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LES JARDINS EXOTIQUES: EARLY FRENCH ROMANTICISM AND ITS IMPACT ON  
TRAVEL INSPIRED NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH GARDENS

by

Kyra Kalina Sanchez Clapper

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

History

The University of Memphis

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The question of French literature's portrayal of the environment has been widely debated in the field of ecocriticism, with scholars such as Douglas Boudreau and Marnie Sullivan arguing that ecocriticism predominately focuses on literature in English. While there is a long-standing tradition of travel literature dating back to Samuel de Champlain's *Des Sauvages* (1604), the works primarily focus on the peoples living in the area and not on the physical environment. Until recently, scholars of French Studies have largely ignored the intellectual and cultural approach to nature, and in order to further our understanding of French environmental writing, we need to understand how the literary side of French Romanticism influenced the scientific advances in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century France.

This dissertation is an environmental history of transatlantic botanical exchange during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the Age of Enlightenment, the beginning of salon culture, there was no shortage of correspondence between North American and western European intellectuals. Much of the discourse focused primarily on politics and religion, where western civilization began to capitalize on the ideas of individualism and secularization. While there is no shortage of historiography on these exchanges, I argue that there is more scholarship to be done on the role of French gardener-botanist explorers in the long eighteenth century. I offer a new perspective on transatlantic botanical exchanges by analyzing the acquisition of seeds from exotic locale as well as the correspondences between North American and European correspondences from an ecocritical perspective. Another focal point of this presentation is on the French Enlightenment and the philosophes' interpretations of nature in their texts. I delve further into the relationships between late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century literature, exploration, and the environment.

In my project, I will closely analyze the flora at Vallée aux Loups and Chateaubriand's ethnography of North America, *Voyage en Amérique*. I argue that Chateaubriand's ever-changing perspective on the environment can be clearly seen during the time lapsed between creating his gardens, which were based on his earlier works *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802), and his more serious attempts at scientific writing in *Voyage en Amérique*.<sup>1</sup> By cross-referencing this ethnographical work with his gardens, we will further understand how Chateaubriand brought his American travels to the French public in the forms of written prose and landscaping, as well as how this provides us with an example of how the shift in the understanding of nature from the Enlightenment to Romanticism occurred.

One of the historical limitations of my project is the dearth of prior work on ecocriticism written in French. Much of the historiography on Romanticism is focused primarily on British and German Romanticism. However, this could be simply because Romanticism's foundations are primarily rooted in the English and German languages.<sup>2</sup> Romanticism did not come into full fruition in France until the 1830s with the publication of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. Hugo's predecessors, such as Chateaubriand, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Étienne Pivert de Senancour (1770-1846), and Bernardin de Saint Pierre (1737-1814), were still under the influence of the Enlightenment, which would make their work more transitional than representative of true Romanticism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While I am aware of the author's *Les Natchez* (1825-6), I chose not to include it in this project for now due to its fictitious nature and its reliance on *René*. *Voyage en Amérique* was written after Chateaubriand's tenure as the president of the Société de géographie and demonstrates the author's everchanging perspective of former New France.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Denise Le Dantec and Jean-Pierre Le Dantec, *Reading the French Garden: Story and History*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). Originally published in French in 1990. Both of them have written several works on French gardens and landscape architecture, such as the following: *Les Jardins et les Jours* (2007); *Jardins et Paysages: Textes critiques de L'Antiquité à nos jours* (1996). Some French Romanticism studies I have encountered primarily focus on the second half of the nineteenth century. Literary critic Emily Haddad's *Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth-Century English and French Poetry* (2002) focuses on poets during the peak of Orientalism in literature.

One of the gaps that I would like to bridge is that between landscape gardening and colonial botany and literature in French history. During the Enlightenment? During Romanticism? What is the recent scholarship on this topic from the English and German perspectives?<sup>4</sup> My research will provide a more open scope of French Romanticism from the environmental history perspective. Most works that I have encountered on French Romanticism are written from the political perspective, and hardly any are written from the environmental perspective.<sup>5</sup> I have also noticed that while there are works on French Romanticism and nature, these works are almost always focused solely on the literary and religious perspectives. Those themes will play a role in my project, but the main focus will be on European travelers' scientific focus between North America and Western Europe. While my project will focus on well-known figures of French exploration, I also intend to refer to lesser-known figures and open up more discussion from a bottom-up perspective in Modern European environmental history and writing.

One of the more obvious limitations of my work is that most of the historiography on Romanticism written in English primarily focuses on British and German literature. Literary critics such as Ursula Heise have stated many publications on Anglo-American ecocriticism exist due to post-Industrial Revolution guilt.<sup>6</sup> This statement still holds true, because there are

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Although my project will focus on French travel to North America, Haddad's work will provide insight into how to look at other forms of literature written during the colonial period. A work more closely related to my research is *Back to the Garden: Chateaubriand, Senancour, and Constant* by Michael J. Call (1988), who focuses on *le mal du siècle* and the Garden of Eden myth.[7] In Denise Le Dantec and Jean-Pierre Le Dantec's *Reading the French Garden: Story and History* (1990), they analyze gardens created by French authors from an intellectual historiographical perspective. While they include a brief analysis of Chateaubriand's gardens, their work is mostly focused on the literary perspective and does not delve into the scientific or exploration perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Barlow Rogers's *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* is the most cited text in landscape studies.

<sup>5</sup> In terms of the environmental perspective, I am referring to studying the natural world from a non-anthropocentric stance. While the Annales School is considered to be the father of environmental historiography, they deemed studies of current environmental issues to not be of much importance, because they do not meet the qualifications of *la longue durée* (meaning, the data is much more quantifiable over a long period rather than simply looking at short-term causations).

<sup>6</sup> Ursula Heise, "Globality, Difference, and the International Turn in Ecocriticism." *PMLA* 128.3 (May 2013): 636-643.

numerous works on British Romanticism and its connection to natural history, but very little, if any, on French Romanticism (published in English, anyway).<sup>7</sup> One of the few works that I have encountered so far is Brigitte Weltman-Aron's *On Other Grounds* which analyzes eighteenth-century gardens and explores how the reading of gardens can tell us more about Nature and its place in French identity.<sup>8</sup> However, I aim to look at gardens created by authors who traveled to exotic locales and imported flora from their travels in order to show their interpretation of nature during the post-Enlightenment and Romanticism eras of French history.

My key questions are the following: What are the current works in the area of French Romanticism?<sup>9</sup> Literary? Historical? And what are some future research possibilities in French Romanticism from scientific/cultural perspectives? What are the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches to topics that are “old-fashioned,” like Romanticism? Are there any recent works on environmental history/ecocriticism in French? How can we apply primarily Anglo-American historiography to French Romanticism?<sup>10</sup> How did the French perceive the exotic during the *Ancien Régime*? And during the Napoleonic era? How did French travelers bring their experiences back to France? By writing prose? Importing flora? Fauna? How did they do it? And

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most common arguments between scholars of French history and literary studies stems from the Annales School's attitude towards *la longue durée*, where contemporary environmental studies and ecocriticism are not necessary because there is not enough information to warrant the study of the environment. However, Romanticism historiography continues to grow in both British and German, and some of those works include the following: *Romantic Science: The Literary Forms of Nature History* edited by Noah Heringman; *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (2017); *The Birth of Homeopathy out of the Spirit of Romanticism* by Alice Ann Kuzniar (2017); *The New Poetics of Climate Change: Modernist Aesthetics for a Warming World (Environmental Cultures)* edited by Matthew Griffins (literary critic); *Questioning Nature: British Women's Scientific Writing and Literary Originality, 1750-1830* (literary criticism); Jane Goodall, *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830* (2008).

<sup>8</sup> Brigitte Weltman-Aron, *On Other Grounds: Landscape Gardening and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writing: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Some recent works in French literary studies that focus on environmental/“green” writing are the following: *Exotic Subversions in Nineteenth-century French Fiction* by Jennifer Yee; *Ecocritical Approaches to Literature in French* edited by Douglas Boudreau and Marnie M. Sullivan; and *French Ecocriticism: From the Early Modern Period to the Twenty-First Century* (2017) edited by Daniel Finch-Race and Stephanie Posthumus.

what would be the benefit of looking at accounts of lesser-known European intellectuals who corresponded with well-known figures such as Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Lamarck, et cetera?

### Historiography

The first historiographical lens I use throughout this project is environmental. I look at environmental history from both the “hard science” perspective and the cultural perspective. Intellectual historian Emma C. Spary argues in her work *Utopia’s Garden* (2000) that “the recent developments of the historiography of the sciences have notably focused attention on the problems of scientific practice and way from earlier concerns with an internalist history of science.”<sup>11</sup> In terms of environmental studies written by scholars of French history and literature, most existing scholarship primarily focuses on material and economic evidence. However, Spary argues that there has not been enough work done on French gardens from the cultural/intellectual aspects of environmental history, which is a great injustice for the field of French environmental history in general. This work covers the garden’s history from the Old Regime to the Revolution, which provides a solid foundation for this project.

Although my project centers around nineteenth-century French gardens, it is necessary to also provide some historical context regarding early modern French gardens. Andre Le Nôtre (1613-1700), the most important figure in French formal garden history, was the Gardens of Versailles’ chief designer. During the seventeenth century, the French garden prided itself on being meticulously detailed and of a relatively tame nature.<sup>12</sup> The Gardens of Versailles utilized the latest hydraulic technology and contained numerous foreign floras that were strategically placed

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<sup>11</sup> Emma C. Spary. *Utopia’s Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Erik Orsenna, *André Le Nôtre: Gardener to the Sun King* (George Braziller, 2001); Ian Thompson, *The Sun King’s Garden: Louis XIV, Andre Le Notre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2006); Franklin Hamilton Halehurst, *Jacques Boyceau and the French Formal Garden* (University of Georgia Press, 1966).



in areas throughout the gardens in order to recreate certain locale that the French had explored. Le Nôtre's project primarily focused on flora, and did not consider the fauna and the indigenous peoples who had incorporated those plants into their cultures and diets.

Versailles is known to be a *jardin à la française* (a garden in the French manner). This garden style peaked during the Enlightenment and was eventually replaced by the *jardin paysager* (landscape garden), which emulated English gardens by relying less on the systematic organization of the flora and instead allowing everything to grow naturally. The goal of this style of gardening was for the garden to replicate the wilderness. French gardeners still kept their focus on maintaining things in a somewhat organized manner, thus designating certain gardens to have "themes," and Chateaubriand designed his gardens in the same manner. While each geographic location he had previously visited had its own themed garden, he did not specifically designate each one to be physically separated from the others with borders or signs. This garden organization style reflects Benedict Anderson's *Imaginary Communities* (1983), where the idea of consolidating peoples and places into imaginary parameters is defined as a modern concept.<sup>13</sup>

The most well-known garden that is comparable to Vallée aux Loups is Josephine de Beauharnais's Château de Malmaison. The property was purchased by Josephine in 1799, much to Napoleon I's chagrin. The manor cost 300,000 francs and was in much need of repair.<sup>14</sup> Despite the heated arguments the property brought upon the newlyweds, Josephine was able to create luxurious gardens that were the talk of the salons until her death in 1814. Unfortunately, the Battle of Buzenval in 1870 would destroy the remnants of the gardens.

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Lack, H. Walter., Heilmeyer, Marina., Redouté, Pierre Joseph. *Jardin de la Malmaison: Empress Josephine's Garden with an Essay by Marina*. Germany: Prestel, 2004.

Environmental history, which is a relatively new field in the history discipline, emerged during the 1970s in the United States during the environmental movement. It is predominately an Anglo-American field, because both countries deal with the excessive pollution caused by the Industrial Revolution, which is not to say that other continents and countries are not interested in this particular field of history. Environmental historians such as Mart Stewart, John McNeill, and Donald Worster have high hopes for their field because of its interdisciplinary appeal and vastness. While all geographical fields of history have great potential to make their mark in the area of environmental history, countries such as India and Brazil are currently saddled with different social issues resulting from post-colonialism.

According to Stewart's "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field," environmental history is considered to be practical historiography because it is useful on both the local and global scale. Stewart begins his argument by announcing that the field had expanded ever since its conception to the 1990s, and that when it comes to the study of environmental history, Stewart states that twentieth-century American historians see it as "the history of the role and the place of nature in human life, the history of all the interactions that societies have had with the nonhuman past."<sup>15</sup> The study of the environment should be approached from both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric points of view. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when nationalism heavily influenced the historian's craft in Europe, history has been written to focus only on the people living in the nation-state, rather than in the environment.<sup>16</sup> Stewart and other environmental historians disagree with that approach, and instead seek to find a middle ground where humanity and the environment can be studied equally. It would be

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<sup>15</sup> Mart Stewart, "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field," *The History Teacher* 31 (May 1998): 352.

<sup>16</sup> This is especially important for Native American studies, because before European colonialism, North America's map looked nothing like the one that the European cartographers proposed upon the Natives.

obvious to write about nature as the background for the writing of human history. After all, nature does not recognize nation-state boundaries, and affects everyone on this planet. The fact that everyone can relate to the environment to some degree is what makes the study of environmental history so appealing. It is also good for historians to know this fact, because as the field of history becomes increasingly diverse, it also creates more and more niche groups, to the point that if one is not a specialist in the field that they are reading about, that field is thus deemed “useless” to the general public.<sup>17</sup> While environmental history does not have that particular problem, it is still too broad, and this leads to contradictions in the questions being asked by other environmental historians.

McNeill's “Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History” also describes the appeal of environmental history as a sort of universal field that can be tackled from many different angles. However, his main concern throughout his argument is that many countries barely touch upon the subject due to different priorities and the fact that the task is quite daunting, with a plethora of information to go on.<sup>18</sup> He breaks down each continent by stating how far they have gotten in the field and how the study of environmental history benefits their citizens. For example, the United States and Northern Europe (which includes Great Britain and Scandinavia) are much further along in the study of environmental history, since the Industrial Revolution polluted much of their countries. Also, the history of trees was one of the driving forces to study Northern Europe’s environment.<sup>19</sup> McNeill closes his argument by stating that historians should be more willing to collaborate with other disciplines as well, because while he

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 362.

<sup>18</sup> McNeill, John, “Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History,” *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 42 (December 2003), 11. While his argument relies mostly on nineteenth- and twentieth-century environmental concerns, the key points can also be applied to the arising environmental history of Native Americans. See Joy Porter’s *Native American Environmentalism* for a series of essays covering nineteenth- and twentieth-century Native American environmental history and contemporary concerns.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 16-19.

is encouraging more people to enter the field, he also warns that the immensity of the field is such that it would be impossible to study environmental history without leaving one's comfort zone behind.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to environmental history, ecocriticism relies on interdisciplinary scholarship in order to pose questions on "green writing". Ecocriticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary perspective, where literature scholars analyze texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways in which literature treats the subject of nature.<sup>21</sup> In addition to my training as a historian, I use my French literature background in order to tie the two fields together. Generally speaking, ecocriticism and environmental history are heavily Anglo-American with their approach.<sup>22</sup> It was not until the 2000s that scholars in France began to publish more works on environmental history and "green" writings.<sup>23</sup> By examining one of the monolithic literary figures in France from an environmental lens, we will diversify the heavily English-written study of ecocriticism and green writing.

The second historiographical lenses I use are the cultural histories of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In order to make this project more manageable, I narrow my focus to western European gardens created during the Revolutionary Era.<sup>24</sup> Although Chateaubriand is one of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>21</sup> There have been two waves of ecocriticism. According to Lawrence Buell, first-wave ecocritics romanticize nature, while second-wave ecocritics engage with the ecological devastations that have occurred.

<sup>22</sup> John McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 5-43. See *Global Environmental History: An Introductory Reader (Rewriting Histories)*, 1st Edition (edited by John R. McNeill and Alan Roe) for a general overview of global environmental historiography. Another important work on green writing is James McKusick's *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> *The National Habitus: Ways of Feeling French, 1789-1870* (2014), edited by Marie-Pierre Le Hir; Anne Rehill, *Backwoodsmen as Ecocritical Motif in French Canadian Literature: Connecting Worlds in the Wilds* (2016).

<sup>24</sup> My angle in terms of gardening historiography will be mostly from the aesthetic perspective. While Chateaubriand is not the first French person to travel to and write about the New World, I am interested in how his gardens display the tensions between Post-Enlightenment and Early Romanticism in France. Because the history of gardening is interdisciplinary, I rely on fundamental texts in the areas of environmental history, history of science (in particular, botany), the history of literature, and architectural studies. Recent works on the history of the French garden are the following: Monty Don, *The Road to Le Tholonet: A French Garden Journey* (2013); Filippo Pizzoni, *The Garden: A History in Landscape and Art* (1999); Susan Taylor-Leduc, *Seventeenth-Century French Garden*

main figures of this project, I also look at his predecessors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, as well as his intellectual cohorts. For each author, I examine their literary writings and correspondences with well-known fellow intellectuals and lesser-known intellectuals in order to result in a well-balanced critique. While all of these figures are known for their literary success, I want to delve more into their contributions to natural history and general environmental studies, and this approach offers a more scientific perspective as opposed to the usual literary one.

I intend to narrow down these historiographies by looking at them from both scientific and literary perspectives. For the history of science, I look at the “hard” sciences such as botany in order to better understand the role of colonial botany during French exploration and imperialism. I am also interested in examining how learned Europeans portrayed their travels to North America in the forms of both gardening and prose.<sup>25</sup>

According to German philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the Enlightenment began as a philosophy of positivity. However, as it reached its decline, the Enlightenment’s negative traits, such as alienation, standards of measurement, and mechanistic views of the world, had become more prominent. In their collaborative work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), one example of mechanistic views of the world occurs when a shaman is described as seeing the world as a living organism, while everyone else sees nature as subordinate to man. To the philosophes, the planet was nothing more than a resource for humanity to exploit in order to advance civilization. By approaching the environment from an anthropocentric standpoint, the

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*History* (Taylor & Francis, 1998); Rosalind Creasy, *Edible French Garden* (1999); William Howard Adams, *The French Garden, 1500-1800* (George Braziller, 1979); John Dixon Hunt, Michel Conan, and Claire Goldstein, *Tradition and Innovation in French Garden Art: Chapters of a New History* (2002).

<sup>25</sup> Some of the lesser-known figures that I found so far are the following: Marc-Antoine Eidous (travel/agriculture); Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt (botany); Jean-Baptiste-Pierre le Romain (cartography); Jean-Jacques Rousseau (philosopher); Antoine Joseph Dezallier d’Argenville (naturalist); and Louis-Jean-Marie Daubenton (naturalist).

philosophers took advantage of their scientific knowledge and rationalized the idea that everything exists just to advance human civilization. Horkheimer and Adorno take this a step further by applying Enlightenment logic to capitalism, despite it going against their economic ideologies because they were Marxists.<sup>26</sup> Here is where the Enlightenment argument begins to reveal its paradoxes.

One of the contradictions of the Enlightenment is that while it created the concept of the individual, it also simultaneously laid the foundation for a homogenized society. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant stressed the individual's importance in his essay *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). If an individual is enlightened, then they can use their newfound knowledge to not only improve their living circumstances, but also to improve society as a whole.<sup>27</sup> This is in the same thread as the history of the denomination. Mastery from the Enlightenment perspective is seen as a positive thing, and by using mastery, humans can create the Self, which will thus help them to dominate nature. While this might sound like a one-way conversation, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the Enlightenment is rather a dialectic.

As the title of their work suggests, in order to achieve Enlightenment, one must always be willing to converse with others. The overarching argument is that just because something exists does not mean that we cannot question it, because by doing so, this is pure ideology.<sup>28</sup> This is where the divide between the Enlightenment and Romanticism becomes more pronounced. The Enlightenment is fixated on facts, and that everything must be explained rationally. However, Romanticism embraces mystery and does not seek to question every facet of life. While the

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<sup>26</sup> They also argued that capitalism is only beneficial for the rich and is conversely suppressive to the poor. While one of the Enlightenment's primary goals was to achieve social equality, it seemed more like equality to the upper and middle classes.

<sup>27</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 6.

Enlightenment is antagonized for being Eurocentric, it also looks at ethnology, which is one of the precursors of anthropology.<sup>29</sup> And one of the primary ways that these fields of study became popularized over time was through travel literature.

Eighteenth-century savants used exotic locations in order to convey their philosophy and critique their society without facing scrutiny. By referring to contemporary explorers' travelogues, works such as *Lettres persanes*, *Supplément du voyage de Bougainville*, and *L'ingénu* were created.<sup>30</sup> It was not until the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that works written in the exotic locations that the author had experienced were published.<sup>31</sup> Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) uses travel as a medium to critique French society without directly insulting said society. By using Persian characters as mouthpieces for his political critique, Montesquieu provided a dialectic that both embraces and rejects the current French culture. For example, in Lettre LXXXV, Usbek writes to Mizra in Ispahan about the locals' ignorance of God.<sup>32</sup> They must educate them about salvation, or else they will not be able to enter heaven. This is an indirect attack on Louis XIV, who was quite insistent on pushing Catholicism onto his subjects. It is incorrect to assume that an outsider will be condemned because they do not share the same knowledge as their observer. For Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), Rica and Uzbek were Persian diplomats who have traveled throughout Europe. Rica, who is proud of his homeland, uses his experience to bolster his opinion of Persia, while Uzbek is more open to the foreigners who he encountered, resulting in him turning his loyalties to the exotic rather than to Persia.

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<sup>29</sup> Even before the Enlightenment, one of the earliest works of ethnography in French was Montaigne's *Des Cannibales* (1580), which is based on Brazil's indigenous peoples.

<sup>30</sup> Some of the most notable French explorers are Samuel de Champlain, Jacques Cartier, Antoine Louis de Bougainville, Jean-François de la Pérouse, and Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz.

<sup>31</sup> The works that I am going to pay special attention to are St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) and Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René* (1801-2).

<sup>32</sup> Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, Lettre LXXXV.

According to French literary critic Paul Hazard, the notion of travel literature demonstrates the rupture between Antiquity and modernity. In his *La Pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle, de Montesquieu à Lessing* (1946), Montesquieu engaged with religious and political texts, despite not being a theologian or politician, in order to better understand human thought in his own writings.<sup>33</sup> Although *Lettres persanes* was meant to be read as a political critique, Hazard argued that Montesquieu could also be read from a religious perspective. According to Hazard, the overall purpose of *Lettres persanes* is to show that reason and faith need to coexist in order to achieve success in human civilization. Voltaire conveys a similar message in *L'Ingénu* (1767).

*L'Ingénu* (1767) is a story about a Huron who crossed the Atlantic to England and who ultimately moved to Brittany, France, where he was forced to assimilate into French culture. However, he does not merely assimilate without resisting the social norms placed upon him. For example, in the second chapter, the *Ingénu* (innocent one), “according to custom, awoke with the sun, at the crowing of the cock, which is called in England and Huronia, ‘the trumpet of the day.’ He did not imitate what is styled good company, who languish in the bed of indolence till the sun has performed half its daily journey, unable to sleep, but not disposed to rise, and lose so many precious hours in that doubtful state between life and death, and who nevertheless complain that life is too short.”<sup>34</sup> Rather than follow the European routine of making himself productive during the daytime, the Huron decided to laze around in bed and be unproductive, which shows the reader that the notion of time and how it is spent is different for every culture. While one culture sees daylight as a period of productivity, the Huron would rather be idle and make it a “waste.”

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<sup>33</sup> Hazard, *La Pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle, de Montesquieu à Lessing*, 1946. 114. Translated from the following quote: “L’origine divine de la loi, Montesquieu ne veut pas la considérer; il n’est pas théologien, il est écrivain politique, il n’examine les diverses religions du monde que par rapport au bien que l’on en tire dans l’État civil, soit qu’il parle de celle qui a sa racine dans le ciel, ou bien de celles qui ont la leur dans la terre; il sait qu’il y a dans son livre des choses qui ne seraient entièrement vraies que dans une façon de penser humaine.”

<sup>34</sup> Voltaire, *L'Ingénu* (1767). Chapter I.



Since the Hurons were residing in New France at the time, the French assumed that all indigenous peoples ultimately converted to Roman Catholicism, France's predominant religion. However, Voltaire believed that it is better to be a deist rather than convert to another religion, simply because conversion is seen as more "modern" than the person's previous religious beliefs. That was one of the commonalities between Voltaire and Rousseau, the rejection of organized religion. While there are numerous accounts of travel written by philosophers with no travel experience, Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* provides the philosophers with the inspiration to write about the exotic in order to critique western European culture.

Louis Antoine de Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* (1771) is a travelogue of his own circumnavigation of the globe. What made his expedition particularly noteworthy was the fact that he was the first Frenchman to successfully accomplish that goal. He could also map out his travels quite accurately by using his training as a mathematician. He states in his forward:

America, it is true, discovered and conquered, the sea route made in India and the Moloques, are prodigies of courage and success which undoubtedly belong to the Spaniards and the Portuguese ... but this kind of primacy and senior does not prevent French navigators from claiming justice some of the glory attached to these brilliant but painful undertakings.<sup>35</sup>

Bougainville recorded his studies of the geography, biology, and anthropology of the places that he encountered throughout his travels, and he described the people he encountered as innocent and free from Western civilization's corruption.<sup>36</sup> The account influenced many of the savants of the eighteenth-century, such as Rousseau and Diderot, and the latter went as far as to write a parody of Bougainville's travelogue.

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<sup>35</sup> Bougainville, Louis, *Voyage autour du monde* (1771).

<sup>36</sup> In one of Bougainville's accounts, he recalls the time that his men encountered an African man. He states, "Les gens du canot étoient prêts à se retirer lorsqu'ils virent avec surprise un Negre s'approcher seul dans une pirogue à deux balanciers" (302).

Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) is a parody of Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde*. The two characters, A and B, provide a dialogue of Bougainville's circumnavigation of the globe. According to Anthony Pagden's *European Encounters* (1994), *Supplément* is a contribution "to a specific and enduring eighteenth-century argument against colonization and the inescapable cultural annihilation which colonization was thought to involve. It is an argument about the integrity and ultimate incommensurability of all culture, an argument about the destructive potential of migration, and about the reliance of 'Enlightenment' and civility upon diversity."<sup>37</sup> While these characters physically traveled to exotic places, the characters of Rousseau's novels were more focused on finding themselves through internal discourse, which segued into his works ultimately being categorized as Romanticism.

Romanticism is a cultural movement birthed in western European fine arts and literature during the late-eighteenth century, but it was not until 1800 that Romanticism began to truly develop as a movement separate from the Enlightenment. Before the "official" development of French Romanticism, there was a transitional period between the French Revolution and The Consulate (1789-1804). While there was a delay in the development of Romanticism in French literature and art, there were transitional figures in both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The most evident of these is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who was also considered to be one of the greatest philosophers who corresponded with other major philosophers such as Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Alembert. During the French Enlightenment's peak, the *philosophers* went to great lengths to bring about collectivity to the general public.

The last historiographical lens I use in the project is colonial. The construction of the gardens mimicked France's former colonies and Chateaubriand's travelogues depicted both the physical

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<sup>37</sup> Pagden, Anthony, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (Yale University Press, 1994), 143.

environment and various Native American tribes residing in present-day Canada and New York.<sup>38</sup> In order to tie this to Chateaubriand's commentary on deforestation, Richard Grove discusses in *Green Imperialism* (1995) the history of deforestation and its consequences, as well as Europeans' attempt to learn more about foreign fauna by importing them to their homeland and studying them in a university setting. While colonialization has certainly piqued European interest in botany, conservation, and preservation, it also hastened their desire to further colonization to exploit these newfound resources in order to sustain their people and their economy.<sup>39</sup>

One of the other concerns I have with this project is that numerous scholars have dismissed Chateaubriand's attempts at ethnography due to the presence of various inaccuracies. Their argument was straightforward—why read a fictitious travel account when other travelogues provide better descriptions? According to Felipe Fernández-Armesto's *Pathfinders* (2006):

The line between exploration and adventure, or between explorers' reports and travelers' tales, has never been exactly fixed. Travel literature existed to depict a world of wonder, not reduce it to easily classifiable facts. Exploration, unfolding an ever more diverse world, whether public appetite for curiosities. Fictional travels became cartographers' sources, just as in the fifteenth century, chivalric romances had been mistaken for accounts of the real journey.<sup>40</sup>

Scholarship in English quickly dismissed Chateaubriand's travelogues in the early twentieth century, with scholars such as Emma Armstrong arguing that contemporary scholars do not refer

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<sup>38</sup> In Richard Grove's *Green Imperialism* (1995), he focuses on environmental concerns that date back to Western colonialization's beginnings. Each colonial power had a different ideology when it came to taking care of the environment. However, they were also concerned with satisfying the needs of their homeland citizens and the marginalized groups living in their satellite territory. Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 73.

<sup>39</sup> This is one of the main arguments made in Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan's *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (2007), a collection of essays dealing with different facets of colonialism. The collection ranges from the indigenous population's treatment, the transportation of flora to the Old World, and technological advancements necessary to improve and accelerate the trade of cash crops.

<sup>40</sup> Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 253-254. Other works on exploration that I am going to look into are Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and Sydney* (2009) and Ernest Scott, *Terre Napoléon: A History of French Exploration and Projects in Australia* (1910).

to Chateaubriand's travelogues because they were highly inaccurate and fictitious, and not enough emphasis was placed on what was actually present in the location.<sup>41</sup> I call upon my background in French literature and history in order to conduct ecocriticism of the gardens and the novels of the French Romantics present throughout my argument.<sup>42</sup> I argue that travelogues, either fictional and non-fictional, are important for scholars to analyze because they reveal to modern readers the period's intellectual trends. Why would Chateaubriand write about the fauna that does not inhabit North America? Is this due to creative liberty, or to pique the French audience's interest in order to coax them to come to North America?

### Chapter Organization

Chapter 1, "Chateaubriand's Travels to America and His Writings About Native Americans and Nature," delves into the topic of François René de Chateaubriand's nine-month American voyage in 1791, and how his journal writings, as well as novellas, *Atala* and *René*, gained popularity within France. Before his travels, he studied under the tutelage of Malesherbes, whom he was distantly related to due to his older brother's marriage to Malesherbes's granddaughter. By undergoing serious scientific preparations, it is apparent that Chateaubriand had the intention to traverse the eastern American coast and play explorer like his Saint-Malo compatriot, Jacques Cartier.<sup>43</sup> The second part of the chapter provides an in-depth ecocritical analysis of *Atala* and

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<sup>41</sup> Emma Kate Armstrong, "Chateaubriand's America." *P. M. L. A.*, XXII, New series 15, 1907.

<sup>42</sup> The gardens that I visited are the Arboretum de la Vallée-aux-Loups (Paris), Jardin des Plantes, and Les Délices (Geneva). These gardens are especially important because they were either created during the early Romantic period, or were created by a French author influenced by Romantic thought.

<sup>43</sup> The figures who I look at are Jean-Baptiste Bénard de la Harpe, André and François Michaux, Pierre-Paul Saunier, and Joseph Nicolas Nicollet. Some of the historiographies of these figures include the following: François Lagarde, *The French in Texas: History, Migration, Culture* (University of Texas, 2010); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (University of Pennsylvania, 2011); David MacDonald, *Lives of Fort de Chartres: Commandants, Soldiers, and Civilians in French Illinois, 1720–1770* (SIU Press, 2016); Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (University of Illinois, 1970); and Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, *Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies: The Expeditions of 1838-39, with Journals, Letters, and Notes on the Dakota Indians* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993).

how we can better understand the European psyche of nature writing.<sup>44</sup> In this chapter, I discuss the importance of Chateaubriand's American voyage during the Revolutionary Era, and how his writings on Native Americans and North American nature are pivotal to developing the travel writing genre. His writings give modern readers a better understanding of the nineteenth-century European perspective of the early American republic, and how European travelers compared to European-Americans in terms of understanding native American culture. His last travelogue, *Voyage en Amérique*, was written decades after his American voyage and showed his changing attitudes towards the French presence in North America.

Chapter 2, "Botany, Colonial Botany, and the Enlightenment and Romanticism," focuses on the Enlightenment and Romanticism's transitional period, and in which I take an interdisciplinary approach to the role of nature in nineteenth-century French literature and science. Between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, how did Nature and nature change meaning? This is echoed in the gardens and in prose and legal documents, which are often woven together in Chateaubriand and Humboldt's political writings, despite their conflicting ideologies. It could be said that the eighteenth century is the perfect era for botany to become one of the most popular topics of salon culture, due to its multifaceted nature. With the eighteenth century being the apex of transdisciplinary scholarship, it is fitting for botany to be the most popular field for all intellects, since it can be used to further the studies of both aesthetics and science. The purpose of this chapter is to show how botany was used to leverage political motives. During the Age of Exploration, European kingdoms vied for control of the spice trade and the spread of Christianity. And while the British and Spanish empires were more invested in

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<sup>44</sup> Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians*. (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994).

colonization, the French empire focused on establishing strong trade posts throughout the New World, which led to relatively amicable relations between the French and Native Americans.

Chapter 3, “Gardens in France and Enlightenment and Romanticism,” serves two purposes. In the first half, I provide an overview of garden historiography in western France from the eighteenth century onward, because understanding some background knowledge of European gardens will make it easier for me to explain Chateaubriand’s nature prose and gardens and how they shaped later French Romantics’ perspectives on the physical world in their works.

In Chapter 4, “Chateaubriand’s Concept of Nature and Its Relationship to Other Enlightenment and Romantic Thinkers,” I analyze Chateaubriand’s travel literature and juxtapose these writings with those of Alexander von Humboldt in order to better understand how the two men portrayed their North and South American trips from different perspectives, aesthetically and scientifically, respectively. In order to reinforce my claims, I examine their correspondences both with each other and with other natural historians. By creating a network out of these correspondences, we will further understand French and German attitudes towards the environment during the Romantic period.

Finally, I close my project with an overview of nature in post-Romanticism. The Enlightenment and Romanticism are not as radically different as we sometimes perceive. Rather, it can be argued that both of these cultural movements created the foundation of twentieth-century environmental history. In Bruno Latour’s *Down to Earth* and *Facing Gaia*, he states that while modern-day environmental consciousness can be traced back to Antiquity, it is not until the early nineteenth-century that humanity seriously questioned our place in the physical environment. The Anthropocene age, the period during which human activities have had an environmental impact on the Earth, is regarded as constituting a distinct geological age

beginning as recently as the 1960s.<sup>45</sup> By relating the history of gardens in France to the ongoing impact that humans continue to have on the planet, I end this work with one significant rhetorical question—where do we go from here?

