



Madame de Stael: The First Modern Woman

Francine du Plessix Gray

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"A writer of scintillating style and resonant substance," (*Publishers Weekly*), bestselling author Francine du Plessix Gray chronicles the incandescent life of the most celebrated woman of letters of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era.

The daughter of the second most important man in France, Louis XVI's Minister of Finances, Jacques Necker, Madame de Staël was born into a world of political and intellectual prominence. Later, she married Sweden's ambassador to the French court, and for a span of twenty years, she held the limelight as a political figure and prolific writer. Despite a plain appearance, she was notoriously seductive and enjoyed whirlwind affairs with some of the most influential men of her time. She always attracted controversy, and was demonized by Napoleon for her forthrightness, the sheer power of her intellect, and the progressiveness of her salon, which was a hotbed for the expression of liberal ideals. The emperor exiled her, on and off, for the last fifteen years of her life.

Madame de Staël—force of nature, exuberant idealist, and ultimate enthusiast—waged a lifelong struggle against all that was tyrannical, cynical, or passionless in her time, and left Europe a legacy of enlightened liberalism that radiated throughout the continent during the nineteenth century.

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