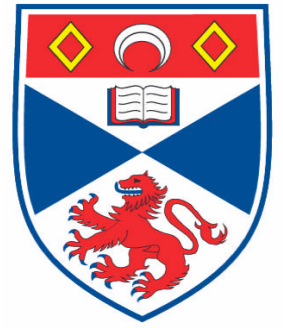
Women and Nature in the Works of French Female Novelists, 1789-1815

Christie Margrave



A dissertation submitted to the University of St Andrews in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, Department of French

28 November 2014

DECLARATIONS

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I, Christie Margrave, hereby certify that this thesis, which is 89,867 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2009 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September 2009; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2009 and 2014.

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I would like to thank the Réunion des musées nationaux in Paris for their permission to include reproductions of two of Constance Mayer's paintings: *L'Heureuse mère* and *La Mère infortunée*, both from the salon of 1810, and both now in the Louvre.

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ABSTRACT

On account of their supposed link to nature, women in post-revolutionary France were pigeonholed into a very restrictive sphere that centred around domesticity and submission to their male counterparts. Yet this thesis shows how a number of women writers – Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël – re-appropriate nature in order to reclaim the voice denied to them and to their sex by the society in which they lived.

The five chapters of this thesis are structured to follow a number of critical junctures in the life of an adult woman: marriage, authorship, motherhood, madness and mortality. The opening sections to each chapter show why these areas of life generated particular problems for women at this time. Then, through in-depth analysis of primary texts, the chapters function in two ways. They examine how female novelists craft natural landscapes to expose and comment on the problems male-dominant society causes women to experience in France at this time. In addition, they show how female novelists employ descriptions of nature to highlight women's responses to the pain and frustration that social issues provoke for them.

Scholars have thus far overlooked the natural settings within the works of female novelists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Yet, a re-evaluation of these natural settings, as suggested by this thesis, brings a new dimension to our appreciation of the works of these women writers and of their position as critics of contemporary society. Ultimately, an escape into nature on the part of female protagonists in these novels becomes the means by which their creators confront the everyday reality faced by women in the turbulent socio-historical era which followed the Revolution.

ABBREVIATIONS

Material from the corpus of primary texts analysed in this thesis will be referenced with the following abbreviations and relevant page numbers in parenthesis immediately following the quotations:

AS *Adèle de Sénange* (Mme de Souza)

AM *Amélie Mansfield* (Mme Cottin)

E *Émilie et Alphonse* (Mme de Souza)

C *Corinne* (Mme de Staël)

LMR *Les Mères rivales ou la calomnie* (Mme de Genlis)

M *Malvina* (Mme Cottin)

Mat *Mathilde, ou mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades* (Mme Cottin)

V *Valérie* (Mme de Krüdener)

The full bibliographical references for each of these novels can be found in the thesis bibliography.

Owing to the lack of general availability of the majority of the novels analysed within this thesis, which have been out of print for over a century, it is necessary to provide a large amount of plot summary in order for my analysis to be sufficiently clear. Synopses of all eight novels are included in Appendix I.

The Romantic age is notoriously difficult to define in terms of dates, particularly if we also employ the term pre-Romanticism to discuss the early Romantic era in France. The present work aligns itself with Noakes' delineation of the Romantic period as extending through the first half of the nineteenth century and having its roots in the pre-revolutionary period of Rousseau. See: Susan Noakes, 'The Rhetoric of Travel: The French Romantic Myth of Naples', *Ethnohistory*, 33:2, (1986), 139-148.

In referring to Mme de Genlis, Mme de Krüdener, Mme de Souza and Mme de Staël by surname only, some scholars use 'Genlis', 'Krüdener', 'Souza' and 'Staël' and others 'de Genlis', etc.. The present discussion will employ the former. The sole exceptions to this practice are found when quoting from other scholars who have chosen to employ 'de'; in this case the quotation is not altered.

This thesis has employed capitalised and unitalicised formatting for Ancien Régime throughout. The sole exceptions to this practice are found when quoting from other scholars who have employed *ancien régime*, ancien régime, or *Ancien Régime;* in these cases the quotations are not altered.

All spellings in quotations taken from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French texts have been modernised throughout. This includes the removal of several nominal capitalisations in the letters from Mme de Krüdener to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, quoted in the introduction.

The letter from Krüdener to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has been referenced as instructed on the Electronic Enlightenment website, and according to MHRA guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

Women and Nature in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century France

> Or, à partir de la *Nouvelle Héloïse*, le sentiment de la nature a pris sa place dans la vie profonde. Il a cessé d'être une distraction ou une joie futiles et passagères, pour mettre dans les âmes les racines tenaces qu'y poussent les émotions puissantes. Surtout il a mérité d'entrer dans l'histoire sociale comme dans l'histoire littéraire.[1]

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, women were pigeonholed into a very restrictive sphere, centred around domesticity and submission to their male counterparts, as studies of women's history and French women's writing recognise.[2] Hesse summarises the issues women faced:

> They were denied the vote in 1789, prohibited from political mobilization during the Terror, denied civil equality within marriage, and, finally, with the promulgation of the Civil Code in 1804, legally subordinated to the will of their husbands. Bourgeois modernity, in short, was not good for women.[3]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that French women writing during this period examine such issues in their works, as Stewart, Hesse, Finch and Cohen have noted.[4] This thesis analyses works by Cottin, Krüdener, Genlis, Souza and Staël, who all write about socio-political issues of contemporary relevance to their sex. Genlis writes on women's education; Genlis and Krüdener write on motherhood; Cottin, Souza and Staël write about the duty-happiness debate facing women – whether to follow their hearts in choosing a lover, or fulfil the duty owed to their family; Staël writes about the difficulties confronted by talented women; and arranged (and forbidden) marriages feature in many women's novels.

Part 1: Corpus

This thesis will examine how descriptions and portrayals of the natural world play a key role in several novels by these five authors, often aiding the writers to be subversive,

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[1] Daniel Mornet, *Le Sentiment de la nature en France de J.-J. Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Genève: Slatkine, 1980), p.217.

[2] Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Catherine R. Montfort-Howard (ed.), *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1994); Catherine Toubin-Malinas, *Heurs et malheurs de la femme au XIXe siècle:* 'Fécondité' *D'Émile Zola* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1986).

[3] Hesse, p.31.

[4] Hesse; Joan Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Alison Finch, *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

without being openly politically critical. Natural settings are employed to create symbolic depth, to establish discourse and to enable escape, and in each case Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël's employment of nature allows them to expose and comment on women's contemporary difficulties and to engage with the socio-political debates centred around a woman's role. Therefore, in establishing a corpus of novels to be analysed, I focus on those in which descriptions of the natural world appear at crucial moments that impact one of the five junctures of an adult woman's life under scrutiny in the thesis: marriage, authorship, motherhood, madness and death. I have also drawn together some of the better and lesser known works of these authors. This shows that it is not only recently revived novels which feature interesting portrayals of nature, nor is it solely those which have yet to be analysed that manipulate descriptions of the natural world. Both the more and the less well-known novels have recourse to the natural world to discuss women's issues. The corpus of novels analysed in this thesis is as follows:

Mme de Souza, *Adèle de Sénange* (1794)
Mme de Souza, *Émilie et Alphonse* (1799)
Mme de Genlis, *Les Mères rivales ou la calomnie* (1800)[5]
Mme Cottin, *Malvina* (1800/1801)
Mme Cottin, *Amélie Mansfield* (1802/1803)
Mme de Krüdener, *Valérie* (1803)
Mme Cottin, *Mathilde, ou mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades* (1805)[6]
Mme de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807)[7]

In order to make comparisons with these primary texts, Staël's *Delphine,* Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* and Genlis's *La Femme auteur* will also be briefly mentioned. They are not analysed in depth, however, because their portrayal of the natural world is not as rich as elsewhere in Staël, Cottin and Genlis's work.

These five authors have been selected out of the larger body of women writers in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France owing to their contemporary popularity. If today's scholarship is unaware of some of the recurring themes within the novels devoured by the French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readership, we risk underestimating significant aspects of French sociological history and the responses to them. The contemporary popularity of Cottin, Krüdener, Genlis, Souza and Staël can be seen by viewing the number of publications of their works, provided in Appendix II.

Cottin's novels topped the list of the country's bestsellers: '[i]n the period 1816-20, *Claire d'Albe* was in fact *the* best selling novel in France, followed closely by […]

[5] Hereafter *Les Mères rivales*
[6] Hereafter *Mathilde.*
[7] Hereafter *Corinne.*

Elisabeth'.[8] According to Sainte-Beuve, '[r]ien n'égale le succès qu'eurent dans leur temps les romans de Madame Cottin'.[9] In the case of Genlis, '[m]any of her writings were bestsellers'.[10] Polowetsky even characterises Genlis as '[t]he most prolific and possibly the most widely read French author of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods'.[11] Krüdener's fame is equally impossible to deny. 'Sa *Valérie*, fut un succès triomphal', declares Larnac.[12] *Valérie*'s success was also swift: the novel 'remporta un succès européen prodigieux et immédiat'.[13] Souza's novels, particularly her first, were greatly sought after too. Carpenter describes the 'very great success of her first novel *Adèle de Sénange*'.[14] Staël's popularity is underlined by the fact that her works have never disappeared from public view. Sainte-Beuve writes: 'Malgré les défauts de sa manière, a dit M. de Chateaubriand […], elle ajoutera un nom de plus à la liste des noms qui ne doivent point mourir'.[15] Staël's novels were also praised by Lamartine, who called her a male genius in female form.[16] Staël's popularity has been noted by many scholars, including Goodden, Winegarten and Balayé, but it is perhaps best summarised by Gutwirth:

> Between 1815 and 1845, these volumes [Staël's novels] continued to be extremely popular, receiving much notice from both critics and public. No other novelist in France whose works were not currently appearing was the subject of as many articles during this spell.[17]

Part 2: Literature Review

Gutwirth's statement is perceptive not only in its description of Staël's critical acclaim, but also in highlighting the disappearance of other authors from the literary scene. For, despite their distinction during their lifetimes, after their deaths, Cottin, Krüdener, Souza, and Genlis fell into obscurity for over 150 years. Staël escaped this fate, perhaps due to

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[8] Margaret Cohen, 'Introduction', in Sophie Cottin, *Claire d'Albe,* ed. by Margaret Cohen (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), pp. vii-xxii (p.x) (Original emphasis).
[9] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi* (Paris: Garnier Frères, n.d.), XI, 488.
[10] Heather Belnap Jensen, *Portraitistes à la plume: Women Art Critics in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (University of Kansas: ProQuest, 2007), p.106.
[11] Michael Polowetsky, *A Bond Never Broken: The Relations between Napoleon and the Authors of France* (Toronto: Associated UP, 1993), pp.142-143.
[12] Jean Larnac, *Histoire de la littérature feminine en France*, (Poitiers: Impr. Nicolas, Renault et Cie; Paris, éditions Kra, 1929), p.171.
[13] Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, *Un Autre mal du siècle: Le Romantisme des romancières, 1800-1846* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2005), p.52.
[14] Kirsty Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza in Social and Political Perspective* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p.49.
[15] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits de femmes* (Paris: Didier, 1844), p.64.
[16] Madelyn Gutwirth, 'Seeing *Corinne* afresh', in *The Novel's Seductions, Staël's* Corinne *in Critical Inquiry*, ed. by Karyna Szmurlo (Cranbury, NJ; London, England; Mississauga, Ontario: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp.26-34 (p.26).
[17] Ibid. p.28.

her place on the European socio-political stage, her confrontations with Napoleon, or her influence on European Romanticism. Her fellow women writers were not as lucky; only now are scholars beginning to accord them the attention they deserve. Mariette-Clot asserts:

> De *La Princesse de Clèves* aux romans de la fin du XIXe siècle, peu d'ouvrages écrits par des femmes ont retenu l'attention des critiques et rares sont les éditeurs qui inscrivent encore à leur catalogue des titres anciens et oubliés. Nombreuses sont cependant celles qui se sont consacrées au genre romanesque, notamment à la fin du XVIIIe siècle et dans la première moitié du XIXe.[18]

Stewart argues that women's literature fell from the canon because of its content:

> The questions that they raise – the passionate nature of women, the economic necessity and indeed the very possibility of marrying and remarrying, the liveability of contemporary marriage, the significance of mothering and domesticity – as much as the way in which they raise them, didn't appear sufficiently important to the literary establishment.[19]