This project relies on interdisciplinary approaches to scholarship in order to arrive at its final conclusion. By examining literary texts, political speeches, society bulletins, and physical gardens, we will be able to better understand France and North America's environmental history during the revolutionary era (1750-1850). Much of the scholarship on French Romanticism is from the French-speaking world, and little exists from the English-speaking world. By making the historiography and prose available to English-speaking scholars, we will broaden our interpretation of the French-speaking world's environmental history.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sources on the Anthropocene include the following: Jeremy Davies' *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (2016); John McNeill's *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945* (2016); Libby Robin and Will Steffen's "History for the Anthropocene" (2007); and Lydia Barnett's "The Theology of Climate Change: Sin as Agency in the Enlightenment's Anthropocene" (2015).

<sup>46</sup> Ecocriticism can be defined as the omnibus term most commonly used to refer to the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less commonly) other expressive media, including the critical premises informing such study. Buell, Lawrence, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, "Literature and Environment." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36, no. 1 (November 21, 2011): 417–40. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-111109-144855>.

## Chapter 2: Chateaubriand's Travels to America and His Writings About Native Americans and Nature

'If I were younger, I would go with you and spare myself the spectacle offered here of crime, treachery, and folly. But at my age, one must die where one is. Do not forget to write to me by every ship, to tell me of your progress and your discoveries: I will make the ministers aware of them. It's a great shame that you know no botany!'

- Malesherbes to Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*

Throughout the eighteenth century, armchair explorer philosophers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot wrote philosophical *contes* based on their recent excursions.

Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) focuses on two Persian characters, Uzbek and Rica, who traversed the Middle East and Europe and sent letters back to Persia about their transcontinental experiences. Voltaire's *Ingenu* (1767) is a tale about a Huron transported to Europe who was then forced to conform to the French lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> Diderot's *Supplément de Bougainville* (1796) features two characters, A and B, who provide philosophical commentary on Bougainville's Tahitian travelogues.<sup>2</sup> These three philosophers shared a common thread, which was that of using characters of ambiguous nationalities as mouthpieces to critique contemporary European society, giving authors more freedom of speech and a little more leeway to voice their disgruntled attitudes towards their political adversaries. While these works were quite popular in their day, they were nearly a dime a dozen. It was not until Chateaubriand's American novellas, *Atala* and *René*, both of which are part of his larger work, *Genie du christianisme*, that we have a child of the Enlightenment write about their personal experiences abroad, rather than rely solely on popular travelogues of the time to provide the background of the tale.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 will provide a closer reading of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Although the work was written in 1772, it was not published until 1796.



During the Age of Enlightenment, it was fashionable for armchair philosophers to live vicariously through explorers and to situate their contes based on famous, contemporary voyages. Denis Diderot (1713-1784), the famed co-creator of the modern *Encyclopédie*, was inspired by Louis Antoine de Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* (1771), which documents his circumnavigation of the globe. Bougainville, the first Frenchman to accomplish this feat, disembarked at several locations ranging from Argentina, Patagonia, Tahiti, and Indonesia, and his travelogue describes the different societies that he encountered, as well as the local geography and biology. Rousseau's romantic myth of the noble savage permeates the narrative, encouraging philosophers such as Diderot to freely critique western civilization without facing any repercussions.

It was once a common tactic to use foreign locales and characters in order to critique western civilization. After all, it was the easiest way to freely speak against the ruling monarch and the current political climate. Some of the most well-known contes written during the Enlightenment were Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, and the aforementioned *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*.<sup>3</sup> However, out of all of these works, only Bernardin de Saint-Pierre traveled outside of Europe and based his tale on personal experience.

Although Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814) resided in Mauritius, which was also the location of his work *Paul et Virginie*, his work is primarily focused on colonists of French descent. It was not until Chateaubriand's American novellas that we have a glimpse of Amerindians that lacks Western civilization's comparison to indigenous American societies.

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<sup>3</sup> Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* focuses on two Persian travelers, Rica and Uzbek, who send letters to their friends and family about their travel experiences. *Paul et Virginie* is a tale about two young French lovers living in Mauritius. *Supplément* is a philosophical parody of Bougainville's travelogue, which focuses more on the morals and ethics of the people whom the latter encountered.

While not scientifically and geographically accurate, having access to the first tale written by a French author who visited the early American Republic was revolutionary in and of itself.

In this chapter, I discuss the importance of Chateaubriand's American voyage during the Revolutionary Era and how his writings on Native Americans and North American nature were pivotal to the development of the travel writing genre. His writings give modern readers a better understanding of the nineteenth-century European perspective of the early American republic, as well as how European travelers compared to European-Americans understood native American culture. His final travelogue, *Voyage en Amérique*, was written decades after his American voyage and showed his changing attitude towards the French presence in North America.

#### Reading Rousseau, Preparing for the Voyage

Thanks to Chateaubriand's aristocratic connections, he was able to communicate with some of the brightest minds of his time. One of those family friends included Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721-1794), whose granddaughter was married to Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand, one of Chateaubriand's elder brothers. Malesherbes was in communication with a number of philosophes, especially Rousseau, and contributed to Diderot and d'Alembert's co-edited *Encyclopédie* in order to ensure that the Jesuits and the Church would approve of its contents.<sup>4</sup> Malesherbes was the one who inspired the 23-year-old to travel to North America. Serious about his Northwest Passage venture, the two men would compare maps, calculate distances between the Bering Strait and Hudson Bay, and read numerous travelogues written in various languages. Despite all of the obvious dangers present in the accounts, including but not limited to "the rigours of the climate, the attacks of wild animals, and the lack of food supplies," the young Frenchman was adamant about completing the voyage.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Claude Berchet, *Chateaubriand* (Paris : Gallimard, 2012) : 108.

<sup>5</sup> François René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. (Paris : 1848). Book V: Chapter 15: Section 3.

Malesherbes, a trained botanist himself, advised Chateaubriand to study the fundamentals of botany before his departure. Some of the botanists who the youth referenced included Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, Bernard de Jussieu, Nehemiah Grew, Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Their contributions to the field ranged from nomenclature, taxonomy, anatomy, and medicinal purposes. After skimming through their various works, the young Frenchman deemed himself as “a second Linnaeus,” despite not having contributed anything at all to the field of botany. This could either be a youthful display of ignorance or another one of his grandiose schemes of becoming an equal to the father of modern-day nomenclature.

During his American voyage, Chateaubriand continued to write to Malesherbes about the sights that he encountered. In Book 7, Chapter 8 of his *Mémoires*, he recalls writing to his great-grandfather during his stay in an Indian village near Niagara Falls. He describes a scene of Native American women who:

...occupied themselves in various tasks; their babies were slung in nets from the branches of a large copper beech. The grass was covered with dew, the breeze emerged from the forest all scented, and the cotton plants, their bolls inverted, resembled white rosebushes... My heartbeat with joy mingled with terror on entering the wood which hid from view one of the greatest spectacles that Nature has offered mankind.<sup>6</sup>

The village was ten miles away from Niagara Falls, which was teeming with inns, factories, and mills. The majesty of the cascades made him “leave dreams everywhere I have trailed my life.”<sup>7</sup>

Before setting off to the United States, Chateaubriand needed to send a worthwhile proposal to the French government. In order to travel to the United States, Chateaubriand had to get permission from the French government, which was not entirely difficult as long as he had a point of contact. Along with his letter to George Washington, he proposed that the purpose of his

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<sup>6</sup> *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Book VII: Chapter 8: Section 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Book VII: Chapter 8: Section 1.

voyage was to find the Northwest Passage in order to satiate his poetic ventures. He likened his ambitious itinerary to that of Napoleon Bonaparte, a second lieutenant and fellow no-name at the time. Both men would eventually rise from obscurity and dominate literature and politics, respectively. It is also strange that Chateaubriand kept referring to the Floridas, which was then in the Louisiana Territory, an area that he would not set foot in, as the birthplace of *Atala*. Perhaps it was to keep up with the image of a *mestiza* heroine and her pure-blooded Native American lover. Embracing wanderlust, Chateaubriand claimed that by being “under the influence of a different landscape, my flower of love, my nameless phantom of the Armorican woods, became *Atala* in the shaded groves of Florida.”<sup>8</sup> Armorica was the Roman name of Chateaubriand’s home province, Brittany, and by tying his childhood memories of the Breton forests to those he encountered in North America, he created the imaginary Floridian groves for his novella *Atala*. This explains all of the botanical inaccuracies that plague the North American tale, which finally came into fruition almost ten years after the voyage.

### Writing *Atala* and *René*

After his five-month tour of North America, Chateaubriand headed back to France on December 10, 1791, upon hearing of Louis XVI’s arrest. His travels to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Buffalo provided enough material to write his Rousseau-esque American tales. Throughout his travel writings, he described the American “deserts,” which were actually “untouched” forests, lakes, rivers, and savannahs, as the backdrop of his American works *Atala*, *René*, *Les Natchez*, *Voyage en Amérique*, and parts of his *Mémoires*.<sup>9</sup> The first two are novellas

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<sup>8</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’outre-tombe*, Book V : Chapter 15 :Section 3.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques-Guy Petit, “Articles: Encyclopédie Du Patrimoine Culturel De L’Amérique Française – Histoire, Culture, Religion, Héritage,” Articles | Encyclopédie du patrimoine culturel de l’Amérique française – histoire, culture, religion, héritage, December 15, 2008, [http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-467/French\\_Culture\\_in\\_North\\_America%3B\\_Chateaubriand%E2%80%99s\\_Travels\\_and\\_Literature\\_.html](http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-467/French_Culture_in_North_America%3B_Chateaubriand%E2%80%99s_Travels_and_Literature_.html).

originating from a larger work, *Génie du christianisme*, a Catholic apology. It was published at the perfect time, when the French Revolution had practically destroyed the Catholic Church. Napoleon Bonaparte would later recruit Chateaubriand as part of his campaign to gain the votes of the aristocratic and faithful. But while Chateaubriand is often referred to as one of the greatest Catholic writers of modern France, he was not always a devout believer.

As a youth, Chateaubriand was a devout reader of Rousseau, which made him skeptical of his Catholic upbringing. Throughout his childhood, he was educated by numerous tutors who introduced him to materialism, which led the young Frenchman to be a skeptic until the death of his mother in 1798, which reawakened his Catholic faith. In 1792, Chateaubriand returned to France and joined the Royalist army. Numerous family members, including Malesherbes, were executed during the Reign of Terror. While fighting at the Siege of Thionville, Chateaubriand was gravely wounded and subsequently taken to Jersey, and then exiled to England.

*Atala* (1801) is based on Chateaubriand's travels to America when he was in his early twenties. Even though he claimed that he was not following Rousseau's philosophy, his writing style was quite similar when it comes to writing nature. He states:

To the point, remain, I am not, like M. Rousseau, an enthusiast of the savages; and, although I may have as much to complain about society as this philosopher had to praise himself for, I do not believe that pure nature is the most beautiful thing in the world. I have always found it very ugly wherever I have seen it. Far from being of the opinion that the man who thinks is a depraved animal, I believe that it is the thought which makes the man. With this word of nature, we lost everything.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than romanticizing nature as pure, unchaste, and perfect, Chateaubriand instead always viewed the environment as an ugly place. Rousseau, who was hopeful that humanity would be

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<sup>10</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 19.

able to return to nature, had contrasting views compared to his more pessimistic successor.

Chateaubriand was not interested in raising new philosophical questions when he wrote about his American travels. He credits Rousseau for sparking his interest in nature and the unknown, but Chateaubriand was more interested in becoming an explorer than a philosophe.

One of Chateaubriand's striking differences compared to most preceding French novelists is the absence of a male character's name in his titles. *Atala* is titled after the eponymous heroine, who is of Spanish and Native American descent. She is the embodiment of the idea of civilization meeting the New World as she tries to balance her two cultures. Her father is a Spaniard, and her deceased mother was Native American. One of the few preceding works with the female character's name as the title is Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), which was unsurprisingly a major influence on Chateaubriand.

Another important character in *Atala* is Lopez, a Spanish missionary who raised Chactas after his tribe's skirmish with the Spaniards. When Chactas informed Lopez that he wanted to return to nature and find his tribe, the Spaniard tried to discourage Chactas from leaving. However, Chactas could not be persuaded to stay. Before the younger man departed, Lopez cried:

‘Child of Nature! Resume that manly independence, of which Lopez has no wish to deprive you. If I were younger myself, I would enter the wilderness with you (of which I too have sweet memories!) and return you to the arms of your mother. When you are deep in your forests, think now and then of this old Spaniard who gave you shelter, and remember, so as to attract the love of your fellow men, that the first experience you acquired of the human heart, was all in its favour.’ Lopez ended with a prayer to the God of Christianity, a religion I had refused to embrace, and we parted tearfully.<sup>11</sup>

Lopez's warning to Chactas about “returning back to nature” was a critique against the ideology that men should go back to the way humanity existed before the conception of civilizations. A

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<sup>11</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*.

“savage” life is not possible for someone who has been living in western civilization for all of their life. Chactas is the embodiment of the romantic who wants to escape the corruption of society. But in the end, there is no escape.

Like Voltaire’s *Cacambo*, Chactas is the mediator between the “Old World” and the “New World.” However, he is not as rational as Voltaire’s character. For instance, at the beginning of the tale, Chactas, who did not ever feel like he truly belonged in Christian society, decides to leave the colony’s safety and attempt to find his fellow tribe members. Despite his benefactor’s multiple warnings that he will never be able to go back to his former life as a Native American in the forests, Chactas still insists on returning to his tribe. And this is similar to Chateaubriand’s own experiences. During the French Revolution, aristocrats were robbed of their inheritances and property and were given two choices: to remain in France, with the constant threat of imprisonment and being guillotined, or flee the country and become an émigré. Chateaubriand was part of the latter movement, though not before serving in the king’s army. Eventually he fled the country and lived in England in exile as a penniless émigré for seven years.

At that time, I broke my mother’s breast, and I began to grow, proud as a Spaniard and as a Savage. My mother made me a Christian so that her God and my father’s God would also be my God. I said... I never washed my father’s feet; I only know that he lived with his sister in Saint-Augustin, and that he was always faithful to my mother: Philippe was his name, among the angels, and men named him Lopez. At these words, I [Chactas] uttered a cry which resounds in all solitude; the noise of my transport mingled with the noise of the storm. Grabbing Atala on my heart, I exclaimed with sobs: O my sister! O daughter of Lopez! Daughter of my benefactor!<sup>12</sup>

Two takeaways from this reveal are the quasi-incestuous love expression and the coexistence of Europeans and Native Americans. While the two are not blood-related, they both view Lopez as their father figure. Even though Romanticism always focuses on individualism, Chactas believed

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<sup>12</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 27.

that he could only achieve paradise by being with Atala. To him, happiness was a person rather than a place. And this perspective is different from that of previous French philosophers who thought that humans needed to isolate themselves in order to pursue true happiness. This also becomes one of the two characteristics that Romanticism retained from the Enlightenment: the longing for Antiquity and the focus on the individual.

Although René is Chateaubriand's fictional counterpart, he inserts his romantic principles into Chactas' character as well. When Chactas describes Atala, he uses the Romantic idea of individual happiness by stating that she is his refuge. Towards the end of their escape, he explains how happy he had been "when I found myself once again in solitude with Atala, with Atala, my liberator, with Atala who gave herself to me forever!"<sup>13</sup> While solitude in Romanticism usually refers to a particular place, Chactas finds solitude specifically in a particular person's company. This interpretation of personal utopia differs from the philosophes' eighteenth-century mindset, which sought to create a utopia that was a destination for only one person, rather than a society as a whole.

One of the most salient concepts that Chateaubriand discusses in *Atala* is the idea of Providence. Divine providence is most frequently referred to in Protestant sects of Christianity, making it odd for a French Catholic to include it as a major theme in his work. However, because the tale takes place in the United States, and the Americans were majority Protestants, it would make sense to think that the author was trying to attract a wider audience. When the eponymous character spoke with the two Amerindians, Chactas stated, "Ah! René, I do not whisper against Providence, but I admit that I never remember this evangelical society without experiencing the bitterness of regrets."<sup>14</sup> The slight jab at Providence can be interpreted as the author's readings of

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<sup>13</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 25

<sup>14</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 34.



Rousseau's Calvinist days, during which the philosophe was in a constant state of switching religious ideologies before ultimately settling for deism.

The novella that accompanies *Atala, René*, turns the focus to the Frenchman's experiences in France and how they shaped his perceptions of North America. The author's childhood heavily influences the protagonist's backstory. After his father's death, René travels throughout Europe, visiting the sites of Antiquity and lamenting the increasing secularization of European civilization. This tale showcases the author's wistful youth, wishing to return to the days of the Greek gods. He plays up the melancholy by setting his story in the season of autumn:

Sometimes we walked in silence, giving ear to the dull soughing of autumn, or the sound of the dead leaves, which we trod sadly under our feet; sometimes, in our innocent games, we pursued the swallows over the meadows or the rainbow on the glistening hills; sometimes too we murmured verses inspired by the spectacle of nature. Young, I cultivated the Muses; there is nothing more poetic, in the freshness of its passions, than a sixteen-year-old heart. The dawn of life is like the dawn of day, full of purity, visions and harmonies.<sup>15</sup>

Here we find an example of proto-Romanticism in which there is a combination of revering both nature and the figures of Antiquity. Romanticism, while spiritually driven, is not necessarily Christian. Romantics often used pagan imagery in their spiritual works, particularly during the French Revolution.

Another place of solace for the young Romantic was experiencing solitude in the natural world. As the youngest in a family of ten, Chateaubriand grew up feeling that he did not fit into society. His relationship with his father, René de Chateaubriand, was practically non-existent. René was a stoic man with ties to the slave trade, which earned the family a handsome sum. The patriarch sent his youngest child to Combourg, where he was raised and educated by numerous tutors. These sentiments appear again in *René*, where the eponymous hero states that he was:

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<sup>15</sup> Chateaubriand, *René*, 6.

overwhelmed by the superabundance of life. I was subject to sudden blushes and felt as if rivers of molten lava flowed through my heart; I would give out involuntary cries, and night was as troubled by my dreams as my waking. I needed something to fill the abyss of my existence: I descended valleys, climbed mountains, summoning with all the strength of my desire the ideal object of some future affection; I embraced it in the winds; I thought I heard it in the sighing of the waters: all things became that phantom of imagination, both the stars in the sky and the very principle of life in the universe.<sup>16</sup>

Obviously, the geographic features mentioned in this passage had not been experienced by the author just yet. If we were to interpret this passage based on its emotional impact, it can be said that despite the author having traveled to the New World to satiate his muse, he is still unhappy. He knows that his experiences in American wilderness are ephemeral, and that he will soon have to return to his native land.

Towards the end of the tale, René cries out how the “Sun of this New World witness now to my tears, echo of the American shore that repeats René’s voice, this was the aftermath of that dreadful night: leaning on the forecastle of my vessel, I saw my native land vanishing forever from my sight!”<sup>17</sup> With the political turmoil unfolding in France before Chateaubriand disembarked to North America, he knew that the France that existed before his departure to North America would never be the same again due to the ongoing secularization and corruption. However, despite having left Europe for good and marrying a native woman, the young Frenchman still cannot find happiness. In the end, all three men are caught in a battle between the French and the Natchez Indians, and they subsequently die. Their memory lives on the rocky seats, where the two native men convinced the French youth to not commit suicide.<sup>18</sup> The moral of this tale is that there are two kinds of nature, and *René* focuses more on human nature than the

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<sup>16</sup> Chateaubriand, *René*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Chateaubriand, *René*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Chateaubriand, *René*, 18.

physical environment, more so even than *Atala*. However, it is important to understand how Chateaubriand portrays the human condition, both physically and mentally.

Chateaubriand inserts his romantic ideologies into the character of Chactas. When Chactas describes Atala, he states that she is his solitude, his refuge: “When the dawn broke over the Appalachians, we were already far away. How happy I was when I found myself once again in solitude with Atala, with Atala, my liberator, with Atala who gave herself to me forever!”<sup>19</sup> While solitude in Romanticism is usually talked about as a place, for Chactas it is a particular person. This also differs from the eighteenth-century mindset of the *philosophes*, who sought to create a utopia that would be a destination for only one person rather than for society as a whole. One of the striking concepts that Chateaubriand brings up in *Atala* is the idea of Providence. While this is largely a Protestant concept, Chateaubriand incorporated it into his work most likely because he knew that Americans were at the time majority Protestants due to their English ancestry, as well as the fact that Providence is also synonymous with Heaven. This was also a concept that Rousseau heavily emphasized in his work because of his previous Calvinist leanings: “Ah! René, I do not whisper against Providence, but I admit that I never remember this evangelical society without experiencing the bitterness of regrets.”<sup>20</sup>

In C. Lombard’s article “Chateaubriand’s American Reception (1802-1870),” he argued that Americans during the eighteenth and nineteenth century found French authors like Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Saint-Pierre interesting because of their deism.<sup>21</sup> While Rousseau and Saint-Pierre are considered deists, Chateaubriand was very defensive of his Catholic faith. This makes it seem strange as to why the Americans thought that his work *Genie du christianisme* had

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<sup>19</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Chateaubriand, *Atala*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> C. Lombard, “Chateaubriand’s American Reception.” 221.

Protestant appeal. However, this could also be because Chateaubriand had his mélange of Catholicism and paganism.<sup>22</sup> Like *Atala*, Chateaubriand compared himself to religious figures, and emphasized how he was able to overcome his adversaries. This is similar to the Protestant worldview, which sees humanity's struggle as a trial to get to Providence.

Despite the rising popularity of Chateaubriand and other French deists' works in America, American intellectuals did not fully delve into their French counterparts' writings. For example, Chateaubriand read Ralph Waldo Emerson, but Emerson had no interest in French Romanticism.<sup>23</sup> That was not to say that Americans did not read French works at all. During the Transcendental movement, Chateaubriand was a commonly known author to many Americans. Even Melville read and praised him.<sup>24</sup> The reasons why the importance of Chateaubriand fell away in American scholarship is still debatable. Was it because the way he wrote was most appealing to the French people of his time? Or was it because his travels have been debunked, and he lied about some of the places he claimed to have traveled to? For the sake of this paper, it does not matter if he lied about some of the places he claimed to have traveled; this is not an important distinction. What is important is how he portrayed the landscapes that he imagined, and why he did so. By understanding the nineteenth-century French mindset regarding the environment, we can understand why French colonialism and the treatment of the environment in both her colonies and the mainland were the way they were.

According to environmental historians such as Alfred Crosby and Donald Worster, it would be better to describe the European colonists as biological imperialists rather than militaristic ones because of their impact on the environment. On the subject of Eurocentric concepts, religion and

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<sup>22</sup> Lombard, 222.

<sup>23</sup> Berchet, *Chateaubriand*, 222-226.

<sup>24</sup> Berchet, *Chateaubriand*, 226. Melville refers to Chateaubriand (along with many other European authors) in his epic poem, "Clarel."

science were heavily intertwined in Native American history, because what Europeans conceived of as science was incorporated into both religion and science among the Native American population. Native Americans are commonly cited as “humanity’s first environmentalists,” despite texts such as Shepard Krech’s *The Ecological Indian* arguing otherwise. Since Native cultures were developed within nature, rather than nature being separated from society as in many European societies during the eighteenth century, it is logical for environmental historians to pay special attention to Native American history when writing about the environment. This is especially true for those studying American environmental history as well.

#### Reading Chateaubriand from an Ecocritical Lens

Before Chateaubriand began his speech on his American journey, he presented the organization of his work for the reader. The preface lays out the travelogue with regards to geography, science, and social mores. The preface preceding *Voyage en Amérique* is a kind of travel history presenting the general picture of geographic science, and what he considered to be the road map of man on the globe.<sup>25</sup> By organizing his argument in this fashion, he demonstrated to the reader that nature could be understood from a variety of different perspectives.

Here, Chateaubriand established why he was interested in becoming an explorer like his compatriot, Jacques Cartier, and explained that the initial objective of his trip was to contribute to geographic studies. He also classified *Voyage en Amérique* as a collection of semi-autobiographical travelogues. However, as stated earlier, it does not matter for our purposes if his account was completely accurate, because this was not meant to be taken as a scientifically accurate travel account. Instead, its purpose was to show readers of the Chateaubriand era, as

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<sup>25</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*, Preface.

well as to modern-day readers, how the French perceived the environment and other cultures that they encountered during their travels.

*Voyage en Amérique* is divided into several sections. It begins with natural history and then moves on to discuss Native American customs, Native American festivals, the Native American concept of time, medicine, Native American languages, hunting, war, religion, government, and the current state of Native Americans in North America. The travelogue ends with three conclusions regarding the current situation in the United States, an overview of the Spanish republics, and the end of his journey. The organization of his work demonstrates his understanding of the many different facets of Amerindian life. Chateaubriand divided his natural history chapter into two parts—flora and fauna. He noted how the different species interacted with Amerindians and how each tribe had a different approach to incorporating them into their various rituals. Before he delved into the subject, however, Chateaubriand included a disclosure stating that he had not had the time or resources to speak to all the tribes in the areas that he had visited. This shows that he is taking the time and consideration to point out that this work was not going to do the tribes justice if it were simply to agglomerate them.

Chateaubriand talks about these different facets of the American environment in order to establish that each part of nature can stand on its own and is worth its merit. This goes against the Enlightenment cultural movement, in which the earth is considered to be simply a machine for humanity to manipulate for the better. By writing about Native Americans, flora, and fauna in the different sections, he recognizes that each group does not need human interference in order to be important. In his chapter on natural history, Chateaubriand tried to offer a brief history of the landscape and to be as scientific as possible with his descriptions. When he was not trying to be a

scientist, he included religious dialogue in his journal throughout the trip. This is evident when he spoke of his approach to writing foreign history:

Travel is one of the sources of history: the history of foreign nations is placed, by the narration of travelers, with the particular history of each pay. Travel goes back to the cradle of society: the books of Moses represent the first migrations of men. In these books, we see the patriarch leading his flocks to the plains of Canaan, the Arab wandering in its solitudes of sand, and the Phoenician explorer the seas.<sup>26</sup>

He stresses the importance of traveling because, without it, humanity would cease to exist. To return to nature is to avoid the corruption that was currently running rampant during the courts of France in the eighteenth century and to return to their religious roots. Although there are other works based on the Holy Land, Chateaubriand compares the United States to the land of Canaan because it is out of sight of European corruption. Saint-Malo was also a location that Chateaubriand thought was simultaneously free from European corruption and notorious for its corsairs, and it had a strong history of exploration dating back to the Middle Ages. He remembers his childhood in the following sentence: “I saw in my youth old Bretons murmuring against the paths that the open up wanted in their woods, even though these paths were to raise the value of the waterfront properties.”<sup>27</sup> Since Brittany is located in France’s northwest corner, it boasts both lush forests and an abundance of coastline. Both the forests and the sea shape Chateaubriand’s desire for travel, as well as inform his writing style. This also comes out when he talks about becoming an explorer. Being faithful to his romantic prose, he paid homage to Antiquity by referencing Ulysses, stating that his travels were primarily triggered by curiosity rather than monetary gain. He ranks as an explorer who was more interested in self-fulfillment than scientific progress. This is made clear when he declared the following: “I am stuck in the crowd of obscure travelers who have seen only what everyone has seen, who have made no

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<sup>26</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

<sup>27</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

progress in science, who have added nothing to the treasure of human knowledge.”<sup>28</sup> Although he did use scientific terminology in order to describe the landscape, he was more interested in contributing to the humanities than he was to the hard sciences.

Chateaubriand’s lamentations for the Amerindians’ loss of culture due to the Europeans bringing war, disease, and colonization are common in his travelogues. While he discusses how Europeans made a great contribution to the development of human civilization over the previous centuries, he also cannot stand what they have done for indigenous people while on their relentless conquests. He believed that the Amerindians were a dying culture due to the Europeans’ westernization efforts that had been imposed on them. The indigenous cultures were seen as “uncivilized” because they did not impose the same social hierarchy as the Europeans did. This was particularly true of English settlers, who saw the “deserts” westward and considered the area to be dangerous territory due to its unknown nature.

#### Chateaubriand: The Scientist

The title of this section is quite strange, considering the fact that Chateaubriand never had any formal training in the sciences, with the exception of perusing Malesherbes’s botanical collection. The brief stint at Vallée aux Loups demonstrated the author’s understanding of the garden and landscape theory, with each garden categorized by a distinct geographic location. However, that can be seen as more of an artistic preference than the effects of a discerning scientific eye. There was a time that the Breton wanted to demonstrate his knowledge of the natural world in a scientific manner. In 1826, Chateaubriand was elected as the third president of the Société de Géographie, the oldest geography society in the world. Like Rousseau, Chateaubriand wrote many of his “scientific” works on nature decades after his botany and travel

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<sup>28</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.



experiences. During his tenure as president, Chateaubriand wrote an ethnography titled *Voyage en Amérique* (1827) thirty-five years after his initial voyage. Although the intention of this work was to rival those of Laplace and Humboldt, he still had a proclivity to include religious allegories. Chateaubriand admits that some of the details might have deviated from the truth, yet while scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth century were quick to dismiss his travelogue as “too fictional” to be taken seriously, that does not justify the dearth of ecocritical readings of Chateaubriand over the past three decades.<sup>29</sup>

Christian Bazin’s *Chateaubriand en Amérique* (1969) looks at the French author’s travels to North America and describes the author’s religious imagery. One quote in particular that struck a chord with Bazin was when Chateaubriand described himself as “passing like this bird which flies in front of me, which runs at random and is embarrassed only by choice of shading. Here I am as the Almighty created me, sovereign of nature, carried triumphantly over the waters, while the inhabitants of the rivers accompany my race, that the peoples of the air sing their hymns to me, that the beasts of the earth greet me, let the forests bend their summits in my path.”<sup>30</sup>

Chateaubriand also wrote about the religious experiences that he had while in the care of the Amerindians. He describes a dream to an Amerindian doctor in which he had a bison inside his stomach: “The family seems dismayed, but suddenly the assistants exclaim that they are also possessed of an animal : the one imitates the cry of a caribou, the other the barking of a dog, the third the howling of a wolf, the patient in turn counterfeits the roar of his buffalo: it is a terrible

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<sup>29</sup> Some contemporary works on Chateaubriand at the time of this article also address the lack of research done on the French author’s work from the “green” perspective. See JeanMarie Roulin’s chapter, “François-René de Chateaubriand: Migrations and Revolution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (2016) for more information on Chateaubriand’s travelogues and his influence on the early French Romantics.

<sup>30</sup>Christian Bazin and Michel Poniatowski, *Chateaubriand en Amérique* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), 174. Original text: Je passe comme cet oiseau qui vole devant moi, qui se dirige au hasard, et n'est embarrassé que du choix des ombrages. Me voilà tel que le Tout-Puissant m'a créé, souverain de la nature, porté triomphant sur les eaux, tandis que les habitants des fleuves accompagnent ma course, que les peuples de l'air me chantent leurs hymnes, que les bêtes de la terre me saluent, que les forêts courbent leur cime sur mon passage.

charivari.”<sup>31</sup> Literary critic Emile Faguet also argued that Chateaubriand will always be relevant to French literary studies because “by returning to America, he renewed a century of the French imagination.”<sup>32</sup> Despite the French presence not having as lasting of an impact on the present-day United States as their British arch-rival, there was still significant French interest in the newly founded country.

Another qualm that early twentieth-century scholars had with Chateaubriand’s travelogues were the numerous counts of fabrication. Emma Armstrong’s article “Chateaubriand’s America” (1907) primarily focuses on what is and is not accurate in his travelogues.<sup>33</sup> Yet while he deliberately wrote about flora that was not exactly present in the places that he visited, he still put forth an accurate account of the flora that he encountered on the portion of his journey along the Mississippi River. His account’s accuracy is not as important as his contributions to future French Romantic interpretations of nature.

Before delving into the discussion of Chateaubriand’s gardens and travelogues, we must understand why the study of French environmental history and literary criticism is in dire need of more research. Literary critic Gordon Sayre argues in his work *Les sauvages américains* (1997) that North American literary studies often ignores French colonial literature.<sup>34</sup> Scholars from multiple disciplines have concluded that French colonial literature was far more inaccurate than Spanish and English colonial literature, thus taken less seriously in literary studies. However, French colonial accounts’ accuracy and inaccuracy should not play a major factor in deciding

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<sup>31</sup> Bazin, 180.

<sup>32</sup> Bazin, 205.

<sup>33</sup> Emma Kate Armstrong, “Chateaubriand’s America.” *PMLA*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1907), pp. 345-370: 360. While it was correct to say that Chateaubriand embellished some of the details of the nature he was describing, Armstrong’s section on the desert integrates Amerindians into the discourse of nature even though Chateaubriand made clear divisions between the environment and the Amerindians in his organization.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon Sayre, *Les sauvages américains: Representations of Amerindian in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1997), 48.

what is or is not worth studying. While it is true that most colonial literature was embellished in order to draw in more readers, rather than serve as serious scientific accounts, studying the author's framework and interpretation of the colony is still important because it teaches us the mindset of the colonists, who come from a multitude of different backgrounds.

Despite leaving behind his literary career in order to dedicate himself fully to politics, Chateaubriand decided to write *Voyage en Amérique* as the closing chapter of his American voyage, which had taken place over thirty years prior. This work, which was published during his tenure as the third president of the Société de Géographie, can be read as a memoir of the statesman's accomplishments.<sup>35</sup> Due to the long gap between the voyage and this work's publication, exaggerations and inaccuracies were bound to occur. The initial goal for Chateaubriand's expedition was to make a name for himself as an explorer. However, the trip did not go as planned, and this resulted in the author creating other explanations as to why he had set forth to America.

The way that Chateaubriand organized and structured his travelogue is also important to keep in mind. The work begins with natural history and then shifts gears to discuss Amerindian manners, holidays, the concept of time, medicine, languages, hunting, war, religion, government, and their current state towards the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> His work's organization shows that he understands that every aspect of Amerindian culture deserves its own discourse. For example, when he writes about natural history, he sections out flora from fauna by indicating the name of the species (such as beaver or deer) and including both a description of these species and their role in the environment.<sup>37</sup> An example of this is on display in his section about the

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<sup>35</sup> More details about the *société* and Chateaubriand's tenure as its third president will be discussed in the second chapter.

<sup>36</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*. 1827.

