

those who had opposed the abolition of aristocracy to link the two events. Doyle has always had the gift of writing clearly, and this has contributed to making so many of his books classics. *Aristocracy and its Enemies* is another splendid work, the most successful overview of the subject to date, providing a wide-ranging narrative that is at its best guiding the reader through the turmoil of the early 1790s, through the years of antagonism towards nobility that followed, and up to the re-establishment of old orders when the Revolutionary projects had either failed or been forced to adapt to new times. Doyle seems to have read every secondary work on eighteenth-century French politics and intellectual life, and the result is hugely informative for scholars and invaluable for students coming to the subject for the first time. If the book has a weakness, it is that a lot more could be said. *Aristocracy and its Enemies* concentrates on France, but it would have been helpful to know what the difference was between French attacks on nobility and classical or Renaissance precursors, who were also faced with declining states and found the source of the problem in their noble or senatorial classes. The other part of the story that is underplayed is the link between arguments about the future of nobility and speculations in political economy. Many authors, and perhaps Montesquieu himself, envisaged a noble class emerging from a meritocratic social order, the question being how to replace the existing system without getting rid of nobility altogether or sparking civil war. None of these points detracts from the value of Doyle's book, but it is usefully read alongside studies of French speculators and projectors, and especially Michael Sonenscher's *Before the Deluge* (2007) and *Sans-Culottes* (2008).

RICHARD WHATMORE
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

doi:10.1093/fs/knq064

Parole, personnage et sujet dans les récits littéraires de Benjamin Constant. By ANNE BOUTIN. (Travaux et recherches de l'Institut Benjamin Constant, 10). Geneva: Slatkine, 2008. 590 pp. Hb €90.00.

This new addition to the series of Benjamin Constant studies is a perceptive analysis of *parole* and its effects on *personnage* and *sujet* in *Adolphe*, *Amélie et Germaine*, *Cécile*, and *Ma vie*, the last three posthumously published. Beautifully written, jargon-free, perfectly structured and signposted, the volume benefits from an extensive bibliography and an index of (non-fictional) proper names. Boutin conveys Constant's astonishingly modern language (easily accessible to secondary students), its *conte*-like simplicity, its abstraction from social convention, its universality. She studies such oppositions as solitude and society, private thought and public speech, introspection and objectivity, indecision and resolve, dejection and enthusiasm, independent judgement and third-party advice, suppression and outbursts — all through the perspective of the powerlessness and the power of language. Previous critics have emphasized the failure of *constantien* communication, each of the four works focusing on a crisis of the spoken word. But Boutin analyses such linguistic features as voice, style, person, point of view, and narratology in general, and hence underlines, following in part John Searle and J. L. Austin, the considerable resources available, among them recourse to silence and to the writing of letters. Reflecting its origin as a doctoral dissertation, the book is rarely ludic or even amused and would have profited from much pruning, the citations from fellow critics and from Constant being invariably too long. Quotations are sometimes repeated within a short space, although it would be a curmudgeonly reader who objected to rereading such aphorisms as 'Cursed be he who, in the first instants of a love affair, does not believe that the relationship will last for ever!' The methodology is essentially 'intrinsic' — multiple extended close readings concentrating on form rather than content, with little reference to the genesis of the four texts or, for

instance, to the questions of linguistic norms in writing non-French French or of specifically Swiss perspectives and attitudes. Biographical insights emerge principally in the eternal question of the degree of autobiography in *Adolphe*. As shown by the perfect readability and the seamless transition from primary discourse to universal maxims, Boutin adopts some of Constant's stylistic features. Her conclusion, ostensibly referring to the novelist, thus argues for the difficulty of synthesis, also reflecting her own approach, little suited to an easily summarizable thesis.

WILLIAM BUTCHER
HONG KONG

doi:10.1093/fs/knq051

Approaches to Teaching Duras's 'Ourika'. Edited by MARY ELLEN BIRKETT and CHRISTOPHER RIVERS. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009. vii + 184 pp. Pb \$19.75.

Renewed interest in Claire de Duras's 1823 novella, stimulated by developments in feminist and postcolonial theories, has challenged teachers to find inventive ways to elicit the complexity, significance, and relevance of a deceptively simple text. The present volume thus offers a timely pedagogical approach to *Ourika*, and strategies for reading and exposing its rich themes. An opening section usefully presents the principal editions of the text, critical studies, and background readings on race, gender, class, and history. Part 2 contains twenty-two didactic approaches, spanning four broadly thematic categories. The first, on 'historical dimensions', provides pertinent insights into everything from the French and Haitian revolutions to Duras's family ties to the plantation slave trade. Although the extra-textual role of history in *Ourika* functions as a framework that impacts on the eponymous heroine's alienation, in contrast to the Balzacian or Flaubertian novel where history is often explicitly woven into the textual fabric itself, the significance of this, disappointingly, is not developed. Rather than functioning as an isolated section, the treatment of history — notably through an exploitation of references to 'public and private revolutions' (p. 32) — could have allowed for further consideration of the work's distinctive textuality and for a more general discussion on the differences between the *roman sentimental* and other prevailing textual models (most notably realism). The second section, on the dominant themes of race, class, and gender, charts the prevalent social, political, and sexual attitudes of the time, but hinges on an impressive set of close textual analyses by renowned critics. Here *Ourika* is identified within trends in women's writing and is successfully placed in dialogue with Chateaubriand's *René* (*le mal du siècle* is a dominant theme throughout). While this leads neatly into a third section, on 'literary contexts', intended to 'illuminate *Ourika* and highlight its originality by juxtaposing it with other texts' (p. 22), surprisingly this is the shortest category in the volume (although an element of fluidity is acknowledged). The impression persists that an opportunity has been missed to suggest how teachers might build on the foundations laid by examinations of the protagonist's exclusion by proceeding to highlight the textual otherness of the *récit* itself. Granted, the relationship between *Ourika* and Byronic Romanticism, the Ovidian myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, and Pineau's contemporary francophone novel *L'Exil selon Julia* all advance original arguments and make telling connections, but these remain somewhat fragmentary, and a more cohesive sense of *Ourika's* literary significance — its appropriation of and departure from Romanticism, the counterpoint it furnishes to readings of social integration and sexual identity in canonical nineteenth-century male-authored novels — would have been productive. In spite of these frustrations, what remains constant is a sense of the value *Ourika* can bring to the classroom. Contributors to the final section — the most explicitly pedagogical — recount how the work's timeless themes engage students and promote vibrant discussion in everything from comparative literature to civilization courses. Overall, the editors succeed in communicating the powerful appeal,