Even if women's novels were important at the time of printing, the fact that they often had a political edge and demanded 'an historical sensitivity' from their readers, meant they 'quickly went out of fashion as the politics changed'.[20]

Only since the 1990s has scholarship on French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's writing flourished. Monographs and articles have underlined the influence of successful women writers, and have consequently shown why it is important to re-examine their work;[21] anthologies and critical editions have been published;[22] a database has been created;[23] an increasing number of conferences request panels on

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[18] Catherine Mariette-Clot, 'Avant-Propos', in *La Tradition des romans de femmes, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles,* ed. by Catherine Mariette-Clot and Damien Zanone (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012), pp.7-17 (p.7).
[19] Stewart, pp.21-22.
[20] Carpenter, p.263.
[21] Bertrand-Jennings; Carpenter; Stewart; Jean Bloch, 'The eighteenth century: women writing, women learning' in *A History of Women's Writing in France* ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.84-101; Margaret Cohen, 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel*, ed. by Timothy Unwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.54-72; Martin Hall, 'Eighteenth-century women novelists: genre and gender', in *A History of Women's Writing in France,* ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.102-119 (p.102); Brigitte Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales, 1789-1825* (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2009).
[22] Raymond Trousson, *Romans de femmes du XVIIIe siècle: Mme de Tencin, Mme de Graffigny, Mme de Riccoboni, Mme de Charrière, Olympes de Gouges, Mme de Souza, Mme Cottin, Mme de Genlis, Mme de Krüdener, Mme de Duras* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1996); Huguette Krief, *Vivre libre et écrire: Anthologie des romancières de la période révolutionnaire (1789-1800)* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005); Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, *Adelaide and Theodore, or Letters on Education,* ed. and trans. by Gillian Dow (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007); Mme Cottin, *Claire d'Albe,* ed. by Margaret Cohen (The Modern Language Association of America: New York, 2002); Mme de Souza, *Eugénie et Mathilde ou mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel,* ed. by Kirsty Carpenter (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 2014).
[23] The Women Writers' Database: <http://neww.huygens.knaw.nl/works/show/1027>.

francophone women's writing;[24] a growing number of theses have focused on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female authorship.[25] French women's writing has consequently become a burgeoning field.

Work Conducted Prior to the 1990s

Stewart argued in 1993 that 'there has been relatively little available in the way of modern analysis of novels by women'. Aside from occasional scholarship on individual authors, the scholars who had examined eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French women novelists numbered less than half a dozen, including Mooij (1949), Fauchery (1972), Sainte-Beuve (1840s), Kavanagh (1862) and Le Breton (1901). One recurring theme in the writings of the latter three is the status of women writers as the bestselling authors of their day. Little actual analysis of the authors' works was conducted, however, and any direct comparison between authors' texts was scarce. Nor was there any significant attempt to examine how women writers of the period 1789-1815 scrutinised the socio-political status quo within their novels.

Work Conducted Since the 1990s

Scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French women writers began to expand in the 1990s, with Stewart, DeJean, Montfort-Howard, Cohen, Trousson and Trouille amongst the first to re-examine women's writing of this period.[26] Trousson's 1996 anthology reproduces some of the fiction of several women writers in order for the modern reader to experience these long-forgotten novels.[27]

Scholarly work on women's writing in the last two decades has developed in several directions, ranging from general overviews – such as Finch's monograph which gives 'a sense of what women writers were doing in the century as a whole'[28] – to examinations of more specific themes. Perhaps expectedly, the rediscovery of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women's writing occasioned the need to justify the return to

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[24] Women in French 2015 Conference, 8-10 May 2015, University of Leeds; "From Medieval to Modern: New Approaches to French Women and Authorship" Northeast Modern Languages Association (NEMLA), Toronto, 30 April - 3 May 2015.

[25] Cottin has featured particularly in theses by Heitzman, Glessner, Bianciardi, Moreau and Chase: see bibliography.

[26] DeJean; Montfort-Howard; Stewart; Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel;* Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightnment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[27] Trousson.

[28] Finch, pp.1-2.

such texts. Consequently, most monographs remind the modern reader of the contemporary popularity of the works in question, before discussing other issues.

Statistics regarding the number of women writers publishing in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France are provided and debated by Darnton, Wolfgang, Hesse and Foley.[29] Hesse and Darnton argue that women's publishing under the Ancien Régime was minimal; Hesse's figures illustrate a dramatic increase in women's writing in the years following the Revolution. Similarly, Stewart states: 'in the advancing eighteenth century – particularly in its last few decades – there was a distinct increase in the number of prominent women novelists',[30] and Finch speaks of 'an explosion of women's writing' in the 1800s.[31] Wolfgang, however, argues that women writers were more marginalised than ever after the Revolution.[32] Similarly, Foley shows that despite the growing number of published women writers, women still formed a small percentage of the total number of writers in print. The work on statistics is ongoing and the development of an online database has added to our knowledge of publication of women's novels.[33]

Studies also chart the role played by women in the general development of the French novel. DeJean details the rise of female authorship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the role this played in the novel's development.[34] Cohen takes the charting of the development of the French novel into the nineteenth century, examining the influence of the sentimental novels published by women in the early nineteenth century on later plotlines, genres and canonical authors (particularly Balzac and Stendhal).[35]

Other scholars explore both the negative and positive reactions to Rousseau's work exhibited by women writers (particularly Roland, Gouges and Staël). Trouille comments upon the paradox that 'the women writers to whom Rousseau appealed most strongly were often those who, because of their superior gifts and idealistic expectations, were least apt to content themselves with the limited role he prescribed for them'.[36] Rousseau's influence on women's writing of this period has been further developed in

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[29] Hesse; Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1984); Susan K. Foley, *Women in France since 1789: The Meaning of Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Aurora Wolfgang, *Gender and Voice in the French Novel, 1730-1782* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).
[30] Stewart, p.3.
[31] Finch, p.2.
[32] Wolfgang, p.12.
[33] The *Women Writers* Database: <http://neww.huygens.knaw.nl/works/show/1027>.
[34] Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
[35] Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel.*
[36] Trouille, p.2.

recent years by Popiel, Louichon, Call, Perrin, Sgard and Chase.[37] Whether women writers upheld or protested against Rousseau's philosophies and ideas in their novels remains a point of debate.

The type of writing undertaken by women has also been studied. Goodman addresses how the restrictive lives women faced as married, domestic creatures are portrayed in their correspondence. Women use letters, Goodman argues, as a form of expression to convey the difficulties of being a woman in the eighteenth century.[38] For this reason, my analysis will take into account women writers' correspondence, *cahiers* and treatises where they help us understand their novels. Regarding the novelistic genres in which women participated, Krief states that 'la littérature féminine fait place à des formes nouvelles qui s'élaborent conformément aux attentes du public',[39] covering genres as diverse as the *roman pastoral,* the *roman oriental polémique,* the *roman sensible et sentimental,* the *roman érotique*, and the *roman-mémoires*. Cohen argues that women did not pen early Realist novels, but rather wrote sentimental or idealist novels. Both Cohen and Miller contend that the reason for this lies in women's dominated social position, which 'makes them hostile to a historical moment's reigning notions of plausibility and verisimilitude that are the products of the dominant, that is, masculine, culture'.[40] Women's writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was so prolific, according to the 2012 volume edited by Mariette-Clot and Zanone, and had such value for the reading public that 'romans de femmes' itself forms a tradition of writing, made up of a *langage romanesque* with recurring themes and plot details. This latter volume argues that consequently we must reconsider women's writing of this era if we are to gain a better picture of the literature and social history of the day, for women write about the socio-political issues that affect them.

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[37] Dana Chase, *Mother Nature and the Nature of Woman: Rousseau's* Nouvelle Héloïse *and the Novels of Sophie Cottin and Adélaïde de Souza*, (Electronically published doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 2001) <http://search.proquest.com/docview/275807092/fulltextPDF?accountid=8312> [accessed 30 November 2012]; Michael J. Call, *Infertility and the Novels of Sophie Cottin* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2002); Jean-François Perrin, 'Enjeux et poétique de la mémoire affective chez les romancières françaises après la *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1762-1803)', in *La Tradition des romans de femmes, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles,* ed. by Catherine Mariette-Clot and Damien Zanone (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012) pp.105-130; Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008); Jean Sgard, 'Collections pour dames', in *La Tradition des romans de femmes, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles,* ed. by Catherine Mariette-Clot and Damien Zanone (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012), pp.105-129.

[38] Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), p.4.

[39] Krief.

[40] Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel,* p.9. Cf. Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

It is this latter aspect of women's writing which must be discussed most of all here, as it is to this area that the present thesis will add original arguments. As Cazenobe argues 'une sorte de vision ou de compréhension commune du destin malheureux des femmes d'élite, intelligentes et sensibles, [est] illustré par le sort réservé aux héroïnes de romans'.[41] Women's novels reflect the situation of the real upper-middle class women of the time, providing greater insight into the socio-historical status quo of the period. In fact, women's writing often even protested against the situation faced by women. The power of eighteenth-century women's novels and the advantages that a female voice can bring to the sphere of literary fiction have been addressed by Stewart, Wolfgang, Krief and Carpenter. Carpenter states that Souza's novels, 'were a way of preserving detachment and at the same time entering into a much more political arena than most women could gain access to'.[42] This is true of many women writers. Stewart analyses the power of women's fiction to expose the problems faced by women of the era, styling it a 'covert female rebellion'.[43] 'Protest in the novel' is, according to Stewart, 'masked and mediated'.[44] She describes how Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* dramatises

> the tensions and the revolt that characterize a tradition of novels by women and propos[es] a nuanced vision of female sexuality as integral to personality, diametrically opposed to the notion advanced by Restif and others of female sexuality as justifiable mainly in terms of social utility.[45]

Similarly, Wolfgang argues that women writers such as Graffigny appear to conform to the status quo, whilst nonetheless criticising it. Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* comprises the expected form of 'feminine' style love letters and therefore on the surface appears to be a 'feminine' romantic novel (the most acceptable genre in which women might publish). However, 'only in the margins of the love-letters, displaced from the reader's focus of attention, does the author display her scholarship. Graffigny evoked a male tradition of philosophical critique through her scholarly apparatus – a preface, historical introduction, and footnotes'.[46] Therefore, social satire and cultural observation form as much a part of Graffigny's novel as do the expected love intrigues. My analysis will expand upon the work of Stewart and Wolfgang, illustrating further how women highlight socio-political issues without being overtly subversive.

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[41] Colette Cazenobe, *Au Malheur des dames: Le roman feminine au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), p.379.
[42] Carpenter, pp.256.
[43] Stewart, p.1.
[44] Ibid., p.6.
[45] Ibid., p.183.
[46] Wolfgang, p.103.

Whilst Stewart's and Wolfgang's analyses have focused on eighteenth-century novels, the apparently political nature of nineteenth-century women's writing has been discussed by Winegarten and Bertrand-Jennings, amongst others.[47] Bertrand-Jennings believes that sympathy for the woman suffering under stifling social conditions led to her portrayal in women's early Romantic novels. She argues that if a male *mal du siècle* involved expressing suffering at their impotence in the new society rising out of the ashes of a Revolution that had promised so much, an *autre mal du siècle* arose for women who had to face much more than mere disappointment:

> [L]a mise à l'écart civile, législative, politique et sociale dont ces auteurs étaient l'objet en tant que femmes de cette époque semble les avoir sensibilisées au sort de l'« Autre » et leur avoir prêté une grande compassion pour tous les exclus et victimes de la société. […] Ainsi, quand on tient compte de la littérature écrite par les femmes, il devient difficile de soutenir que le mouvement romantique fut essentiellement introspectif et individualiste dans ses commencements. En effet, les textes de femmes, et ceci, dès le début du siècle, et quelle que soit l'origine sociale de leurs auteurs, sont orientés vers l'autre, traversés par un souci social qui pointe déjà nombre de problématiques des littératures réaliste et même naturaliste.[48]

Waller also argues that Staël and Sand employ *mal du siècle* themes in order to criticise the subordination of women,[49] and Bowman recognises Cottin's significance as a 'portrayer of the plight of women' in her day.[50]

Works on Individual Women Authors

Scholarship on individual women authors is increasing, though there are still few scholars specialising in Cottin, Souza and Krüdener. Staël, because she never fell into obscurity, remains the focus of much scholarship. Biographies of Staël have been written by Winock, Diesbach, Gooden and Winegarten, and her novels and treatises have generated much discussion, perhaps owing to Balayé's critical editions of her works.[51] Scholars have written feminist analyses of Staël's work,[52] and have discussed her presentation of the

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[47] Bertrand-Jennings; Renee Winegarten, *Accursed politics: Some French Women Writers and Political Life, 1715-1850* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2003).
[48] Bertrand-Jennings, p.10.
[49] Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993).
[50] Frank Paul Bowman, Summary of *Claire d'Albe* in *A New History of French Literature,* ed. by Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.602.
[51] Mme de Staël, *Dix années d'exil,* ed. by Simone Balayé and Mariella Vianello Bonifacio (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Mme de Staël, *De l'Allemagne,* ed. by Simone Balayé, 2 vols (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967); Mme de Staël, *Corinne, ou l'Italie,* ed. by Simone Balayé (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Mme de Staël, *Delphine,* ed. by Simone Balayé and Lucia Omacini (Genève: Droz, 1987).
[52] Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel H. Goldberger and Karyna Szmurlo, *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

woman of genius, of forbidden love and of women's place in society,[53] her participation in the political sphere,[54] her philosophies on passion,[55] and her travels in exile.[56]

While biographies of Cottin have been written by Call, Arnelle and Sykes, she has featured in relatively few articles, which tend 'to stress the intersections in her novels of romanticism with notions like pathos, passion, and "*pudeur*"'.[57] *Claire d'Albe* appears the most frequently in analyses of Cottin's works. Chase has compared this novel to Souza's *Adèle de Sénange* as both novels 'take issue with Rousseau's vision of feminine nature by associating their heroines with different garden structures'.[58] Stewart's discussion of *Claire d'Albe* addresses why it appeared so shocking to its contemporary audience, and why Genlis, for instance, heavily criticised it.[59] A critical edition of *Claire d'Albe* was published in the MLA texts and translation series in 2002, though the remaining four of Cottin's novels have not yet been resurrected.