<sup>37</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

beaver, where Chateaubriand states that if the Amerindians found a beaver in their territory, it was brought before the tribal chief and punished by having its tail severed.<sup>38</sup>

The Indians tell that if a beaver is caught marauding on the territory of a tribe which is not his, he is brought before the chief of this tribe and punished correctionally; on recidivism, they cut off this useful tail which is both his cart and its trowel: he thus returns mutilated to his friends, who assemble to avenge his insult.<sup>39</sup>

This passage illustrates the Amerindians' relationship with the local fauna; animals were treated as equals to the Amerindians, to the point that they would establish territorial boundaries with them. This goes against Jean-Jacques Rousseau's hypothesis that Amerindians, in general, do not possess established frontiers.<sup>40</sup> Chateaubriand noted that some of the tribes that he encountered had established limits with the animals that lived within their society. Similar to their European counterparts, those who violate the law are consequently punished.

Throughout the ethnography, the manitou is given great importance. The manitou is presented as the life force of Native American mythology in Algonquin groups, and it exists in inanimate and animate objects. Its presence is noted in the beaver section:

When we see the works of beavers for the first time, we cannot help admiring the one who taught a poor little beast the art of the architects of Babylon, and who often sends man, so proud of his genius, at the school of an insect. Have these astonishing creatures encountered a valley where a stream flows, they block this stream by a roadway; the water rises and soon fills the gap between the two hills: it is in this reservoir that the beavers build their homes. Let's detail the construction of the roadway.

This passage gives Chateaubriand a better understanding of why the Amerindians believed that they descended from the Grand Castor, as the possibility of small creatures to have the ability to

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<sup>38</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

<sup>39</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

<sup>40</sup> Rousseau refers to Amerindians in his last correspondence with M. de Bordes as "barbarians." In one of his letters, he writes: "L'Amérique ne nous offre pas des spectacles moins honteux pour l'espèce humaine. Sur-tout depuis que les Européens y sont. On comptera cent peuples barbares ou sauvages dans l'ignorance pour un seul vertueux."

build structures that could be compared to those of ancient Babylon amazed the Frenchman. Comparing fauna's capabilities to humanity's was unheard of in modern Europe's rigid social hierarchy.<sup>41</sup>

Although this sounds like a general ethnography of Amerindians as a homogenous group, Chateaubriand was cautious enough to include a disclaimer that this work's intention was not to describe *every* tribe.<sup>42</sup> This is important to note, because it shows that he took the time and consideration to say that this work did not do the overall Amerindian population justice. When he writes about city structure, he talks about people in one paragraph, the environment in another paragraph, and the infrastructure in another. Romantics and ascetics were attracted to the idea of the United States because it was the closest thing to the "virgin nature" that they were searching for, since human civilization had tainted much of western Europe's wilderness.

Towards the end of *Voyage*, Chateaubriand explains the role of humanity within nature. Throughout his travels, he had compared the American landscape to Europe's and Antiquity's. This is part of the Romantic tradition, as one of the movement's traits was to discover what humanity's place was in the universe. Is nature meant to abstain from human interference (wilderness), or would it reach its full potential by being tamed? However, since Chateaubriand is known as an author and not a scientist, his account focused more on nature's aesthetics rather than their scientific characteristics. While his travels were mostly in the northeast region of America, he had ambitions to go to the Pacific to find the Northwest Passage, despite his travels all taking place in the Atlantic. Armstrong's article "Chateaubriand's America" focuses primarily

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<sup>41</sup> It is also quite fascinating to see a nobleman find comradery with an animal.

<sup>42</sup> He left that work to his predecessors, such as Cartier and Champlain, who not only acknowledged the Amerindian tribes by their proper name, but knew that each tribe had multiple names, depending on who was referring to who.

on what is and what is not wrong about his American account.<sup>43</sup> While it was correct to say that Chateaubriand embellished some of the details of nature while on his journey, the section on the desert integrates the Amerindians into the discourse about nature, even if Chateaubriand did not necessarily intend it to. While he deliberately wrote about the flora that was not exactly present in the places he visited, he still gave an accurate account of the flora that he encountered on the Mississippi River portion of his trip. His account's accuracy is not as important as his contribution to future French Romantic interpretations of nature.

Chateaubriand's contribution to French Romantic thought is his shift to an interpretation of nature with less human intervention, which is different from the Rousseauist approach to nature, in which nature is largely a vehicle for political discourse. This perspective goes completely against the Rousseauist belief of civilized man returning back to nature. Whenever philosophers have written about indigenous peoples, natives have been included in descriptions of nature because they are not considered civilized compared to Western European society.

Chateaubriand paid close attention to the different animals and plant species that he encountered during his travels. Before setting off to North America, he consulted his distant relative, Malesherbes, for botany advice. Malesherbes, the court lawyer who had served under Louis XVI, was also passionate about the natural sciences and corresponded with Rousseau on natural history. Chateaubriand incorporated the advice of Malesherbes, as well as his research into the national archives before his trip. With this intense period of preparation, it can be interpreted that Chateaubriand intended to create a scientific travel journal for America. In his section on the natural history of America, he primarily focuses on the different species of

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<sup>43</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, and Barbara de Negroni. *Correspondance: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991).

animals that one does not encounter within Europe. Examples of this are caribou, turkey, bison, opossums, and—the author’s favorite—beavers. When he describes some of these creatures, he also talks about the species’ role in Native American cultures as well.

An example of this is in his section on the beaver, in which Chateaubriand states that if the Amerindians found a beaver in their territory, it was brought before the tribal chief and punished by having its tail severed.<sup>44</sup> Afterward, the beaver is said to return to its family to plot its revenge on the tribe. This is a good example of how Native Americans treated the local fauna; while animals were treated as equals to the Native Americans, they still had a sense of territorial boundaries. This goes against Rousseau’s hypothesis that Amerindians, in general, did not possess established frontiers. Chateaubriand noted that some of the tribes that he encountered established limits with the animals that lived within their society. Similar to their European counterparts, those who violated the law were consequently punished.

When he wrote *Voyage en Amérique*, Chateaubriand tried to record his trips from an unbiased, scientific point of view in order to fit in with his geographer cohorts in the Société de Géographie. If one is familiar with Rousseau’s works on nature, it is obvious that he was more interested in using the environment as a vehicle to push his political philosophy rather than studying nature for its own sake. While Rousseau’s *Dictionary of Botany* approaches nature from a respectful perspective, it also essentially focuses on human interactions with the environment and how each plant is interpreted within the framework of a different social class, and also that nature itself is a kind of civilization. Whenever one reads Rousseau’s philosophical works, it is obvious that Rousseau always had an anthropomorphic motive to fulfill. For example, his botanical dictionary is full of political examples. While several definitions in his dictionary of

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<sup>44</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

botany are strictly referring to scientific terminology, some of the terms include political anecdotes. This is particularly evident with his entry on the word “flower,” in which he spends a few pages discussing with the definition of the flower in both scientific and political terms. What makes Chateaubriand different from other French intellectuals of his time is that he was not as blatant with his political ideologies when providing definitions for the flora and fauna that he encountered in North America. The descriptions of nature in *Voyage in America* are strictly delineated for scientific purposes. Although there is some philosophical and religious discourse between the European narrator and the Native Americans, it is not the focal point of the book, which is rather the American environment and its impact on the human condition.

However, since he is an author and not a scientist at heart, it is no surprise that Chateaubriand exaggerated the truth in order to attract readers. The whole Romantic movement was about promoting travel to distant lands as a way of escaping the life of the industrial city. This is why historians regard the environment as the grandfather of Romanticism. Those parts of the two movements escape their work environment to regain the “savage” that the Europeans had lost because of the development of civilization, even though there is really no such thing. William Cronon makes this argument in his article “The Trouble with Wilderness” by stating that the “desert has served as an important vehicle for articulating deep moral values on our obligations and responsibilities to the non-human world.”<sup>45</sup> Although this is both true for Rousseau and Chateaubriand’s literary works, Chateaubriand was more interested in writing about nature from an aesthetic point of view rather than creating a new set of moral codes, which was the case for Rousseau. Instead, nature was seen as a plane of existence between the divine and the terrestrial,

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<sup>45</sup> William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” *Environmental History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1996), pp. 7-28: 10.



and Chateaubriand believing that nature was a transcendental plane between Heaven and humanity goes against traditional Catholic values.

While other Enlightenment thinkers have viewed nature as a place of reason, Rousseau saw it as the foundation of human morality. Rousseau can also be considered as the forerunner of the *Annales*, in which his emphasis on prehistory is considered to be crucial for understanding human history. However, for those who were part of the *Annales*, they believed that studying nature from a non-anthropomorphic perspective to be insignificant, because it does not change for generations. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to study nature when there is no solid evidence. The *Annales* is known for primarily focusing on a scientific approach to the history of the environment, in which the actual specimens were more important than intellectual and cultural representations of nature.

The accountability of travel literature is not the only factor in terms of measuring the novel's worth. While there are numerous works on European experience in the early American Republic, works such as *Atala* and *René* should not be dismissed solely based on the author's inaccuracies with regards to the story's geographic descriptions. By contextualizing the plot within the contemporary political climate, contemporary readers and modern-day readers alike will better understand the aristocratic European experience of early North America and Amerindians.

One of the major ongoing debates between naturalists during the Enlightenment was deciding which particular nomenclature to use. Here, I briefly discuss the existing nomenclature systems before the Enlightenment, as well as each system's positives and negatives. The most referenced one is the Linnaeus versus the Buffon plant classification system. Then we have hobbyists like Rousseau who, while he did contribute to botanical studies, does not have the formal training like his colleagues, such as Malesherbes and Buffon. We see the differences between nature's

interpretation from a strictly scientific perspective and a more humanistic view. The French have been studying natural history in North America since the Jesuits' arrival in present-day Canada in the sixteenth century. There is a trend of Saint-Malo natives traveling towards the New World as well. Saint-Malo has a reputation for its pirate culture, and much of Brittany's seafaring vessels departed from this small coastal town.<sup>46</sup> It would not be farfetched to argue that Chateaubriand followed the Saint-Malo tradition of his Breton forefathers and felt a sense of Breton patriotism by following through with his travel plans.

Other French explorers that come to mind when discussing botanical research of the eastern United States are Jean-Baptiste de la Harpe, father and son botanists André and François Michaux, gardener-explorer Paul Saunier, and geographer Joseph Nicolas Nicollet. La Harpe is known for his discovery of present-day Little Rock, Arkansas.<sup>47</sup> André Michaux, one of the most renowned French botanists of the eighteenth century, was one of Jussieu's students, and he traveled throughout North America, Oceania, and Madagascar. The younger Michaux would also obtain botanical fame in North America and even have a forest in Pennsylvania named after him.

While there is no shortage of historiography on Chateaubriand's American voyage in English and French, much of it is now obsolete. While his works were taken as truth by his audience during his lifetime, scholars decades later constantly disputed the legitimacy of the Frenchman's claims. With numerous articles defaming his account, scholars began to refer to other European travelers to North America for more accurate depictions. Yet despite the embellishments and inconsistencies that run rampant throughout both the literary pieces and his private journal, I

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<sup>46</sup> See the following works for more details on Saint-Malo's corsair history: Stephen Leacock's *The Mariner of St. Malo* (TP Verone Publishing, 2009) and Marcus Rediker's *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>47</sup> Sources on La Harpe include George Odell's *La Harpe's Post: Tales of French-Wichita Contact on the Eastern Plains* (University of Alabama Press, 2002).

argue that it is still important to examine Chateaubriand's writings about America because it gives modern readers a better understanding of the eighteenth-century mind during that tumultuous period of French history.

## Conclusion

While nowhere near in the same tier as his contemporary Alexander von Humboldt, Chateaubriand's writings about America give modern-day readers a better understanding of how Europeans perceived North American wilderness and indigenous cultures during the early American republic. Because his scientific writings were written over thirty years after his voyage, readers can see how his attitude towards colonialism had also changed over that period of time. In *Atala* and *René*, there is a reverence for the indigenous ways of life, and *Voyage en Amérique* concludes with a trace of bitterness towards France's loss of the North American territories.

The next chapter provides a case study of François René de Chateaubriand's travel writings and personal gardens, the latter having been influenced by the author's international experiences and how he obtained the flora specimens. By looking at a historical figure who is more closely tied to literary contributions than his role in France's environmental historiography, we will better understand the multifaceted nature of the colonial botany trade. The chapter will also show how someone without formal training in the sciences significantly impacted household names such as Humboldt and Laplace.

### Chapter 3: Botany, Colonial Botany, and the Enlightenment and Romanticism

*Although several have written about from the country of Canadas, I nevertheless did not want to stop telling them and have expressly been on the spot in order to be able to give faithful testimony to the truth, which you will see (please) in the little speech that I addressed to you, which I beg you to enjoy. In doing so, I will pray to God, Monsignor, for your greatness and prosperity and will remain all my life.*

Samuel de Champlain to Charles de Montmorency

The eighteenth-century is the perfect era for botany to become one of the most popular salon culture topics due to its multifaceted nature. With the eighteenth century being the apex of transdisciplinary scholarship, it is fitting to have botany be the most popular field for all intellectuals, since it could further the studies of both aesthetics and the sciences. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the study of botany leveraged political motives. During the Age of Exploration, European kingdoms vied for control of the spice trade and the spread of Christianity. While the British and Spanish empires were more invested in colonization, the French empire focused on establishing strong trading posts throughout the New World, which led to relatively amicable relations between the French and the Native Americans.

While Chateaubriand always displayed a sense of reverence for the newly founded United States, he still had an air of European superiority regarding its lack of arts and culture. In his *Mémoires*, he states that “in the new continent there is no classic literature, no romantic literature, and no Indian literature: as to the classics, Americans have had no Middle Ages; as for the Indians, Americans scorn the savages and have a horror of the woods as if they were a prison to which they were destined.”<sup>48</sup> He would later add that Americans had never experienced their

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<sup>48</sup> Chateaubriand, François René. *Voyage en Amérique*.

nation's childhood, for they had yet to know old age. And while this makes it seem like the author is belittling the New World, he does not fault them for this deficiency, since they were still in the process of developing their nation's history.

### European Interests in the New World

French colonization has been taking place ever since the seventeenth century, which was the midpoint of the Age of Exploration. During this period, French explorers scoured the seas intending to relocate due to religious persecution, the fur trade, and scientific advancement. In the early seventeenth century, English colonists threatened the fur trade that was occurring in Acadia (present-day eastern Quebec and Nova Scotia), but the French and Basques dominated the market and wanted to keep it that way. According to Jacques Lacoursière, Samuel de Champlain “will forsake the Aboriginal nations with whom he traded furs only to ally himself with others who lived far away. Although 60 years earlier Jacques Cartier had encountered Iroquoians living in the areas of Quebec and Montreal, none were left in the St. Lawrence River Valley when Champlain arrived.”<sup>49</sup> While the relationships between Native American and European relationships seemed purely amicable early on, ulterior motives grew apparent. The Native Americans gained easier access to food, clothing, weapons, and luxury goods, such as alcohol. As for the Europeans, the French and the British were competing in the fur business in Europe and North America. Trade was competitive amongst the Europeans and the Natives, as well as within their own groups—fellow Europeans pitting against each other, and numerous Native American tribes forming alliances with other tribes.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Excerpt from Robin Philpot and Jacques Lacoursière's *A People's History of Quebec*. (Canada: Baraka Books, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> This tells us that it was not always Europeans vs. Native Americans, but also Europeans vs. Europeans and Natives vs. Natives.

Since this dissertation's focus is on flora, I will not go into much detail about the fur trade. While other European colonial powers were engaging in trade with Native Americans, my argument focuses on French and Amerindian relations in early America and how their relationship shaped both the American environment and the plant exchange between North America and Europe.<sup>51</sup> By looking at the plants being imported from the New World to Europe, we will better understand how Europeans viewed foreign environments, as well as what they saw as necessary to bring back to their homeland. It all depended on the explorer's ulterior motives. While the Jesuits came to the New World to spread Christianity, they were also curious about how the First Peoples in present-day Canada incorporated flora into their daily lives. Explorers with backgrounds in natural history and botany were eager to add to the ever-growing list of plant nomenclature and find new European consumption or medical treatment resources.

It was not uncommon for indigenous spiritual leaders to practice medicine. Chateaubriand writes about general Native American medical practices in *Voyage*, stating that the art is "almost as advanced among them as among civilized peoples." Some of the plants mentioned were garent ouguen (abasoutchenza), also known as Chinese ginseng, sassafras, lychnis, and Canadian bellis. Each of these plants had properties that could heal the ailments that Europeans otherwise succumbed to without treatment. Chateaubriand then shifts his attention to the sweathouse seances, where the participants feel as if they had brushed with death and delirium. Before

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<sup>51</sup> I am in no way dismissing the French occupation in Indochina. However, due to the time limits, as well as the dearth of historiography (in comparison to the other three geographic locations), the following works do an excellent job contributing to the neglected historiography: *France and "Indochina": Cultural Representations* by Kathryn Robson, Jennifer Yee (Lexington Books, 2005); *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* by Julia Ann Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (University Press of Virginia, 1998); Eric T. Jennings's *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (University of California Press, 2011); Martin Windrow's *The French Indochina War 1946–54* (Bloomsbury, 2013); Mai Na M. Lee's *Dreams of the Hmong Kingdom: The Quest for Legitimation in French Indochina, 1850–1960* (University of Wisconsin, 2015); Christina Elizabeth Firpo's *The Uprooted: Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina, 1890–1980* (University of Hawaii, 2016); and M. Kathryn Edwards's *Contesting Indochina: French Remembrance Between Decolonization and Cold War* (University of California, 2016).

closing the chapter, Chateaubriand recalls how “these follies, mentioned by Charlevoix, are repeated every day among the Indians. How does the same man, who rose so high when he believed himself to be dying, fall so low when he is sure to live?”

### Botanophilia: France’s Newfound Obsession with Botany

Botanophilia, the interest in botany and natural history among European intellectuals, was a phenomenon born in French salons. In Roger L. Williams’s *Botanophilia in Eighteenth-century France* (2001), he argues that botany is a field that straddles the line between the sciences and the liberal arts. Due to its transdisciplinary nature, the learned crowd in the eighteenth century found it quite accessible compared to the more elusive hard sciences. Even those who did not have the proper training in gardening or botany were interested in the field, and would divulge in conversations about gardening to show their perspective of nature.<sup>52</sup> Its elusive nature gave professionals from fields as vastly disparate as politics to the fine arts to incorporate their interpretation of the surrounding environment in order to fulfill their ulterior motives. For the former, it was a sense of nation-building, while the latter was for individualistic expression.<sup>53</sup>

Before the French Revolution, Chateaubriand went on a voyage to North America with the hopes of discovering new territories like his fellow Breton, Jacques Cartier. Much to his chagrin, however, he did not make any groundbreaking discoveries as he had hoped. His experience is reminiscent of the ongoing attitude towards exploration during the French Enlightenment, where gentlemen explorers were curious to discover new places and to incorporate their discoveries

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<sup>52</sup> This is an example of participatory Enlightenment, where people who were not part of the Academy or one of “the greats” were able to partake in the study of botany. However, this did not mean that everyone became a scientist. Instead, it became more common for people to hear a scientific discourse or see a scientific demonstration. This view of the Enlightenment is quite contemporary.

<sup>53</sup> Williams also enters into conversation with From Ross’s text, arguing that the garden was another place for gardeners and other intellectuals to show everyone a physical representation of what it means to be aesthetic in nature.

into the European context. However, Chateaubriand's purpose differed from that of his predecessors. While he did want to make discoveries of unknown landscapes, he did not pursue that goal for the sake of writing a political discourse and to making France look better than it was. Rather, he explored for his own self-gratification.

Prior to Chateaubriand's travels to America, a French aristocrat named Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur (1735-1813) traveled to America to serve in the French and Indian War.<sup>54</sup> Some might argue that "the American Fanner" made his first public appearance eleven years before Chateaubriand found a publisher for his *Essai sur les Révolutions* (1797). The great innovator first used the American materials that he worked over more effectively in his travels, tales, and Mémoires.<sup>55</sup> Relying on a Frenchman's experience who had lived in North America during and after the American Revolution is more reliable than reading a literary work written by a French youth traveling to North America with such implausible goals as to discover new trade routes to Asia and write about his experience with more imagination than not.

During this period, another prominent gardener was fermier-générale Claude-Henri Watelet (1718-1786), who was known for his contributions to the fine arts and his theoretical essays on gardens. Since much of his income came from farming taxes in Orléans, he was privileged enough to pursue art and aesthetics.<sup>56</sup> Thomas Whately's *Modern Observations* heavily influenced *Essai sur les Jardins* (1774) on Gardening (1770). The picturesque garden's rise

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<sup>54</sup> Another work to refer to with regard to Chateaubriand's travels is Chateaubriand: Lafitau, etc. Cf; éd. Du *Voyage en Amérique*, dans *Oeuvres complètes* de Chateaubriand, Champion, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Hector St. John de Crevecoeur. *Letters from an American Farmer* (p. 7). Neeland Media LLC. Kindle Edition.

<sup>56</sup> This also gave him the opportunity to work with other well-to-do scholars such as Levesque A, Georges-Louis Leclerc, and Comte de Buffon. For a detailed biography, refer to Samuel Danon's English translation *Essay on Gardens: A Chapter in the French Picturesque*. Some of the figures to look into are Jean-Marie Morel, René de Girardin, Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle, and Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières,



influenced British and continental European gardens during the late eighteenth century and moving forward as well.<sup>57</sup>

Like Rousseau, Watelet viewed the garden as a temple and constructed his garden to be metaphysical and straightforward, just like the former's philosophy on nature. While numerous gardening books were published during this decade, Watelet's was one of the few to grab the public's attention.<sup>58</sup> However, critics attacked the essay for its lack of organization and technical expertise, which was especially pertinent in the Age of Reason. Watelet considered the gardens to be the "stepchild of the arts" due to the art community's lack of enthusiasm to include it as one of the fine arts.<sup>59</sup>

Another reason why Watelet's essay was renowned amongst like-minded botanists and statesmen was the ulterior motive of creating gardens that embodied a sense of national pride. This theme is prominent in his chapter on the now non-existent garden of Moulin Joli, where Watelet makes a not-so-subtle claim that his garden was the embodiment of a French picturesque garden. For example, the chapter on Chinese garden design was based solely on others' travels, since he had never traveled there. By tying the garden's style to a specific nation, he conveys to his audience that they will be able to experience the exotic without ever having to leave their homeland. Watelet's interpretations of the experiences of others played into the essay's central metaphysical argument, as well as all picturesque garden theory: the impact of inanimate objects on the human condition.<sup>60</sup>

### Reworking the Enlightenment and the New Romanticism

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<sup>57</sup> More information on the picturesque are located in Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*. 3. There is also a French translation by François-de-Paule Latapie titled *L'Art de former les jardins modernes ou l'art des jardins anglais*.

<sup>58</sup> Watelet, *Essay*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Watelet, *Essay*, 9.

<sup>60</sup> Watelet, *Essay*, 14.

In order to understand how Romanticism reworks the Enlightenment, we must first understand the component of French Romanticism. In Frank P. Bowman's article "Les caractères du romantisme français" (2003), he states that he "prefers to consider it in historical terms and turn to the fashions, literary practices and the intellectual universe which flourished between 1800 and 1850...French Romanticism is also characterized by polemics and cosmopolitanism; some have even seen it as a break with national tradition."<sup>61</sup> According to Michael Ferber's *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (2010), the critical characteristics of Romanticism that differentiate it from the Enlightenment are the experience of solitude and communion with nature; the suffering of the people; the quest for spirituality; and nostalgia.<sup>62</sup> Nostalgia, one of the most prominent traits of Romanticism, is frequently referred to by both the Romantics and scholars of Romanticism.

John Tresch concludes *The Romantic Machine* by stating that "the themes that have been erroneously associated solely with a nostalgic opposition to machines—aesthetic and organic holism, protean fluids, creative perception, and active imagination...in all these ways, romantic machines were at the heart of projects to know and to remake society and its surrounding milieu."<sup>63</sup> While the Romantics embraced modernity, they also wanted to keep some components of nostalgia in their works. Romanticism is often stereotyped as "anti-science" due to its embrace of emotion and melancholy. However, this is not actually true in the slightest, because they were willing to compromise their ideology with the rise of science.

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<sup>61</sup> Watelet, *Essay*, 73.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Benjamin argued that Proust's idea of nostalgia, which stemmed from Baudelaire's concept of nostalgia, is a futile attempt to re-experience the past. Henri Bergson also argues that it is impossible to feel the same sensation one felt in the past, because he rejects the notion of the human experience having to deal with the past.

<sup>63</sup> Tresch, *The Romantic Machine*, 288.

Although natural philosophy had utilized taxonomy since the Antiquity, Jussieu and Linnaeus created the nomenclature used by scientists and literary figures. Unlike the Enlightenment, Romanticism focused more of its attention on aesthetics rather than order. To them, the nomenclature was too artificial. While they understood that plants' taxonomy was necessary in order to mediate the communication of botany, the Romantics believed that it was necessary to not dismiss the indigenous names of plants in favor of the new nomenclature. English literary critic Theresa Kelley remarks in her article "Romantic Exemplarity" that "bringing exotic plants home to England to make them grow and bloom at home or transporting English plants to distant colonies or from one distant colony or at least port of call to another were thus strategies for domesticating an exotic plentitude that was by turns strange and strangely familiar."

Enlightenment and Romanticism concepts of ownership are somewhat similar to one another. One can argue that the colonizers were taking part in botanical imperialism by taking flora back to their home country and introducing flora native to the colony's home country. Both the Enlightenment philosophers and Romantic thinkers would agree that while Enlightenment scientists always asked the question "how" when conducting research, they never really asked "why," which was a question reserved for the philosophes. However, with the latter, their biases towards non-Europeans dismiss perspectives that do not match their own. Ergo, the Enlightenment was a Eurocentric movement where only western science and philosophy are considered to be the ultimate Truth. According to Kant, it is easier for individuals to achieve Enlightenment than it is for a collective unit.

Similar to Kant, Rousseau and many other authors and philosophers can belong to more than one movement at the same time. While there is a consensus that he was a philosophe, numerous scholars consider Rousseau to be a Romantic. This classification is paradoxical, since the two

movements are the opposite of one another, focusing on rationality and emotions. Rousseau reworked the Enlightenment in a multitude of ways. What made his philosophy so radical compared to that of his contemporaries was that he was against the idea of human civilization. Because of civilization, according to Rousseau, humanity has become corrupt, and the only way to regain our innocence was to return to nature. Here, Rousseau focuses more on the political side of nature rather than the scientific perspective. To Rousseau, nature is used as a vehicle to convey his political philosophy to his readers. While Rousseau's idea of nature is mostly political, he did write about nature for its own sake in his later works. In *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), Rousseau dedicates each of his ten walks to a different aspect of life. The first walk is dedicated to the environment and its role in humanity, and the seventh walk is about daydreaming and how he envisioned retiring to the wilderness. Rousseau uses different landforms as a metaphor for three emotions: rationality, nostalgia, and loneliness.

Chateaubriand would liken himself to the Amerindians by considering himself a marginalized person since birth in order to establish a sense of familiarity. Not only was he born into a minor aristocratic family on the eve of the French Revolution, but he was also from Brittany, a province that did not become a part of France until the sixteenth century. If we were to read about his trip from the Other's perspective, one could argue that North America is similar in certain ways to his hometown of Saint-Malo, located on the coast of northwestern France. The following description illustrates his childhood: "I saw in my youth old Bretons murmuring against the roads that we wanted to open in their woods, so even that these roads were to raise the value of riparian properties."<sup>64</sup> Because Brittany lies in the northwest corner of France, it benefits from both its lush forests and an abundance of coastline. Both forestry and maritime regions shaped

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<sup>64</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

Chateaubriand's writing style and sense of wanderlust. Being faithful to his romantic prose, he pays tribute to Antiquity by referring to Ulysses and credits his curiosity as the main reason why he traveled. While one of his goals was to "find" the Northwest Passage, it was more for self-fulfillment than scientific reasons.<sup>65</sup> He describes the beginning by stating the following: "I come to be ranged in the crowd of obscure travelers who have seen only what everyone has seen, who have made no progress in science, who have added nothing to the treasure of human knowledge."<sup>66</sup> While he acknowledges that he is one of the many unfamiliar faces traveling to the New World and would not add to the "treasure trove of human knowledge," he was confident that he would go down in history as a significant contributor to the sciences. However, this was not the sciences that we think of today, but rather the natural sciences that straddle the disciplinary line between the hard sciences and the humanities.

As a youth, Chateaubriand's contribution to early French Romanticism was to study nature for its own sake, rather than as a vehicle for anthropocentric needs—namely, politics. This perspective goes against the Rousseauian ideology that he used to follow, in which the purpose of studying nature was to have humanity return to its purest state before the development of civilization. Philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot used indigenous peoples as a mouthpiece for their philosophical views. Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* (1767) is a satire about an unnamed Huron, also known as "The Child of Nature," who relocates to Bretagne and is unknowingly baptized. This short work is Voltaire's critique of the ridiculousness of established religions and his advocacy for deism. Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762) delves into the idea of innate human goodness and argues how children would remain inherently good if Nature raised them. Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) relies on Louis Antoine de

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<sup>65</sup> Thompson, 25. Chateaubriand was also interested in travelling to the Arctic for the sake of science.

<sup>66</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

Bougainville's personal travelogues and manipulates the latter's account to become a discourse between speakers A and B about how they interpret different attitudes towards morality in Tahiti.

Reevaluating Chateaubriand's prose from the historical perspective will also offer a new approach to writing about environmental literature and history. While environmental historiography and literary criticism have greatly expanded over the past two decades, there is still much work to be done with French literature. By reading literature in different languages, scholars across disciplines will develop questions and perhaps collaborate with others in fields that they would not have considered otherwise. John McNeill's article, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," states that one of the most significant issues of environmental history in France was the general lack of interest in the environment unless it was related to politics or economics.<sup>67</sup> Thankfully, French history and literature scholars have expanded their historiographical horizons and are doing more work regarding environmental studies' intellectual and cultural aspects.

Much of the scholarship on Chateaubriand remains exclusive to his literary and political careers from the anthropocentric perspective. But by reading Chateaubriand's gardens as well as his *Voyage*, we will be able to broaden our horizons as European environmental scholars by placing less emphasis on strictly Anglo-American sources and instead refocusing our attention to other European subjects and how they portray the exotic in their works. I am not discrediting the work done in English, but instead offering a way to broaden the field's horizons and show how others write about environmental history and garden history. I mention the latter because it has garnered more attention from hobbyists than academics, even though the vast potential of

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<sup>67</sup> John R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History." *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (2003): 5-43: 29.

gardens can be used as a primary source. Chateaubriand's gardens can most certainly be read in the context of his literature from an academic standpoint, rather than a mere tourist attraction outside of Paris. By reading his gardens, understanding their organization, and contextualizing them in his written works, environmental historians and literary critics can come up with new questions to pose not only with regards to Chateaubriand's written works, but also other nineteenth-century French authors' portrayal of nature, in the shape of both gardens and prose.

As mentioned throughout this section, Chateaubriand corresponded with numerous botanophiles of different nationalities about how they interpreted flora in their gardens or scholarship. In the next section, I delve deeper into the works of philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant and how they interpret the garden as a place of aesthetics. I then shift my attention to actual botanists, and how the hard sciences interpreted the flora that they extracted from an exotic locale. Finally, I will look at the artists' collaborations with the botanists and how they incorporate the flora in their works.

Before botanophilia took hold of the French salons, Louis XIV invested much of his image with floral imagery. As Elizabeth Hyde notes in *Cultivated Power*, Louis XIV utilized the royal gardens as "markers of his might in military, political, and aesthetic arenas," and appropriated flowers such as anemones and pansies in order to bolster his absolutist image.<sup>68</sup> What was grown in the gardens reflects the reigning monarch's taste in floriography and their ability to obtain specimens from faraway lands. The royal gardens also serve practical purposes. For example, Linnaeus tried to cultivate pineapples in Sweden in order to help solve the food shortage problem.

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<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Hyde *Cultivated Power: Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), xii. Donneau de Visé was the one who likened the king to those specific flowers. While identifying oneself as a flower was by no means a novel idea, it is important to note when studying the cultural depictions of past rulers.

## Armchair Explorers and Nation Building in the Garden

Like in all of his writings, Voltaire manages to take a jab at established religion by using the Huron as a mouthpiece for deism. When the Huron's religious affiliation was under questioning, the following dialogue takes place:

“I am of my own religion,” said he, “just as you are of yours.”  
“Lord!” cried Miss Kerkabon, “I see already that those wretched English have not once thought of baptizing him!”  
“Good heavens!” said Miss St. Yves, “how is it possible? How is it possible the Hurons should not be Roman Catholics? Have not those reverend fathers, the Jesuits, converted all the world?”<sup>69</sup>

Since the Hurons resided in New France, the French assumed that all indigenous peoples had converted to Roman Catholicism, which was France's predominant religion. According to Voltaire, it is better to be a deist than convert to another religion simply because conversion to Christianity is more “modern” than the person's previous religious beliefs. That was one of the commonalities of Voltaire and Rousseau—the rejection of organized religion. While there are numerous accounts of travel written by philosophers with no travel experience, Bougainville's *Voyage Autour du monde* gave the philosophers inspiration to write about the exotic in order to critique western European culture.

Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) is a parody of Bougainville's *Voyage Autour du monde*. The two characters, A and B, provide a dialogue regarding Bougainville's circumnavigation of the globe. According to Anthony Pagden's *European Encounters* (1994), *Supplément* is a contribution “to a specific and enduring eighteenth-century argument against colonization and the inescapable cultural annihilation which colonization was thought to involve. It is an argument about the integrity and ultimate incommensurability of all culture, an argument about the destructive potential of migration, and about the reliance of ‘Enlightenment’ and

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<sup>69</sup> Voltaire, *L'Ingénu*.



civility upon diversity.” While the characters of these works physically traveled to exotic places, the characters of Rousseau's novels were more focused on finding themselves through an internal discourse.

