, once again, center-stage in our political, philosophical and historical arenas, Liberal Values constitutes a major revision of our understanding of the origins of modern liberalism. A subtle and humane exploration of Benjamin Constant, the 19th-
century diarist, novelist, psychologist and political theorist -- the first French analyst of democracy. Kitty Maule longs to be "totally unreasonable, totally unfair, very demanding, and very beautiful." She is instead clever, reticent, self-possessed, and striking. For years, Kitty has been tactfully courting her colleague Maurice Bishop, a detached, elegant English professor. Now, running out of patience, Kitty's amorous pursuit takes her from rancorous academic committee rooms and lecture halls to French cathedrals and Parisian rooming houses, from sittings with her dress-making grandmother to seances with a grandmotherly psychic. Touching, funny, and stylistically breathtaking, Providence is a brightly polished gem of comic romance. Frequently paradoxical developments of themes and situations from the opening chapters are traced in detail in an analysis that emphasizes the novel's intricate writing as well as its historical and intellectual significance. Enjoying all the advantages of noble birth and intellectual ability, but haunted by a sense of the meaninglessness of life, Adolphe seeks distraction in the pursuit of the beautiful, but older and more vulnerable Ellenore. Unaware of the danger 'of appropriating the language of love, and of fostering in yourself or others emotions of the heart that are transitory', Adolphe unexpectedly falls in love, only to chafe under the burden of an illicit relationship that blocks his public career. Unable to commit himself fully to Ellenore, and yet unwilling to face the pain he would cause by leaving her, Adolphe finds himself caught up in a situation that cannot be remedied, and is resolved only with disastrous results. Examen, chapitre par chapitre, des concordances et des divergences entre le roman et la réalité du point de vue d'Ellénore. 'One of the undisputed masterpieces of early nineteenth-century French prose fiction.' From Richard Sieburth's preface to Adolphe Published simultaneously in London and Paris in 1816, Adolphe is the story of a tragic love affair between its narrator and his lover Ellenore, two characters locked into a fatal dance of self-destruction. In what is one of the earliest examples of autofiction, from a period when all creative endeavour was permeated by autobiography, Constant's aim was to create an exemplary fiction of high moral purpose which would also function as an act of intimate self-vindication and revenge on his former lover, the formidable Madame de Stael. The result is a tautly-strung Racinian tragedy in prose. Soon after publication, Constant was defending himself from charges that he had written a novel based on real people, which he strenuously denied. The work was translated into English by Alexander Walker, and overseen by the author, resulting in what Richard Sieburth describes as 'an eccentrically bevelled jewel of Regency prose'. This riverrun edition publishes Walker's translation and Constant's preface in a new edition here for the first time since 1817.