Scholarly work on Krüdener has been conducted principally by Mercier, Ley and Ney. Ney's 1953 study was the first in roughly a century to bring Krüdener's life and work back under academic scrutiny. He also sheds light on *Albert et Clara*, written in French but only published posthumously in German.[60] Ley has published excerpts from Krüdener's correspondence,[61] and details of her interaction with famous names of the Romantic era.[62] He also details the publication history and reception of *Valérie*.[63] Mercier's 1974 thesis provides perhaps the most in-depth analysis of the themes and plot of *Valérie* thus far.[64] He also published a critical edition of the novel in 1974.

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[53] Karyna Szmurlo, *The Novel's Seductions: Staël's Corinne in Critical Inquiry* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999); Angelica Goodden, *Delphine and Corinne* (London: Grant & Cutler, 2000).
[54] Winegarten, *Accursed politics;* Angelica Goodden, *Madame de Staël: The Dangerous Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[55] Tili Boon Cuillé and Karyna Szmurlo, eds., *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society and the Sister Arts* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013).
[56] Goodden, *Mme de Staël.*
[57] See: Colette Cazenobe, 'Une préromantique méconnue, Madame Cottin', *Travaux de littérature,* 1 (1988), 175-202; J. Rossard, *Pudeur et Romantisme (Mme Cottin, Chateaubriand, Mme de Krüdener, Mme de Staël, Baour-Lormian, Vigny, Balzac, Musset, George Sand)* (Paris: Librairie A.G. Nizet, 1982); Jean Gaulmier, 'Sophie et ses malheurs ou le romantisme du pathétique', *Romantisme,* 3 (1971), 3-16.
[58] Chase, Abstract.
[59] Stewart.
[60] Edward W. Ney, *Additional Light on Madame de Krüdener's Life and Writings* (unpublished doctoral thesis, New York University, 1956).
[61] Francis Ley, *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant et Madame de Krüdener* (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1967).
[62] Francis Ley, 'Goethe et Mme de Krüdener', *Etudes Germaniques,* 23:1 (1968), 54-57.
[63] Francis Ley, *Madame de Krüdener et son temps* (Paris: Plon, 1962).
[64] Michel Mercier, '*Valérie': origine et destinée d'un roman* (Lille: Service de reproduction des theses de l'université, 1974).

Scholarship on Genlis covers her life,[65] her attitudes to motherhood,[66] her opinions on education[67] and on the role of women.[68] An extensive biography of Genlis has been provided by Broglie. The revival of Genlis has been significantly furthered by Dow's scholarship on Genlis's life and work, on the British reception of Genlis, on her historical novels, and on her influence as a female writer and scholar.[69] Dow also translated Genlis's 1782 novel *Adèle et Théodore* into English and published it as a critical edition in 2007.

Work on Souza is scarce, with the exception of articles on *Adèle de Sénange*. This is perhaps because Slatkine's reprinting of *Adèle de Sénange* in 1995 'makes it the most accessible of Madame de Souza's novels for contemporary readers'.[70] Souza's portrayal of the convent is analysed by Angelo.[71] Carpenter's 2007 monograph discusses Souza's novels in the light of the social and political perspective of the period in which they were written, and her critical edition of Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde* is due to be published in the Autumn of 2014. The revival of Souza is therefore very much a work in progress.

Recurring Themes

Love, passion and marriage are analysed frequently in work on female novelists of this era.[72] Also, domestic issues 'which had previously been deemed trivial and boring became fashionable, so that issues concerning household management, children and parenthood became legitimate topics in the novel'.[73] Other themes have also been analysed. Naudin discusses the illnesses featuring in women's novels of the Consulate and First Empire, covering melancholy, fevers, apoplexy, pneumonic illnesses and psychosomatic illnesses,

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[65] Jean Harmand, *Madame de Genlis: sa vie intime et politique, 1746-1830* (Paris: Perrin, 1912).
[66] Bonnie Arden Robb, *Félicité de Genlis: Motherhood in the Margins* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).
[67] Isabelle Brouard-Arends and Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, *Femmes éducatrices au siècle des Lumières* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007); W. M. Kerby, *The Educational Ideas and Activities of Mme la Comtesse de Genlis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1926); Jean-Noël Pascal, 'Au Jardin des fables: botanique et pédagogie chez quelques fabulists (1795-1803)', *Dalhousie French Studies,* 29 (1994), 129-142.
[68] Louis Chabaud, *Les Précurseurs du feminisme, Mesdames de Maintenon, de Genlis, et Campan: Leur role dans l'éducation chrétienne de la femme* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et cie, 1901); Anne L. Schroder, 'Going Public Against the Academy in 1784: Mme de Genlis Speaks out on Gender Bias', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 32:3 (1999), 376-382.
[69] Gillian Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis: 'Gouverneur, Mère de l'Église', 'Hypocrite'* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2004); Gillian Dow, 'The British Reception of Madame de Genlis's Writings for Children: Plays and Tales of Instruction and Delight', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 29:3 (2006), 367-381.
[70] Carpenter, p.46.
[71] Mary Patricia Angelo, *Force of Habit: How the Convent Shapes the Family in the Fiction of Adelaide de Souza* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 2013).
[72] Bertrand-Jennings; Carpenter; Chase; Stewart; Cazenobe, *Au Malheur des dames;* Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel;* Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales;* Szmurlo, *The Novel's Seductions*.
[73] Hall, p.108.

which appear in the works of Souza, Staël, Cottin, Genlis, Gay and Duras.[74] Feminine illness, particularly hysteria, is also the focus of Rogers' article.[75] Music in the works of Staël, Cottin and Krüdener, alongside the works of male authors, is analysed by Cuillé.[76] The philosophical ideas of Staël and Genlis are presented by Poortere.[77]

Part 3: The Contribution Made by this Study

As this introduction will illustrate, woman's supposed connection with nature contributed to her being pigeonholed into a restrictive role in society, and consequently it is highly relevant that women writers employ nature to address the issues which they confronted within the pigeonholes of that social order. This thesis explores those issues, faced by women at critical junctures in their lives, and how they are highlighted through women writers' descriptions of natural landscapes. Furthermore, it analyses how nature highlights the reactions exhibited by the female subjects of novels in response to the pain and frustration that social issues provoked. As Mornet states in the quotation which opens this introduction, nature encourages the birth of powerful emotions. Nature is therefore an ideal medium for these women writers to convey the emotional reactions resulting from the problematic feminine condition.

Many scholars have stated that portrayal of landscape setting is either almost non-existent, or is unimportant in women's sentimental novels. Finch argues that women writers 'normally avoided sensuous description of landscape'.[78] Similarly, Cohen states: 'The effacement of description characterises the sentimental novel […]. Sentimental novels delineate setting and the material aspect of characters only with a few attributes that are often common place'.[79] Those focusing on individual women writers have claimed that portrayal of natural setting is rare in the novels of the woman they discuss. Sainte-Beuve argues that 'Mme de Souza d'ordinaire s'arrête peu à décrire la nature'.[80] Sykes, discussing Cottin's novels, states that in *Malvina* '[l]es descriptions de paysages sont fort rares et toutes conventionnelles',[81] and that in *Amélie Mansfield,* although there is

[74] Marie Naudin, 'La Maladie dans le roman féminin du consulat et du premier empire', *Nineteenth-Century Studies,* 12/13:4/1 (1984), 22-32.
[75] Nancy Rogers, 'The wasting away of Romantic heroines', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 11:3-4 (1983), 246-256.
[76] Tili Boon Cuillé, *Narrative Interludes: Musical Tableaux in Eighteenth-Century French Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
[77] Machteld de Poortere, *The Philosophical and literary Ideas of Mme de Staël and of Mme de Genlis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
[78] Finch, p.22.
[79] Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, p.48.
[80] Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits de femmes*, p.47.
[81] Leslie Sykes, *Madame Cottin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), pp.128-129.

a little more spatial description present, it is nonetheless composed only of clichés.[82] Similarly, regarding *Mathilde,* he argues: 'Etant donné la longueur du roman et les possibilités du sujet, […] n'est guère plus riche à cet égard'.[83]

Baker seeks to rectify the conclusions hastily drawn by previous scholars regarding Staël's appreciation of nature:

> Literary critics have made much capital of the following utterances of Madame de Staël: 'Si ce n'était pas le respect humain, je n'ouvrirais pas ma fenêtre pour voir la baie de Naples pour la première fois, tandis que je ferais cinq cents lieux pour aller causer avec un homme d'esprit que je ne connais pas'. These words quoted […] as evidence that the enjoyment of natural scenery was not necessary to Madame de Staël, have since been repeatedly adduced as sufficient proof that she was incapable of either appreciating or interpreting nature.[84]

Baker rightly questions assumptions based on this one utterance. For in a letter to Suard in 1805, from her *Carnets de voyage,* Staël describes the scenery of the Neapolitan countryside very differently: 'J'ai plus senti la nature ici que je ne l'ai sentie partout ailleurs. Le midi a quelque chose d'actif qui vous parle comme un ami ou vous réveille comme une fête. C'est à Naples que je l'ai senti'.[85] She expands further, in a letter to the poet Monti: 'Je suis plus près d'être convertie sur la poésie; j'ai senti moi-même à Naples cette sorte d'enthousiasme qui tient à l'air, aux parfums, aux merveilles de la nature, et les vers que je vous lirai l'expriment'.[86] Staël is not averse to contemplating the natural world, and therefore the fact that she reproduces natural landscape in her fiction is hardly surprising. Indeed Staël's novel, *Corinne ou l'Italie*, echoes almost exactly the thoughts on the Neapolitan countryside which appear in her correspondence and *carnets*.

Cottin's correspondence also reveals a strong love of natural landscape, which permeates into her novels. In 1803 Cottin wrote to her brother-in-law, André, full of praise for the Bagnères countryside:

> J'ai éprouvé un plaisir si doux et si vif à revoir mes belles montagnes, mes eaux si limpides, mes vertes et fraîches prairies, qu'il me serait impossible de ne pas vous en dire quelque chose; l'effet que produit sur moi la vue de ce pays-ci est bizarre et, quoique toujours le même, il me surprend toujours.[87]

Cottin's reading of works by other sentimental novelists also heightened her appreciation of nature. She writes to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who famously extolled nature, stating:

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[82] Ibid., p.129.
[83] Ibid., p.129.
[84] George M. Baker, 'Madame de Staël's Attitude toward Nature', *The Sewanee Review,* 20:1 (1912), 45-64 (p.45).
[85] Simone Balayé, *Les Carnets de Voyage de Madame de Staël: Contribution à la genèse de ses œuvres* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1971), p.116.
[86] Ibid., p.118.
[87] Arnelle, *Une Oubliée: Mme Cottin d'après sa correspondance* (Paris: Librairie Plon, Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1914), p.150.