While the rise of botanophilia took hold of the French elite in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, few could afford the luxury to experience the lands mentioned during many a salon visit. In order to satiate that desire, they would instead read the works of those who had firsthand experience. By reading their compatriots' works, they not only quelled their thirst for adventure, but also felt a proto-nationalistic pride for their achievements. Immanuel Kant tied his philosophy on gardens [Mittelweg] to nationalism, where his ideal of “the will and its application to cultural and especially linguistic groups.”<sup>70</sup> This quote echoes Jean-Jacques Rousseau's vision of nationalism in terms of culture. However, Rousseau was more concerned with the nation's political aspect and had a more “solidaristic foundation than the neoclassical or Spartan political idea of the more stoic philosophers.”<sup>71</sup> Botany's accessibility made it where any discipline could participate in the increasingly lucrative field during the Age of Exploration forward. And while I began the colonial botany historiography with the spice trade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this project is primarily focused on the eighteenth-century approach to botanical studies due to its explosive popularity in French salons.

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<sup>70</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 67. For more works on Kantian philosophy, see Gary Dorrien's *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History*, 8. (Berlin 1976; Barnard 1965). For Isaiah Berlin's works on Romanticism, see the following: *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton University Press, 2013); *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought* (Chatto & Windus, 2006). This is where scholars reach an impasse when it comes to describing the theories behind nationalism. According to Benedict Anderson, “Theorists of nationalism have often been perplexed, not to say irritated, by these three paradoxes: “(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept—in the modern world everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender—vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, ‘Greek’ nationality is sui generis. (3) The ‘political’ power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence” (Anderson, 5).

The race to see which European empire would have the strongest hold of the botanical trade had been going on ever since Columbus voyaged to the New World. However, botanophiles utilized the philosophers' ever-expanding knowledge and the gardener-explorers who accompanied military fleets to further territories such as Oceania and east of the Mississippi. By looking at the Age of Exploration's key explorers, who come from many backgrounds, we can develop a better understanding of the growth of travel and botanical exchange from academia to the amateur. Later, academics will join societies with fellow like-minded people who had similar experiences, and pundits will devour the literature created by the former and aim to create their own travelogues from the comfort of their own desk.

Nationalism in the form of flora has been popular ever since the sixteenth century, since this was the "race of exploration." If you had more access to goods, you are seen as the more powerful empire.<sup>72</sup> There were different types of gardens for all social classes. The kitchen garden being the most common for the lower class since subsistence farming was the most common. From the Scientific Revolution forward, the relationship between religion and botany began to unravel. For instance, Jacques Boyceau argued that "parterres or formal garden beds should be laid out in complex and symmetrical ways to embody the abundance and orderliness of nature as it was known to science. This design strategy was implicitly a program of 'restoration,' intended to bring gardens closer to perfection using human intelligence, but Boyceau's writings

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<sup>72</sup> *Dominion, Demonstration, and Domination: Religious Doctrine, Territorial Politics, and French Plant Collection* by Chandra Mukerji. This article discusses the roles of religious and secular law in the development of French colonial botany in the New World, as well as in the Orient. Mukerji argues that one of the main reasons why botanical gardens did not come to fruition in present-day Canada is due to the fact that the missionaries residing in Canada did not have enough manpower to tend to the sick as well as maintain a garden. France was perceived to be the beacon of human progress, and it was only logical for those in the flora trade to cultivate them in the mainland rather than the colonial territory. They also deemed the indigenous populations as unworthy, unknowledgeable, or just stupid when it came to garden maintenance. 19.

presented the work as intellectual, a fruit of knowledge rather than faith.”<sup>73</sup> Botanist Jean-Baptiste Thibault de Chanvalon’s (1723-1788) put forth an argument of moral rhetoric in the colonies, claiming that it was part of their duty as Catholics to protect the environment and the people living there. However, this mindset pushes their Eurocentrism forward, because they believed that the “savages” did not know how to utilize the flora/fauna to their advantage.<sup>74</sup>

If we were to look at the garden from a religious perspective, the absence of any strict organization is the first thing to notice in the Romantic garden’s rise. By organizing the garden, it destroys the Edenesque allure. As for Julie’s garden in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, it was free from exotic flora and only incorporated plants from the area. She states, “[I]f I did not find exotic plants and products of India, I found those of the country arranged and united so as to produce a more laughing and more pleasant effect.”<sup>75</sup> This is ironic, because the gardens modeled after Elysium were essentially their own isolated civilizations. The point of creating these holy gardens was to be surrounded by nature and the divine, not to isolate its access to just a select few. This can also be paralleled to the public parks that would be developed later, which did not restrict visitors based on social class. There is a hierarchy of gardens ranging from the practical kitchen garden to the elite ornamental garden.

French gardens also tend to use more local flora in order to mimic the biblical garden. By importing plants from foreign locales, the garden’s purpose was no longer to recreate humanity’s

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<sup>73</sup> Merkurji, 21. The reason why botanical gardens did not take off in North America was due to the European mindset that Europe was the apex of civilization, which meant that Canada did not have a need for botanical gardens because Europe was just going to recreate what they saw in Canada by taking its flora.

<sup>74</sup> Look up works on *mesnage* (care and management of land, specifically). While Christianity is usually seen as a dominant force on nature, it is also used to defend the protection of the environment. This can also be an influence on the Annales (it’s all about land management based on morality/justice and politics) (33). This period influenced the Annales School’s views on morality and justice when it came to land management in modern France.

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*. This is similar to Elizabeth Hyde’s argument: “Instead of nature encumbered, manipulated and confined, Elysium offers a refuge from social relations of domination and exploitation.” Elysium is a garden in the loosest sense of the word, because it has boundaries (same can be said for Eden, too). However, these borders are hard to distinguish, since they were not installed, so to speak (22).

original garden, but rather to “save” the species from the “uncultured” locals. The change of the garden’s purpose also helped further interest in botany amongst ordinary people. Gardens such as the Jardin du Roi are classist (if we were to use modern terminology here) because only the king could partake in the flora grown there. This meant that if new types of comestibles or medicines successfully grew, only the king would be able to consume these products.

The relationship between eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century literature, exploration, and the environment changed drastically after European exploration in the New World. Disciplines were not as divided as they are in modern-day academia, making the network between intellectuals much broader. Salon participants corresponded with people whose specializations were on the other side of the spectrum (such as an artist and a mathematician). Because of this type of networking, we can see the development of disciplines, such as botany, which was just one of the many natural history subfields up until the Enlightenment.

Rousseau’s writings focus more on human interaction with the environment, how one interprets each plant as belonging to a different social class, and the idea that nature itself is a civilization. It is because of this mindset that Rousseau is interpreted to be anthropocentric with his philosophy. For example, his botanical dictionary is full of political examples. While many botanical terms were strictly referred to in scientific terms, some of the terms had philosophical discourses that ran on for pages. This is especially evident with his entry on the word “flower,” in which he spends several pages dealing with the flower’s meaning in both scientific and political terms.

If I give my imagination to the sensations that this word seems to call, I might make an excellent article perhaps to the Shepherds, but very bad for the Botanists. For a moment, let us part the bright colors, the sweet smells, the elegant forms, to seek first to know the organized being that brings them together. At first, nothing seems easier; who thinks they need to be taught what a flower is?<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Rousseau, *Dictionnaire sur la botanique*.

Rousseau then proceeds to enter into a political, philosophical, and scientific discourse of the flower. He focuses on the organization of floral anatomy and how it echoes the existing social hierarchy in developed civilizations. He explained that each part of the flower served a specific function, similar to how the monarchy, nobility, clergy, and commoners had their place in society. Rousseau was more interested in the poetic interpretation of flora than being a “true” botanist and analyzing the specimen from a purely pragmatic standpoint.

Rousseau’s philosophy on nature reinforces my main argument that we should be looking at the works of travelers and the deskbound philosophes, which will provide another perspective of European attitudes towards exotic locations and their developing interest in the environment for scientific purposes. While there are a myriad of works on French colonialism in the New World, more work could still be done from the exchange’s botanical side. When we read about the Columbus Exchange, it was not until Crosby’s *Columbian Exchange* when historians and scientists took a serious look at the biological exchange between Europe and the New World.

One of the Enlightenment’s standard generalizations was that Catholics were steadfast with their religious beliefs while Protestants were skeptical heathens trying to debunk the Bible’s core Truth. In Gunnar Broberg’s *Linnaeus* (1980), he argues that the French saw the organization of nature as a humanist task, with no room for any religious hierarchy.<sup>77</sup> This is not true for numerous botanists, the French, and all other nationalities, who took it upon themselves to look into nature as a way to better understand God.<sup>78</sup> French botanists such as Malesherbes were not antitheist, and conducted their research without threatening their religious beliefs. With more

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<sup>77</sup> Broberg, 67-8.

<sup>78</sup> Some of the most prominent eighteenth-century gardens include François de Paule Latapie, Thomas Whatley, Delarochette, William Chambers, Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle, François-Henri d’Harcourt, Jean-Marie Morel, René Louis Nivernois, Horace Walpole, George-Louis Le Rouge, and Alexandre de Laborde.

Europeans becoming more interested in botany, how were they supposed to reach a consensus on a plant's name after its discovery?

One of the biggest debates surrounding plant nomenclature is the choice of approach. There were two schools of thought during this period, which were those of Linnaeus and Buffon. Linnaeus's critics would chastise him for "arbitrary relations for those of nature. When followed slavishly, they constitute a danger. It is essential first to furnish the head with facts and idea, and to delay as long as possible the formation of reasons and relations."<sup>79</sup> If Linnaeus had a preconceived notion of categorizing each specimen that he encountered during his fieldwork, he did not truly look at each plant as an individual. This led other botanists to believe that Buffon's approach was more natural, because he was not as systematic as his Swedish counterpart.<sup>80</sup> He also added that these three ideas—physical truth, continuity, and the natural method—occupied a considerable place in the secondary literature on Buffon, and that they had an almost fatal appeal for historians of ideas. Buffon's presentation of these ideas was cursory, even perfunctory, and as ideas, they do not translate his thought adequately. According to Broberg, Buffon's conception of "the real affinities among natural forms is better understood by using a different set of terms."<sup>81</sup>

### La société de Géographie

The Société de Géographie was founded in 1821 by 217 savants, a number of whom would be quite familiar to today's audience. Some of the most illustrious figures include mathematician Pierre Simon Laplace, the society's first president, Joseph Fourier, Alexander von Humboldt, Pierre Lapie, Conrad Malthe Brun, Emmanuel de Pastoret, Louis Vivien de Saint-Martin, and

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<sup>79</sup> Broberg, Gunnar. *Linnaeus: Progress and Prospects in Linnaean Research* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell; Pittsburgh, PA: Hunt Institute for botanical documentation, 1980), 71.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 74.

Charles Athanase de Walckenaer. Almost all of these would serve as president over the following thirty years. The Société is the oldest geography society globally, and while based in Paris, there were members of other nationalities, namely Humboldt, a Prussian, who participated in its academic endeavors as well.

While the society's main goal was to further the area of geographical studies, many of the presidents from the first three decades of the society's existence were anything but formally trained geographers. However, that did not prevent them from contributing to the expansion of the field. For example, Joseph Fourier was both a mathematician and physicist, and his contributions to the sciences had quite a diverse range. For example, his theorems on harmonic analysis and their application to heat transfer and vibrations played a large role in discovering what we consider to be the greenhouse effect. He also had close political ties, having accompanied Napoleon on his Egyptian expedition in 1798. He examined various possible sources of the additional observed heat in articles published in 1824 and 1827. While he ultimately suggested that interstellar radiation might be responsible for a large portion of the additional warmth, Fourier's consideration of the possibility that the Earth's atmosphere might act as an insulator of some kind is widely recognized as the first proposal of what is now known as the greenhouse effect, although Fourier never called it that as such.<sup>82</sup> Alexander von Humboldt was one of the few men trained as a geographer to take the position of president. Like his contemporaries, he wore many hats that ranged from naturalist, explorer, geographer, and

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<sup>82</sup> Selected works on Fourier include the following: James R. Fleming's "Joseph Fourier, the 'greenhouse effect', and the quest for a universal theory of terrestrial temperatures" (1999); I. Grattan-Guinness's *Joseph Fourier, 1768-1830* (1972); "How ecosystem services and agroecology are greening French agriculture through its reterritorialization" (de Sartre, Charbonneau, Charrier) (Jul. 2019); Jean-Louis Dufresne's "Jean-Baptiste Joseph Fourier et la découverte de l'effet de serre" (2006).

polymath. He is credited to be the first person to claim that climate change is human induced in works published in 1800 and 1831.<sup>83</sup>

In order to demonstrate how diverse the Société was at the time, I will mention a few of the lesser-known figures and their contributions to the field of geography. Pierre M. Lapie was a cartographer and engraver, as well as a French colonel, who worked with topographical engineers. His works were influential on German commercial map-making in the nineteenth century. Some of those works include the following: a map of Turkey and Central Asia; a map of exploration of Australasia and Polynesia; and a map of Macedonia. His two major works were *Atlas Classique et Universel* (1812) and *Atlas Universel de géographie ancienne et moderne* with Alexandre Emile Lapie (fils) (1842).<sup>84</sup> Conrad Malte-Brun, a Danish-French geographer and journalist, coined the name for Oceania in 1812. His scientific works include *Géographie mathématique, physique et politique de toutes les parties du monde* (1803 and 1812). He was a regular contributor to *Journal des Débats* and became an ardent imperialist while initially being against the consular government. This position led him to publish his *Treatise on legitimacy considered the basis of public law in Christian Europe* (1824). His son, Victor Adolphe Malte-Brun, was also a geographer.<sup>85</sup>

One of the presidents who had almost no correlation with the field of geography were Claude-Emmanuel de Pastoret (1755-1840), who was a lawyer, author, politician, and academic.

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<sup>83</sup> Due to Anglo-Saxon dominance in the sciences, naturalists such as Humboldt are largely forgotten by the average person.

<sup>84</sup> Works on Lapie include the following: Florin-Gheorghe Fodorean's "Pierre Lapie and the Roman Road Network in Moesia" (2016); Bronwen Douglas's "Geography, raciology, and the naming of oceania" (2011); and Richard J.A Talbert's *Challenges of mapping the classical world* (2019).

<sup>85</sup> Selected works on Malte-Brun include the following: Laura Péaud's "Relire la géographie de Conrad Malte-Brun/Re-reading Conrad Malte-Brun's geography" (2015); Anne Godlewska's "L'influence d'un homme sur la géographie française: Conrad Malte-Brun (1755-1826)" (1991); and Hervé Théry's "Visions ambiguës d'un pays disparu, le Brésil dans la Géographie universelle de Conrad Malte-Brun / Ambiguous impressions of a bygone country, the Brazil in Conrad Malte-Brun's Géographie universelle" (2012)



However, there were quite a few geographers who served as president, including the following: Louis Vivien de Saint-Martin (1802-1896), who worked on geography and the history of Napoleon I's reign, and Charles Athanase Walckenaer (1771-1852), who discovered the map of Juan de la Cosa, the oldest extant map that shows the American continent, and published *La monde maritime* (1818), *Histoire générale des voyages* (1826–1831), and *Géographie Ancienne, Historique et comparée des Gaules* (1839, new edition 1862). He was also an entomologist and arachnologist who published, among other things, the *Histoire Naturelle des Insectes* (1836–1847), together with Paul Gervais. He was also the scientist who transferred the black widow into its current genus.

While numerous trained geographers were members of the Société, almost all presidents during the first thirty years were politicians or former military men. The rationale behind this decision could be because the former could not spare time to serve in administrative roles. However, this proves to not be the case when Humboldt served as president in 1845. The society was initially located at Hôtel de Ville, Paris, and was relocated in 1879 after the Paris Commune burnt down the city's archives in May 1871. The society published discoveries in a quarterly revue, *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, from 1822 to 1899. From 1900 to 1940, it was titled *La Géographie*, with a hiatus between 1940 to 1946 due to World War II. The journal is now called *Acta Geographica*, which is published three times per year.

When Chateaubriand served his term as the society's third president, he utilized his unpublished travel notes from his American voyage to write *Voyage en Amérique*, as well as his journal entries when he was the owner of Vallée aux Loups, in order to provide new perspectives on nature from both cultural and scientific standpoints. Although he was not a trained scientist, like many of the savants of the Société (Pierre-Simon Laplace, Frédéric Cuvier, Alexander

Humboldt, and Joseph Fourier, to name a few), Chateaubriand was determined to redeem himself for the inaccuracies of his descriptions of the North American environment. Before this appointment, the Vallée aux Loups gardens were somewhat structured, showing a mélange of Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic sentiment.

### Conclusion

This chapter's overall goal is provide a better understanding of western Europe's growing interest in botany during the revolutionary era. The boundaries of the sciences were still permeable, making cross-disciplinary collaborations between philosophers and trained scientists easier. When botanophilia grabbed the attention of salon participants, the study of botany permeated the fine arts, literature, landscaping, and, of course, the sciences. The revolutionary era also marks the transitional period between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. As more people were privy to overseas travel, more travel literature was produced based on firsthand accounts. By comparing the novellas based on famous trips to ones written from the author's own personal experiences, readers gained a different understanding of the portrayal of the natural world.

In the next chapter, I discuss European garden theory and its influence on Chateaubriand's own gardens. The attention will be shifted away from the Frenchman and onto Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld, who was criticized by both his contemporaries and later scholars alike for not having been much of a traveler. His contemporary garden theories had a part in the construction of gardens, whether in the form of physical labor in the gardens or the gathering of specimens from a different locale. This makes English and French garden theory different from German garden theory. The former researched the places mentioned, while the latter relied on others'

information. Rather than being deskbound scholars, intellectuals during this period preferred those who practiced what they preached (so to speak).

## Chapter 4: Gardens in France from the Enlightenment to Romanticism

*“Nature, always simple, employs but four materials in the composition of her scenes, ground, wood, water, and rocks. The cultivation of nature has introduced the fifth species, the buildings requisite for the commendation of men. Each of these again admits of varieties in figure, dimensions, colour, and situation.”*

Thomas Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770)

*“I would like to heighten the whole Universe of my taste for gardens.”*  
Charles-Joseph Lamoral, 7th Prince de Ligne

Despite being a key part of the development of western European garden theory, German gardening theorist Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld (1742-1792) was criticized by both his contemporaries and later scholars alike for not actually partaking in travel or gardening. Contemporary garden theorists in both Britain and France participated in the construction of gardens by physically working on site or by obtaining exotic flora. What do these different attitudes towards gardening tell us about the capricious European perspective of the garden and their interpretations of plants both indigenous and exotic? In order to better understand Chateaubriand's nature writings and gardening practices, the first half of the chapter provides a brief overview of the history of gardening and landscaping in western Europe before delving into Chateaubriand's prose and landscapes. Instead of starting with the overrated Versailles, I will look at lesser-known figures such as Prince de Ligne and C.C.L. These works provide the perfect segue to Chateaubriand's gardener persona, which stems from his childhood in Combourg and proprietorship of Vallée aux Loups into the question of revolutionary France's ever-evolving gardening history, as well as how the obsession with botany and the exotic brought about the rise of travel-inspired gardens from the nineteenth century forward.

Prince de Ligne, C.C.L. Hirschfeld, and Garden History

Charles-Joseph Lamoral, 7th Prince de Ligne (1735-1814), Field Marshal, proprietor of an infantry regiment, and writer, would be the last person one would think of when it comes to gardening literature. While much of his legacy lies in his military prowess during the Seven Years' War, the Prince de Ligne was no stranger to salon culture and mingling with the brightest minds of his time. A historian of sorts, what also made his writing stand out were the minute details that he incorporated into his historical work, such as his best-known work, *Fantaisies et préjugé's militaires* (1780).<sup>1</sup> Instead of focusing solely on significant events, Ligne wrote about his subjects, such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Napoleon I, as human beings rather than larger-than-life personalities.<sup>2</sup> This approach is also incorporated in his lesser-known writings, such as *Coup-d'oeil sur Beloeil* (*A Glance of Beloeil*, 1781).

Departing from his usual military writings, *A Glance of Beloeil* waxes poetic about Ligne's gardens. The work was a distraction from his daily court routines and his constant mingling with society. As gardening became an increasingly popular hobby for the well-to-do, it was not surprising to see Europeans compare the superiority of their local flora over those from a different milieu. Botanical exchange across the Atlantic made it possible for Europeans to incorporate foreign species into their gardens, but many Europeans found the flora around them to be more than sufficient, with Ligne proclaiming that "they would say to the trash repository of the City Chymists: do not give these fatal mixtures of the juices and juices of America: and go to my little garden to seek some native and beneficial plants."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All of his works were published posthumously in thirty-four volumes, *Mélanges militaires, littéraires, sentimentales* (1817).

<sup>2</sup> In Guy Basil's edition of *Coup d'œil at Belœil and a great number of European gardens* (1991), he writes about de Ligne's personal anecdotes that linked them more to *la petite histoire* than to History. Basil states: "Yet thanks to his perspicacity, Ligne has caught just those details that might otherwise have been lost forever but contribute so much to our understanding of great personalities" (3).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Joseph Ligne, 177.

Ligne's upbringing also played a role in the development of his cosmopolitan worldviews. A member of the Belgian Ligne family and a Habsburg Austrian subject, Ligne was raised in the French fashion and would later embark on military campaigns and diplomatic missions that would eventually connect him with Catherine the Great. These experiences are also present in his interpretation of his leisure gardens:

This garden, in the middle of this nursery of trees and birds, will make a nursery of the most precious flowers from which we will draw what will be suitable for the baskets, the English garden, the sacred wood, the garden of the Hesperides, the flowerbed of water, & c. Near there, opposite an *arc de triomphe* which marks the garden, near the Levant Canal, will make a large vault which will have its counterpart near the Western Canal and under which there will be a small port for two small gondolas.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, while the French and English had competed with each other's gardening styles ever since the sixteenth century, it was also not uncommon to see the other nationality have their rival's style incorporated into their multithemed estate. And while many French gardeners were quick to dismiss foreign specimens from the New World for more "superior" ones from continental Europe, there was a rising interest in mimicking Chinese and Japanese gardens *à la jardin Anglo-Chinois*, which will eventually become a staple in nineteenth-century French gardening.

What does this tell us about the capricious European perspective of the garden and their interpretations of plants both indigenous and exotic? In this project, I delve into the question of revolutionary France's ever-evolving gardening history, as well as how the obsession of botany and the exotic brought about the rise of travel-inspired gardens from the nineteenth century forward.

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<sup>4</sup> Ligne, 6-7.

If we were to look at the German angle of garden theory, one of the prominent figures in German landscape theory is Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld (1742-1792). In Linda Parshall's translation of Hirschfeld's *Theory of Garden Art* (2001), she argues that he was considered to be one of the revolutionary figures in the construction of Western European gardens, and yet it was not until two centuries later that we noticed that he was also a man of many contradictions. Although championed as a landscape theorist, he himself contributed nothing revolutionary. When one looks back at Hirschfeld's work from the perspective of more than two centuries later, a number of contradictions emerge. He was a writer who in significant ways revolutionized the art of gardening in Europe, yet he was by no means a revolutionary. Although a famous champion of English gardens, he never even visited England.<sup>5</sup> However, due to his lack of funds and his unsuccessful academic career as a university professor, his memory lived on with Goethe, Herder, and Wieland in the Seifersdorfer Tal, a German landscape garden that he would much have admired.<sup>6</sup> From what I have gathered from his legacy, it seems that more prominent contemporary figures cited his work in order to further the understanding of nature versus Nature, rather than to apply it to the practice of landscape architecture.

Although widely known during his lifetime, Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld (1742-1792) wrote one of the most comprehensive studies on gardening during the eighteenth century in his *Theorie der Gartenkunst* (1779-1785). Translated into English by Linda B. Parshall, in the tradition of the Enlightenment, Hirschfeld never set foot in the exotic locale that he referred to

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<sup>5</sup> Similar to his French counterparts, such as Diderot and Voltaire, Hirschfeld was "an impassioned interpreter of the natural world who spent much more time in his study poring over his books than he did communing with the out-of-doors. His life seems very far from the idyllic encounters he depicts with so much verve and sincerity." Parshall, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the sources he refers to are Sonnerat's *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine*, Bougainville, Cook's *Travels*, Walpole's *On Modern Gardening*, Girardin's *De la Composition des Paysages*, Montaigne's *Journal de Voyage en Italie*, Heely's *Letters*, Brandt's *Gegenden* appear in all five volumes (47) (fix citation) (pages 50-1).

when he wrote *Theory*.<sup>7</sup> The eighteenth century in Germany was a period of intense and self-conscious appreciation for nature and of profound speculation regarding the relationship between God, mankind, and the natural world. Nature was perceived as a wellspring of aesthetic and emotional enlightenment, and also as a source of moral power and guidance in public and private life.<sup>8</sup> The perception that gardens could, and should, also contain political meaning, and that they were socio-economic as well as cultural statements, only heightened their allure. What made this word so attractive during the eighteenth century? The broad attraction of the *Theory* was largely due to its mingling of genres: part musings on the joys of living close to nature, part philosophy of aesthetics, part historical survey, part travel book, part poetry anthology, and part moral and political tract. *Theory* offered inspiration and encouragement to would-be garden designers, travelers, poets, and to any and all who deemed themselves people of sensitivity and sensibility.<sup>9</sup>

Hirschfeld's garden never came to fruition since he never actually gardened, but he imagined what the perfect garden would be like.<sup>10</sup> Although Hirschfeld was interested in the exotic, he did not include examples of these in his mental map of the perfect garden, because that would be seen as pretentious.<sup>11</sup> Instead, he proposed an all-inclusive garden integrated with the surrounding landscape around it and which could not be defined by any style. This could be interpreted as his way of having people experience nature without necessarily being transported to a foreign locale, which was quite a different worldview in comparison to that of fellow

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the works referred to throughout his treatise on gardens and landscape theory were written by the following: Captain Cook, René-Louis de Girardin, Jacques Delille, Jean-Marie Morel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Claude Henri Watelet, Salomon Geßner, Friedrich von Hagedorn, Albrecht von Haller, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Johann Georg Sulzer, Joseph Addison, William Chambers, Joseph Heely, Henry Home, Horace Walpole, Thomas Whately, and Arthur Young.

<sup>8</sup> Parshall, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 7.



Enlightenment thinkers, as the philosophers wanted to bring the exotic to the people in order to make them worldlier.

For Hirschfeld, gardens were the preeminent form of art, representing the zenith of civilized behavior and how it influenced civilized society's idea of aesthetics and ethics, as well as display what it means to be an individual or a nation. In his essay, he begins with an analysis of how primitive people intuitively engage with and revere the world of nature, and then he outlines how gardens undergo a natural evolution from the practical to the pleasurable, given cultural advances.<sup>12</sup> While European civilization is often assumed to take away society's perception of the natural world, it also provides the intellectual space for people to appreciate nature untouched from afar. Most of his essay focuses on English and French garden designs, since Germany adopted a *mélange* of both styles in terms of landscape gardening.

Some of Hirschfeld's influences as he developed his garden philosophy were Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and Johann Georg Sulzer (1720-1779). Sulzer, who was one of the key figures of German Romanticism, was in turn heavily influenced by Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Three essential components in Hirschfeld's discussion are the artist's idea, the means of its realization, and the reconstruction of the idea in the mind of the beholder.<sup>13</sup> According to Parshall, there are two general laws of garden art: the "garden artist" must choose those elements of nature "that have the optimal effect," and then, to shape them, "associate and arrange them so their impact is strengthened."<sup>14</sup> The artificiality of the garden makes it easier to appreciate certain elements of nature that would otherwise be unnoticed when

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<sup>12</sup> We can compare this to contemporary philosophes' works on indigenous peoples worldwide and how western Europe was slowly moving away from nature by building artificial societies with the knowledge that they had obtained from enlightenment.

<sup>13</sup> Parshall, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Parshall, 13-14.

left to its own devices. However, Hirschfeld contradicts himself by arguing that the French have bad taste and character in their gardens, while the English have good/taste.<sup>15</sup> While French gardens were a physical representation of Enlightenment perfection, English gardens allowed their flora to grow in its “natural and wild” state. It was easy for Hirschfeld to critique the two styles of gardens as a German outsider. In addition, his people did not have a unified idea of what made a German garden distinctly German. He also critiqued the English garden as tainted by temples and other architecture. He argued that a garden sullied by any manmade structure suffered from “statuomania,” which was synonymous with “Anglomania.”<sup>16</sup> Here, he agrees with the French attitude of buildings being separate from the garden.

The garden is also seen as an artistic representation of society due to the presence of an inherent hierarchy. Hirschfeld reinforces this point by stating that “since nature both contains and signifies a divine order, its preordained harmony can teach us how to organize our own world. The freedom of nature becomes a paradigm for human relations, and the maintenance of this freedom through the proportional restraint of a gardener’s design becomes a paradigm for benevolent government.”<sup>17</sup> This argument was also present in Rousseau’s botanical letters. Rousseau agreed to this, but his *Lettres botaniques* suggest that there is a hierarchy in nature. He furthered this claim in order to explain why the current governmental system did not work during his lifetime. Rather than have one “body” be in control of the majority, so to speak, Rousseau argued for society to restructure itself to mimic flora, where each part plays a specific role in order for the whole to exist in harmony.

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<sup>15</sup> Parshall, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Parshall, (note 51) (24).

<sup>17</sup> Parshall, 25.

As for the exportation and importation of plants, Hirschfeld wrote that “reading about the exotic, the intrigue of strange geographical features, the allure of foreign climates, the strange or familiar beauty of other landscapes and gardens both satisfied the urge to learn about the world and whetted the appetite for more.”<sup>18</sup> This went against Rousseau’s environmental philosophy, as he believed that the perfect garden was constructed with only indigenous flora.<sup>19</sup>

This is this is why it is so important for a figure such as Chateaubriand to write about his travels. Even though not all of the information in his ethnographies belonged to him, at least he could say that he had personal experience being in the places that he wrote about. In the context of garden historiography, we can consider Hirschfeld as a proto-Romantic, similar to Rousseau and somewhat similar to Chateaubriand. When it comes to the construction of the garden, “only scenes that are truly created by nature, that are indisputably not imitation and, most important, scenes that elude description,” are designated by Hirschfeld as “romantic.” The reciprocal element of one’s confrontation with nature is essential. Romantics believed that any attempt to reach closure limits the imagination, and that to define an idea is not only undesirable but actually impossible.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, Hirschfeld’s reception and legacy were mixed. While there is no shortage of details in his work, contemporaries such as Goethe, Jean Paul, and Marquis de Lézay-Marnésia found him “way too meticulous with detail, which would bore the reader,” as well as repetitive.<sup>21</sup> In addition, despite present-day garden and landscape historians agreeing that Hirschfeld is one of the most prominent voices of nineteenth century garden theory, he was called out by his contemporaries for being a fraud, as well as accused of not writing much about the garden

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<sup>18</sup> Hirschfeld, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Rousseau’s *Elysium*.

<sup>20</sup> Hirschfeld, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Hirschfeld, 39.

because he had never really set foot in one.<sup>22</sup> While his work was not really incorporated in English and French gardens, it did at least influence German gardening.

### Merging of Garden Styles

While tackling such a vast field as the rise of botany during the Age of Reason, the original goal was to establish a network for professional scientists without relying on experts from other disciplines. However, this proved to be impossible to achieve, since most botanists, naturalists, and explorers were also involved in politics and the arts. Pigeonholing intellectuals involved in one field of study is improbable, since there were no clear divisions amongst these disciplines until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> During the Enlightenment and the early Romantic periods, it was not uncommon for intellectuals to contribute to fields vastly different from their specific occupation and area of expertise. Many literary and scientific figures were statesmen (Chateaubriand and Humboldt), and numerous political figures (Malesherbes, Walpole, Watelet) were amateur artists and scientists. *Philosophers* were known to work closely with field specialists to include their works in the *Encyclopédie* and their literary works that indirectly critiqued the current government. What we consider interdisciplinary scholarship was common practice until the establishment of defined disciplines towards the end of the nineteenth century.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chateaubriand was not formally trained in the sciences. However, he referred to prominent scientists, explorers, and people of letters, and his correspondences with scientists, explorers, and people of letters who had traveled overseas show that he had as much enthusiasm for the field as his predecessors and contemporaries. This chapter focuses on naturalists and authors who were especially interested in nature/environmental fiction and non-

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<sup>22</sup> Hirschfeld, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* is a great example of how works published during this transitional moment in modern history straddle Enlightenment and Romanticism cultural movements.

fiction writing. Significant figures that come to mind in terms of Atlantic travel during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are military officer Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), botanists André and François Michaux (1746-1802, 1770-1855), and political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859). While it is no surprise that Humboldt is widely known for his South American scientific expeditions, the end of de Tocqueville's journey in America moves westward to the "unknown," in search of "virgin, savage nature" and the peoples who coexist within.<sup>24</sup> By overcoming the rigid structure of modern-day academia, where each discipline is streamlined into one department, we will better understand how not only naturalists and botanists understood the environment from a scientific perspective, but also the perspectives of those who, while not classically trained in the sciences, attempted to contribute to the conversation as well.

It is also important to note that many of the figures Chateaubriand corresponded with on the subject of natural history are his distant relatives. As previously mentioned, one of the most famous botanists of the eighteenth century was Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721-1794). While he was not an explorer, he traveled across France and Europe to experience the flora that he encountered in texts, making him stand out from this period's deskbound *botanophiles*. Before Chateaubriand's American voyage in 1791, he studied botany under Malesherbes, his distantly related relative by marriage, and researched the archives at the Jardin du Roi. Despite these preparations, Chateaubriand knew that his writings on North America would not necessarily be scientifically accurate. He had ambitions to "discover" the Northwest Passage, but realized it was all but a fleeting fancy as soon as he arrived in present-day Baltimore. The ambitious youth then came to terms with himself with the fact that his

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to Lacam, Jean-Patrice. *Les Indiens de Tocqueville: témoignage et réflexions sur l'Amérique indienne des années 1830* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013).

writings on early America were more geared towards the literary imagination than actual reality. This confession appears in his early correspondence with Claire de Duras (1777-1828) and Humboldt, and his early literary publications such as *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802), which are later incorporated into his Catholic apology, *Génie du christianisme* (1802). In his American novellas, Chateaubriand contributed to early French Romanticism by convincing his readers to look at nature for its own sake, rather than as a vehicle for anthropocentric needs—namely, politics. This perspective goes completely against the Rousseauian idea of civilized man returning to nature.

Whenever philosophers have written about indigenous peoples, the indigenous peoples have been included in the idea of nature because of the fact that they were not considered civilized in comparison to the society of Western Europe. However, compared to those of Rousseau, Chateaubriand's writings on North American ethnography and ethnobotany are presented from an unbiased perspective. If one is familiar with Rousseau's works on nature, it is evident that Rousseau is more interested in using the environment as a means to push his political and moral philosophy, rather than a strictly scientific study of nature. While Rousseau's *Letters on the Elements of Botany* (1771-1774) approaches nature from a scientific perspective, it focuses primarily on human interaction with the environment and how one interprets each plant in a different social class, and the idea that nature itself is a civilization. It is because of this mindset that Rousseau is interpreted to be anthropocentric with his philosophy.<sup>25</sup> For example, his botanical dictionary is full of political examples. If a number of definitions in his botanical dictionary are strictly referring to scientific terminology, some of the terms it refers to also have political examples related to them. This is particularly evident with his entry on the word

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<sup>25</sup> Kyra Sanchez Clapper, "Chateaubriand and His Influence on the Early French Romantics' Perspective on Nature," MA thesis, (University of Memphis, 2015).

“flower,” in which he spends several pages discussing the meaning of the flower in both scientific and political terms.<sup>26</sup> What makes Chateaubriand different from other French intellectuals of his time is that he did not try to assert his personal political beliefs when providing definitions for the flora and fauna that he encountered in North America. Although there is some philosophical and religious discourse between the European narrator and the Amerindians, he is not the focal point of the book, but rather the focus is on the American environment and its impact on the human condition. While the other philosophers saw nature as a place of reason, Rousseau interpreted the environment as the foundation of human morality and nature (nature in an abstract sense, not in a literal scientific sense). One could argue that Rousseau is the precursor of the Annales School, as he considered prehistory to be a crucial period of human history. One can also consider his anthropocentric view of nature as similar to that of the Annales, in which nature did not need to be studied outside of the human context because it takes generations for the physical environment to warrant significant enough change for study. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to study nature when there is no solid evidence to prove one’s theory. The Annales School is known for concentrating primarily on a scientific approach to environmental history, in which the actual specimens were more important than the intellectual and cultural representations of nature.

Similar to the transition between different schools of thought, gardens are considered to be unique pieces of art due to their versatility. Politicians view the garden as a place of nationalistic power, while artists view it as a place of self-expression, as well as an opportunity for leaders to commission them as physical artistic representations of their nation’s power. Scientists view the garden as a place to cultivate knowledge and further scientific knowledge in the areas of

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<sup>26</sup> Roulin Jean-Marie, “François-René de Chateaubriand: Migrations and Revolutions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, edited by Paul Hamilton. (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 52-68: 55.

medicine and agronomy. And while there are clear and pragmatic reasons to continue the study of botany, it was also obvious that European intellectuals wanted to help fulfill their benefactors' desires to gain national glory. Gardens are considered to be one of the most nationalistic forms of art due to their styles being tied to a nation, as well as being a metaphor (the roots are literally part of the land, therefore cannot belong to any other nation).<sup>27</sup> The only problem with the garden is that it almost never retains its original form. As plants die, ownership switches, and management changes, biodiversity is a thing that happens due to the transportation of new flora, as well as climate change.<sup>28</sup>

Gardens are multipurpose spaces, so knowing why they exist depends on their ownership and audience. Was it created for profit in order to attract tourists? Did someone commission it as a living artistic representation? Could it be seen as a place for someone to experience a modern-day Eden? If the garden contains numerous foreign specimens from current colonies, is it a showcase of national power? After all, European imperial powers were in a race to show who knew how to manipulate the environment to its maximum potential.

With the rise of nationalism taking control of western Europe at the turn of nineteenth century, gardens were no longer reserved just for the nobility to entertain their guests or to woo lovers. Botanical gardens became government funded projects in order to not only allow the public to enjoy their many splendors, but also to further the nation's understanding of the environment as a source of power. Before, gardens were reserved for the Church, as well as the rich. The Church would try its best to recreate the gardens mentioned in Genesis and to replicate heaven on earth.

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<sup>27</sup> Traditionally speaking, English gardens are the quintessential Romantic garden due to its lack of structure and lack of exotic florae, though not always. French gardens until after the Revolution were meticulously structured, mimicking geometric shapes. German gardens during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries borrowed from both English and French styles.

<sup>28</sup> Also, the role of the Anthropocene and how environmental awareness and policy need to pay closer attention to not just numerical data on the environment, but also the intellectual and cultural sides as well.



As for the nobility, they felt entitled to the land because they believed that the Church and the nobility took better care of the land than the government did.

One of Chateaubriand's arguments in his attempt at ethnography is that North America would not be as well-organized if it were not for European intervention. This shows a clear break from his extreme Romanticism mindset when he was a youth traversing early America, and is geared more towards the guilt of France losing control of North America after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Americans leads them to take credit for most discoveries in the western United States; but it should not be forgotten that the French from Canada and Louisiana, arriving from the north and by the south, had traversed these regions long before the Americans, who came from the eastern side and who were hampered by their confederation in their route of the Creeks and the Spanish.<sup>29</sup>

While he acknowledges that the Lewis and Clark expedition should be rightfully credited for its discoveries east of the Mississippi, Chateaubriand asserts somewhat of a European superiority over the Americans' claims of scientific discovery. Without the help of earlier European colonists, he believed that early Americans would not have even been able to make their so-called discoveries. And it is with this claim that Chateaubriand contradicts his earlier writings by lamenting the fact that France had to surrender their territories in the New World.<sup>30</sup>

Similar to the study of botany, the construction of gardens is inherently interdisciplinary due to the many agendas that it can fulfill. Gardens can be viewed as a political arena, where botanical gardens pit themselves against other nations in order to see who has the more diverse and better kept possessions. Since this was the Age of Imperialism as well, it is also important to

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<sup>29</sup> François-René Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*. 1827.

<sup>30</sup> In *Atala* and *René*, Chateaubriand praises the indigenous ways of life and expresses the hope that they will continue to follow their traditions, despite the birth of the Early American republic. However, in his ethnographical works published decades later, he displays instances of pro-imperialism by stating that France should still have her North American territories.

note which plants were being kept in the gardens. We can also interpret the number of native plants in the garden, as well as see that number as a stance against anti-imperialism and more so a national garden. In Rousseau's garden in Ermenonville, for example, he made sure that all of the plant specimens included in the original design were native to the area.

One can argue that the rise of scientific exploration was an example of the goal of national conquest, in which each major imperial power funded intellectuals to embark on travels to little known territories and to retrieve botanical samples, as well as information on the peoples living in those areas, as quickly as possible. Another thing to note about gardens is that they are fleeting. Unlike other forms of fine art, such as paintings and sculptures, gardens are ever-changing and do not retain their original form over time. While it is possible for a garden to have some semblance to how it looked when it was first created, it all depends on who is the current proprietor or gardener and what their prerogative might be. One owner might have had easier access to a plant, for example, or maybe one plant became a new commodity that was trendy to have in the garden, thus replacing the former flora that had resided in the soil.

#### Chateaubriand: The Gardener

From 1807 to 1818, Chateaubriand was the proprietor of Vallée aux Loups, an arboretum located in Châtenay-Malabry on the outskirts of Paris.<sup>31</sup> Although Chateaubriand's birthplace was the coastal town of Saint-Malo, he spent most of his childhood within the Breton forests, and his time in Combours would explain his particular interest in the forests that he encountered during his travels, as well as the purchase of numerous tree seedlings to include in his themed gardens. Although Chateaubriand's original intention was to live out the rest of his days at

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<sup>31</sup> While conducting research at the Maison de Chateaubriand, I could not find much information on the acquisition of saplings. The only proof of Chateaubriand planting the existing specimens in the arboretum are on the park's placards.

Vallée aux Loups, his relationship with Napoleon I soured after the execution of the Duc d'Enghien. After this incident, he stepped down as one of Napoleon's ambassadors, which ultimately forced him to sell the property in order to recuperate his financial losses.

Despite having such a plethora of references to the natural world in his prose, political writings, and attempts at ethnography, there is a lack of existing scholarship on Chateaubriand's writings, as well as his gardens, in the field that we would consider to be "green studies." While the main problem of green studies is the fact that it is Anglo and American-centric, it is also problematic that there is not much work in the area even done in French.<sup>32</sup> While there have been countless studies on Ermenonville, Versailles, Jardin des Plantes, and Jardin des Tuileries, there are only brief scholarly references, if any, to Chateaubriand's Vallée aux Loups.<sup>33</sup> One of the few works published on general French gardens in English is an English translation of Denise and Jean-Pierre Le Dantec's called *Reading the French Garden: Story and History*.<sup>34</sup> By looking at lesser-known French gardens, such as Vallée aux Loups, we will better understand the connection between literature and the natural sciences in early nineteenth-century France.

Chateaubriand's later scholarly works, particularly *Voyage en Amérique*, and his ownership of Vallée aux Loups, provide new perspectives on nature from both cultural and scientific standpoints. The father of early French Romanticism wrote *Voyage* as a serious attempt at North American ethnography. This work's timing fits alongside Chateaubriand's appointment as the

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<sup>32</sup> While environmental historiography has its roots in the Annales School, and the study of geography is much more present in France comparison to the United States, the rubric of "green studies" in French is more focused on the material and economic perspectives of the environment, as opposed to the intellectual/cultural perspectives (which is more prominent in Anglo-American and German green studies). See William Cronon's essay "Appendix: Doing Environmental History" (1988) addressing this issue.

<sup>33</sup> For works on Rousseau's gardens at Ermenonville, see Gerard J. van den Broek's *Rousseau's Elysium: Ermenonville Revisited* (2012) and Martin Calder's *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century* (2006). On Versailles, see Michel Baridon's *A History of the Gardens of Versailles* (2008) and Chandra Mukerji's *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (1997). For Jardin du Roi, see E.C. Spary's *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (2000).

<sup>34</sup> *Reading the French Garden* was initially published in French in 1987 and was translated in 1990.

third president of the Société de Géographie, the world's oldest geographical society. Although he was not a trained scientist like many of the savants of the *Société* (Pierre-Simon Laplace, Frédéric Cuvier, Alexander Humboldt, and Joseph Fourier, to name a few), Chateaubriand was determined to redeem himself for the inaccuracies of his descriptions of the North American environment. Before this appointment, the Vallée aux Loups gardens were somewhat structured, showing a mélange of Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic sentiment.

We can read about the gardens in *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, an autobiography that was meant to be published posthumously but was rushed to be published to fund the purchase of Chateaubriand's tomb on Grand Bé. At one point, the grounds contained livestock as well.<sup>35</sup> The gardens contained specimens from all over the globe. One of his gardens was modeled after the popular English garden, which contains numerous Asian plants.

Beyond this field is another piece of ground separated from the field by another retaining wall, with a green trellis interwoven with clematis and Bengal roses; that end of my estate consists of a clump of trees, a little meadow and a poplar alley. The corner is extremely secluded: it does not smile at me as Horace's corner did: *angulus ridet*.<sup>36</sup>

He goes into further detail by mentioning how even though the garden's purpose is to incite joy, he wept when he beheld it. If there is anything that Chateaubriand stays true to, it is the melodrama of Romanticism.

One of the plants that his gardens are most well-known for are the Lebanese cedars, which have a close tie to Christianity. He planted these trees as a way to remember his Middle Eastern voyage. Since he and Madame de Chateaubriand were childless, the next best thing to do in order

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<sup>35</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Book XXXVI: Chapter 1: Section 1. "My house once bought, I have done my best to live in it; I have made it such as it is. From the drawing-room windows one's first view is of what the English call a *pleasure-ground*, a proscenium formed by a lawn and banks of shrubs. Beyond this enclosure, over a retaining wall topped by white lattice fencing, is a field variously cultivated and dedicated to providing fodder for the Infirmary's cattle."

<sup>36</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Book XXXVI: Chapter 1: Section 1.

to immortalize their memory was to plant them, quite literally, into the ground.

Moreover, my trees scarcely know if they serve as a calendar for my pleasures or as death certificates for my years; they grow each day, as I shrink: they marry themselves to those of the Foundlings enclosure and the Boulevard d'Enfer which envelop me. I see not one house; I would be less divorced from the world six hundred miles from Paris. I hear the bleating of the goats that nourish the abandoned orphans.<sup>37</sup>

### Private Spaces turned Public: La Vallée aux Loups Today

In Spring 2019, I had the privilege to interview M. Jérôme Tixier, who is currently the Assistant to the Head of Service Department of Parks, Landscapes, and the Environment at Vallée aux Loups. Chateaubriand's property was acquired by the Département de la Seine in 1967. Since 1970, it has belonged to the Département des Hauts-de-Seine, which undertook numerous projects from 1972 to 1986. La Maison de Chateaubriand and its park were inaugurated and opened to visitors on 26 May 1987.<sup>38</sup>

The maintenance of the Vallée-aux-Loups Departmental Domain is largely entrusted to an external service provider. However, a small team of gardeners from the Department persists and maintains certain landscaped horticultural areas of the arboretum, as well as its plant collections. Today, the Maison de Chateaubriand park is maintained by two to three gardeners (depending on the period and the amount of work to be done) belonging to a private company.

The Maison de Chateaubriand park management strives to preserve the romantic imprint of its illustrious designer. All traces of development carried out by François René de Chateaubriand

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<sup>37</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Book XXXVI: Chapter 1: Section 1. He then goes on to add that "the sisters of charity in their robes of dark muslin and their white cotton caps, convalescent women, and aged ecclesiastics wander among the garden's lilacs, azaleas, calycanthuses and rhododendrons, among the rose-bushes, redcurrants, raspberries and kitchen-garden vegetables. Some of my octogenarian priests were exiles when I was: after having shared my misery with them on the lawns of Kensington, I offer them the grassy tracts of my hospice; they drag their religious age behind them like the folds of the sanctuary veil."

<sup>38</sup> Jerome Tixier (Assistant to the Head of Service Department of Parks, Landscapes and the Environment, Vallée aux Loups), interviewed by Kyra Sanchez Clapper at Memphis, TN, 2019.

were retained, and all possibilities of transcribing and planting the detailed vegetation in the writer's work are systematically utilized. The most representative scenes are preserved, and only certain themes, such as common buildings and the vegetable garden, have disappeared due to the multiplicity of managers who have been in charge of maintaining the site.

The floral specimens available today were planted in 1987, as well as 2000, after the storm of December 1999.<sup>39</sup> All specimens that did not survive or have undergone significant climatic events are, as far as possible, resettled, in order again to preserve the soul of the place. The Hauts-de-Seine Department works with many French and European nurseries, and the plants purchased are generally exceptional subjects because of their size and shape. The managers favor quality and prefer to wait for buyers in the Department to identify the most suitable subjects.

The plants which were most probably planted by Chateaubriand, and which have persisted to the present day, are the famous white chestnut tree (*Aesculus hyppocastanum*), the Louisiana bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), the common catalpa (*catalpa bignonioides*), the pontic rhododendrons (*Rhododendron ponticum*), and the equally famous Lebanese cedar (*Cedrus libani*). These specimens are each in their appropriate "themed" garden. Chateaubriand modeled his domain and arranged it like a landscaper, had leveling work done, and traced the paths, and then "plants and plants as much as he can," as his wife noted. In order to obtain plants, he called upon his acquaintances, his friends, renowned nurserymen, and even the ex-Empress Josephine, who gave him a magnolia with purple flowers for his greenhouses in Malmaison.<sup>40</sup> Far from his

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<sup>39</sup> Some of the specimens include the following: *Cedrus libani*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Magnolia tripetala*, *Magnolia liliflora* « Nigra », *Fagus sylvatica* « Purpurea », *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweetgum), *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Cercis siliquastrum*, *Castanea sativa*, *Tilia cordata*, *Quercus petraea*, *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Taxodium distichum*, *Platanus orientalis*, *Populus nigra* « Italica », *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Pinus sylvestris*, *Pinus nigra* subsp. *Laricio* var. *corsicana*, *Acer platanoides* « Crimson King », *Catalpa bignonioides*, and *Ginkgo biloba*.

<sup>40</sup> According to the text's introduction, Malmaison culminated in all of the things that Josephine thought were worthy for her guests to see when she entertained them. She spent exorbitant amounts of money on importing exotic flora and fauna, but there was no concise list of what was brought from where and when they were purchased. She also seemed to care more about the architecture and entertainment for the guests. However, that is not to downplay

time's landscaped fashions, he designed a literary park where each structure was carefully chosen, which was often connected with the regions visited by this tireless traveler. At the foot of its trees, he can seek his inspiration, imagine his characters, and start writing his *Mémoires*. Unfortunately, there are no publications on the different plants that were used and cited by Chateaubriand in his works.

It is also evident that Chateaubriand conducted some research before his American expedition. According to C.W. Thompson's *French Romantic Travel Writing*, Chateaubriand taught himself more about botany at Jardin du Roi before setting off to North America.<sup>41</sup> This preparation also helped him with the organization of his travelogue. In the preface, Chateaubriand provides the reader with a general overview of American geography, and to some degree an overview of human history. This shows us that Chateaubriand understands that nature is multifaceted. He also mentions that one of the original goals of this project was to make a scientific contribution to French history, just like his compatriot, Jacques Cartier.<sup>42</sup> However, his quest to find the Northwest Passage ultimately ended up failing, and it is because of this failure that parts of his travelogue are both fictional and non-fictional. This is to keep the audience entertained and to show that accuracy is not the only thing that matters in travel literature.

Next, Chateaubriand shifts his attention to the American environment and describes that each facet of nature can stand on its own and is worth its own merit. This mentality goes against the cultural movements of the Enlightenment, in which the earth is simply a machine for humanity to manipulate in order to better civilization as a whole. By writing about Native Americans, fauna,

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her interest in botany. Contemporaries state that her knowledge of the flora is equal to that of an educated botanist.[3] They were also impressed with how the garden setup mimicked the Swiss wilderness, and that cows were brought from Switzerland to experience Swiss goods in the comfort of Paris.

<sup>41</sup> C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writings: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>42</sup> Berchet, *Chateaubriand*, 163.

and flora in the various different sections, Chateaubriand recognizes that each group does not need a human organism in order to be important. In his chapter on natural history, Chateaubriand attempted to provide a brief history of the landscape and to be as scientific as possible with his descriptions. When he does not specifically seek to be scientific, he incorporates religious dialogue in his diary throughout the journey.

The chapter also concerns the terrain that he encountered in America as it relates to Chateaubriand's home province of Brittany. After all, his travels were indeed inspired by his coastal hometown, Saint-Malo. He saw in his youth "old Bretons murmuring against the roads that the open up wanted in their woods, so even that these roads were to raise the value of riparian properties."<sup>43</sup> Because Brittany lies in the northwest corner of France, it benefits from both lush forests and an abundance of coastline. Both forestry and maritime experiences shaped Chateaubriand's desire for travel, as well as his style of writing. This theme also emerges when he talks about becoming an explorer. Being faithful to his romantic prose, he pays tribute to Antiquity by referring to Ulysses and explaining that his travels are triggered more by curiosity than monetary gain. While one of his goals was to "find" the Northwest Passage, this goal was more for self-fulfillment than for scientific reasons. This is made clear when he declares: "I am ranged in the crowd of obscure travelers who have seen only what everyone has seen, who have made no progress in science, who have added nothing to the treasure of human knowledge."<sup>44</sup> The lack of scientific terminology throughout his text shows that Chateaubriand was more interested in nature's aesthetics than the science behind its existence.

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<sup>43</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*, 1826.

<sup>44</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*, 1826.



Since Chateaubriand was not a trained scientist, he used his literary skills instead of scientific knowledge in order to entice his readers to visit the New World.<sup>45</sup> Romanticism brought about the appeal of travel not only to the rich, but to anyone who had access to their texts. Because of this trait, environmental historians consider Romanticism to be the grandfather of environmentalism, as well as environmental literature and history.<sup>46</sup> Although this is true for Rousseau and Chateaubriand's literary works, Chateaubriand is more interested in writing about nature from an aesthetic point of view, rather than creating a new set of moral codes like Rousseau. Instead, nature was perceived to be a plane of existence between the divine and the earthly. However, the fact that Chateaubriand saw nature as a transcendental plane between heaven and humanity goes against traditional Catholic values.

Environmental philosopher Gilbert Lafreniere primarily focuses on Rousseau and how his philosophy gave birth to the environmentalism movement. He writes, "From 1750-1762, Rousseau constructed a system of ideas ranging from a critique of the beliefs and practices of Western civilization to a set of utopian models for reform in the realms of politics, society, education, and religion, all within the context of deep respect for nature. His epistolary novel, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), would change Western aesthetic attitudes towards nature irrevocably."<sup>47</sup> Here we see a mélange of disciplines that Rousseau's philosophy influenced, showing how inherently interdisciplinary environmental studies already was even before it became its own formal field of study. This work is also a more concrete example of how nature and religion are connected.

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<sup>45</sup> Roulin Jean-Marie, "François-René de Chateaubriand: Migrations and Revolutions," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, edited by Paul Hamilton (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 52-68: 55.

<sup>46</sup> Cronon, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Gilbert F. Lafreniere, *The Decline of Nature: Environmental History and the Western Worldview* (Bethesda: Academia Press, 2007), 186.

Chateaubriand was one of Rousseau's disciples in his early literary career, following Rousseau's philosophy so closely that he went on a sort of pilgrimage before he set off for America.<sup>48</sup> After Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, French Romanticism did not come into full fruition until the publication of Chateaubriand's Amerindian novella, *Atala* (1801). Unlike his predecessors, Chateaubriand was known for being an exceptional French figure to travel to North America and write about the peoples he encountered there from personal experience, rather than relying on others' travelogues.<sup>49</sup> *Atala* was the novella that launched Chateaubriand's literary career and helped him regain entry into France after the Revolution. While it is part of a larger work, *Génie du christianisme* (1802), it was published a year earlier as a test to see how the public would respond. And while Chateaubriand insisted that *Atala* and *René* were anti-Enlightenment works, several themes presented throughout the book are reminiscent of Neoclassicism.<sup>50</sup> According to art historian David Wakefield's *The French Romantics* (2008), Chateaubriand's use of language was meant for artists to recreate the scenery that he described in his works based on his descriptions. Wakefield also states that Chateaubriand is the inventor of pictorial literature. Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and Marcel Proust carried this form to its logical conclusion; this, in its turn, gave rise to literary painting, and both phenomena are fundamental to the art of the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Two important works by Bernadin de Saint-Pierre are *Paul et Virginie* et les *Etudes de la nature*. This was included in Jean-Claude Berchet's biography on Chateaubriand.

<sup>49</sup> For more information on Chateaubriand's biography, please see Jean-Claude Berchet's *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> One of the major themes of Romanticism is a return to organized religion (particularly Catholicism). While some Romantics during this period were not considered Christian, but rather pantheists, they still incorporated Christianity's medieval aesthetics into their works.

<sup>51</sup> Wakefield, David. *The French Romantics: Literature and the Visual Arts 1800-1840*. London: Chaucer Press, 2007, 66. Wakefield details how *Atala* inspired numerous painters and how the Chateaubriand's dialogue was a guideline for painters.

This philosophy goes against Hirschfeld's vision of the garden. If the garden must include monuments and architecture, it needs to include figures who represent national figures.

Hirschfeld writes, "Younger nation have seldom made use of this potent means of encouraging service through memorials... How many sums have been wasted on filling our cities and gardens with endless, repetitious copies of ancient gods, and how little have we thought to dedicate part of this expenditure to the true benefactors of the human race and the meritorious men of our own land!"<sup>52</sup> This made sense for the German garden, since the nation did not unify until 1871.

However, during the French Revolution, anything associated with the Catholic Church was destroyed, and temples resembling the Antiquity were then constructed in their stead. Hirschfeld would agree upon the erection of busts of contemporary political figures who had helped to build the nation. However, the fact that they were dressed in Antiquity garb would have thrown him off.

While one of Chateaubriand's goals was to "find" the Northwest Passage, this goal was more for self-fulfillment than for scientific reasons. When he was on board the ship, he declared: "I stand in the crowd of obscure travelers who have seen only what everyone has seen, who have made no progress in the sciences, who have added nothing to the treasure of human knowledge."<sup>53</sup> He did not want to fall into the same categorization as those who had traveled to see only what had already been seen and recorded by others. Unfortunately for him, he falls into this category due to the absence of any discovery on his part during his expedition. It was not uncommon for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors to not cite their information, and while we know that Chateaubriand was not a trained scientist and had to cite numerous scientific works in order to make up for this intellectual gap, his focus on primarily the aesthetics of nature

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<sup>52</sup> Hirschfeld (318). This was particularly true for Germany, which will not be unified until 1871.

<sup>53</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

and culture, and the lack of scientific terminology demonstrates that Chateaubriand was more interested in the aesthetics of nature, rather than the science behind it.

### Conclusion

The overall goal of this chapter is to offer a reevaluation of not only Chateaubriand's prose from a historical perspective, but also to offer a new approach to writing environmental literature and history. While environmental historiography and literary criticism in the field have greatly expanded over the past two decades, there is still much work to be done with literature in French. By looking at the literature of different languages, scholars across disciplines will be able to come up with more research questions and perhaps collaborate with scholars working in fields that they would have not thought of otherwise.

## **Chapter 5: Chateaubriand's Concept of Nature and Its Relationship to Other Enlightenment and Romantic Thinkers**

To conclude my dissertation, I explain why Chateaubriand is such a pivotal figure of both French Enlightenment and Romanticism. Although these movements are often treated as if they are like night and day, much of their characteristics are actually shared. Since Romanticism reached France later than Germany and England, the movement in France tended to retain much of its Enlightenment roots during its early stages. In this chapter, I analyze Chateaubriand's travel literature and juxtapose his writings with Alexander von Humboldt's works in order to better understand how the two men portrayed their North and South American trips from different perspectives, both aesthetically and scientifically, respectively. And to reinforce my claims, I examine their correspondences with each other as well as with other natural historians. By creating a network out of these correspondences, we will be able to further understand the shift of French and German attitudes towards the environment during the Romantic period.

Interestingly, while the French and the English had competed with each other's garden styles ever since the sixteenth century, it was also not uncommon to see the other nationality have their rival's style incorporated in their multithemed estate. Moreover, while many French gardeners were quick to dismiss foreign specimens from the New World for more "superior" ones from continental Europe, there was a rising interest to mimic Chinese and Japanese gardens *à la jardin anglo-chinois*, which will eventually become a staple in nineteenth-century French gardening. What does this tell us about the garden's capricious European perspectives and its interpretations of both indigenous and exotic plants? In this project, I delve into the question of revolutionary France's ever-evolving gardening history, as well as how the obsession with botany and the exotic brought about the rise of travel-inspired gardens from the nineteenth century forward.

Literary critic Robert Pogue Harrison poses this question in *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (2006), in which he explains humanity's relationship with gardens throughout human history. By understanding how humanity took care of gardens throughout the centuries, we will understand the shifting mentality of humanity's treatment of nature. One of the points that Harrison raises is the importance of cultivation, when he states:

...we are thrown into history that we must cultivate our garden. In an immortal Eden, there is no need to cultivate since all is pre-given there spontaneously. Our human gardens may appear to us like little openings onto paradise in the midst of the fallen world, yet the fact that we must create, maintain, and care for them is the mark of their postlapsarian provenance. History without gardens would be a wasteland. A garden severed from history would be superfluous.<sup>1</sup>

If there is no one there to take care of a garden, how can it survive the test of time? In order for a garden to survive, there needs to be a community there to help it grow and thrive. Human agency is what separates gardens from the wilderness. One of the definitions of the word "garden" is "a plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers, or vegetables are cultivated."<sup>2</sup> This is the opposite of the wilderness, where the environment shapes itself and only the natural elements are at play. Harrison writes, "for unlike earthly paradises, human-made gardens that are brought into and maintained by cultivation retain a signature of the human agency to which they owe their existence. Call it the mark of Cura."<sup>3</sup> Since there is no way for humanity to return to the Garden of Eden, the next best thing to do is therefore to replicate paradise in the form of gardens. Chateaubriand believed that recreating these landscapes could bring humanity closer to their spiritual beliefs and provide them with a sense of ownership in their cultivated land. Each section of the garden replicated an idealized vision of the wilderness of each nation that he visited.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), iii.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> Harrison, 9.

However, since they were grown intentionally in France, they can never really be considered “wilderness.” Instead, they are replicas of the lands that he visited, and rather than view each garden as a retreat, one can see them as a glimpse of each country. After visiting these gardens, visitors might want to visit the lands themselves.

John Dixon Hunt, one of the leading authorities in the area of garden history, argues in many of his works that gardens should be read as a primary source in scholarship, rather than be reduced to an amateur hobby. While there is no shortage of historiography on Versailles, there is a dearth of scholarship on gardens constructed concurrently with Le Nôtre’s masterpiece. We currently lack any efficient and plausible narrative of the *longue durée* of French garden art, which may be explained in part by the concentration of energetic and enthusiastic research and writing upon the period dominated by André Le Nôtre. This particular episode’s dominance has meant that the larger story has been neglected; in particular, the quite remarkable and distinctively French episode of “natural,” picturesque, or “English” gardening has never attracted the same attention and expertise as earlier periods. However, another explanation involved the difficulty of deciding what shape to give to a full-scale narrative of French design once the “climax” of Le Nôtre has passed. How is a coherent storyline to be found for the various interventions that followed that glorious moment in French garden art?<sup>4</sup>

One of the main reasons that Chateaubriand constructed these gardens was to leave a permanent mark of his legacy that could be physically seen, instead of just having it in the form of his prose. The gardens would represent each of his trips, and visitors could experience what he saw during his travels without ever leaving France. Harrison’s work reinforces this mentality, as he states that “what distinguishes us in our humanity is the fact that we inhabit relatively

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<sup>4</sup> Hunt, vii.

permanent worlds that precede our birth and outlast our death, binding the generations together in a historical continuum.”<sup>5</sup> Ever since the beginning of human civilization, humanity has looked for a way to leave its legacy behind, either in the form of prose, architectural structures, or the fine arts. These practices are apparent in European societies, but not in Amerindian societies. The latter relied more on the oral tradition, since many of the tribes were nomadic and did not create permanent structures. This manner is juxtaposed with Harrison’s description of human culture, which states that “the word culture has its roots in the soil.”<sup>6</sup> The ephemeral nature of nomadic life is one of the facets of Amerindian culture that Chateaubriand admires. Even though they have established civilizations, they still respected the land that they occupied. To most Amerindian tribes, there was no such thing as ownership of land, because it was for all to use.

Chateaubriand was known for his fleeting intellectual endeavors and patriotism regarding both his birth province and the nation of France. He considered himself a Breton *and* a Frenchman, each with the same fervor.<sup>7</sup> By examining Chateaubriand’s numerous writings that refer to the environment that he was currently living in, we can better understand how nostalgia and nationalism play a large role in one’s political stances. In the next chapter, I will continue to explore the role of trees and French nationalism. While this chapter focuses on Chateaubriand’s pro-Catholic and pro-royalist visions of French forests, I also want to point out that the language he uses could anachronistically be considered global. If the woods in his fiction (in both *Atala* and *René*) can be considered as public temples of worship, why is it a problem for the government to redistribute the land? And that’s not even to mention his anti-Protestant sentiments, which have been found to be the most heretical.

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<sup>5</sup> Harrison, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Harrison, 45.

<sup>7</sup> The way that he shows his Breton patriotism is by admiring the landscape. Other Breton nationalists usually pride themselves in knowing their ancestral tongue.



Although Victor Hugo is often credited as the Father of French Romanticism, Chateaubriand was the first definitive figure of France's Romantic movement. After all, the former declared in his diary that he "would become Chateaubriand or nothing!" at the age of fourteen. Hugo's early life echoed much of his predecessor's. He was exiled to the island of Jersey for political dissidence, although his political career was not as illustrious as Chateaubriand's. His first works paid homage to the founder of Romanticism, such as the ideas of French nationhood, the Catholic faith, and the monarchy. As a young man, Hugo traveled with his military father throughout Europe.

While Hugo's prose focused on waterways and the European landscape, it would be a stretch to categorize his writings as travel literature. As Edward Said explained in his pivotal work *Orientalism* (1978), the French cared more about the exotic and attractive reality than their British neighbors did. Chateaubriand's writings on the Middle East were considered egotistical because there was more focus on the author's perspective of his surroundings than solely focusing on the details of the "wilderness" surrounding him. However, his portrayal of North America was the opposite; here, he was trying to be a scientist rather than a Catholic apologist. As seen in *Génie du christianisme*, Chateaubriand had always been an ardent defender of the Church. Accord to Said, the purpose of Chateaubriand's excursion to Jerusalem and Lebanon was to "round off his studies" of the exotic, as well as perfect his prose, in which he argues that "religion is a kind of universal language understood by all men."<sup>8</sup> Having been to the New World and seen its monuments of nature, he needed to complete his circle of studies by visiting the Orient and its monuments of knowledge. Said also argues that "Chateaubriand puts the whole idea in the Romantic redemptive terms of a Christian mission to revive a dead world, to quicken

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<sup>8</sup> Said, 171.

in it a sense of its own potential, one which only a European can discern underneath a lifeless and degenerate service.”<sup>9</sup> While this is true for his trip to the Middle East later in his life, the Frenchman’s opinion of the “savages” in North America was not one of a missionary, but rather of a traveler who was open to new ideas of spirituality.<sup>10</sup>

Chateaubriand’s travels in the New World and throughout Europe and the Middle East gives us a better understanding of what it meant to be a Romantic versus a philosophe. Unlike his predecessors, most of the philosophers relied on explorers’ travelogues and would use them as the foundation of their discourses. But the concept of travel literature depends on the author who was writing it. Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* (1721) is a collection of letters written by two Persian noblemen who traveled throughout Europe and France. In their letters, they critique and praise their homeland’s ways of doing things compared to that of the places they have visited.

Voltaire’s *Ingénu* (1767) focuses on a Huron taken away from his homeland in New France to England and, eventually, Brittany, where he is forced to assimilate to the new culture. Diderot’s *Supplément du voyage de Bougainville* (1772) is another exemplary work in which a philosopher presents a cast of characters traveling to distant lands in order to better understand not only the world around them, but also the very culture in which they were raised back in their homeland. Breaking away from the traditional sense of travel literature, Rousseau’s *Emile ou de l’éducation* was travel literature in the sense of self-discovery within nature, and was not tied to a specific nation-state. Chateaubriand’s *Atala* and *René* (1801-1802) gave the French public a glimpse of the New World from the author’s personal experience, as well as a newfound appreciation of Christianity following the French Revolution. De Staël’s *Corinne* (1806) critiques

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<sup>9</sup> Said, 172.