'Jadis, au milieu des plaisirs de Paris, je regrettais la nature. Elle me plaît davantage depuis que je la vois tous les jours; vos ouvrages m'apprennent à l'aimer mieux encore'.[88]

Krüdener also wrote to Bernardin of her love of the natural world:

> Non jamais je n'oublierai cette matineé cette émotion attendrissante, si pure si vive, que j'éprouvai au moment du réveil de la nature. C'était comme si je sentais pour la première fois aussi le réveil de mon cœur, cette faculté bienheureuse de m'intimer au sublime, au majestueux de cette scène varieé, de m'élever comme l'aigle au-dessus même de tout ce que j'apercevais.[89]

Krüdener's sentiments echo those of Staël in her Neapolitan *Carnets de voyage* and of Cottin in her correspondence. These writers feel that nature has awakened strong emotions in their hearts. It should hardly be surprising, therefore, that they include frequent, often lengthy, descriptions of nature in their novels, correspondence or journals, that they should impute an expressive value to it, or that their novels should associate these descriptions of nature with strong emotional reactions to social pressures, particularly on the part of female characters. This is also the case with Souza and Genlis. In overlooking the importance of nature to these women writers and particularly the descriptions of natural landscape within their novels, scholars have left a significant aspect of the burgeoning field of women's writing unexplored. A re-evaluation of the natural settings within the novels of Cottin, Krüdener, Genlis, Souza and Staël, as suggested by this thesis, brings a new dimension to our appreciation both of the works of these women writers, and of their position as critics of their contemporary society.

Part 4: Nature

Enlightenment Definitions of Nature

In the Enlightenment, the definition of nature was an all-encompassing one. The *Encyclopédie* states: 'Nature signifie quelquefois le système du monde, la machine de l'univers, ou l'assemblage de toutes les choses créées'.[90] The 1762 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* describes nature similarly, as: 'Tout l'univers, toutes les choses créées'.[91] French eighteenth-century naturalist Buffon, in his *Histoire Naturelle,*

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[88] Ibid., p.116.

[89] Frau [Mrs] Barbara Juliane von Krüdener, baroness von Krüdener, '*Frau [Mrs] Barbara Juliane von Krüdener, baroness von Krüdener to Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: Tuesday, 7 September 1790 — [letter]*', in *Electronic Enlightenment*, ed. by Robert McNamee et al.
<http://www.e-enlightenment.com/item/sainjaVF0031161_1key001cor/> [accessed 5 April 2014]

[90] *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* 21 vols (Stuttgart; Bad Cannstatt: F. Frommann, 1988 [1751-1772]), XI, 40.

[91] *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française,* 4th Edition (1762),

defines nature in exactly the same way, before going on to describe '[c]ette multitude prodigieuse de Quadrupèdes, d'Oiseaux, de Poissons, d'Insectes, de Plantes, de Minéraux, etc. [qui] offre à la curiosité de l'esprit humain un vaste spectacle'.[92] Such distinct classification of nature also involved defining the intricacies of human nature: mankind's innate ways of thinking, feeling or behaving. In fact '*Human* nature, in particular, became the age's most important object of study'.[93]

The need for universal classification was partially down to a desire to extend scientific knowledge, though it was also largely because of a desire to impose order on nature, thus demonstrating man's control over it. Prior to the mid-eighteenth century in Europe, nature was regarded as an immature state of being upon which human knowledge and civilisation had improved. Bronner speaks of 'the trend evident in the works of Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke, all of whom treated nature as "atomic, inert, and reducible to its constituent parts," a mere physical resource to be manipulated at will for human use'.[94] Buffon states similarly: 'la Nature est autant notre ouvrage que le sien; nous avons su la tempérer, la modifier, la plier à nos besoins, à nos désirs; nous avons fondé, cultivé, fécondé la Terre'.[95]

When writing fiction, 'novelists shared with thinkers and artists generally the prevailing eighteenth-century conviction that the "proper study of mankind is man"';[96] indeed, for many, 'outside nature had little place' at all.[97] For this reason, therefore,

> [e]arly French works accord minimal importance to nature description – minimal in the sense both of brevity (usually no more than a line or two) and of infrequency (usually no more than a few descriptive passages in a whole novel). […] The same use of short, stereotyped nature descriptions – the total absence of any extended or developed depictions of landscape – persists in France down to Rousseau's time.[98]

In most French fiction penned between d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* in the early seventeenth century and Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), descriptions of nature did not feature.

<http://portail.atilf.fr/cgi-bin/dico1look.pl?strippedhw=nature&headword=&docyear=ALL&dicoid=ALL&articletype=1#ACAD1762> [accessed 6 September 2014].

[92] Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi* (Paris: L'Imprimerie royale, 1749), p.3.

[93] Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment,* trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.105. (Original emphasis).

[94] Stephen Bronner, *Ideas in Action: Political Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1999), p.266.

[95] Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Les Époques de la nature,* 2 vols (Paris: L'Imprimerie royale, 1780), I, 4.

[96] Doris Y. Kadish, *The Literature of Images: Narrative Landscape from* Julie *to* Jane Eyre (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p.2.

[97] D. G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.6.

[98] Kadish, p.17.

Trahard's seminal text on *sensibilité* makes this clear: '[D]ans une certaine mesure et pendant un certain temps, le XVIIIe siècle ressemble au XVIIe siècle: la nature est absente des grandes œuvres jusqu'en 1760'.[99]

Changes in the View of Nature

However, 'the second half of the eighteenth-century discovered the romantic concept of nature',[100] and the nature which featured in (pre-)Romantic writing was less all-encompassing than that of the age of encyclopedias and scientific reason. Mornet, Charlton and Charlier list the nature recurring througout sentimental literature and Romantic thought: *la campage, l'idylle champêtre, la vie agricole, les jardins, la montagne, les orages* (and *les nuages*), *les volcans, la mer, les lacs, les rivières, les bois* and *les forêts, le monde transocéanique*, and funereal nature.[101] These types of nature will be considered throughout this thesis, firstly because Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël's novels are examples of sentimental literature, and secondly because these types of nature all have several commonalities rendering them highly relevant to the present discussion. All are employed by female novelists in various combinations in order to highlight women's preoccupations in post-revolutionary France, to provide novels with symbolic and allegorical depth, and to achieve communication when ordinary language does not suffice.

Because of these commonalities (and to avoid cumbersome repetition, for often the same aspects of nature are used to highlight different preoccupations) this thesis will not be structured so that each chapter discusses a different sub-category of nature. Rather, it will follow the problems women faced at various junctures in their lives, with presentations of nature used to highlight these problems. However, despite this structural intention, four sub-categories of nature must be borne in mind, for they nuance the discussions which follow. They are: tamed nature, nature cultivated to look untamed, wild nature, and natural deathscapes. Each of these sub-categories was relevant to late eighteenth-century France, since each grew in significance in the consciousness of writers, philosophers and the general public. Yet, before examining the characteristics of

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[99] Pierre Trahard, *Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle (1715-1789),* 4 vols (Paris: Boivin, 1931-33), I, 15.
[100] John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.345.
[101] Mornet; Charlton; Gustave Charlier, *Le Sentiment de la nature chez les romantiques français (1762-1830)* (Bruxelles: Hayez, 1912).

these subcategories of nature, we must note the changes which opinions on the natural world underwent.

The contempt in which nature had been held during the Enlightenment did not last, and within one generation nature went from second-class status to being elevated on a pedestal:

> There seems little doubt that the Enlightenment is a period when the notion of opposition between nature and the state of society or of education suddenly gains a great prominence. It is also clear that the status of 'nature' becomes much higher in this period than it had been in more traditional dialectics, where it was associated with the fall, savages and the failure of education.[102]

This radical about-face arose largely out of the writings of Rousseau. Between *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) and *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), Rousseau argued that mankind had once known a state of perfection but had been corrupted by civilisation.[103] He argued that a natural state of innocence and virtue could be re-obtained if man returned to live at one with the natural world.

This solution, which permeates the majority of his works, became particularly apparent in terms of practical application in *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*:

> Rousseau affirme à travers son roman, la nécessité d'une existence qui s'oppose à la civilisation urbaine. A ceux qui aspirent à la paix, à la sérénité et au bonheur, l'auteur conseille l'indispensable retour à la vie champêtre qui modifie par ses bienfaits le caractère de l'homme.[104]

Julie achieved unrivalled popularity; indeed '[t]he demand for copies outran the supply so badly that booksellers rented it out by the day and even by the hour'.[105] Howells believes the reason for this immense popularity was that 'readers […] found that it gave public voice for the first time to their own dreams and ideals'.[106] Thanks to the dissemination of Rousseau's concepts a new craze for nature took France by storm: '[n]ature is no longer something to be despised as low; it is rather to be cherished, and, above all, it is the source whereby society, morals, education, even medicine, are to be reformed and purified'.[107] Contemplation of the natural world was now encouraged, and nature itself was no longer to be avoided, but rather actively sought out:

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[102] Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, 'Women and the Dialectics of Nature in Eighteenth-Century French Thought', in *Nature, Culture, and Gender*, ed. by Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.25-41 (p.27).
[103] P.E. Charvet, *A Literary History of France: The Nineteenth Century* (London: Benn, 1967), pp.3-4; Robin Howells, *Regressive Fictions: Graffigny, Rousseau, Bernardin* (London: Legenda, 2007), pp.1-7.
[104] Nouchine Behbahani, *Paysages dans* La Nouvelle Héloïse (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1989), p.1.
[105] Darnton, p.242.
[106] R. J. Howells, *Rousseau: 'Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse'* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), p.9.
[107] Bloch and Bloch, p.31.

> Townsmen escaping to the countryside from the squalor of the expanding cities, the revival of pastoral literature under the influence of translations of Gessner and a reappraisal of Virgil and Theocritus, the fashionable craze for botanizing, the switch of aesthetic appreciation from 'mountain gloom to mountain glory', the sentimental impact of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* – whatever the reasons, a new way of the imagination opened. [108]

Rousseau soon became the major progenitor of a sentimental fiction which included lengthy portrayals of natural landscapes such as those listed by Mornet, Charlier and Charleton. Mainly, if not exclusively, however, analysis of novels in which nature began to appear focuses on male authors, namely Rousseau himself, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand and the writers of pastoral fiction such as Baculard d'Arnaud, Marmontel and Loaisel de Tréogate. The ways in which nature is employed in women's fiction remains unexplored, and this thesis will go some way towards rectifying this.

Tamed Nature

Two types of 'tamed' nature will be considered in this thesis. In seventeenth and early eighteenth-century France, as we have seen, 'taming nature' had involved imposing order on it. Since the age of Louis XIV, therefore, the number of *jardins à la française* in the style of those designed by Le Nôtre at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles had increased. The rigid style of this garden reflects the way nature in the early eighteenth century was generally contemplated – as something to be controlled by mankind, sculpted to suit order and rationality: 'Le principe de ce type de jardin est le parterre, toujours à base de buis. Il est régulier et symétrique, privilégiant la ligne droite et les angles droits'.[109]

However, later in the century, a new desire overtook the French to live at the heart of nature whilst working with it, rather than cultivating nature in order to dominate it. Pastoral life and literature became popular,[110] and the new enthusiasm for 'idealised agricultural scenery',[111] or for meandering in country parks resulted in nature and rustic living playing a larger role in public social life. People in both higher and lower echelons of society desired to escape the vices of towns for the beauty of the countryside. This is nature in its 'more tranquil, immediately attractive forms',[112] including such spaces as "'les maisons des champs", "l'idylle champêtre", "plaisirs rustiques", "les jardins", "voyages

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[108] McManners, p.345.
[109] Alexander Minski, *Le Préromantisme* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1998), p.92.
[110] Katherine Astbury, '"Une Chaumière et un cœur simple": Pastoral Fiction and the Art of Persuasion 1790-92', in *Revolutionary Culture: Continuity and Change,* ed. by Mark Darlow, special issue of *Nottingham French Studies*, 45:1 (2006), 5-19; Katherine Astbury, *The Moral Tale in France and Germany, 1750-1789* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002); Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
[111] John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), p.127.
[112] Charlton, p.18.

pittoresques"'.[113] Literature dealing with these themes and spaces includes "'poèmes champêtres", "pastorales", "idylles" and "églogues naïves"'.[114]

Tamed natural landscapes lend several advantages to literature which are relevant to the present study. Firstly, the rigid tamed nature in the French-style garden provides an excellent allegory for the dominated, restricted life of the woman in an arranged marriage. Secondly, gentle, tranquil tamed nature in the form of parks and gardens creates an idyllic, secure space separated off from corrupt civilisation. In Chapter 1 we will see utopian idylls provide the perfect space in which lovers may *rendez-vous* away from the eyes of disapproving society. The space for their illicit encounters must be both idyllic in order to encourage and to reflect the passion felt, and also secluded in order to protect the lovers. In Chapter 3, utopian idylls provide a secluded, peaceful space in which a mother can grieve.