<sup>10</sup> Said, 176. Also, Chateaubriand’s trips were so influential that other authors indirectly based their travels on his. While Nerval based his itinerary on Lamartine’s, the latter crafted his trip from Chateaubriand.

French society from the perspective of a British-born woman who embraced Italian nationalism by learning the language and culture. Using travel literature to critique French society was prevalent mode in French literature until Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), which praised the Napoleonic era and French nationalism rather than opposed it.

This chapter will provide a general overview of the development of Romanticism in France, its impact on the general populace's perspective on the environment, and how its philosophy is still prevalent in today's anxiety regarding radical climate change. To end my dissertation, I explain why Chateaubriand was such a pivotal figure of the French Enlightenment and Romanticism. Although these movements are treated as if they were like night and day, they shared many characteristics. Since Romanticism reached France later than England and Germany, the movement in France retained much of its Enlightenment roots during its early stages. I will also refer back to garden history and how environmental historiography is tied to Chateaubriand's concept of nature.

### Enlightenment and Nature

The word *nature* underwent numerous changes in its definition throughout the early modern to the modern period. The idea of nature takes on different meanings depending on the context. In early natural philosophy, nature referred to the human condition and emotions.<sup>11</sup> However, as travel literature began incorporating more exotic flora and fauna, those who were reading these works began to see symbolism between nature and humanity. In Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*, the Huron protagonist declares:

I am a hundred times more to be pitied than you; I am born free as the air; I had two lives, liberty and the object of my love; and I am deprived of both. We are both in fetters, without knowing who put them on us, or without being able to

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<sup>11</sup> For works on early European concepts of nature throughout European history, see Augustine of Hippo's *The City of God* (5th century) and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (1485).

inquire. It is said that the Hurons are barbarians, because they avenge themselves on their enemies; but they never oppress their friends. I had scarce set foot in France before I shed my blood for this country. I have, perhaps, preserved a whole province, and my recompense is imprisonment. In this country men are condemned without being heard. This is not the case in England. Alas! it was not against the English that I should have fought.<sup>12</sup>

One of Rousseau's main arguments is that there is no such thing as "order" in nature, and if humanity were to return to nature, they would be free from the artificiality of human-made rules. He reinforces his argument by stating, "the spectacle of nature becomes indifferent to [man] by dint of becoming familiar to him. It's always the same order, it's always the same revolutions; he does not have the spirit to be astonished at the greatest wonders; and it is not at home that we must seek the philosophy that man needs, to know how to observe once what he has seen every day."<sup>13</sup> Rousseau accused Western civilization of being ungrateful for the environment, which brought about unhappiness and turmoil of war.<sup>14</sup> Rousseau's solution was for humanity to appreciate nature; by doing so, he believed that the need for violence would diminish, and humanity would better understand themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Although some progress has helped society to some degree, Rousseau thought that humanity had removed itself from nature. In *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), Rousseau writes, "We had to make a lot of progress, acquire a lot of industry and lights, transmit them and increase them from age to age, before arriving at this last term of

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<sup>12</sup> Voltaire. *L'Ingénu*, Chapter 14.

<sup>13</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Rousseau's *bon sauvage* is considered "good" and "pure" because he is self-reliant. If humans did not need to rely on others to survive, then they would be able to live according to the laws of nature. However, Europeans are ignorant of nature, have too strict rules, and are continually waging war with one another. Rousseau believed that wars were fought solely for the ownership of land, and his solution to warfare was to eliminate the concept of private property, which the indigenous peoples did not have. But this is all speculation on his part, because Rousseau had never actually traveled outside of Europe. Despite this, Rousseau's followers believed that his philosophy would be a perfect blueprint with which to overthrow the existing governments in Europe.

<sup>15</sup> Laurence D. Cooper's *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (1999) goes into more detail about Rousseau's political discourse. A more recent work on Rousseau's political and educational philosophies is Denise Schaeffer's *Rousseau on Education, Freedom, and Judgment* (Penn State University, 2016).

the state of nature. So let's take things from above and try to bring together under a single point of view this slow succession of events and knowledge, in their most natural order."<sup>16</sup> Rousseau was against the notion that everyone must be the same: "It was I who built this wall; I gained this ground by my work. Who gave you the alignments, could they answer, and under what do you claim to be paid at our expense for a work that we have not imposed on you."<sup>17</sup> The logic was that property was earned through work. However, Rousseau argued that this reasoning was artificial, and that humanity would be better off if everyone were granted access to said property by doing their fair share of work. He also argued that technological advancement was one of the downfalls of humanity.

According to Rousseau, the two technological advances that pulled humanity further away from nature were metallurgy and agriculture, respectively. He reinforced this argument with the following quote: "... For the philosopher it is iron and wheat that have civilized men and lost mankind; so both were unknown to the savages of America who for this have always remained such."<sup>18</sup> The Amerindians, however, did not have the same technological advances in agriculture as the Europeans did. This fact gave Rousseau the idea that the Amerindians have simpler lives than the Europeans did because their lives were not too complicated because of technology. This is against organized religion as well, because the state can manipulate it for profit. Rousseau, who was a deist, did not believe that there was only one true religion. To him and other deists, religion was something that someone can find in themselves rather than in an institution.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 44. This quote also fits into my argument about Chateaubriand's disapproval of the European colonization of the New World. The Europeans destroyed Amerindian culture with war, disease, and colonization. While he speaks of how Europeans have contributed to human civilization's development over the centuries, he cannot support what they have done to the indigenous populations because of European colonization and the Enlightenment rationale that Amerindian culture was dying.

<sup>19</sup> This sentence also fits into Cooper's argument, in which happiness is found in nature rather than human-made institutions.

Although Rousseau frequently changed his religious beliefs, he always retained his belief in God. According to the deists, God is present in nature, and there is no need for a religious institution in order to believe. He writes, “When religion had done only this good to men, it would be enough for them all to have to cherish and adopt it, even with its abuses, since it spares even more blood than fanaticism does. made flow: but let’s follow the thread of our hypothesis.”<sup>20</sup> He thought that even though people are increasingly fleeing away from religion, religion would always be there for them, even if they mistreat it. This quote also corresponds to his hypothesis that nature would always be there for those who want to return to it. Nature and religion are the same entity according to Rousseau. If one is in nature, one is with God, and the rules laid down by nature are those laid down by God. However, this is an over-simplified notion of religion, and is particularly true of his analysis of Amerindian cultures and religions.

The progress of civilization has caused the creation of free time. Rousseau writes that “in the arts which did not need the assistance of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good and happy as far as they could be by their nature and continued to enjoy among themselves the pleasures of a trade independent.”<sup>21</sup> Europeans ultimately ended up with too much free time, which was why they could organize society in the ways that they did. However, “savages” could keep their lives simple because they only needed the necessities.<sup>22</sup>

A naïve idea that Rousseau had was that the savages had no rules in their society. He thought that all savages shared the same beliefs. He wrote, “When I see animals born free and abhorred

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<sup>20</sup> Rousseau, 50.

<sup>21</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> According to Rousseau, men needed only three things: food, sex, and sleep. The rest were just false needs. Rousseau writes that if we “give a civilized man time to gather all his machines around him, there can be no doubt that he easily overcomes the savage man (23).” Compared to the savage, civilized man is physically incapable of fending for himself, because he relies on technology and others’ assistance. However, the savage is more autonomous and has free will. In this sense, it is more logical for humanity to embrace solitude, rather than depend on others. Later in Rousseau’s life, he retracted this argument because he knew that humanity could not revert to statelessness.

by captivity break their heads against the bars of their prison, when I see multitudes of naked savages despise European pleasures and brave hunger, fire, iron and death so as not to keep their independence, I feel that it is not for slaves that it is up to reasoning for freedom.”<sup>23</sup>

The consequences of his opinions on the wild lead to the idea that we should either live in small communities that are homogeneous, or live in a new republic where everyone has civil liberties. He thought that humanity was neither good nor bad. With this logic, Rousseau’s philosophy argued that humanity becomes corrupt only once they desire unnecessary things in order to survive. Laws are also blamed, because they prohibit man from attaining the true state of happiness. However, what is right and what is wrong is inherently subjective. This call for small communities was anti-colonialist because it did not believe in creating hegemonies. Rousseau thought that the idea of nationalism was false, because we are all part of the same race; he states, “While we read in a thousand places that Frenchmen and other Europeans took refuge voluntarily among these nations, spent their whole life there, without being able to leave such a strange way of life, and that we even see missionaries supposed to regret with fondness the calm and innocent days they spent with these peoples so despised.”<sup>24</sup> Rousseau’s philosophy did not welcome radical systemization.

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<sup>23</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 47. This work is also read from a political perspective. Depending on how Rousseau’s philosophy is interpreted, one can interpret his philosophy as a plea for autocracy. He writes, « je me borne à être un sauvage paisible dans la solitude que j’ai choisie auprès de votre patrie, où vous devriez être. » (77)[38] The government, according to Rousseau, is the source of all corruption. He proposes that the common people and the government should work together rather than against each other. That is why Rousseau is credited with being the father of the extreme ideologies of communism and fascism. If one interprets his philosophy from a leftist perspective, Rousseau wants the government to standardize everything. Rousseau writes: « il me suffit d’avoir prouvé que ce n’est point-là l’état originel de l’homme et que c’est le seul esprit de la société et l’inégalité qu’elle engendre qui changent et altèrent ainsi toutes nos inclinations naturelles. » (54)[38] We are born to be happy, and it is because of the government that we do not have real happiness. He talks about how current social constructs ban us from our full potential: « les citoyens voulurent garder leur liberté, les sujets ne songèrent qu’à l’ôter à leurs voisins, ne pouvant souffrir que d’autres jouissent d’un bien dont ils ne jouissaient plus eux-mêmes. En un mot, d’un côté furent les richesses et les conquêtes, et de l’autre le bonheur et la vertu » (50).

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité*, 74.

The concept of the savage has its advantages and disadvantages. Rousseau challenged the overly structured European social system and wished for European societies to simplify, rather than become more complex and rationalize everything. While he had good intentions with this philosophy, these works simplify foreign cultures in order to avoid as many Europeans as possible. This was arrogant on his part, because he had never traveled outside of Europe. This hypothesis was detrimental not only to indigenous peoples, but also to Europeans as well. While it did contribute to the birth of democracy, it has also given us the misconception that European progress represents humanity's overall progress. While Rousseau tried to explain why indigenous peoples had fewer problems than Europeans did, it is also arrogant to assume, because one cannot insult one culture just to praise another.

### Transition Between Enlightenment and Romanticism

The period of Romanticism arrived rather late in French arts and literature in comparison to its British (1750-1850) and German (late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries) counterparts.<sup>25</sup> This is due to the fact that the political climate of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century France had put a halt to the intellectual movements that were occurring in its salons. While French Romanticism was not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment, it distinguished itself enough to be different from its predecessor. In fact, the precursors of Romanticism were also part of the Enlightenment movement. One of the key *philosophers* was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was at one point close friends with Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Alembert.<sup>26</sup> Because Rousseau and

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<sup>25</sup> Like all historical and literary periods, there is not a real consensus in terms of when these periods begin and end. Refer to the following works on Romanticism: Isaiah Berlin's *The Roots of Romanticism: Second Edition* (2013); Henry Beers' *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (1898); and Nicholas Saul's *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> What separated Rousseau from his colleagues were his political views. Since this project is about nature, religion, and science, I will refrain from going into too much detail about politics. For more about politics and gender, see Joel Schwartz's *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (University of Chicago Press, 1985); Penny Weiss's *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex, and Politics* (NYU Press, 1995); and Mira Morgenstern's *Rousseau and Politics of Ambiguity: Self, Culture, and Society* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).



Chateaubriand were incorporating Enlightenment ideology into their own ideology, Romanticism was not a *complete* rejection of the Enlightenment.

One of the ways in which Romanticism was not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment was its shared ideology in terms of what it means to be an individual, as well as what it means to be a citizen in a nation-state. Prior to the Enlightenment, most Europeans accepted the idea of a collective self, where the only individual who mattered was the king, due to his divinity. But as French intellectual society became more secularized, the idea of the individual became more prominent. Rather than live one's life in order to please the nobility, one should make something out of themselves.<sup>27</sup>

While the Enlightenment and Romanticism shared the same perspective of the individual, the French Romantics were strongly against the overuse of rationalism in order to explain the world around them. During the Scientific Revolution, Newton attempted to use mathematics in order to provide physical proof of God's existence.<sup>28</sup> However, unbeknownst to him, his successors were able to take God out of the equation and began theorizing how the world had come to be without divine intervention. However, with the philosophes, the take on this varies. To today's scholars, Diderot and d'Alembert could be considered to be agnostic-atheists who did not believe in the concept of a higher power, while other philosophers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau were against the idea of organized religion, but supportive of the idea of a pantheistic God.

In order to understand how nature and religion are intertwined in Romantic art and literature, we must understand how Romanticism borrowed its concept of nature from the Enlightenment.

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<sup>27</sup> While this seems to be a trend with the philosophes, philosophers such as Kant dedicated their philosophical essays to the nobility. See Kant's *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784).

<sup>28</sup> For more discussion of the clockmaker God, see Edward Dolnick's *The Clockwork Universe: Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, and the Birth of the Modern World* (2012).

When articles for the *Encyclopédie* were published between 1751-1772, the entry for the word “nature” had several meanings, due to its inherent vagueness. The philosophers were right to assume that nature could be interpreted in a multitude of ways, depending on the context in which it is written. For political scientist Laurence Cooper, the nature that Rousseau addressed is anthropocentric and a vehicle for political discourse.<sup>29</sup> This is also similar to French literary scholar Daniel Sipe’s interpretation of the concept, in which nature is just another way to refer to the human condition, and how the different viewpoints of nineteenth-century intellects shaped the constantly changing conception of a utopia after death.<sup>30</sup>

The purpose of this section is to examine how the environment played a role in humanity’s perception of God. Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, who were both part of the Enlightenment, believed that God was synonymous to Providence.<sup>31</sup> To the deists of the Enlightenment, God was not restricted to a specific religion or sect. On the other hand, Romantic writers did not have an agreement with regards to religion’s role in human civilization. While Chateaubriand was the lead French apologist of Catholicism during the early nineteenth-century, his early novellas portrayed God as Christian as well as pagan, with the critique of Atala’s untimely demise due to religious fanaticism. As for Hugo and Lamartine, they were fervently against organized religion, and they believed that one had to find God within nature.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, travel literature was a popular method with which to criticize the ills of society. While some authors wrote about the exotic in order to critique their own society, others wrote about distant places as a means to entice their readers to

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<sup>29</sup> Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau and Nature: The Problem of the Good Life*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Sipe, *Text, Image, and the Problem with Perfection in Nineteenth-century France: Utopia and Its Afterlives* (London: Routledge, 2013), 18.

<sup>31</sup> The concept of Providence is common in both Catholic and Lutheran theology. German philosophers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel were the strongest proponents of Providence during the Enlightenment and Romantic eras.

visit them. If we were to compare eighteenth-century works such as *Le Supplément du voyage de Bougainville*, which was a parody of Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* (1791), in comparison to later works such as Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* and Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René*, we see that the former wrote solely based on the experiences of others, while the latter two actually went to Mauritius and North America, respectfully.<sup>32</sup> The reason why there was such close attention paid to the linguistics of botany was because it showed modern readers how people during the eighteenth perceived the environment around them. After much explanation of the linguistic changes of flora, especially flowering plants, Kelley explains that her "interest in the culture of Romantic botany is driven, then, less by its taxonomic details or the brilliance of botanical illustration (although these too have their beauties) than by their status as substrata out of which Romantic poets craft poetic singularities."<sup>33</sup> From this, we can understand that the Romantics were more concerned with the aesthetics of nature than the technicalities of taxonomy. And while this might sound like the Romantics only cared about semantics on a superficial level, their understanding of the ever-changing language of flowers is key to better understanding how perspectives when it came to nature had changed throughout modern European history.

#### Early French Romanticism: Rousseau and Saint Pierre

Daniel Roche and Anthony Pagden argue that the Enlightenment in France (1701-1789) was a movement that strived to unify humanity by eliminating the social classes. In Roche's *France in the Enlightenment* (1998), he compartmentalizes the movement into three parts: space and time,

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<sup>32</sup> Theresa Kelley, "Romantic Exemplarity," 224. Her argument is primarily focused on British Romanticism, but can also be applied to French Romanticism as well. One of the ongoing debates in the field of Romanticism studies is with regards to the semantics used to describe nature. Literary critic Theresa Kelley argues in her essay, "Romantic Exemplarity," that the "Romantic debates about botany and nomenclature belong to, and may have helped incite, a wider cultural and literary attention to classification and naming."

<sup>33</sup> Kelley, 249.

the relation of the monarchical state to subjects and corporations, and changes in fundamental values.<sup>34</sup> While Roche and other scholars argue that politics during the Enlightenment were the cause of modern individualism, Pagden contends that science was pivotal to the development of individualism in the modern era.<sup>35</sup> However, the equality that the Europeans had in mind was restricted to white men in western Europe who saw themselves as separate from the Church. By focusing solely on western European science, [ir]religion, and philosophy, the Enlightenment is considered a Eurocentric ideology that rejects anything that does not fall into its paradigm.<sup>36</sup>

If we were to compare the philosophical *contes* written by Rousseau and Saint-Pierre to the Eurocentric idea of the Enlightenment, we would see that the two ideologies do not mesh in the French Enlightenment. One of the reasons why Romanticism did not make its mark in French culture until the early nineteenth century was due to the numerous revolutionary movements that were occurring in Old Regime France. Instead of a clean separation from the materialistic Enlightenment, a transitional period between the Enlightenment and Romanticism took shape in France from the end of the eighteenth century to 1830.<sup>37</sup>

Similar to the Enlightenment, Romanticism was not a unified movement. Each author, artist, and philosophe had a different approach to what was and what was not “romantic.” Even the etymology of the word *romantic* is contradictory. According to literary critic Michael Ferber, “[I]t is one of the oddities of etymology that ‘romantic’ ultimately derives from Latin *Roma*, the

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*. (Harvard University Press: 1998), 8.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters* (New York: Random House, 2013), 20-22. Although philosophers such as the Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) fought for universal human rights, which included rights for women and slaves, the movement’s overall goal was to bring equality to men.

<sup>36</sup> Works such as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) come into play when writing about the Enlightenment from the non-European perspective.

<sup>37</sup> A myriad of works focus on the Enlightenment and Romanticism’s roles in shaping nineteenth-century French politics and society. For works on politics during eighteenth-century France and its impact on the Enlightenment, see the following works: Dena Goodman’s *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Cornell University Press, 1996); Colin Jones’s *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (Penguin Books, 2003); and Daniel Roche’s *France in the Enlightenment* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

city of Rome, for surely the prevalent image of the ancient Romans for many centuries now is that they were the least romantic of peoples.”<sup>38</sup> During the Enlightenment, art movements such as Neoclassicism emerged that embraced the Antiquity’s aesthetic. If the etymology of the word *Romanticism* refers to the people of Rome, this brings us to the question of whether French Romanticism was a rejection or an extension of the Enlightenment. And in order to understand how Romanticism is different from the Enlightenment, we must first understand the very definition of the word.

Meyer Howard Abrams, one of the renowned literary critics of Romanticism in the twentieth century, provides the most detailed, albeit lengthy, definition of Romanticism. In *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971), the movement is defined as follows:

Romanticism was a European cultural movement, or a set of kindred movements, which found in a symbolic and internalized romance plot a vehicle for exploring one's self and its relationship to others and to nature, which privileged the imagination as faculty higher and more inclusive than reason, which sought solace in or reconciliation with the natural world, which ‘detranscendentalized’ religion by taking God or the divine as inherent or in the soul and replaced theological doctrine with metaphor and feeling, which honored poetry and all the arts as the highest human creations, and which rebelled against the established canons of neoclassical aesthetics and both aristocratic and bourgeois social and political norms in favor of values more individual, inward, and emotional.<sup>39</sup>

One can see how the movement was full of contradictions. Despite being a movement that supported individualism, it also gave birth to nationalism—an ideology in which one feels a sense of belonging with those who share commonalities from the same nation-state.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ferber, *Romanticism*, 10. This quote was cited from Abrams, Meyer Howard. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973). While his works predominantly focus on British Romanticism, the background information that he provides for the movement can be applied to all types of Romanticism.

<sup>40</sup> For more works on nationalism, see the following: Liah Greenfield’s *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, (Harvard University Press, 1992); Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983); and Anthony Smith’s *The Nation in History* (Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

If Romanticism is not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment, is it merely a reworking? How were nature and religion portrayed in these movements? How was science interpreted during the Enlightenment? And in Romanticism? In order to better understand this transitional cultural period, we must focus our attention on the Enlightenment and Romanticism's significant figures. By doing so, we will better understand how French Romanticism retained much of its Enlightenment heritage, despite being a revolt against humanity's increasing mechanization. I argue that French Romanticism (1780-1840) is not a rejection of the Enlightenment. While the two movements are often considered opposites, Romanticism actually borrowed many of its concepts from the Enlightenment and modified them to fit a new paradigm. In order to understand how Romanticism is not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment, we must first understand how the Enlightenment underwent drastic changes towards the end of its epoch. Although both movements deal with politics, I will only focus on the movements' approaches to religion and science.<sup>41</sup> The two common themes that they share are with regards to how nature plays a vital role in human civilization.

Travel literature played a large role in the Enlightenment and Romanticism and figured significantly into their views on human nature and the physical environment. While the study of travel literature is predominately Anglo-American, it is still prevalent in other languages as well.<sup>42</sup> Using exotic backdrops to present social critiques and foreign characters, authors from

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<sup>41</sup> For works on the politics of the French Revolution, see the following: Dena Goodman's *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (1996); François Furet's *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1981); Laura Mason's *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Cornell University Press, 1996); and Micah Alpaugh's *Non-Violence and the French Revolution: Political Demonstrations in Paris, 1787-1795* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> In her article, "Globality, Difference, and the International Turn in Ecocriticism," Ursula Heise argues that ecocriticism is still Anglo-American-centric and that for the field to continue developing, it needs to analyze more literature written in different languages.

Montesquieu to de Staël were able to articulate their criticisms without directly attacking French society.

The concept of what constitutes travel literature depends on the author. Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) is a collection of letters written by two Persian noblemen who traverse Europe and France. In their letters, they critique and praise their homeland's way of doing things compared to how things are done in the places they have visited. Voltaire's *Ingénu* (1767) focuses on the tale of a Huron who was taken away from his homeland in New France to England and, eventually, to Brittany, where he was forced to assimilate to a new culture. Diderot's *Supplément du voyage de Bougainville* (1772) is another exemplary work in which a philosopher invents a cast of characters traveling to distant lands in order to better understand not only the world around them, but also the very culture in which they were raised back in their homeland. Breaking away from the traditional sense of travel literature, Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* was travel literature in the sense of self-discovery within nature, and was not tied to a specific nation-state.

The Enlightenment's materialistic worldview of the physical environment came to a decline during the late eighteenth century, and was followed by a reprise in religion. Shortly afterward, society fell back to the secular worship of not necessarily institutionalized religion, but rather the human-made concept of nationalism. This collective movement was ironically born during the Napoleonic era, during which the individual mattered more than the general population.

Romanticism arrived relatively late in French arts and literature than it did in its British (1750-1850) and German (late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries) counterparts.<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Like all historical and literary periods, there is no real consensus with regards to when these periods begin and end. Refer to the following works on Romanticism: Isaiah Berlin's *The Roots of Romanticism: Second Edition* (2013); Henry Beers' *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (1898); and Nicholas Saul's *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

political climate of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century France halted its salons' intellectual movements. While French Romanticism was not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment, it distinguished itself enough to be different from its predecessor. The precursors of Romanticism were also part of the Enlightenment movement. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the critical philosophers who was close friends with Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Alembert.<sup>44</sup> Because Rousseau and Chateaubriand were incorporating Enlightenment concepts into their own ideologies, Romanticism was thus not a *complete* rejection of the Enlightenment.

One way in which Romanticism was not a complete rejection of the Enlightenment is in its shared ideology of what it means to be an individual and what it means to be a citizen in a nation-state. Prior to the Enlightenment, most Europeans accepted the idea of a collective self, in which the only individual who mattered was the king, due to his divinity. But as French intellectual society became more secularized, the idea of the individual became more prominent. Rather than live one's life only to please the nobility, it was now believed that one should make something out of themselves in their own right.<sup>45</sup>

While the Enlightenment and Romanticism share the same perspective of the individual, the French Romantics were firmly against the overuse of rationalism to explain the world around them. During the Scientific Revolution, Newton used mathematics in an attempt to provide physical proof of God's existence.<sup>46</sup> However, unbeknownst to him, his successors were able to

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<sup>44</sup> What separated Rousseau from his colleagues were his political views. Since this project is about nature, religion, and science, I will refrain from going into too much detail about politics. For politics and gender, see Joel Schwartz's *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (University of Chicago Press, 1985); Penny Weiss's *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex, and Politics* (NYU Press, 1995); and Mira Morgenstern's *Rousseau and Politics of Ambiguity: Self, Culture, and Society* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> While this seems to be a trend with the philosophes, philosophers such as Kant dedicated their philosophical essays to the nobility. See Kant's *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784).

<sup>46</sup> For more discussion of the clockmaker God, see Edward Dolnick's *The Clockwork Universe: Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, and the Birth of the Modern World* (2012).



take God out of the equation and began theorizing about how the world had come to be without divine intervention. With the philosophes, the take on this idea varies. To today's scholars, Diderot and d'Alembert could be labeled as agnostic-atheists who did not believe in the concept of a higher power, while other philosophers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau were against the idea of organized religion but still supportive of a pantheistic God.

In the eighteenth century, many Europeans referred to mountainous Switzerland as Europe's "wilderness." Because Rousseau was born in Geneva, the way that he perceived nature was already assumed to be radical compared to his French contemporaries, since most western Europeans viewed Switzerland as a "wild country." In Gerard van de Broek's *Rousseau's Elysium: Ermenonville Revisited* (2012), he focuses on how Rousseau's personal experiences shaped the landscape of Ermenonville, where he spent his final days.<sup>47</sup> For example, Rousseau has said that "the whole of Switzerland is, so to speak, but a great city, whose streets, broad and long, more than that of Saint-Antoine, are strewn with forests, cut off from mountains, and whose scattered houses and isolated, communicate only with English gardens." The difference between landscapes and gardens is that the former is less organized than the latter. Rousseau was against the idea of excessive rational use, like the mountains. He preferred nature, where there is no order, rather than the new Western civilizations where cities had become overly structured. We can interpret this mentality as a natural hierarchy: "I will remember all my life a plant collecting that I made one day near the Robailan, mountain of the vigilante Clerc. I was alone, I sank into the crevices of the mountain, and from wood to wood, from rock to rock, I came to a recess so hidden that I have never seen a wilder aspect in my life."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Gerard van de Broek, *Rousseau's Elysium: Ermenonville Revisited* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>48</sup> Rousseau, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Promenade I.

In solitude, Rousseau described the mountains as a natural barrier for both animals and humans. He writes, “The duke, the little owl and the silversmith made their voices heard in the cracks of the mountain, a few rare but familiar little birds tempered the horror of this solitude.”<sup>49</sup> In this context, animals see the mountain as a place that offers solitude as well as shelter. For humans, it is a place to escape what they believe to be civilization. According to Rousseau, how did mountains influence human civilizations in the eighteenth century? While he argued that nature and humanity were two separate entities, he also stated that the mountains were a place for man to escape civilization. The Europeans regarded Switzerland as a “wild country,” frightening because of its inhospitable terrain. However, Rousseau thought that Switzerland was a beautiful country because its nature was not tamed. According to him, God could only be found in the wilderness, because it was free from human intervention. In the same vein, Rousseau’s pupil, Saint-Pierre, believed that God resided in nature.

Towards the end of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s novel, *Paul et Virginie* (1788), the two lovers are separated by Virginia’s untimely death. Rather than surrender herself to Paul, Virginia decides to maintain her virtue intact by drowning. This dramatic event relates to one of the central themes in this work, which is that religious piety is the only way to salvation, even if it means an early demise. Like Rousseau, Saint Pierre was against the excessive use of reason, and he expressed the notion that reason and religion coexist because nothing can be absolute due to many external elements.<sup>50</sup> While this might not seem to make sense, since Virginia could have been easily saved from falling off the ship, she still had her reasons. Despite her early demise, her soul is still present throughout the rest of the story:

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<sup>49</sup> Rousseau, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Promenade VII.

<sup>50</sup> Catriona Seth et Eric Wauters, *Autour de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: les écrits et les hommes des Lumières à l’Empire* (Rouen: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2010). This is a collection of essays on Saint-Pierre’s writings and how there is much more work to be done with regards to him in modern scholarship.

... But Virginie still exists. My son, see that everything changes on earth and that nothing is lost in it. No human art could destroy the smallest particle of matter, and what was reasonable, sensitive, loving, virtuous, religious would have perished, when the elements with which it was coated are indestructible? Ah! If Virginie was happy with us, she is now much more so. There is a God, my son: all nature announces it; I do not need to prove it to you.<sup>51</sup>

This quote explains that Virginia's presence in nature is essential because she is like God—she is omnipresent. Everyone is happier when one is with God. The death of Virginia justifies the notion that souls are happier after death. According to St. Pierre, nature and Heaven are the same. After death, deceased souls return to nature in order to be with God. Virginia's omnipresence reflects Saint-Pierre's beliefs, which were that God is present in nature and not in an institution. Like Rousseau and other deists of the eighteenth century, St. Pierre was a pantheist, and his style of writing describes his religious beliefs. One can consider Saint Pierre to be a pantheist; he was also a devout Christian. By describing him as a pantheistic Christian, readers become aware of his special attention given to nature.

#### Chateaubriand's Scientific Aspirations in North America

Chateaubriand was one of Rousseau's disciples in his early literary career. He followed his philosophy so closely that he went on a sort of pilgrimage before he set off for America.<sup>52</sup> After Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, French Romanticism did not come into full fruition until the publication of Chateaubriand's Amerindian novella, *Atala* (1801). Unlike his predecessors, Chateaubriand was known for being one of the exceptional French figures to actually travel to North America and write about the people he encountered there from personal experience, rather than relying on travelogues of others.<sup>53</sup> *Atala* was the novella that launched Chateaubriand's

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<sup>51</sup> Bernandin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*.

<sup>52</sup> Two important works by Bernadin de Saint-Pierre are *Paul et Virginie* et les *Etudes de la nature*. This was included in Jean-Claude Berchet's biography on Chateaubriand.

<sup>53</sup> For more information on Chateaubriand's biography, please see Jean-Claude Berchet's *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014).

literary career, as well as helped him regain entry into France after the Revolution. While it is part of a larger work, *Génie du christianisme* (1802), it was published a year earlier as a test in order to see how the public would respond. While Chateaubriand insisted that *Atala* and *René* were anti-Enlightenment works, there are a number of themes throughout the book that are reminiscent of Neoclassicism.<sup>54</sup> According to art historian David Wakefield's *The French Romantics* (2008), Chateaubriand's use of language was meant to be a guide for artists to recreate the sceneries that he described in his writings. Wakefield also states that Chateaubriand was the inventor of pictorial literature, which Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and Marcel Proust carried to its logical conclusion; this in turn gave rise to literary painting, and both phenomena are fundamental to the art of the nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Before the French Revolution, Chateaubriand aspired to become a scientific explorer. In 1791, at the age of 23, he set off to North America with the hope of making a name for himself as an explorer. Throughout his nine-month journey, he maintained a travelogue and described his goals in detail. One of these was to make a scientific contribution to French history just like his compatriot, Jacques Cartier.<sup>56</sup> However, his quest to find the Northwest Passage ended up failing due to navigational errors. Since he could not fulfill that goal, he set his sights on natural history instead.

Chateaubriand's interest in Amerindian culture demonstrated that he had a genuine curiosity in botany prior to leaving on his American expedition. Chateaubriand taught himself more about botany at Jardin du Roi before setting out to North America, as well as corresponded with

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<sup>54</sup> One of the major themes of Romanticism is a return to organized religion (particularly Catholicism). While some of the Romantics during this period were not considered to be Christian, but rather pantheists, they still incorporated the medieval aesthetics of Christianity into their works.

<sup>55</sup> David Wakefield, *The French Romantics: Literature and the Visual Arts 1800-1840* (London: Chaucer Press, 2007), 66. Wakefield goes into detail about how numerous painters were inspired by *Atala* and how Chateaubriand's dialogue was a guideline for painters.

<sup>56</sup> Jean-Claude Berchet, *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 2014), 163.

Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721-1794), Louis XVI's defense and botanist, in order to learn the basics of botany.<sup>57</sup> These intense preparations demonstrated that the Frenchman had made a serious attempt to create a scientific travelogue. In the preface of *Voyage en Amérique* (1827), Chateaubriand gave the reader the general overview of American geography and, to some degree, an overview of human history. This shows that Chateaubriand had a multifaceted view of nature.

Despite these preparations, modern-day scholars dismiss his travelogues as irrelevant to the history of travel writing in North America. According to Annie Smart's recent article, scholarship on Chateaubriand has declined in the twentieth century because of the lack of validity of his descriptions. She states that "while some believed that the descriptions reflected his poetic imagination, others claim that Chateaubriand had simply embellished upon passages from previous travel writings, such as American naturalist William Bartram's 1791 *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* and French Jesuit priest Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix's 1744 *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle-France*."<sup>58</sup> If Chateaubriand was merely inserting different travelogues into his own account, what is the point of studying his travel literature when there are more accurate depictions of early North America available? Chateaubriand's decision to write a semi-autobiographical travelogue as a way to keep the audience entertained was to show that accuracy is not the only thing that matters in travel literature. Dismissing Chateaubriand's literature solely on the basis of its inaccuracies would be to do an injustice to the development of French environmental history and literature.

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<sup>57</sup> C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writings: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>58</sup> Annie K. Smart, "Re-Reading Nature and Otherness in Chateaubriand's *Voyage en Amérique*: A Case for the Biophilia Effect" (*Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Volume 42, 2013). pp. 123-145:124.

By ignoring one of the earliest French Romantic figures, our understanding of Romanticism's influence on the development of the field of environmental history will be stalled.

Despite its inaccuracies, what made Chateaubriand's American experiences exceptional for his epoch were his attention to the American environment and his descriptions of why each facet of nature had self-worth and did not need to rely on human values. This point was made clear in the organization of his work, as well as the details he used to describe each flora and fauna.<sup>59</sup> While many of the philosophers had more materialistic views of the earth, Chateaubriand viewed the environment as an extension of humanity and a place where all cultures could coexist. By writing about Amerindians, flora, and fauna in different sections, Chateaubriand clearly recognized the importance of each group and the fact that they do not need to rely on anthropocentrism, the belief that only humans are the holders of moral standing, in order to warrant study.<sup>60</sup>

Next, Chateaubriand shifts his attention to the American environment and describes how each facet of nature could stand on its own and was worth its own merit. This goes against one of the common beliefs of the Enlightenment, in which the earth was simply a machine for humanity to manipulate for its own betterment. By writing about Native Americans, fauna, and flora in his different sections, he demonstrates that he recognizes the fact that each group does not need the

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<sup>59</sup> Each chapter in *Voyage en Amérique* is organized by different facets of native life. The table of contents is presented as follows: The Voyage in America; Natural History; The Savages' Mores; Harvests, Parties, Maple Sugar Harvests, Fishing, Dances and Games; Year, Division and Regulation of Time, Natural Calendar; Medicine; Indian Languages; Hunting; War; Religion; Government; The Current State of North American Savages; Conclusion: United States; Conclusion: Spanish Republics; Conclusion: End of the Voyage.

<sup>60</sup> It is also important to note that the Amerindian tribes were not written about as a collective group. While there is not a section for each tribe that Chateaubriand encountered, he made sure to note that his work did not do justice to the indigenous population as a whole. He makes this clear the following quote: "When we have removed from the story of the first navigators and the first settlers who recognized and cleared Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, the two Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New- York, and all that we called New England, Acadia and Canada, we can hardly assess the wild population between the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence River, at the time of the discovery of these regions, in below three million men."

human organism in order to be important. In his chapter on natural history, Chateaubriand attempted to give a brief history of the landscape and to be as scientific as possible with his descriptions. When he did not seek to be scientific, he incorporated religious dialogue in his diary throughout the journey. This is evident in the section where he described his approach to natural history. He argued that humanity would cease to exist if traveling was not possible, and that the exploration of the unknown was part of human nature. He believed that complacently settling in one area for the entirety of one's lifespan was unnatural. With civil unrest disrupting many civilizations throughout Europe, the idea of returning to nature was not only to avoid the corruption that was passing through the French courts in the eighteenth century, but also to return to their Catholic roots. In relation to his work on the Orient, *Route from Paris to Jerusalem* (1811), Chateaubriand perceived his travels to exotic locales as a means to escape the increasing corruption of western civilization and the rise of industrialization.

There are parallels made between the early American republic and the author's home province of Brittany as well. After all, his travels were inspired by his coastal hometown, Saint-Malo. He remembers his childhood in the following sentence: "I saw in my youth old Bretons murmuring against the paths that the open one wanted in their woods, even though these paths were to raise the value of the riparian properties."<sup>61</sup> Because Brittany lies in the northwest corner of France, it benefits from both lush forests and an abundance of coastline. Both forestry and the maritime culture shaped Chateaubriand's desire for travel, as well as his style of writing. This theme also emerges when he talks about becoming an explorer. Being faithful to his romantic prose, he pays tribute to the Antiquity by referring to Ulysses and the fact that his travels were primarily triggered by curiosity rather than monetary gain.

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<sup>61</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

This mentality could lead scholars to believe that Rousseau was anthropocentric with his philosophy. For example, his botanical dictionary is full of political anecdotes. While a number of the botanical terms were strictly referred to in scientific terms, some of the terms also had philosophical discourses that ran on for pages and pages. This is especially evident with his entry on the word “flower,” in which he spent a few pages extrapolating upon the definition of “flower” in both scientific and political terms:

If I give my imagination to the sensations that this word seems to call, I might make a nice article perhaps to the Shepherds, but very bad for the Botanists. For a moment, let us part the bright colors, the sweet smells, the elegant forms, to seek firstly to know well the organized being that brings them together. At first, nothing seems easier; who thinks they need to be taught what a flower is?<sup>62</sup>

Rousseau then proceeded to go into a political, philosophical, and scientific discourse of the flower, focusing on the organization of floral anatomy and how it echoed the existing social hierarchy in developed civilizations. Each part of the flower served a specific function, similar to how the monarchy, nobility, clergy, and commoners each had their own place in society. It is obvious that Rousseau was more interested in the poetic interpretation of flora rather than being a “true” botanist who analyzed specimens from a purely pragmatic standpoint. And if we were to juxtapose this with Chateaubriand’s ethnographical attempt, *Voyage en Amérique*, the reader will find that while he wrote like a botanist in some parts, the majority of the text focuses more on the aesthetics of the native populations.

Even before his attempts at scientific writing, Chateaubriand always incorporated environmental themes into his fiction, non-fiction, political writings, and correspondences with salon participants who showed a particular interest in nature. However, the reason as to why he

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<sup>62</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettres elementaires sur la botanique*. 1789. Also see Jean-Marie Roulin’s “François-René de Chateaubriand: Migrations and Revolutions” in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, edited by Paul Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2016), pp. 52-68: 55.



incorporated such detailed accounts of his surroundings changed throughout his career. For example, in *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, he describes his childhood home, Combours, in a manner that would only appeal to him: “Combours, I sing the first verses of a lament that will only charm me; ask the Tyrolean shepherd why he likes the three or four notes he repeats to his goats, mountain notes, echo echoes to sound from the edge of a torrent to the opposite edge?”<sup>63</sup> During his youth, he was more sentimental and wanted nature to be its own entity and for humanity to either live among with nature like the indigenous peoples he encountered, or to let it be. A few decades later, while a member of the Chamber of Peers, he referred again to the forests of his youth in order to convince the audience to protect the woods not only for the sake of the Catholic Church, but also for the nation of France. Chateaubriand always wanted to protect forests, which resonates with many of his childhood sentiments and his Romantic ideology, but the purpose of saving them changed throughout his lifetime.

Lastly, Chateaubriand ended his *Voyage* on a quasi-Rousseauian note by stating that “the United States, therefore, offers in its midst, under the protection of liberty, an image and a memory of most famous places of ancient and modern Europe, similar to that garden of the Roman country where Adrien had made repeat the various monuments of his empire.”<sup>64</sup> This is somewhat patronizing, because it can be interpreted as claiming that if it were not for the European colonialization of North America, its current citizens would not have the privilege to

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<sup>63</sup> François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Volume 1. (Barcelona: Librairie polytechnique espagnole et étrangère de Thomas Gorchs, 1849), 44.

<sup>64</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*. This quote can be related to Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Gardens* (University of Chicago: 2008), where he states that “*Notre jardin* is never a garden of merely private concerns into which one escapes from the real; it is that plot of soil on the earth, within the self, or amid the social collective, where the cultural, ethical, and civic virtues that save reality from its own worst impulses are cultivated. Those virtues are always ours.”: iv.

tend to the American wilderness that parallels those found in ancient Rome. This description is a stark contrast from the pages in which he claims that the Amerindians were the first to encounter this so-called wilderness. The viscount nevertheless lamented the Old Regime by comparing the virgin forests to the days in which the environment was primarily tended to by the Church and the aristocracy.

### Travel and the Romantic Spirit

In 1813, two major historical figures from opposing intellectual spheres made their acquaintance with one another through one of the major salon hostesses of France, Claire du Duras (1777-1823). Duras, an émigré like Chateaubriand, had fled France during the French Revolution in 1789. It was then that she met the latter and established a lasting friendship that would play a large role in post-revolutionary salon culture, as well as in Duras's writings. While Duras's own work was focused on gender and slavery, she and Chateaubriand corresponded about a multitude of topics, such as the arts, politics, philosophy, and to some extent the sciences. It was in Duras's salon where Humboldt and Chateaubriand made each other's acquaintance. The two *érudits* contrasted with each other in a multitude of ways—liberal and conservative; scientist and poet; analytic and poetic. Although one was a liberal and the other conservative, they were able to both broaden their fields to those who would not have ever thought to even look at their work in the first place.<sup>65</sup>

Along with his interest in Amerindian culture, it is also evident that Chateaubriand had a genuine interest in botany prior to leaving for his American expedition in 1791. Chateaubriand taught himself botany at the Jardin du Roi before setting out to North America, as well as

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<sup>65</sup> While it was common for early salons to include intellectuals from different fields, salon culture became more specialized during the early nineteenth-century with the rise of societies and institutions.

corresponded with Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes in order to learn the basics of botany.<sup>66</sup> With such intense preparations, it can be interpreted that his original intention was to create a scientific travelogue. In his preface, Chateaubriand gives the reader a general overview of American geography and, to some degree, an overview of human history. This shows us that Chateaubriand understood that nature is multifaceted. He also mentions that one of the original goals of this project was to make a scientific contribution to French history, just like his compatriot, Jacques Cartier.<sup>67</sup> However, his quest to find the Northwest Passage ended up failing, and it is because of this failure that parts of this travelogue are considered both non-fictional and fictional.

Chateaubriand's decision to write a non-fictional-turned-fictional travelogue was a way to keep the audience entertained, as well as to show that accuracy is not the only thing that matters in travel literature. According to Annie Smart's recent article, scholarship on Chateaubriand has declined in the twentieth century because of the lack of validity of his descriptions. She states that "while some believed that the descriptions reflected his poetic imagination, others claim that Chateaubriand had simply embellished upon passages from previous travel writings, such as William Bartram's 1791 *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* and Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix's 1744 *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle-France (History and General Description of New France)*."<sup>68</sup> This logic has led scholars to believe that if Chateaubriand was merely inserting different travelogues into his own account, what is the point of studying his travel literature if there are more accurate depictions of

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<sup>66</sup> C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writings: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>67</sup> Jean-Claude Berchet, *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 2014), 163.

<sup>68</sup> Annie K. Smart, "Re-Reading Nature and Otherness in Chateaubriand's *Voyage en Amérique*: A Case for the Biophilia Effect" (*Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Volume 42, 2013), pp. 123-145:124.

early North America? However, dismissing Chateaubriand's literature solely on the basis of its inaccuracies would be an injustice to the development of French environmental history and literature. By ignoring one of the earliest French Romantic figures, our understanding of Romanticism's influence on the development of environmental history would be stalled.

Accurate or not, what makes Chateaubriand exceptional for his epoch was his attention to the American environment and how he describes how each facet of nature is worth its own merit without human intervention. This point is made clear in the organization of his work, as well as the details that he used to describe each flora and fauna.<sup>69</sup> While Enlightenment philosophy generally views the earth as nothing more than a machine to manipulate for the betterment of civilization, Chateaubriand viewed the environment as an extension of humanity and a place where all cultures could coexist. Stepping away from eurocentrism in this regard, he also writes about Amerindians, flora, and fauna in his different sections. The fact that he did so shows that Chateaubriand recognized the importance of each group and that they do not need to rely on anthropocentrism in order to warrant study.<sup>70</sup>

Chateaubriand argues that humanity would cease to exist if traveling was not possible. He believed that it is part of human nature to travel and explore the unknown, and to be complacent and settle in just one area for the entirety of one's lifespan was unnatural. In addition, if man were to return to nature, he would not only avoid the political corruption plaguing western

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<sup>69</sup> Each species is given its own section, scientific definition, and a description of its relevance to Chateaubriand's voyage. The organization of these subjects can be seen in the table of contents.

<sup>70</sup> It is also important to note that the Amerindian tribes were not written about as a collective group. While there is not a section for each tribe that Chateaubriand encountered, he made sure to note that this work did not do justice for the indigenous population as a whole, which is evident from the following quote in *Voyage en Amérique*: "Quand on aura retranché du récit des premiers navigateurs et des premiers colons qui reconnurent et défrichèrent la Louisiane, la Floride, la Géorgie, les deux Carolines, la Virginie, le Maryland, la Delaware, la Pensylvanie, le New-Jersey, le New-York, et tout ce qu'on appela la Nouvelle-Angleterre, l'Acadie et le Canada, on ne pourra guère évaluer la population sauvage comprise entre le Mississipi et le fleuve Saint-Laurent, au moment de la découverte de ces contrées, au-dessous de trois millions d'hommes."

Europe, but also to return to his religious roots. This reoccurring theme sets the foundation for one of his later works on the Orient, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811). He perceived his travels to exotic locales as a means with which to escape the increasing corruption of western civilization and the rise of industrialization.

As a youth, Chateaubriand's contribution to early French Romanticism was to study nature for its own sake, rather than as a vehicle for anthropocentric needs—namely, politics. This perspective went against his previous Rousseauian ideology, in which the purpose of studying nature was to have humanity return to its purist state prior to the development of civilization.<sup>71</sup> In comparison to the philosophes, Chateaubriand's writings on North American ethnography and ethnobotany have a somewhat less anthropocentric motive. If one is familiar with Rousseau's works on nature, it is evident that Rousseau was more interested in using the environment as a means to further share his political philosophy, rather compose a strictly scientific study of nature. While Rousseau contributed to the expansion of botanical studies in his correspondence letters, as well as *Letters on the Elements of Botany* (1771-1774), his writings tended to focus more on human interaction with the environment and how one interprets each plant as part of a hierarchy, and that nature itself is a civilization. It is because of this mindset that Rousseau's philosophy is interpreted to be anthropocentric. For example, his botanical dictionary is inundated with political examples. While a number of the botanical terms were strictly referred to scientifically, some of the terms had philosophical discourses that ran on for pages and pages.

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<sup>71</sup> Philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot used indigenous peoples as a mouthpiece for their philosophical views. Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* (1767) is a satire about a Huron, also known as 'The Child of Nature,' who relocates to Bretagne and is unknowingly baptized. This is Voltaire's critique of the ridiculousness of established religions and his advocacy for deism. Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762) delves into innate human goodness and focuses much on how children will be inherently good if Nature were to raise them. Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) relies on Louis Antoine de Bougainville's own travelogues and manipulates the latter's account into a discourse between speakers A and B and how they interpret different attitudes towards morality in Tahiti.

This is especially evident with his entry on the word *fleur*, where he spends a few pages explaining the flower's meaning in both scientific and political terms.

Since Chateaubriand understood that he was not a trained scientist, he used his elegiac prose in order to entice his readers to visit the New World. Romanticism appealed to the literate population's wanderlust, with its vivid accounts of foreign lands and peoples. Its curiosity about the unknown led environmental historians to consider Romanticism to be the grandfather of environmentalism, as well as environmental literature and history. William Cronon makes this argument in his article "The Trouble with Wilderness" (1996) by stating that the "desert served as an important vehicle for articulating deep moral values on our obligations and responsibilities for the non-human world."<sup>72</sup> Although this is both true for Rousseau and Chateaubriand's literary works, Chateaubriand was more interested in writing about nature from an aesthetic point of view, rather than creating a new moral code like Rousseau. Instead, nature was perceived to be a plane of existence that united the divine and the temporal. The fact that Chateaubriand saw nature as a transcendental plane between heaven and humanity goes against traditional Catholic values in which God's presence can only be experienced in an established house of worship. It is here that we see the remnants of Rousseau's influence on the young Romantic.

Even before his attempts at scientific writing, Chateaubriand had always incorporated environmental themes in his fiction, non-fiction, political writings, and correspondences with salon participants who showed a particular interest in nature. However, the reason as to why he incorporated such detailed accounts of his surroundings changed throughout his career. For example, in *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, he describes his childhood home, Combourg, in a manner that would have only appealed to him: "Combourg, I sing the first verses of a lament that will

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<sup>72</sup> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (*Environmental History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1996), pp. 7-28: 10.

only charm me; ask the Tyrolean shepherd why he likes the three or four notes he repeats to his goats, mountain notes, echo echoes to sound from the edge of a torrent to the opposite edge?”<sup>73</sup> As a youth, he was invested in sentimentality and the desire for nature to be its own entity, while at the same time have humanity either live amongst nature like the indigenous peoples that he encountered during his travels, or to let it be. A few decades later, while a member of the Chamber of Peers, he referred again to the forests of his youth, but now for materialistic purposes. This speech was to convince the audience to protect the woods not only for the sake of the Catholic Church, but also for the nation of France. While Chateaubriand always wanted to protect the forests, resonant of his childhood sentiments and his Romantic ideology, the purpose of his desire to save them changed throughout his lifetime.

Before going into detail about how the French Romantics portrayed nature in their works, we must first understand *why* they wrote in the manner that they did. According to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), the movement was about writing about the exotic. During the nineteenth century, this meant anywhere that was east of Europe (the Middle East and onward).<sup>74</sup> By focusing on intellectuals from a variety of disciplines, we can develop a better understanding of how western Europeans wrote about the exotic, and how their field of study shaped their perspectives.

In order to understand Chateaubriand’s scientific aspirations, we must also understand his literary and political life. French literary critic Michel Crépu’s *Le souvenir du monde Chateaubriand* (2011) devotes each chapter to a different facet of Chateaubriand’s literary and

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<sup>73</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’outre-tombe*.

<sup>74</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 203. The first Orientalists in French literature were Chateaubriand and his contemporaries. In chapter three of his book, Said argues: “Orientalism is not only a positive doctrine about the Orient that exists at any one time in the West; it is also an influential academic tradition, as well as an area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, civilizations.”

political life. According to Crépu, Chateaubriand did not correspond with many people until he initiated a conversation with M. Fontanes.<sup>75</sup> It was only after corresponding with Fontanes that Chateaubriand's interest in different fields such as botany, politics, and literature piqued.<sup>76</sup> As I have stated before, Chateaubriand treated the people he encountered as individuals, rather than a collective group. This brings us to the question of whether Romanticism was individualistic or more focused on the collective.

In terms of categorizing Romanticism as either an individualistic or collective ideology, it can actually go both ways. One of the characteristics that Romanticism shares with the Enlightenment is that many of the works published during this period, such as *Atala* and *Corinne*, used the name of the protagonist in the title. This demonstrates to the audience that the focal point of the work is going to be on a person, rather than an idea. By focusing on primarily one character, this shows the reader that the work is anthropocentric. In comparison to other works such as *Genie du christianisme* (1802), *Les meditations poétiques* (1820), and *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), these titles are more reflective of themes rather than individuals. Chateaubriand's work focuses on Christianity, Lamartine's on nature, and Stendhal's discourse between the religious and secular communities. As more works focusing on a group of people became more popular, so did the idea of nationalism.<sup>77</sup> In Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), the eponymous character is British by birth, but she renounced her heritage in order to become Italian. Corinne felt closer to the Italians and considered herself to be Italian because she had learned about their culture, customs, arts, and language. Nationalism, an ideology that was

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<sup>75</sup> Michel Crépu, *Le souvenir du monde: Essai sur Chateaubriand* (Paris: Grasset, 2011), 39.

<sup>76</sup> Crépu, *Le souvenir du monde*, 41. Chateaubriand also considered himself to be a disciple of Emile (education inspiration) as well as Tournefort, Jussieu, and Linnaeus (scientific inspirations). In the chapter "Verifier Rousseau?" Crépu argues that Chateaubriand was inspired by Rousseau's concept of the *bon sauvage* with regards to his personal experience with the Native Americans.



birthed during the Napoleonic era and the early French Romantic movement, is learned behavior.<sup>78</sup> And with the rise of travel literature, there was also a concurrent rise in nationalism and discussions about what it means to be a citizen of a nation-state.

To shift back to the idea of the collective, Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), who modeled the beginnings of his literary career after that of Chateaubriand, was a devout Catholic during his youth. However, as he got older, he became a pantheist and broke away from established religion. Yet despite this breakaway from Catholicism, Lamartine continued to use biblical lexicon in his poetry. One of the poems that exemplifies this is “Le désert, ou l’immatérialité de Dieu” (1856). Lamartine stated, “Mount from black Lebanon the undecided peaks, from where the star, emerging from the edges to the middle, Seems like a swan bathed in the gardens of God...”<sup>79</sup> Catholicism continued to influence Lamartine’s poetry in a multitude of ways. The location of the poem is in what is considered to be the Holy Land to Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

While location or setting is one of the key elements of a story, other authors felt that the protagonists themselves were the key to understanding the plot. Alfred Musset’s (1810-1857) take on Romanticism was different from that of his contemporaries. Rather than focus his attention on his surroundings, he paid more attention to the human psyche and the *mal du siècle*. Victor Hugo (1802-1885), who is often credited as the leading figure of French Romanticism, modeled both his political and literary careers on Chateaubriand’s.<sup>80</sup> Later French Romantics, while following the Romanticism paradigm that Chateaubriand had laid the foundation for, had their own personal twist on how to portray “nature” in their writings. In de Staël’s *Corrine*

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<sup>78</sup> See *The Nation in History* for more details about nationalism in general.

<sup>79</sup> Lamartine, “Le désert, ou l’immatérialité de Dieu,” 1856.

<sup>80</sup> One of his most famous quotes was that he would “Become Chateaubriand or nothing!”

(1806), nature was an internal phenomenon. While there are some details included about the protagonist's surroundings, de Staël was more concerned about the psychological state of the protagonist. There is a similar case of this in Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* (1820), in which a mélange of the human condition and the physical environment both affected the psyche of the narrator.<sup>81</sup> Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836) also follows the same pattern. The narrator, Octave, does not pay special attention to the environment, but rather how the character is feeling because of his surroundings. It was not until Hugo that greater attention was brought back to the environment in literature.

Hugo, a great admirer of Chateaubriand, shared the same political and religious perspectives of the Father of French Romanticism during his youth. According to Tresch, "[F]or the young Victor Hugo, a feeling for nature and for the divine merged with his support for the restored monarchy. These romantics sought God both in *les voix intérieures* and in the outward pageant of nature."<sup>82</sup> Similar to Chateaubriand and Lamartine, Hugo focuses his attention on the elements in order to convey his messages. For example, in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866), Hugo goes into detail about the role of the waves. Hugo's exile to Jersey inspired the premise of this novel, in which the protagonist, Gilliatt, goes on many adventures while on fishing expeditions. Similar to other romantic works, Hugo refers to traveling as a means of escape from reality. Since this novel is based on maritime travel, he focuses a great deal of his dialogue on the waves. The waves offer both opportunity and misfortune for Gilliatt. Throughout his journey, the waves took him to distant lands and gave him the opportunity to discover the unknown. However, on the same note, the waves were also the cause of his death towards the end of the novel. After he lost

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<sup>81</sup> Said analyzes Chateaubriand and Lamartine's works in particular because they were among the first French literary figures to write about the "French Orient." Said also argues that the "Orient" for the French is the Biblical area, while the Orient for the British consists of India and East Asia.

<sup>82</sup> Tresch, *The Romantic Machine*, 126.

everything, Gilliat believed that death could be his only solace. And although it seems tragic, one could say that his particular death suits him well, because his life was based on the sea.<sup>83</sup>

After Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, French Romanticism did not come to full fruition until the publication of Chateaubriand's Amerindian novella, *Atala* (1801). Unlike his predecessors, Chateaubriand was known for being one of the exceptional French figures to travel to North America and write about the people he encountered there from personal experience, rather than relying on the travelogues of others.<sup>84</sup> *Atala* was the novella that launched Chateaubriand's literary career as well as helped him regain entry into France after the Revolution. While it is part of a larger work, *Genie du christianisme* (1802), it was published a year earlier as a test to see how the public would respond. And while Chateaubriand insisted that *Atala* and *René* were anti-Enlightenment works, there are a number of themes throughout the book that are reminiscent of Neoclassicism. According to art historian David Wakefield's *The French Romantics* (2008), Chateaubriand's use of language was meant for artists to be able to recreate the sceneries that he described in his works. Wakefield also states that Chateaubriand was the inventor of pictorial literature, which Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and Marcel Proust carried to its logical conclusion; this in turn gave rise to literary painting, and both phenomena are fundamental to the art of the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup>

It also concerns the terrain he meets in America as compared to that of his home province of Brittany. After all, Chateaubriand's travels were inspired by his coastal hometown, Saint-Malo. He remembers his childhood in the following sentence: "I saw in my youth old Bretons

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<sup>83</sup> Victor Hugo, *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. (1866).

<sup>84</sup> For more information on Chateaubriand's biography, see Jean-Claude Berchet's *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014).

<sup>85</sup> David Wakefield, *The French Romantics: Literature and the Visual Arts 1800-1840*. (London: Chaucer Press, 2007), 66. Wakefield goes into detail about how numerous painters were inspired by *Atala* and how Chateaubriand's dialogue was a guideline for painters.

murmuring against the paths that the open one wanted in their woods, even though these paths were to raise the value of the riparian properties.”<sup>86</sup> Because Brittany lies in the northwest corner of France, it benefits from both lush forests and an abundance of coastline. Both forestry and maritime culture shaped Chateaubriand’s desire for travel, as well as his style of writing. This also emerges when he talks about becoming an explorer. Being faithful to his romantic prose, he pays tribute to the Antiquity by referring to Ulysses and the fact that his travels were mainly triggered by curiosity rather than monetary gain.

#### Humboldt, Romantic Science, and Corresponding with Chateaubriand

If we were to juxtapose Chateaubriand’s nature writings with Alexandre von Humboldt’s, there is a noticeable difference in their approach and end goals. While the former was more interested in the surrounding environment for aesthetics and the development of a religious discourse, the latter did his best to only write about what he saw. Humboldt’s best-known work, *Cosmos* (1845-1862), aimed to diversify the sciences and create separate branches for each specialization. And while this work might sound like Humboldt was trying to alienate outside disciplines from acquiring the minimum amount of amateur knowledge, it gives the lesser-known branches more focus so that scholars can better understand nature and how the surrounding environment works. This led to the creation of botanical geography.

Phytogeography, also known as botanical geography, has a long history that can be traced back to Humboldt. *Essay on the Geography of Plants* (1807) is the first work that takes a serious look at how plants in Central and South America adapt to their new locales due to plant exchange and global warming.<sup>87</sup> He expressed his area of interest at the beginning of the work,

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<sup>86</sup> Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique*.

<sup>87</sup> Humboldt’s works are among the first to predict temperatures rising throughout the world. For more information, refer to Andrea Wulf’s *The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt’s New World* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2015).

stating that “it would be interesting to show on botanical maps the areas where these groupings of similar species of plants live. These maps would show long bands, whose irresistible extension causes the population of states to decrease, the nations to be separated, and creates stronger obstacles to communication than do mountains and seas.”<sup>88</sup> Certain specimens were associated with specific cultures; Humboldt mentioned how grapes and olives had Roman ties, for example, and that corn is synonymous with Amerindians.<sup>89</sup> He then went into more detail on this point:

For a long stretch of centuries, these plants have made the soil sterile and have dominated these regions completely: despite man's efforts and fight against an almost unconquerable nature. He has been able to claim only small areas for agriculture. These cultivated fields, the only fruits of hard work to be beneficial for humanity, are like small islands in the middle of the heath.<sup>90</sup>

Throughout western European history, rulers vied for fertile land in order to nourish their rapidly growing populations. As the transatlantic trade grew, Europeans gained more opportunities to grow imported flora and to diversify the populace’s diet and prevent famine from occurring. While this solved temporal issues, Humboldt wanted to “solve the great problem of the migration of plants, the geography of plants delves into the interior of the earth: it looks at the ancient monuments that nature has left behind in petrification, in wood fossils, and in coal strata that are the tomb of the initial plant life of our planet.”<sup>91</sup> Here, Humboldt’s approach to history is similar

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<sup>88</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, 2013. Translation by Sylvie Romanowski. *Essay on the Geography of Plants* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 66.

<sup>89</sup> In this section, Humboldt gives several examples of how flora defined the local culture. He states that “a few plants grown in gardens and farms since times immemorial accompanied man from one end of the planet to the other. In Europe, the Greeks took with them vines, the Romans, wheat, and the Arabs, cotton. In America, the Toltecs carried maize with them: potatoes and quinoa are found wherever went the inhabitants of the ancient Cundinamarca. The migration of these plants is obvious; but the land of their origin is as unknown as the origin of the various human races found all over the earth in the remotest times according to traditional accounts.” : 70.

<sup>90</sup> Humboldt, *Essay on the Geography of Plants*, 66.

<sup>91</sup> Humboldt, *Essay on the Geography of Plants*, 69.

to the Annales School's *longue durée*, a long period during which social structures, or in this case physical structures, have evolved over hundreds of years.

The seed exchange between Europe and the Americas was also a major concern for Humboldt. Whenever civilizations incorporated new flora into their daily life, they took precedence over the indigenous ones. He argued that “this preponderance of new plants, which makes the European cultures seem so monotonous and hopelessly dull to the botanist during his excursions, prevails only in a small part of the planet where civilization perfected itself and where consequently population increased the most. In the lands near the equator, man is too weak to tame a vegetation that hides the ground from view and leaves only the ocean and the rivers to be free. There, nature demonstrates its wildness and majesty that render impossible all efforts of cultivation.”<sup>92</sup> This is not necessarily a novel idea, with explorers such as Bougainville and Cook also writing about how indigenous civilizations were quick to be reabsorbed into what westerners would consider as wilderness. Humboldt added that “merely looking at nature, at its fields and forests, causes a pleasure that is essentially different from the impression given by studying the specific structure of an organized being. In the latter, the details interest us and excite our curiosity; in the former, the large picture, the ensemble, excites our imagination.”<sup>93</sup> This is apparent in Humboldt's comparison between indigenous and European experiences of the New World's flora.

According to Humboldt, Amerindian civilizations were thriving culturally, just like the Europeans, but their populations and land acquisition were nowhere near as great. With the

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<sup>92</sup> Humboldt, 72. He continues: “These relationships would be no doubt sufficient to show how extended is the science which I am attempting to outline here; but the man who is sensitive to the beauty of nature will also find here the explanation for the influence exerted by nature on the peoples' taste and imagination. He will delight in examining what is called the character of vegetation, and the variety of effects it causes in the soul of the observer. These considerations are important in that they are closely related to the means by which imitative arts and descriptive poetry can affect us.”

<sup>93</sup> Humboldt, 73.

former, he argued that they were not strong enough “to tame vegetation that hides the ground from view and leaves only the ocean and the rivers to be free. There, nature demonstrates its wildness and majesty that render impossible all efforts of cultivation.”<sup>94</sup> Since Europe was further away from the equator, its biodiversity was not nearly as vast as that of the Americas; this led to bland diets and European explorers’ desire to import foreign flora. The main purpose of the botanical exchange was one of practicality. Plants were necessary to sustain the population, a goal which Humboldt understood. However, he also added that “man, who is sensitive to the beauty of nature will also find here the explanation for the influence exerted by nature on the peoples’ taste and imagination... Merely looking at nature, at its fields and forests, causes a pleasure that is essentially different from the impression given by studying the specific structure of an organized being.”<sup>95</sup> Plants are not merely human sustenance, but rather are also a way to express emotions.

The seed exchange between Europe and the Americas was also a major concern for Humboldt. Whenever civilizations incorporated new flora into daily life, the new flora took precedence over the indigenous ones. He argued that “this preponderance of new plants, which makes the European cultures seem so monotonous and hopelessly dull to the botanist during his excursions, prevails only in a small part of the planet where civilization perfected itself and where consequently population increased the most. In the lands near the equator, man is too weak to tame a vegetation that hides the ground from view and leaves only the ocean and the rivers to be free. There, nature demonstrates its wildness and majesty that render impossible all efforts of cultivation.”<sup>96</sup> Humboldt added that “merely looking at nature, at its fields and forests,

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<sup>94</sup> Humboldt, *Essay on the Geography of Plants*, 72.

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<sup>96</sup> Humboldt, 72. He continues: “These relationships would be no doubt sufficient to show how extended is the science which I am attempting to outline here; but the man who is sensitive to the beauty of nature will also find

causes a pleasure that is essentially different from the impression given by studying the specific structure of an organized being. In the latter, the details interest us and excite our curiosity; in the former, the large picture, the ensemble, excites our imagination.”<sup>97</sup> This is apparent in Humboldt’s comparison between indigenous and European experiences of the New World’s flora.

The Europeans do not enjoy such a spectacle. The frail plants that people, out of love of science or refined luxury, grow in their hothouses are mere shadows of the majestic equinoctial plants; many of these shapes will remain forever unknown to the Europeans; but the richness and perfection of the languages, the imagination and sensitivity of the poets and the painters give some compensation in Europe.<sup>98</sup>

During the transitionary period between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, wealthy Europeans mostly viewed nature as a means to test out scientific theories. The only way for them to experience the true beauty of exotic flora was to read about them in prose or to commission an artist to paint them for a display piece. Humboldt also argues that Europeans held indigenous flora and fauna in higher esteem than the civilizations residing within the actual source area. He states that “the gardens in Iztapalapan, whose remains Hernandez was able to glimpse, are a witness to the taste that the peoples whom we call savages and barbarians had for cultivation and for the beauties of the plant kingdom.”<sup>99</sup>

The two polymaths would not interact until 1813, the year that would mark a continuous exchange of ideas on topics ranging from the arts, sciences, politics, and religion. They became

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here the explanation for the influence exerted by nature on the peoples’ taste and imagination. He will delight in examining what is called the character of vegetation, and the variety of effects it causes in the soul of the observer. These considerations are important in that they are closely related to the means by which imitative arts and descriptive poetry can affect us.”

<sup>97</sup> Humboldt, 73.

<sup>98</sup> Humboldt, 75.

<sup>99</sup> Humboldt, 92.



acquainted through Claire du Duras (1777-1828), a salon hostess in France.<sup>100</sup> The two men corresponded over topics such as the arts, politics, philosophy, and to some extent the sciences. Humboldt and Chateaubriand, both aristocrats and intellectuals, contrasted each other in a multitude of ways—liberal and conservative; scientist and poet; realistic and imaginative. Although one was a liberal and the other a conservative, they were able to broaden their fields to those who would not have ever thought to pay attention to their works in the first place.<sup>101</sup>

The relationship between Duras, Humboldt, and Chateaubriand can be compared to that of siblings. Chateaubriand and Duras met in London as émigrés of the Revolution. Humboldt would later come into correspondence with Duras, who would in turn introduce the Prussian naturalist to the Father of French Romanticism. After their last meeting, Humboldt wrote a letter to Duras, glowing about his meeting with Chateaubriand: “I spent a very happy evening with Mr. de Chateaubriand, almost alone with him. We always meet in our feelings and it is a great good when the sky is still stormy. Nothing could touch the Duchess anymore.”<sup>102</sup> While much of the correspondences between the two men are not necessarily about their travels, there are subtle hints at the subject in later letters. Another instance of Humboldt’s praise of the Frenchman took place in 1816, when Humboldt wrote to Chateaubriand on the subject of seafaring and how it takes great courage to undertake the effort of doing so.<sup>103</sup> While Humboldt’s travels were predominately in the Americas and Chateaubriand’s in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, it is strange to see Humboldt give praise to Chateaubriand, since his voyages were longer. Nevertheless, there was more correspondence from Humboldt to Madame Duras that mentioned

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<sup>100</sup> The most recent French translation of the correspondences between Claire de Duras and Alexander von Humboldt is Humboldt, Alexander von, Diethelm Marie-Bénédicte, and Marc Fumaroli. *Lettres à Claire de Duras (1814-1828)* (Paris: Éditions Manucius, 2016).