A further advantage of employing a tamed natural space as a setting in a novel discussing women's preoccupations is that the author can have her female protagonist sculpt the landscape herself. This allows the protagonist to employ the language of plants, flowers and garden design in order to transmit messages that she wishes to convey. Tamed landscapes can therefore be used to create discourse, as will be seen in Chapter 3, which shows the grieving mother physically shaping nature to re-establish communication with her lost child and to communicate her pain to the outside world.

Nature Cultivated to look Untamed

Coinciding with the change in general opinion of nature, garden fashion also altered. Taste shifted away from the rigid French-style garden, whose regulations were perceived as inhibiting freedom. As the century advanced and the population increasingly demanded liberty in all walks of life, whether political, economical or social, garden design, too, reflected these calls for liberation. Finally:

> [N]othing remained but the defects of the old system, a reaction resulted in its entire destruction. On the ruins was created the Landscape Garden, in the strict meaning of the word no garden at all, but a stretch of cultivated scenery. […] Every sentimentalist, republican philosopher, or romance writer, rebelling against rigid law and order of any kind, delighted in this so-called return to the freedom of nature.[115]

The new type of garden was modelled on the English fashion:

> Le jardin à l'anglaise, tel qu'il sera adapté en France, n'est plus une construction à partir d'un terrain vierge mais une adaptation aux éléments de paysage préexistants.

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Rose Standish Nichols, *English Pleasure Gardens* (Jaffrey, NH: David R. Godine, 2003), p.220.

> C'est l'illusion de la nature qui prime la maîtrise humaine du paysage. Par conséquent, on courbe les lignes droites, on cache les limites du jardin qui doit se fonder dans la campagne environnante.[116]

The English-style garden was believed to incorporate more scope for freedom, and thus the landscape architects charged with creating such gardens adapted the environment to express this liberty at its fullest. It was believed that the *jardin à l'anglaise* should mimic the natural world as much as possible, and so should not comprise straight lines and right angles, but should lull visitors into believing they were in the untamed natural countryside, with winding paths and groves of trees scattered with no apparent order. The taste for *jardins à l'anglaise* even permeated Versailles, when Marie Antoinette's *hameau* was created as 'a place to escape from the intrigues and formalities of palace life', a space of freedom from order.[117]

The advantage of employing this type of garden, which 'consiste à effacer toute trace d'intervention humaine ayant contribué à son ordonnancement',[118] as a novelistic setting resides in its association with freedom rather than rigidity. This will be explored in Chapter 1, when we see a natural space cultivated to look untamed present an opportune setting for Souza's Adèle to discover hitherto unexplored autonomy.

Wild Nature

As well as creating artificially 'wild' landscapes, the country became fascinated with true wild nature, including mountains, stormy oceans, volcanoes and barren deserts. According to Charlton:

> It is one thing to appreciate the gentle pastoral landscape, to feel a sense of harmony with the sunny, contented world of nature represented by the country retreat […]. It is a more difficult thing to appreciate and feel harmony with nature in its wilder, more threatening expressions – to respond to high, barren mountains, dangerous oceans, savage storms on land or sea, black and perilous night-time. In the eighteenth-century, however, for almost the first time in European thinking, a majority achieved these more difficult responses and thereby significantly helped to enlarge men's imaginative and aesthetic reactions to nature.[119]

Mountain scenery became particularly popular. In the seventeenth century

> the dominant tendency in […] many […] parts of Europe was to regard mountains as inconvenient, aesthetically repellent, and dangerous not just to one's body but to one's soul. […] A century and a half later […] [m]ountains […] were regarded by the large majority of literate people as among the most beautiful and spiritually

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[116] Minski, p.93.
[117] Tom Turner, *Garden History: Philosophy and Design 2000 BC – 2000 AD* (London and New York: Spon Press, 2005), p.205.
[118] Minski, p.93.
[119] Charlton, p.41.

uplifting places on the planet.[120]

Ramond de Carbonnières (explorer of the Pyrenees) and Albrecht von Haller (Swiss naturalist and poet) significantly contributed to changing the French perspective on mountain landscapes.

Truly wild nature was popular because of its sublimity – the ability, according to Burke, to thrill and simultaneously to induce terror[121] – and its consequent ability to inspire melancholy. Burke's views on the sublime influenced other European philosophers such as Kant, Helvétius and Diderot. For Kant, 'the sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peak rises above the clouds' and 'the description of a raging storm' could provoke simultaneous awe and fear in the spectator.[122] Nature's sublime power features in the works of several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French artists and writers, including paintings by Gericault, Vernet and Loutherbourg, the works of Chenier and Maréchal,[123] Chamfort's 1768 'Ode aux volcans', and Doré's landscape paintings of the Scottish Highlands. Stafford, Carboni and Van Tieghem examine the French fascination with this latter space and the sublimity of the natural landscape in the Ossian poems in particular.[124] Chapter 2 of this thesis explores Cottin and Staël's engagement with the wild scenery of northern Britain and the gender egalitarianism of its Ossianic myths in their efforts to contribute to the debate over women's writing in France.

Natural Deathscapes

Linking the melancholy inspired by wild landscapes and the peace encouraged by the tamed nature of a garden, a fashion also arose for what we might term the 'natural deathscape'. The concept of the deathscape itself was established by cultural geographers in the 1990s, in particular by the work of Kong, and that of Hartig and Dunn, though it

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120 William Cronnon, 'Forward', in Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, the development of the aesthetics of the Infinite* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp.vii-xii (pp.viii-ix).

121 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: J Dodsley, 1767), pp.97-98.

122 Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* trans. by John T. Goldthwait (London: University of California Press, 1991), p.47. The original German edition was first published in 1764.

123 See: David McCallam, 'The Volcano: From Enlightenment to Revolution', *Nottingham French Studies,* 45:1 (2006), 52-68.

124 Pierre Carboni, 'Ossian and Belles Lettres: Scottish Influences on J.-B.-A. Suard and Late-Eighteenth-Century French Taste and Criticism', in *Scotland and France in the Enlightenment,* ed. by Deirdre Dawson and Pierre Morère (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003) pp.74-89; Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988); P. Van Tieghem, 'Ossian en France', in *The French Quarterly*, I:2 & 3 (1919), 78-87.

is highly applicable to the fashionable spaces for contemplating death in the eighteenth century.[125]

In terms of cultural geography, deathscapes include any space associated with death: sites of death itself, cemeteries, funeral sites, and memorials constructed at the site of a death or in memory of a deceased loved one. Eighteenth-century France was an age in which death was 'even more personalised than previously, even more deeply felt', and in which 'grieving seems to have become even more intense than earlier'.[126] As a result, 'the nineteenth century sees the growth of tombs, the creation and extension of cemeteries'.[127] Simultaneously, a desire to seek out spaces containing tombs and ruins also became common. The nascent feelings of Romantic melancholy dominating the nation 'coincided with the beginnings of organized archaeological investigation, so that ruins became sentimentally fashionable and technically interesting simultaneously'.[128] The paintings of Hubert Robert, *surnommé* 'Robert des Ruines', became widely popular, inviting the nation to contemplate the transience of human existence. A certain pleasure was to be found in experiencing melancholy emotions whilst gazing upon reminders that 'our own pomp will go down to the same doom'.[129]

The trend for meditation on death was felt most acutely at the heart of nature:

> To mourn for someone deeply loved and forever lost, to mourn in solitude, far from the busy world which does not understand the secret magic of a unique love, […] to mourn and be in love with mourning – the concept, a stage in the development of human affection and individuality, was formed, but it required an appropriate setting. Where else should this be found but against the tremendous backdrop of Nature? – scenery changing from light to darkness and from colour to greyness as the days and the seasons revolve, ever beautiful to recall us to our memories of departed beauty, but with sombre moods conveying the charm of melancholy to purify and sustain our grief.[130]

McManners argues that 'as religious themes ceased to be the staple subjects of artistic inspiration, a place was left which had not been available before, for the 'gliding spectre

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[125] L. Kong, 'Cemeteries and Columbaria, Memorials and Mausoleums: Narrative and Interpretation in the Study of Deathscapes in Geography', *Australian Geographical Studies,* 37:1 (1999), 1-10; K.V. Hartig and K.M. Dunn, 'Roadside Memorials: Interpreting New Deathscapes in Newcastle, New South Wales', *Australian Geographical Studies,* 36 (1998) 5-20. Avril Maddrell & James D. Sidaway, *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance* (Surrey, UK; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010).

[126] Charlton, pp.88-89.

[127] Nigel Harkness, Lisa Downing, Sonya Stephens and Timothy Unwin, 'Introduction', in *Birth and Death in Nineteenth-Century French Culture,* ed. by Nigel Harkness, Lisa Downing, Sonya Stephens and Timothy Unwin (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp.9-16 (pp.10-11). The writers cite the Ariès quotation as follows: Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), p.403.

[128] McManners, p.343.

[129] Ibid., p.341.

[130] Ibid., pp.344-345.

and the groaning grave' and the harsh and haunting beauties of Nature'.[131] These harsh and haunting beauties undoubtedly included the terrifying landscapes of natural wilderness which inspired the melancholic and terrified *frisson* identified by McManners as a central emotion when contemplating death.[132]

Yet, tranquil nature equally provided the perfect retreat in which contemplation of thoughts which depress and terrify mankind might be foregrounded. Perhaps the most famous eighteenth-century French deathscape was that at Ermenonville. France had witnessed Rousseau's advocacy of a return to nature in his novels and treatises, and the public's taste for nature increased dramatically following their publication. Consequently, when Rousseau died, and was entombed in a tranquil, natural setting, this spoke directly to the heart of the nation's sentimentality. Ermenonville was 'the generation's ideal sepulchre – the trees, the clear water, the silence, a resting-place for one who had been Nature's closest friend'.[133]

Nature became the space in which graves and tombs were to be established. People wanted images of death to permeate their gardens, and many wished to be buried in a natural landscape. As MacArthur affirms, '[v]irtually all gardens of the final third of the eighteenth century in France were influenced by Rousseau's writings […] and then […] by the site of his tomb at Ermenonville'.[134] If nature itself did not display images deemed melancholy enough for a contemplation of death in one's garden, 'it was soon evident that the creators of gardens did not mind giving Nature a helping hand, and diversifying her "disorders" with evocative artifacts: artificial ruins, tombs, and sepulchral monuments'.[135]

Since nature, savage or tranquil, seemed the perfect setting to meditate on mortality, it is this deathscape which reappears throughout sentimental literature, including in the novels of Cottin, Krüdener, Souza, Staël and Genlis. Natural deathscapes have a particular advantage for nuancing certain arguments because the presence of tombs and ruins in natural settings causes a conflation of time periods in the same space. According to Minski 'Le nouveau jardin est Éden, situé avant la chute et à la fois lieu de l'après, de la fin de la civilisation. En lui coexistent les extrêmes des temps: début du

131 Ibid.
132 Ibid, p.334.
133 Ibid., p.348.
134 Elizabeth MacArthur, 'The Tomb in the Garden in Late Eighteenth-Century France', *Dalhousie French Studies,* 29 (1994), 97-111 (p.98).
135 McManners, p.346.

monde et fin d'un monde, arbres et ruines'.[136] Chapter 1 shows how the presence of a natural deathscape nuances Souza's argument that past and present must work together to combat the problems of marital oppression. Similarly, the morphing of past, present and future in a natural deathscape nuances Staël's presentation of true political and social liberty and gender equality (Chapter 2). Such a natural deathscape also enhances Krüdener's presentation of the garden as a bond-strengthener between bereaved mother and dead child (Chapter 3), and Staël's and Cottin's ability to break down barriers between the worlds of the living and dead in order to allow their heroines to escape social pressure through death (Chapter 5).

Part 5: The Link Between Women and Nature

The fresh perceptions of nature which arose in the eighteenth century have 'markedly affected […] our views on women, children, [and] family life'.[137] Yet why is this the case, and why is an examination of nature relevant to a study of women's fiction as opposed to that written by men?