<sup>101</sup> While it was common for early salons to include intellectuals from different fields, salon culture became more specialized during the early nineteenth century with the rise of a variety of societies and institutions.

<sup>102</sup> Humboldt, 25.

<sup>103</sup> Humboldt, 102.

Chateaubriand's recent publication in 1826, *Les Aventures du dernier Abencerage* (*The Adventures of the Last Saddler's Son*). Never short of praise, Humboldt ended the letter by stating "the new writing of Monsieur de Chateaubriand is full of nobility, moderation and this force which comes from moderation itself: but the new Mithridates are doing better than us."<sup>104</sup>

References to Chateaubriand's penchant for travel and seeking the unknown inspired Pauline de Beaumont, a salon hostess who was also one of Chateaubriand's mistresses, to give him the nickname "Sauvage." Her explanation for this *surnom* was that Chateaubriand was "reformed by his Parisian years and by his travels, by the society of his mistresses, his friends, his wife, became under the Restoration, for this Prussian of Paris who became himself Alexander, the interlocutor par excellence, the hero and perhaps the savior of the 'real France' again at risk."<sup>105</sup> While Humboldt was renowned as a hero of the hard sciences, Chateaubriand's fame came from his fantastic tales of exotic locales. This was yet another parallel between the two men—fame for travelling, albeit for different goals.

Although Humboldt recognized the genius of his French colleague's North American writings, he was not impressed with the falsities about the American environment. In a letter written to German biographer Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858), Humboldt described the downfalls of his first nature writing attempt:

My style's principal faults are an unhappy inclination to hyper-poetical forms, long constructions upon participles, and too much concentrating on manifold views and sentiments in the same period. However, I think these radical evils, founded in my individuality, are somewhat mended by grave simplicity and generalization, enabling me to contemplate my subject with a complete mastery of its details if I may be permitted so much vanity. A book on nature should produce an impression like nature itself.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Humboldt, 103.

<sup>105</sup> Fumaroli, Marc. Humboldt, Alexander von, Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm, and Marc Fumaroli, *Lettres à Claire de Duras (1814-1828)*, 2016: 25.

<sup>106</sup> Friedrich Kapp, *Letters of Alexander von Humboldt to Varnhagen von Ense, from 1827 to 1858*. (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1860), 39-40.

Humboldt then went into more detail about how he did not want to write about nature in the same embellished fashion as his predecessor, German naturalist Georg Forster (1754-1794), and contemporary Chateaubriand. As the Romantic science movement strayed further and further away from natural history's aesthetic side, Humboldt continued to believe that beauty and the natural world were nevertheless compatible. While Humboldt was renowned as a hero of the hard sciences, Chateaubriand's fame came from his fantastic tales of exotic locales. Nevertheless, this was another parallel between the two men—fame for traveling, albeit for different goals.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze Chateaubriand's travel literature and juxtapose his writings with those of his predecessors and contemporaries in order to better understand how intellectuals portrayed the natural world in their writings, aesthetically and scientifically, respectively. Not many people are aware that Chateaubriand and Humboldt were in correspondence with one another, but in fact they were highly prolific men of the Romantic period who wrote travelogues and shared their experiences through letters and salon meetings. Their relationship shows that it was commonplace for early nineteenth-century European intellectuals of all fields to talk about botany. By reading correspondences between various intellectuals during the revolutionary period, we will have a better idea of how European and North American intellectuals who wrote on nature influenced scientists' and poets' scholarly and creative works during the Romantic era.

There have been numerous correspondences between well-known historical figures from various specializations that have yet to be analyzed from the ecocritical lens. By looking at

historical figures who would not usually be under the radar of “green studies,” scholars of history, literature, and philosophy will discover new questions that need to be addressed, as well as work alongside scholars outside of their field toward common goals. While Humboldt’s works are highly specialized, his correspondence with poet Chateaubriand shows that intellectuals were still interested in subjects outside of their specialization.

Gardens have existed since the dawn of human civilization, and their individual purpose depends on the desires of their creators. Until the nineteenth century, the majority of what people today would consider gardens served pragmatic purposes. Only the privileged could construct gardens that only served ornamental purposes. When access to seeds and saplings became more accessible to the lower classes, the rise of the domestic garden boomed. And to conclude my project, I will briefly discuss the rise of popular gardening in Western Europe, and how the philosophy behind ideas about nature crept into the layperson’s everyday life. By participating in a hobby such as gardening, the amateur gardener is playing a role in the Anthropocene, the era during which climate change has been human-induced.

While I could delve in deeper into more discussion of Chateaubriand and Humboldt’s shared passion for botany through their correspondences, this paper provides sufficient evidence that botanical exchange was commonplace amongst European intellectuals of the early nineteenth century. While it is evident that Humboldt was part of French intellectual society and corresponded with trained scientists from France, I found it more compelling to analyze his botanical discourse with poet and politician, Chateaubriand. While it is true that the latter’s North American travelogues have been critiqued by contemporaries and later scholars, there is still an opportunity to be reanalyze his writings from an environmental lens and juxtapose his work with contemporary ecological concerns. This will give scholars a better understanding of

European eco-consciousness from the Romantic period to today's rising interest in environmental justice.

As stated, there have been numerous correspondences between well-known historical figures from various specializations that have yet to be analyzed from the ecocritical lens. By looking at historical figures who would not normally be under the radar of "green studies," scholars of history, literature, and philosophy will be able to discover new questions that need to be addressed, as well as work alongside scholars outside of their field. While Humboldt's work might appear to be more specialized, his correspondence with poet Chateaubriand shows that academics were still interested in subjects outside of their intellectual realm.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

*Today the countryside retains traces of its origins: interspersed with wooded gullies, from a distance, it has the look of a forest and recalls England: it was the haunt of fairies, and you will see that I indeed encountered my sylph there.*

- François René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*

On March 21, 1817, Chateaubriand delivered a speech to the Chamber of Peers proclaiming that “Colbert saw the destruction of France in the destruction of the woods: I prefer his feeling to that of some of those friends of equality (but not freedom) whose hatred persists to continue in the high forests and who, despairing of having been able to level the men, still wish for the nobility of oaks.”<sup>1</sup> Could this have been a call to halt deforestation in the slowly but surely modernizing France?

Despite his retirement from literature, Chateaubriand’s political speeches contain many references to his still-existing environmental concerns that had previously resonated in works such as *Atala* and *René*. Although often labeled as an ultra-royalist, Chateaubriand was moderate with his royalist views due to his sympathy towards Amerindians and the global environment. Although one can interpret his speeches as calls for French nationalism, he also referred to his home province, Brittany, in his writings, and detailed how it maintained a separate identity from that of France. Most of his childhood was spent in Combourg, a commune located between his birth city of Saint-Malo and Rennes, Brittany’s capital. Throughout his writings, he referred to the province as “ma Bretagne,” where he would return only to be buried on Grand Bé.

Chateaubriand’s life spanned from the Old Regime to the February Revolution, where he survived the end of the Old Regime, served as an ambassador for Napoleon I, sat in the Chamber of Peers during the Bourbon Restoration, and lived the rest of his days in solitude before dying in

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<sup>1</sup> Chamber of Peers speech. Look up the citation later.

the midst of the 1848 Revolution. To live such an illustrious life as a minor noble during this tumultuous time in French history is incredible. It should come to no surprise that his approach to literature would be as transitional as his life.

By analyzing travel literature written during the Enlightenment and Romantic movements, it is safe to say that French Romanticism was not a complete break away from the Enlightenment. While still part of the Enlightenment, intellectuals such as Rousseau and Saint-Pierre wrote works that did not follow the Enlightenment paradigm, primarily relying on science to reinforce their beliefs. However, figures such as Rousseau, Saint-Pierre, and later, Chateaubriand, turned back to religion to express their beliefs, and while their works are an obvious fit into the environmental history paradigm today, the forerunners of environmentalism did not necessarily see the importance of the intellectual and cultural analysis of flora and fauna.

According to the Annales School scholars, such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, March Bloch, and Lucien Febvre, the study of the environment was restricted to nation-state borders and only warranted study if there was an economic or material gain.<sup>2</sup> However, environmental philosophers such as Gilbert LaFreniere argued otherwise; rather, environmental history and literature must also be read from the cultural perspective. By reading about the Enlightenment and Romanticism from the religious, philosophical, and scientific perspectives, we can see how the former influenced the latter, and how it ultimately became its own movement.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See the following works: Ladurie's *Histoire humaine et comparée du climat* (2004); *Les fluctuations du climat de l'an mil à aujourd'hui* (2011); *Abrégé d'histoire du climat: Du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, (2007); Bloch's *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (date); and Febvre's *La Terre et l'évolution humaine : introduction géographique à l'histoire* (1922).

<sup>3</sup> See LaFreniere's *The Decline of Nature: Environmental History and the Western Worldview* (2007) for more explanation as to how intellectual and cultural materials played a crucial role in the expansion of environmental philosophy and history.

## Enlightenment and Romanticism: Not So Different?

This environmental history project analyzed how the botanophilia affected the learned people's involvement in botany at various levels of interest. By understanding France's involvement in the New World and how colonial botanical exchange in the shape of seed exchange and correspondences with likeminded intellectuals from the eighteenth century forward, we will better understand the everchanging French perspective on the physical environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, one of my main arguments is that France's Enlightenment and Romanticism movements are not as radically different as we once thought. It is easy to pigeonhole the Enlightenment as being "anti-nature" and to only offer black and white interpretations of the movements: rationality and emotion, sciences and humanities, concrete and abstract. While there is some truth to this assumption, much of the works published during the transitional period borrowed elements from both movements, demonstrating no clear break away from the Enlightenment.

As for Romanticism, it has been common for the movement to be stereotyped as the antithesis of the Enlightenment. It represents anti-rationality, solely focuses on emotions, and is blindly accepting of the importance of the environment. Humans are to forgo their civilized ways (if they are part of said civilized groups) and return to nature in a romanticized sense, copying the Natives in the Americas. These assumptions are false. While many Enlightenment thinkers had a mechanized view of Earth, it was not as cut and dry as those descriptions suggest.

Transitional figures such as Rousseau, Saint-Pierre, and Chateaubriand are crucial in order to fully understand French Romanticism's development. While the cultural movement had its beginnings in England and Germany, its later development in France gives the philosophy



another dimension for Romantic scholars to unravel. Several environmental scholars have credited Romanticism as the “grandfather of environmental history.” Themes such as the sublime, communion with nature, and spirituality have permeated the field. Two centuries after the Romantic era, scholars have credited both the Enlightenment and Romanticism for the creation of environmental history. Bruno Latour’s recent scholarship focuses on Romanticism’s influence on environmental science and history, as well as modern-day political ecology.

### Latour and the Anthropocene

*However, like wild grasses in a French garden, other objects with more extravagant forms began to blur the landscape by superimposing their own branches on those of modernist objects.*

- Bruno Latour, *Politiques de la nature*

In one of his earlier works, philosopher Bruno Latour argues in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) that assuming what European intellectuals considered to be “modern” does a great injustice to the rest of the non-European world. He states that the adjective of the concept “designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time. When the word ‘modern,’ ‘modernization,’ or ‘modernity’ appears, we are defining, by contrast, an archaic and stable past.”<sup>4</sup> From these definitions, it would appear that modernity secedes whatever formerly made up the past, thus making it seem that there was no progress until modernity came to be. Latour refutes this claim, stating that modernism is always active and is never a state of being.<sup>5</sup> It is unfitting to say that modernity is static because, according to many intellectuals, humanity has never actually been modern.

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<sup>4</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Kindle Locations 266-268.

<sup>5</sup> Latour extrapolates on this by defining postmodernism, which is “a symptom of the contradiction of modernism, but it is unable to diagnose this contradiction because it shares the same upper half of the Constitution—the sciences and the technologies are extrahuman—but it no longer shares the cause of the Constitution’s strength and greatness – the proliferation of quasi-objects and the multiplication of intermediaries between humans and nonhumans allowed by the absolute distinction between humans and nonhumans.” (Kindle Locations 2643-2646).

Latour's recent scholarship delves into the effects of the Anthropocene, the current geological age during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. Like all epochs, there is no consensus with regards to when this era began. However, geologists have suggested that the Industrial Revolution was the beginning of the Anthropocene. While the definition makes it seem that humans hold all of the agency in terms of the development of this era, Latour explains:

The Earth is neither nature nor a machine. It is not that we should try to puff some spiritual dimension into its stern and solid stuff—as so many romantic thinkers and Nature-philosophers had tried to do—but rather that we should abstain from de-animating the agencies that we encounter at each step.<sup>6</sup>

He also refers to the people, called “the Earthbound,” as those coming into the Age of the Anthropocene. Latour criticizes those who engage in the sciences for not fully understanding humanity's agency in the “construction of facts,” and how people tend to taint information with biases.<sup>7</sup> Another critique that Latour has of European prescientific visions of Earth was how the planet was seen as a “cesspool of decay, death, and corruption” that could only be escaped through prayer and escape to another plane. However, in what he considers to be a “counter-Copernican revolution,” religion is replaced with science, and there is no escape from Earth, which is still filled with despair and corruption. There is no order, and despite moving from the

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<sup>6</sup> Latour, 15.

<sup>7</sup>He explains this further in this quote: “While the older problem of science studies was to understand the active role of scientists in the construction of facts, a new problem arises: how to understand the active role of human agency not only in the construction of facts but also in the very existence of the phenomena those facts are trying to document? The many important nuances between facts, news, stories, alarms, warnings, norms, and duties are all mixed up. It is so important to try to clarify a few of them anew. This is especially true when we try to understand how we could shift from economics to ecology, given the old connection between those two disciplines and the “scientific world view.” Latour, Bruno. “Agency at the time of the Anthropocene.” *New Literary History*, Vol. 45, pp. 1-18, 2014. We can also relate this to Serres's quote: “So the prophet became king. In our turn, we are appealing to an absent authority when we cry, like Galileo, but before the court of his successors, former prophets turned kings: ‘the Earth is moved.’ The immemorial, fixed Earth, which provided the conditions and foundations of our lives, is moving; the fundamental Earth is trembling.” 3.

infinite universe toward the closed cosmos, we are “straying further away from the foundations and staying that we are still part of the cosmos.” Quite the conundrum, if I do say so myself.

Latour mocks how current Western philosophy has reversed its most known trope in environmental studies, in which “human societies have resigned themselves to playing the role of the dumb object, while nature has unexpectedly taken on that of the active subject!”<sup>8</sup> Rather than giving agency to one actor and not to the other, Latour suggests that we look at both human societies and nature as active subjects. In an increasingly interdisciplinary world, Latour argues that storytelling “is not just a property of human language, but one of the many consequences of being thrown in a world that is, by itself, fully articulated and active.”<sup>9</sup> He is correct—it would be absurd to give one occupation the authority to tell the entirety of our geostory.

Nature is no longer the constant background of our everyday lives, and we need to take responsibility for the environmental damage that has been caused by over-extracting natural resources for our comfort. *Facing Gaia* (2017) portrays Gaia as a secular figure rather than a larger-than-life entity. Latour proclaims that we should look at her as a self-regulating system that is continually being modified in order to accommodate her occupants. He does not refer to any specific ideology throughout these lectures, stating that perhaps there is no one ideology that truly tells us to “come back to Earth,” or in this case, “to Gaia.” His later work, *Down to Earth*, a collection of essays focusing on twenty-first environmental concerns, echoes Romanticism’s call “back to nature,” and implores Western civilizations to respect nature beyond its materialistic value. Latour calls for a return to a horizontal relationship with nature.

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<sup>8</sup> Latour, “Agency at the time of the Anthropocene.”

<sup>9</sup> Latour, “Agency at the time of the Anthropocene.”

Where do we go from here?

The rise of popular gardening owes much of its success to the botanophilia craze of eighteenth-century French salons, and the lack of a divide between these various disciplines made it possible for anyone to participate in the study of botany. Aesthetics and science came together during the Age of Enlightenment; both camps could coexist with one another by utilizing the same tool. While religious persons used botany to reinforce their spiritual beliefs, their secular counterparts were more interested in utilizing scientific knowledge to improve humanity's day-to-day life on this earthly plane of existence. And then some teetered between the two, using the garden as a place to defend one's national and religious pride, as well as to ameliorate their compatriots' living conditions.

As I have discussed throughout my work, botany was one of the conduits in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that transcended social class, ethnicity, politics, religion, and nationality. While the field has its roots embedded in the Antiquity, it would later become a widely appreciated field in modern Europe and, later, worldwide. This work aims to open new windows for scholars of French history in terms of environmental history. Some recent works have also delved into this area of study, but most of these are written from economic and material perspectives. It would be beneficial to study the French environment from a cultural and intellectual lens, as this will provide more opportunities to a wide range of disciplines outside of the hard sciences. By reading gardens as a primary source, we will better understand the French attitude towards nature from the eighteenth century forward, as well as how this awareness played an essential role in the rise of environmentalism in the twentieth century in the West.

Due to time and resource constraints, I could not photograph the gardens that I initially sought to include in this project. Perhaps I will be able to go back to France soon when the weather is

less dreary and more suitable for the blooming season. One of the significant difficulties of this project was accessing the gardens for discussion. Many of them either no longer exist or are difficult to access without the proper resources. In the future, I would like to visit these gardens and correspond with the head gardener of each one in order to learn how they maintain the gardens' integrity hundreds of years past the original creator's death.

Another possibility for this project is to switch my focus from the Atlantic World to either the Middle East or East Asia. With the rise of Orientalism in the nineteenth century, many European intellectuals traversed the Mediterranean and wrote travelogues, often bringing live specimens back to their estates for their contemporaries to experience. As for East Asia, western Europeans have expressed even more interest in Chinese and Japanese aesthetics, herbology, and gardening.

This project opens up various possibilities in several different fields ranging from history, literature, philosophy, and botany. While there is no shortage of works on natural history during the Enlightenment, there is still not much work on transatlantic botanical exchanges during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I found this especially true for French botanical exploration in South America. While much of French exploration during the nineteenth century forward focused on Oceania and the Middle East, those studies can be tied to European and North American exchanges.

In addition to this manuscript, I have created a rough database of well-known and lesser-known figures discussed throughout this dissertation. The goal is to create a network of European and North American intellectuals and to discuss representations of the environment in their works. I was surprised to see many figures whom we would not normally associate with having nature writing as one of their fortes. The purpose of this byproduct is to facilitate

connections between historical figures and to possibly come up with other research questions regarding why we should look at them through an environmental lens. It is also important to note the societies that these people were a part of, and to consider how this savant network shows the modern reader that intellectual endeavors transcended disciplinary boundaries.

As an environmental historian, I always found the study of nature to be most fulfilling from the cultural and intellectual perspectives. As the historiography continues to grow in both English and French-speaking scholarship, this project will provide other scholars with another perspective on Romanticism, and why it is still vital in the twenty-first century. As we deal with the issues of the Anthropocene and continuing climate change, we must understand how we arrived at this epoch, as well as how our ancestors perceived these human-induced changes. Understanding that this anxiety about climate change is not a recent phenomenon, we will have a better chance at collaboration, and in an ideal world, we could possibly come up with solutions to prevent the already dire situations from getting worse.

On a hopeful note, in April 2008, Switzerland became the first country to include plants' dignity in its federal constitution.<sup>10</sup> For centuries, governments and corporations had prioritized which plants should and should not be protected based on their monetary worth. However, with this new piece of legislation, plants of all types are protected from physical harm, instrumentalization, ownership, genetic modification, patenting, diversity, and proportionality.<sup>11</sup> There now has to be a rational reason for humans to use the plant. If a person wants to manipulate a plant specimen, it has to be for both the plant's well-being and society's betterment. By protecting the rights of plants, the Swiss Confederacy upholds the moral integrity of the

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<sup>10</sup> The Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology (ECNH) published a brochure on the "moral consideration of plants for their own sake." It is available online at [https://www.ekah.admin.ch/inhalte/\\_migrated/content\\_uploads/e-Broschure-Wurde-Pflanze-2008.pdf](https://www.ekah.admin.ch/inhalte/_migrated/content_uploads/e-Broschure-Wurde-Pflanze-2008.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> "Moral Consideration of Plants for Their Own Sake," 22.

natural world, plants and humans alike. That is not to say that this is a novel idea in the twenty-first century.

I am attached to my trees; I have addressed elegies, sonnets, and odes to them. There is not one of them that I have not tended with my own hands, that I have not rescued from root-beetles, from caterpillars glued to its leaves; I know them all by name as if they were my children: they are my family, I have no other, and I hope to die among them.<sup>12</sup>

Chateaubriand would be proud.

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<sup>12</sup> Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Book I: Chapter 1: Section 1.

## **Appendix**

### **Vallée aux Loups Questionnaire**

#### **1. Quand avez-vous commencé à travailler à la Maison de Chateaubriand?**

La propriété de Chateaubriand a été acquise par le Département de la Seine en 1967.

Depuis 1970, elle appartient au Département des Hauts-de-Seine qui y entreprend à partir de 1972 de nombreux travaux jusqu'en 1986. La Maison de Chateaubriand et son parc sont inaugurés et ouverte aux visiteurs le 26 mai 1987.

#### **2. Combien de jardiniers travaillent à la Vallée aux Loups ?**

L'entretien du Domaine départemental de la Vallée-aux-Loups est en grande partie confié à un prestataire extérieur. Toutefois, une petite équipe de jardiniers du Département persiste et entretient certains secteurs paysagés horticoles de l'arboretum et ses collections végétales. Le parc de la Maison de Chateaubriand est à ce jour entretenu par 2 à 3 jardiniers (selon les époques et le travail à réaliser) appartenant à une entreprise privée.

#### **3. L'organisation des jardins est-elle toujours la même que celle du temps où Chateaubriand vivait à la Vallée aux Loups ?**

La politique de gestion du parc de la Maison de Chateaubriand consiste à en préserver l'empreinte romantique insufflée par son illustre concepteur. Toutes les traces d'aménagement réalisées par François René de Chateaubriand sont précieusement sauvegardées et toutes les possibilités de retranscrire et implanter la végétation détaillée dans l'œuvre de l'écrivain sont systématiquement exploitées. Les scènes les plus représentatives ont été conservées en l'état. Seules certaines thématiques comme celles des bâtiments des communs et du potager ont disparu du fait de la multiplicité de gestionnaires ayant été en charge de l'entretien du site.



#### 4. Quels arbres ou végétaux plante-t-on aujourd'hui... D'où proviennent-ils?

Quelques exemples d'arbres plantés sur le domaine depuis 1987 et plus particulièrement à partir de l'année 2000 suite à la tempête de décembre 1999 :

- *Cedrus libani*
- *Fagus sylvatica*
- *Magnolia tripetala*
- *Magnolia liliflora* « Nigra »
- *Fagus sylvatica* « Purpurea »
- *Liquidambar styraciflua*
- *Liriodendron tulipifera*
- *Cercis siliquastrum*
- *Castanea sativa*
- *Tilia cordata*
- *Quercus petraea*
- *Séquoia sempervirens*
- *Taxodium distichum*
- *Platanus orientalis*
- *Populus nigra* « Italica »
- *Rhododendron ponticum*
- *Pinus sylvestris*
- *Pinus nigra* subsp. *Laricio* var. *corsicana*
- *Acer platanoides* « Crimson King »
- *Catalpa bignonioides*

- Ginkgo biloba

Tous les sujets n'ayant pas survécus ou ayant subi des événements climatiques importants sont, autant que faire se peut, réimplantés afin, là encore de préserver l'âme des lieux. Le Département des Hauts-de-Seine travaille avec de nombreuses pépinières françaises et européennes. Les végétaux achetés sont en général des sujets d'exception de par leur taille et leur forme. Les gestionnaires privilégient la qualité et préfèrent attendre que les acheteurs du Département identifient le sujet le plus adapté.

#### **5. Combien d'arbres plantés par Chateaubriand existent encore ?**

Les végétaux ayant très probablement été plantés par Mr de Chateaubriand et ayant persisté jusqu'à nos jours sont le fameux marronnier blanc (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), le cyprès chauve de Louisiane (*Taxodium distichum*), le catalpa commun (*catalpa bignonioides*), les rhododendrons pontique (*Rhododendron ponticum*) et le non moins célèbre cèdre du Liban (*Cedrus libani*).

#### **6. A quelle date ont été installés les pancartes devant les plantes? Quand ont-elles été créées ? Chateaubriand a-t-il planté chaque arbre en pensant à ses écrits ?**

Chateaubriand modèle son domaine, il l'aménage à la manière d'un paysagiste, fait réaliser les travaux de nivellement, tracer les allées puis « plante et dé plante, tant qu'il peut » comme le constate sa femme, contrainte de lui laisser la main sur l'agencement du parc. Pour obtenir des plants, il fait appel à ses relations, ses amies, des pépiniéristes de renom et jusqu'à l'ex-impératrice Joséphine qui lui remet un magnolia à fleurs pourpres dans ses serres de la Malmaison. Loin des modes paysagers de son temps, il conçoit un parc littéraire où chaque essence est choisie soigneusement, souvent en lien avec les contrées visitées par cet infatigable voyageur. C'est au pied de ses arbres qu'il puise son inspiration, imagine ses propres personnages et commence à écrire ses mémoires.

**7. Est-ce qu'il y a un catalogue des plantes à la bibliothèque de Chateaubriand ? Si oui, est-ce qu'il y a une possibilité d'en obtenir une copie ?**

Il n'y a malheureusement pas d'ouvrage relatant les différents végétaux utilisés et cités par François René de Chateaubriand dans son œuvre.

Members of the Société de géographie during Chateaubriand's lifetime<sup>1</sup>

Name	Dates	Occupation
Anfrye, Gabriel Prosper Raoul	1843-?	artillery captain, soldier
Argout, Antoine Maurice Apollinaire Comte d'	1782-1858	governor, minister, politician
Argout, Antoine Maurice Apollinaire d'	1782-1858	minister, governor, statesman
Barante, Prosper de	1782-1866	historian, statesman
Barbié du Bocage, Alexandre François	1798-1835	archivist, paleontologist
Barbié du Bocage, Jean Denis	1760-1825	cartographer, geographer,
Becquey, François Louis	1760-1849	magistrate, parliamentary, senior civil servant
Chabrol De Crouzol, Christophe	1771-1836	politician
Chabrol Gaspard, Comte de, Gilbert Joseph Gaspard Dit Chabrol de Volvic	1778-1843	senior civil servant
Chateaubriand, François-René de	1768-1848	ambassador, minister of foreign affairs, translator, writer
Colonna- Walewski, Alexandre	1810-1868	diplomat, politician
Crouzol, Christophe Chabrol de	1771-1836	politician
Cuvier Georges, Jean Léopold Frédéric	1769-1832	anatomist, naturalist
Decazes, Élie	1780-1860	statesman
Eyries, Jen Baptiste Benoit	1767-1846	geographer
Fourier, Jean Baptiste Joseph	1768-1830	mathematician, physician
Freycinet De Saulces, Louis Claude de	1779-1842	geologist, geographer
Gauthier, Marie-Henri Daniel	1782-1835	soldier
Jouannin, Joseph-Marie	1783-1844	cartographer

<sup>1</sup> This information was gathered from the CTHS (Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques) database. I narrowed down the dates to when Chateaubriand was alive and active in the learned societies. <http://cths.fr/>

La Renaudiere Philippe Lasnon de, Philippe François	1772-1845	geographer, writer
Langles, Louis Mathieu	1763-1824	academic, author, librarian, linguist, orientalist, philologist, translator
Lapie, Pierre	1777-1850	cartographer, engraver
Laplace, Pierre Louis Simon de	1749-1827	astronomer, mathematician
Letronne, Antoine Jean	1787-1848	archeologist
Mackau, Ange René Armand	1788-1855	admiral, politician
Malthe Brun, Conrad Dit Malte-Brun	1775-1826	geographer
Montalivet Camille Bachasson, Comte de	1801-1880	peer, statesman
Neuville, Jean-Guillaume Hyde de	1776-1857	diplomat, politician
Pastoret Marquis Emmanuel de	1755-1840	lawyer, man of letters, politician
Pastoret, Emmanuel de	1755-1840	author, lawyer, politician
Pelet-Clozeau, Jean-Jacques Germain	1777-1858	engineer, historian, politician
Rossel, Élisabeth-Paul-Édouard	1765-1829	admiral, astronomer,
Roux de Rochelle, Jean Baptiste Gaspard	1762-1849	ambassador, geographer, poet, writer
Servois, Jean-Pierre	1764-1831	vicar
Tarterat-Clément de Ris, Épouse de La Ronciere-Le Noury Catherine Clémentine	1823-?	woman of letters
Tupinier, Jean Marguerite	1779-1850	politician
Volvic, Gilbert Joseph Gaspard de Chabrol de	1773-1843	official
Warden, David Bailie	1772-1845	diplomat, scholar, scientific writer

## Chateaubriand's Correspondents<sup>2</sup>

Name	Dates	Occupation
Agincourt, Jean Baptiste Seroux d'	1730-1814	antiquarian, archeologist
Beaumont, Pauline de	1768-1803	socialite, woman of letters
Bonpland, Aimé	1773-1858	biologist, botanist, natural historian, physician
Chamfort, Nicolas	1741-1794	playwright, poet, writer
Chénier, André	1762-1794	poet
Fontanes, Louis de	1757-1821	peer, poet, politician
Fusée Aublet, Jean Baptiste Christophore	1720-1778	botanist, pharmacist
Ginguené, Pierre-Louis	1748-1815	journalist, professor, writer
Harpe, Jean-François de la	1736-1803	literary critic, playwright, writer
Hugo, Victor	1802-1885	artist, novelist, playwright, poet, politician, writer
Humboldt, Alexander von	1769-1859	explorer, geographer, naturalist
Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique	1780-1867	artist
Lacretelle, Pierre Louis de	1751-1824	lawyer, politician
Lamartine, Alphonse de	1790-1869	historian, minister of foreign affairs, poet, writer
Lebrun, Ponce Denis Écouchard	1729-1807	poet
McMaster, Archibald	?	?
Morellet, André	1727-1819	clergyman, encyclopedist, translator, writer
Mussy, Philibert Guéneau de	1776-1834	inspector, journalist
Parny, Évariste de	1753-1814	poet
Pasquier, Adrien	?	scholar
Perron, Anisson du	?	?
Récamier, Juliette	1777-1849	socialite, woman of letters
Savary, Anne Jean Marie René	1774-1833	diplomat, general
Schlegel, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich	1772-1829	Indologist, literary critic, philologist, philosopher, poet
Staël, Madame de	1766-1817	philosopher, socialite, writer
Tocqueville, Alexis de	1805-1859	historian, political philosopher, politician, writer
Vigny, Alfred de	1797-1863	novelist, playwright, poet

<sup>2</sup> This information was pulled from Chateaubriand's correspondences with fellow learned individuals. I narrowed down the list to botany and/or natural history correspondences.

## Images



**Figure 1. Kyra Sanchez Clapper Placard of the Louisiana Forest, Vallée aux Loups, Paris France, 2014.**



**Figure 2. Kyra Sanchez Clapper, Vallée aux Loups, Arboretum, Paris France, 2014.**





**Figure 3. HAUTS-DE-SEINE. French. Carte de Vallée aux Loups Chateaubriand, (accessed March 1, 2014).**



**Figure 4. Kyra Sanchez Clapper, La Maison de Chateaubriand, outskirts of Paris, 2014.**





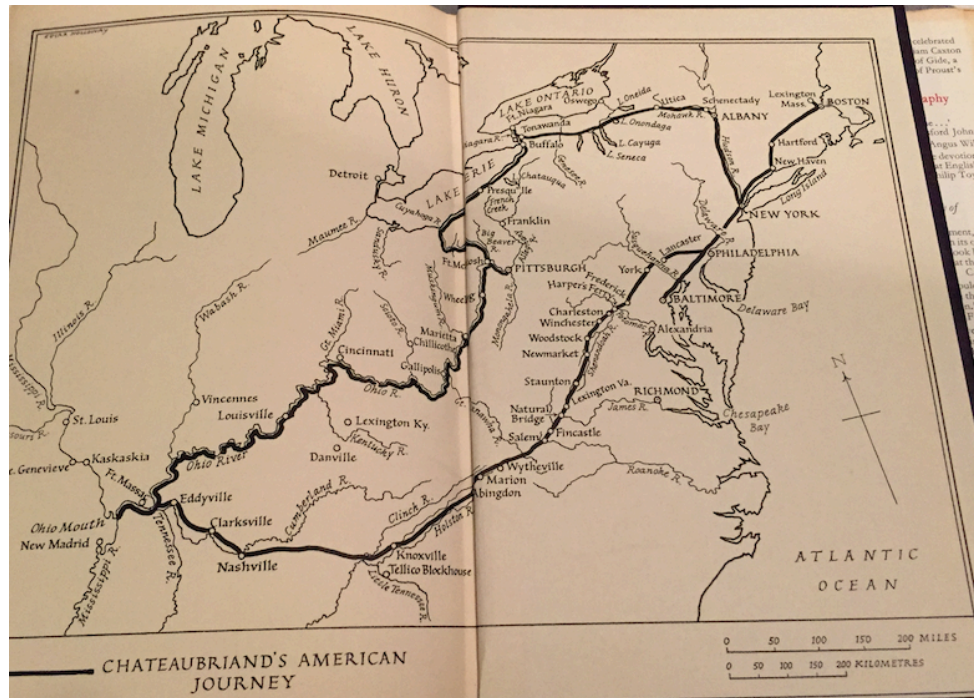
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 5. ANONYMOUS, French, *Il fait naître des fleurs, et brûle les soucis...* 1790. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, (accessed March 1, 2014).**



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6. ANONYMOUS, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, « en pied, tenant à la main un bouquet de fleurs », Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2014.**



**Figure 7. ANONYMOUS, English, Map of Chateaubriand's American Journey, George Painter's *Chateaubriand: A Biography, the Longed for Tempests*. 1977.**