Nature has long been associated with women, even personified as the female figure Mother Nature. In antiquity goddesses were worshipped for their links to fertility, agriculture and the earth. Historians, classicists, philosophers, social scientists, literary scholars and ecocritics have all commented on the woman-nature association.[138] In France, this association certainly pre-dates the eighteenth century. The concept existed in seventeenth-century religious discussion:

> As Pascal said, only some were allowed efficacious grace by God while the rest dwelt in the provenance of concupiscence. This represented a rigorous and unflinching anti-humanist position, while opposing perspectives were also framed as to emphasize the proximity of women to Nature.[139]

The seventeenth century also saw the production of scientific images of the female body during pregnancy depicting the woman surrounded by plants, or portraying the uterus itself as a flower whose opening petals envelop the baby. Examples include *Femme enceinte*

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136 Minski, p.93.
137 Charlton, p.1.
138 Irène Aghion, *Héros et dieux de l'Antiquité: guide iconographique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994); Maureen Devine, *Woman and Nature: Literary Reconceptualizations* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992); Paul Hoffmann, *La Femme dans la pensée des Lumières* (Paris: Ophrys, 1977); Hwa Yol Jung, *Transversal Rationality and Intercultural Texts: Essays in Phenomenology and Comparative Philosophy* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2011); Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
139 Denise Riley, 'Does Sex Have a History? 'Women' and Feminism', *New Formations,* 1 (1987), 35-45 (p.42).

à l'abdomen ouvert, from 1626, and *Femme en position pour l'accouchement et représentation de la position de l'enfant dans l'utérus,* from 1674.[140]

In the eighteenth century, the notion of nature as a feminine entity lies at the heart of the meaning of the word. In the 1762 dictionary, nature was described as 'une bonne mère',[141] an image which reappears throughout the work of Rousseau, for whom 'la Nature […] a tous les attributs de la maternité'.[142] Similarly, the *Encyclopédie* states: '[C]hez les poëtes la nature est tantôt mère, tantôt fille, et tantôt compagne de Jupiter'.[143]

Traditionally, a distinction has been drawn between woman's association with nature and man's association with culture.[144] When studying the French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century context Ortner's theories should be considered alongside Capitan's historical analysis of the period, because the arguments of eighteenth-century texts fall into the categories outlined by these scholars. Ortner identifies three levels at which women have been viewed as 'more rooted in, or having more direct connection with, nature': the biological level, the social level and the psychological level.[145] Capitan's analysis of the woman-nature link in the minds of eighteenth-century thinkers reinforces the arguments made regarding the biological and social levels.[146]

Beginning with the biological level, Ortner argues that '[b]ecause of woman's greater bodily involvement with the natural functions surrounding reproduction, she is seen as more a part of nature than men'.[147] Ortner draws on Beauvoir's argument that woman's physiology is designed more to ensure the continuation of the species than for her own benefit.[148] This biological role puts woman at the heart of nature because '[w]oman creates naturally from within her own being, while men are free to, or forced to, create artificially, that is, through cultural means'.[149] Bloch and Bloch state that in eighteenth-century France in particular, '[t]he traditional view which the philosophers accepted was that woman was closer to nature than man because of her physiological role in sex and motherhood'.[150] Indeed, in medical texts by Cabanis, Roussel and Stahl, 'we find the often noticed association of woman and nature justified by notions of

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[140] These images appear in Emmanuelle Berthiaud, *Enceinte: Une Histoire de la grossesse entre art et société* (Paris: La Martinière, 2013), pp.110-111.
[141] *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française,* 1762.
[142] Hoffmann, p.359.
[143] *Encyclopédie,* XI, 41.
[144] Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?', *Feminist Studies,* 1:2 (1972), 5-31
[145] Ibid., p.12.
[146] Colette Capitan, *La Nature à l'ordre du jour, 1789-1973* (Paris: Kimé, 1993).
[147] Ortner, p.15.
[148] Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe,* 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), I, 48-51. (Original emphasis).
[149] Ortner, p.16.
[150] Bloch and Bloch, p.32.

biological maternity and of the female bodily processes'.[151] La Mettrie believed that, during pregnancy in particular, '[l]a femme […] plus que l'homme est proche de sa nature organique et docile à ses impulsions'.[152]

One notable topic discussed by scientists which drew very clear links between woman's biology and nature was the lunar cycle's potential effect on menstruation. Whilst not all physicians believed that the moon caused the menstrual cycle of every woman, Roussel argues, nonetheless, that the cycles of certain women were particularly affected by lunar change, and that consequently these women were especially close to nature.[153] Such research was still ongoing in 1861, when Strohl argued that '[l]a lune est une cause régulatrice de la menstruation'.[154]

It was not only scientists who believed in woman's connection with nature at the ontological level. In fact, '[t]out le monde à l'époque […] pense plus ou moins que les femmes sont dans la Nature, et en particulier tous les philosophes, de Diderot à Grimm en passant par d'Alembert'.[155] For Diderot, a woman's biology also meant her constitution, and this, too, brought her closer to nature than men: 'La femme avec sa constitution plus faible est préservée de ces efforts et, en conséquence, est restée plus proche de l'état de nature'.[156]

Regarding women's links to nature at the social level, Ortner states that:

> [W]oman's physiological functions have tended universally to limit her social movement, and to confine her universally to certain social contexts which *in turn* are seen as closer to nature. […] I refer […] to woman's confinement to the domestic family context.[157]

In particular, this confinement occurs when women become mothers, for two reasons, according to Ortner. Firstly, since it is 'in direct relation to a pregnancy with a particular child that the mother's body goes through its lactation processes, the nursing relationship between mother and child is seen as a "natural" bond and all other feeding arrangements as unnatural'.[158] Secondly, the mother must instruct and care for children because they require supervision, since they are 'not yet strong enough to engage in major work, yet are mobile and unruly and not yet capable of understanding various dangers'.[159] Infants

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151 Ibid., p.33.
152 Hoffman, p.112.
153 Pierre Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme* (Paris: Masson, 1869 [1775]), pp.120-122.
154 Édouard Strohl, *Recherches statistiques sur la relation qui peut exister entre la périodicité de la menstruation et les phases de la lune* (Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1861), p.6.
155 Capitan, pp.109-110.
156 Otis Fellows and Diana Guiragossian Carr, eds., *Diderot Studies XX* (Genève: Droz: 1981), p.338.
157 Ortner, p.16 (Original emphasis).
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.

themselves are considered closer to a state of nature than adults: 'like animals they do not walk upright, they excrete without control, they do not speak'.[160] Therefore, woman's association with children increases the likelihood of being seen as closer to nature herself.

Furthermore, eighteenth-century scientific and philosophical thought contains the recurring idea of nature intending women to undertake a domestic role: 'Le soin de l'enfance est la destination des femmes; c'est une tâche que la nature leur a assignée', writes Roussel in 1775.[161] Laclos writes, similarly: 'Se conserver et se reproduire, voilà donc les lois auxquelles la *nature* a soumis les femmes'.[162] Whilst the domestic sphere was 'a domain of private virtue, free of the falseness and corruption of public life, under the reign of women close to Nature',[163] men were freed from this restricted sphere: 'la société "naturelle" c'est les femmes', says Capitan, 'la société civile, émancipée de la Nature […] les hommes'.[164] Analysis of eighteenth-century French thought therefore bears out Ortner's notion that a woman's social role supposedly brings her closer to nature.

Ortner's final argument lies at the psychological level. Ortner is reluctant to stereotype male and female personalities as 'rational' and 'emotional' respectively, prefering to argue that men are seen as 'more objective and category-oriented, women as more subjective or person-oriented'.[165] She defines the feminine personality as 'characterized by personalism and particularism', which 'may have contributed to the universal view of women as somehow less cultural than men'.[166] Eighteenth-century French thinkers did not, however, shy away from the terms 'rational' and 'emotional' to describe men and women. For Moreau, 'La femme est un être en qui l'émotion domine sur le raisonnement'.[167] Nor did they hesitate to attribute woman's emotion to her biology; Diderot, for example, thought that 'la femme est un être de passions et d'émotions commandé par son utérus'.[168]

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160 Ibid., p.17.
161 Roussel, pp.219-220.
162 Choderlos de Laclos, 'Des Femmes et de leur éducation', in *Œuvres completes,* ed. by Laurent Versini, (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p.392. (My emphasis).
163 Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason. "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Univeristy of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.78.
164 Capitan, p.111.
165 Ortner, p.21.
166 Ibid., p.22.
167 Hoffmann, p.168. See also: Jacques-Louis Moreau, *Histoire naturelle de la femme,* 3 vols (Paris: Duprat; Letellier, 1803), pp.122-123.
168 Elisabeth Badinter, 'Préface', in Elisabeth Badinter, A. L. Thomas, Diderot, Madame d'Epinay, *Qu'est-ce qu'une femme,* ed. by Elisabeth Badinter (Paris: P.O.L., 1989), pp.7-47 (34-35).

In this period emotion was often conflated with the presentation of nature in the work of sentimental novelists and painters alike,[169] where protagonists 'ne savent pas séparer la nature de leurs émotions'.[170] Indeed, as the epigraph which opens this introduction states, nature was often portrayed 'pour mettre dans les âmes les racines tenaces qu'y poussent les émotions puissantes'. *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* in particular 'reflète […] dans la nature les plus ardentes émotions'.[171] Thus, if women were deemed to be more emotional, then they were considered closer to the natural world. Indeed, woman's emotional state, like her social role, was in fact supposedly ordained for her by nature: 'La nature a voulu que la femme régnât par les émotions', argued Roussel.[172]

Taking the phrase 'psychological level' to its logical conclusion, the fact that women were believed to be more emotional supposedly increased the likelihood of their suffering from hysteria. According to Rogers, hysteria 'was considered a function of a nervous temperament and the heightened emotions of which only women were capable'.[173] The same organs which connect woman with nature because they cause her to focus on the reproduction of the species are also those which provoke psychological crisis: for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French doctors, '[w]oman is predisposed toward hysteria by every sex-specific aspect of her physiology. The doctors generally concur that puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and menopause are particularly risk ridden'.[174] These beliefs, reinforced by the direct link between women's biology and the natural world in the form of the moon, continued throughout the nineteenth century. Brachet's *Traité de l'hystérie* argues that frequency of psychological crises could be remarked 'dans les cas où elle était soumise à l'influence de la menstruation. Quelques femmes et même quelques auteurs ont cru, sans doute, alors, lui trouver des rapports avec les phases de la lune'.[175] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when women's psychology became manifest in her behaviour, it reminded thinkers and scientists of a life closer to a state of nature. La Mettrie 'sees female behaviour as though

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[169] Trahard; Mornet, p.217, p.315 and p.353; Jean Weisgerber, *L'Espace romanesque* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1978), p.141. Examples include Rousseau's *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse,* Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie,* Restif de la Bretonne's *Le Paysan perverti* and *La Paysanne pervertie,* Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded,* Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, and several of the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Hubert Robert.
[170] Mornet, p.197.
[171] Ibid., p.195.
[172] Roussel, p.xxxii.
[173] Rogers, p.251.
[174] Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.40.
[175] Jean-Louis Brachet *Traité de l'hystérie* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1847), p.357.

it were due simply to the closeness of woman to organic nature'.[176] Diderot (who drew many ideas from La Mettrie) wrote of women 'qu'elles ont conservé […] l'énergie de nature, et qu'[…] elles sont restées de vraies sauvages en dedans'.[177] Cabanis argued that during pregnancy and childbirth, women exhibited particularly wild, animalistic tendencies, which expressed the language of nature.[178]

According to Beauvoir and Ortner, woman's association with nature throughout History has led to her subordination in almost all societies: 'woman is being identified with, or […] seems to be a symbol of, something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being at a lower order of existence than itself […], and that is "nature"'.[179] The employment of the woman-nature link as a means of subordination certainly existed in the seventeenth century, though the seventeenth century likened nature to woman in order to rationalise the subordination of nature. Bacon, for example, 'likened the experimental investigation of the secrets of "female" nature to the inquisition of witches on the rack and looked forward to the time when masculine science would shake "female" nature to her very foundations'.[180] His French counterparts presented the self-same image: 'Francis Bacon projected powerful and dangerous "femaleness" onto nature […] René Descartes declared nature to be feminine and thus totally amenable to manipulation and control by […] man'.[181] Bacon's notion of female nature possessing secrets which should be uncovered penetrates down to the eighteenth century. Diderot described nature as 'une femme qui aime à se travestir'.[182] Diderot's work was greatly influenced by the work of Bacon, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why '[b]eaucoup de textes de Diderot autorisent qu'on pense la nature comme femme et comme mère'.[183] Similarly, the desire to dominate nature was passed down to the eighteenth century. For Cabanis, masculinity 'was associated […] with strength, daring, enterprise, hard work and the desire to dominate nature'.[184] As a result of Bacon's

176 Bloch and Bloch, p.34.
177 Denis Diderot, *Sur les femmes,* in *Œuvres complètes de Denis Diderot* (Paris: Deterville, An VIII [1799-1800]), p.420.
178 Pierre J. G. Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* (Paris: Crapart, Caille et Ravier, 1805), p.378.
179 Ortner, p.10. Cf. Beauvoir, I, 15, and Jung, p.6.
180 Carolyn Logan, *Counterbalance: Gendered Perspectives on Writing and Language* (Peterborough, Ontario: Braodview Press, 1997) pp.148-149.
181 Ibid., p.148.
182 Denis Diderot, *De l'interpretation de la nature* in *Textes Choisis,* ed. by Jean Varloot, 7 vols (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1953), II, 47.
183 Elisabeth de Fontenay, *Diderot ou le matérialisme enchanté* (Paris: Grasset, 1981), p.20.
184 Ludmilla Jordanova, *Nature Displayed: Gender, Science and Medicine, 1760-1820* (London; New York, NY: Longman, 1999), p.169.

arguments and influence, Merchant identifies his work as a significant factor in the later subordination of women themselves.[185]

Eighteenth-century French scientists began to describe the physiological, psychological and emotional distinctions between the sexes, and to decree the distinct roles men and women must play in society because of their differences. As they did so, society invoked woman's connection to nature in order to rationalise subordinating her. Participating in the 'public' sphere – politics, writing, publishing and business – became the role of men. A woman's role was to take charge of the 'private' sphere: running the household, taking care of her husband, and providing, nurturing and educating children. She was considered too physically and mentally weak to participate in the public domain. Nature had therefore supposedly intended woman's subordination:

> [C]'est Rousseau qui fait de la Nature le moyen de l'instrumentalisation des femmes, qui fourbit l'arme l'idéologique propre à justifier le statut inférieur qui est le nôtre: les femmes sont dans la Nature, c'est la Nature qui veut qu'elles soient inférieures, il est donc naturel qu'elles soient dominées.[186]

Other writers agreed. Indeed, 'according to [Antoine Léonard] Thomas it was unthinkable that women could ever be men's equals: their minds were "more pleasing than strong". Such was the will of nature'.[187] Ortner's hypothesis that the woman-nature link has contributed to her subordination is substantiated in the eighteenth-century context, therefore, by the beliefs of pre-eminent thinkers.

The Natural and the Unnatural

As subordination to man was intended for women by nature itself, it was deemed 'natural'. Indeed, Rousseau underlines the importance of fulfilling, not turning against, one's natural role: 'L'essentiel est d'être ce que nous fit la nature'.[188] This provokes the question: what was considered 'natural' and 'unnatural' in a woman? Firstly, according to Thomas, woman's acceptance of her subjugated role was 'natural': 'celle qui asservit malgré elle aux conventions et aux usages […] ne perdrait point de vue la nature, et se retournerait encore quelquefois vers elle'.[189] It was also deemed 'natural', in fact biologically natural, for women to display modesty: 'La pudicité est une attitude morale

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185 Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980).
186 Capitan, p.111.
187 James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.8.
188 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Education*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau,* 4 vols (Paris: Furne, 1835), II, 563.
189 Antoine Léonard Thomas, *Essai sur le caractère, les mœurs et l'esprit des femmes dans les différents siècles* (Paris: Moutard, 1772), p.173.

que sanctionne en la femme la nature biologique elle-même'.[190] Immodesty was therefore unnatural. For Diderot and Rousseau, 'to be a woman in civil society is to be modest, to create but not to have desire. To be otherwise is "unnatural"'.[191]

This is perhaps another reason why it was also deemed unnatural for women to quit the private sphere. Did it display vanity to abandon the role of 'uxorious maternity',[192] and to seek a public name? Certainly, if a woman desired to enter the public sphere by writing and publishing, and, moreover, to use that opportunity to express disagreement with the oppression of women in society, she was deemed unnatural. Women such as Staël, Gouges, Roland and Wollstonecraft (who dedicated *Vindication of the Rights of Women* to a French bishop), were accused of becoming unemotional mothers, of gaining an '*improper* kind of autonomy, a freedom unbefitting to [their] sex', and were therefore deemed 'unnatural creatures'.[193] Hall argues, 'Women are still deemed capable of a significant contribution, but one which is limited by their intellectual and biological inferiority: they are granted the 'feminine' virtues, finesse, sensitivity, spontaneity, but 'male' virtues, strength, imagination, creative capacity, are deemed necessary to create truly 'great' novels'.[194] Therefore, if a woman became successful on account of her writing, she was accused of being 'masculine, and therefore unnatural'.[195] This does not mean that men are 'unnatural' creatures, rather such accusations were intended to insult women writers and politically active women by exaggerating the way in which they were seen to have stepped outside the bounds of their own 'nature'. Genlis, for example, 'was likened to a hermaphrodite – a woman in the bedroom and a man in the salon'.[196]

The Paradox

Bloch and Bloch have identified a crucial paradox, which forms an ongoing background to the analyses conducted throughout this thesis. If Rousseau had reversed opinions on nature, extolling it as superior to culture and civilisation, and if he – like Bacon, Locke, Hobbes and Descartes before him, like his contemporaries Diderot and Thomas, and like the scientists Cabanis, Roussel, Moreau and La Mettrie – also continued to expound the belief that nature and women were inextricably linked, then 'surely closeness to

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[190] Hoffmann, p.337.
[191] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.200.
[192] Goodden, *Madame de Staël,* p.12.
[193] Ibid., p.11. (Original emphasis).
[194] Hall, p.103.
[195] Renee Winegarten, *Mme de Staël* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985), p.11.
[196] Schroder, p.376.

nature […] would, if followed through, imply that woman should offer a guide to the new uninhibited natural man and would be superior to him'.[197] To some extent women did, at least, become the source by which society and morals could be improved: they were the source of moral doctrine in the home. However, in no way were women viewed as superior, or even equal to men. The political, economic, legal and social privileges to which men were believed to have an indisputable right were denied to women. In fact the Code Civil of 1804 'relegated women "to the status of minors […] excluding them from the definition of citizenship"'.[198] A woman's role became increasingly restricted to the domestic domain. Previously, therefore, whilst nature had been held in contempt, 'the association of women-nature-subordination can be said to be 'in harmony".[199] Yet, even after nature became revered, women continued to be viewed as inferiors, and it is 'somewhat surprising that this view of women is maintained not simply by doctors such as Roussel but also by radical French writers who had elsewhere changed the status of nature'.[200]

The writers mentioned here include Rousseau, for although radical in exhorting new attitudes towards nature, no writer is perhaps more conservative in his beliefs about confining women to the domestic sphere. In *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, Émile is to shun society, opting for an education from the natural world. One might expect his perfect match to undergo a similar education. Sophie, however, must conform to all the constraints of a civilisation and society which Émile is encouraged to ignore. Therefore, 'in some ways in bringing in Sophie at the last moment Rousseau puts in question the whole edifice he has built, because in introducing woman he reintroduces all the assumptions he elsewhere tried to destroy'.[201] If the perfect society is to be built on the foundation of a return to nature, and natural morals are imparted by the mother, how can the perfect woman, wife and mother be such a social construct, refined by civilisation? Moreover, how can the strong association of women and nature continue to be upheld when the latter is regarded so highly and the former so disparagingly? Despite this evident paradox, as Bloch and Bloch make clear, nothing in fact seemed likely to change opinions:

> The acceptance, more or less consciously, of this notion [that of the superiority of nature] by the writers under consideration meant that either they had to negate their

[197] Bloch and Bloch, p.34.
[198] Finch, p.8-9.
[199] Bloch and Bloch, p.33.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., p.37.

> valuation of nature in order to accommodate the position of women, or accept the superiority of women, something which they ultimately rejected.'[202]

France remained a male-dominated society not only in the late eighteenth century, but also throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth.

Trouille also highlights the discontinuities in Rousseau's views on women:

> The view of women that emerges from [Rousseau's] writings is complex and contradictory, full of ambivalence and discontinuities. It is not surprising, then, that his views have given rise to widely divergent interpretations among both his contemporaries and our own.[203]

Even women writers in the mid-eighteenth century identified discrepancies in his material. In *Essai sur l'éducation des demoiselles,* Mlle d'Espinassy

> feels she has something worth saying and has been stimulated to react to that part of *Émile* which specifically targets women. To position herself in relation to Rousseau she seizes on one specific point, that women 'govern' men. She cleverly contrasts this with his apparently contradictory underestimation of women's capabilities and his belief that they should always defer to their husband's judgment.[204]

The paradoxes within Rousseau's work give rise to paradoxical opinions over Rousseau's arguments in the minds of female writers. By their very status as female authors, they contradicted Rousseau's teachings, and yet, simultaneously, they continued to advocate his views. Chase argues:

> Adélaïde de Souza and Sophie Cottin, like many women of the eighteenth century, were inspired by his novels and challenged by his political and social treatises, oftentimes seeing themselves reflected in the characters that filled Rousseau's works. However, both questioned the limited role that he ascribed to women and sought to redefine women's relationship to society and to nature.[205]

Genlis 'rejected Rousseau's limited view of female capabilities and insisted on the liberating force of a solid education for women',[206] yet she remained 'a firm advocate of the Rousseauian ideals of enlightened domesticity and motherhood'.[207] Staël, too, who was notoriously outspoken in public affairs, continued to promote domesticity as the ideal for women. Trouille argues that the reason why women writers frequently echo Rousseau's assertion that women should live virtuous, domestic lives, and aspire to motherhood was simple:

> Even if their views on women and their political and literary activities seem incompatible with Rousseau's sexual politics […], his women readers still identified

[202] Ibid., p.32.
[203] Trouille, pp.1-2.
[204] Bloch, 'The eighteenth century: women writing, women learning', pp.92-93.
[205] Chase, p.2.
[206] Trouille, p.8.
[207] Ibid.

> with him and with the characters of his novels because they expressed, on an existential level, their deepest aspirations and longings – for ideal love, self-fulfilling motherhood, and domestic felicity.[208]

Even though Genlis and Staël may have argued for women's ability to engage in political thought, neither they nor Cottin, Krüdener or Souza attempted to argue that women should be accorded a role of superiority over men, or should join nature on its newly constructed pedestal. Nor is it the intention of this thesis to prove otherwise. Rather, this thesis will address the fact that Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël discuss both the issues that women were now facing *because of* their relegation to an inferior, domesticated status, and the reactions they exhibit in response to these issues.

It is at the point where the changes in the view of nature meet the refusal to change opinions of women's social roles that the answer to why natural description features in women's novels is to be found. The general opinion of nature had undergone a radical change, but the view of women had not. The use of the one to draw attention to the other is subtle, yet convincing.

Part 6: The Author-Reader Relationship

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed an expansion of the reading public, incorporating a broader cross-section of society, including women, workers and servants.[209] According to Mariette-Clot and Zanone, at this particular point in French history 'le lectorat s'accroît notablement – et ce lectorat est en grande partie féminin'.[210] The expansion in the number of readers owed much to the emergence of *cabinets de lecture*,[211] which also had a dramatic influence on the circulation of novels. The novel occupied a major portion of book production,[212] and women's fiction in particular enjoyed chief position. Novels became the genre dominated by women:

> Fiction was the genre to which the women most readily turned – indeed, those writers cited as outstripping men were mainly novelists. The principal ones of the period (whether because of influence or volume) were Genlis, Souza, Staël, Duras, Krüdener, Gay and Cottin.[213]

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[208] Ibid., p.4.
[209] Martyn Lyons, 'New Readers in the Nineteeth Century: Women, Children, Workers', in *A History of Reading in the West,* ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp.313-344; Martyn Lyons, *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France: Workers, Women, Peasants* (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2001).
[210] Mariette-Clot, 'Avant-Propos', p.7.
[211] Françoise Parent, 'De nouvelles pratiques de lecture', in *Histoire de l'édition française: Le livre triumphant, 1660-1830*, ed. by Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, 4 vols (Paris: Promodis, 1983-86), II, 606-621 (614).
[212] Robert Bied, 'Le monde des auteurs', in *Histoire de l'édition française: Tome II, Le livre triumphant, 1660-1830*, ed. by Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, 4 vols (Paris: Promodis, 1983-86), II, 588-605 (589).
[213] Finch, p.21.

An increasing female readership was, therefore, reading the novels of an increasing female authorship, and the women writers analysed in the present thesis were those to whom the readership turned most of all. This is unsurprising, since the novels of these women concentrated on the lives and problems of women: 'Le XVIIIe siècle marque une sorte d'avènement du roman de femmes, qu'il s'agisse de romans écrits par les femmes, de romans centrés sur la condition féminine ou de romans destinés aux femmes: les trois questions se posent en même temps'.[214]

However, identifying a specific audience for these women's novels is complicated. It is not possible to say that female authors were writing for an exclusively female audience: women's novels of the eighteenth century 'ne sont pas ouvertement dédiées aux femmes; la notion de "bibliothèque" […] inclut un certain esprit de sérieux que l'on ne veut pas encore concéder aux femmes; les éditeurs de romans eux-mêmes ne veulent pas limiter leur marché'.[215] In fact, 'subscription lists indicate that men read just as many novels as women'.[216] The aesthetics of sentimental novels were certainly appreciated equally by both male and female readers: according to Gooden, 'men could be as deeply affected by *Corinne* as women'.[217] However, we must remember that the fraction of the readership which was female was much larger than previously.

Whilst some male readers disliked the portrayal of an 'unnatural' female character leaving the domestic sphere in order to publish (such as Genlis's Nathalie, Staël's Corinne, and Cottin's Mistriss Clare), equally some conservative female readers presented the same attitude: 'women too were critical of women who tried to assume the title of author'.[218] I have uncovered no evidence to suggest that distinctions between whether the novels were read favourably or not can be made according to gender, or whether the emotions exhibited upon reading these novels were different according to the gender of the reader.

Moreover, identifying an 'ideal' reader amongst the contemporary readers is almost impossible. Not only because, according to reader-response theorists, an ideal reader 'is a purely fictional being',[219] but also because the opinions of several women writers, especially Staël, Genlis and Cottin, are difficult to pin down. As we have seen in our

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[214] Sgard, 'Collections pour dames', p19.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Carpenter, p.15.
[217] Goodden, *Madame de Staël,* p.177.
[218] Carpenter, p.257.
[219] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p.29.

discussion of women writers' reactions to Rousseau, contradictory arguments over women's participation in the public sphere were presented by the same authors. Whoever the audience was, however, the fact that women and their plight both feature prominently in the novels is undeniable, and that is the focus of this thesis. Balayé has argued with regard to Staël, and I would argue that this is true of all the women writers under scrutiny here, that women 'sont présentes dans toute son œuvre. Elles en sont l'un des sujets centraux. Elle les aime, elle les comprend, elle les plaint. […] Il n'y a qu'à lire pour s'en convaincre'.[220]

Much of the contemporary response to women writers' works is positive, as can be seen from press comments (Appendix III). Some of the works of female novelists were so well received that they were referred to in works by other writers. For example, '*Adèle de Sénange* was on everybody's lips. Isabelle de Charrière incorporated a critique of it in her novel *Trois Femmes* published in 1797.[221] Renowned romantic poet Lamartine even 'reprit […] certains décors, personnages et thèmes de Mme Cottin'.[222] Note, here, how the setting of Cottin's novels appeals to Lamartine.

Women writers' presentation of their sex's preoccupations was often noted by readers. Cottin's discussion of women writers in *Malvina* received attention amongst her readers, for example. Genlis and Staël believed that the argument within this novel put forward by Mistriss Clare – that only single, childless women should be permitted to write – was directed at them, and consequently took offence, much to Cottin's horror.[223] Cottin was not alone in drawing her readers' attention to the situation of the women writer. In May 1807, the *Mercure de France* described Staël's intentions in *Corinne* to highlight precisely what it meant to be a female professional, and to the problems which arose for women who attempted to break out of the public sphere:

> Il paraît que Mad. de Staël a eu pour but principal, dans la composition de sa fable, de montrer aux femmes qu'elles s'exposent à de grands dangers, quand, dominées par un vain désir de gloire, elles veulent s'élever au-dessus des succès doux et modestes auxquels elles doivent naturellement se borner; que les plus rares talents ne leur donnent point le droit de braver l'opinion, et qu'elles ont trop à craindre de n'obtenir la célébrité qu'aux dépens de leur considération et de leur bonheur.[224]

[220] Simone Balayé, *Madame de Staël: Écrire, lutter, vivre* (Genève: Droz, 1994), p.23.
[221] Carpenter, p.46.
[222] Sykes, p.256.
[223] Ibid., p.349.
[224] C., 'Review of Madame de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie', Mercure de France* (Paris: Le Normant, 1807), XXVIII, 323-332 (324).

This review seems to state that, in Corinne, Staël provides an example to discourage women from trying to escape the domestic confinement expected of them. If this is the case, then '[c]ette idée', the reviewer argues, 'est juste et morale'.[225]

Genlis's readers note that she wrote in favour of women and argued that women writers suffered at the hands of a disparaging patriarchal society: 'Madame de Genlis prétend […] que tous les hommes, sans exception, conspirent contre la gloire littéraire des femmes'.[226] Ley notes that Krüdener's *Valérie* was 'le plus fin et subtil roman psychologique *féminin* de la période du Consulat et de l'Empire'.[227] Souza also presented a similar picture of women's plight, her novels offering her 'a way of expressing the injustice that women fought every day in France in order to be treated as the intellectual equals of men'.[228] Souza's 'rejection of the established male order of things',[229] is evident in verses she herself wrote.[230] Yet Souza does not suffer the same criticism for her discussion of the feminine condition as do Genlis and Staël, indeed she is even able to maintain the favour of Napoleon, the noted misogynist. The reason for this may lie in her moderate way of presenting her arguments, which will be explored in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

The final point to note from the reaction of the contemporary readership regards the comments made on female novelists' presentation of spatial setting, particularly natural (and often foreign) landscapes, since these will be the focus of the in-depth analysis conducted in this thesis. Certain authors expressly drew their readers' attention to the significance they attributed to nature. Genlis was well aware of the power of nature to convey an argument, and ensured that her readers appreciated this power too: 'pour faire parler l'amour maternel […] il n'existe qu'un seul langage; c'est celui de la nature […]; et nul lecteur ne peut le méconnaître'.[231] Stating this argument in *Les Mères rivales,* a novel which uses the language of nature to discuss motherhood, ensures that her readers will bear it in mind throughout. Indeed, this quotation, although originally from

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[225] Ibid.
[226] Louis-Simon Auger, *Ma Brochure en réponse aux deux brochures de Mme de Genlis* (Paris: Colnet; Delaunay, 1811), p.26.
[227] Francis Ley and Jean Gaulmier, *Madame de Krüdener, 1764-1824: romantisme et Sainte-Alliance* (Paris: Champion, 1994), p.171. (Original emphasis).
[228] Carpenter, p.15.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Alphonse comte de Fortia de Piles and Stéphanie Félicité comtesse de Genlis, *Esprit de Madame de Genlis, ou, portraits, caractères, maximes et pensées, extraits de tous ses ouvrages publiés jusqu'à ce jour* (Paris: Porthmann, 1814), p.289.

the novel itself, was so well remarked upon that it was included in a separately printed book of the most poignant maxims and *pensées* drawn from throughout Genlis's work.[232]

The natural landscape setting in Krüdener's *Valérie* was appreciated by critics. In the *Mercure de France*, Michaud noted that 'l'auteur, placé entre le climat de l'Italie et celui de Suède, oppose avec beaucoup d'art le ciel poétique de Venise et de Rome, avec la nature sauvage et quelquefois sublime des rivages de la Baltique'.[233] Even in 1861 readers were still noting the author's use of spatial setting in the novel:

> A date de ce jour régna la mode d'introduire le paysage et les impressions de voyage dans ces histoires du cœur, et de promener son héros et son héroïne par toutes les grandes routes, uniquement pour joindre à l'étude psychologique des caractères, les considérations de l'auteur sur les lieux qu'il fait parcourir à ses personnages.[234]

This link between the landscape of the novel and the mindset of the eponymous heroine will be examined in Chapter 3.

Links between the countries employed as settings and the characters in *Corinne* were also noted. Constant states in *Le Publiciste:* 'L'Italie est empreinte dans Corinne. Corinne est une production de l'Italie; elle est la fille de ce ciel, de ce climat, de cette nature'.[235] Schlegel was in agreement: 'les défenseurs de *Corinne*, à commencer par A.-W. Schlegel, ont montré que les paysages et les villes décrites ne sont pas séparés de l'intrigue mais qu'au contraire ils y jouent un rôle actif'.[236] Constant actually explained this for those critics who did not understand: '[L]'intrigue ne pouvait prendre corps qu'à la condition d'un choix réfléchi des pays d'origine, qui oppose des natures, des qualités et des défauts contradictoires, ressentis d'ailleurs par l'ensemble de la critique comme invraisemblables, puisqu'ils ne les comprennent pas'.[237] Foreign reviewers were also aware of the power of the oppositions in the nationalities of *Corinne*'s protagonists: 'Le Révérend Playfair, dans l'*Edinburgh Review*, comprendra quelle originalité donne au roman ce heurt des caractères nationaux'.[238] In fact, Staël's presentation of northern Britain in *Corinne* was deemed highly accurate even among the British themselves: 'I think the

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[232] Ibid.
[233] Michaud, *Mercure de France,* 10 décembre 1803. See: Ley and Gaulmier, p.172.
[234] L'auteur des Hommes du jour, 'Madame de Krüdener et Madame de Staël', in L'auteur des Hommes du jour, *Les Salons de Vienne et de Berlin* (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, 1861), pp.257-264 (pp.258-259).
[235] *Le Publiciste.* See: Balayé, *Madame de Staël: Écrire, lutter, vivre,* p.255.
[236] Michel Winock, *Mme de Staël* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), p.295. See also: Goodden, *Madame de Staël,* p.156.
[237] Balayé, *Madame de Staël: Écrire, lutter, vivre,* p.249.
[238] Ibid., p.249, note 12.

English national character is much better depicted than by any other foreigner', wrote Lady Stanley of Alderley.[239]

Cottin's knowledge and use of the northern British Ossianic myths and landscape was remarked upon by contemporary readers. One reader even employs the adjective 'ossianique' to describe the whole novel: '[p]armi les écrivains de prédilection de ses *Muses romantiques,* M. Bouteron cite, en lui donnant "une place d'honneur", Mme Cottin, "auteur de l'ossianique *Malvina*"'.[240] According to Cazenobe: 'le public a aimé des paysages écossais, la peinture exacte et précise de la vie de château'.[241] Yet, Cazenobe continues: 'Ce qui nous retient aujourd'hui est une grande variété de portraits de femmes à travers lesquels l'auteur s'exprime sur son sexe'.[242] This serves as a good model for what this thesis aims to do: to draw on the natural spaces depicted, which were recognised by and which held a new-found interest for the contemporary reading public, and to illustrate how the presentation of such spaces offers modern critics a fascinating picture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century woman and her preoccupations. Whether the subtle recourse to the land of Ossianic myth to highlight the plight of the woman writer and to argue in favour of women's education was specifically noted by Cottin's contemporaries is not completely certain. However, according to Louichon, certain reviews argued that her portrayal of nature occasionally went somewhat overboard: 'Pour une fois, La Décade et Le Mercure ont le même point de vue: "L'auteur abuse quelquefois de son talent pour décrire la nature"'.[243] The verb 'abuse', renders this an intriguing comment, provoking the question: Were some of the subtler features of Cottin's descriptions of nature and the uses to which they were put noticed by those who disapproved?

Bianciardi elaborates on Cottin's ability to draw the reader into *Malvina* and its arguments through her use of spatial setting:

> L'on peut repérer, dans *Malvina*, l'apparition d'une attitude nouvelle face à l'élaboration de l'espace fictionnel: l'écrivain se trouve contraint de fonder sa construction sur des éléments qui confortent la représentation personnelle du lecteur. En fait, le procédé permet également de diffuser un savoir, donc s'enrichit d'un didactisme documentaire: la représentation du lecteur, nécessairement stéréotypée, quémandera des poncifs pour adhérer à l'univers fictif.[244]

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[239] Carpenter, p.262. Carpenter footnotes this quotation as follows: Adeane J. H. ed., *The Girlhood of Maria Josepha Holroys* [Lady Stanley of Alderley]. Recorded in Letters of a Hundred Years Ago, from 1776-1796, London, 1986, MJS to Louisa (her sister) Alderly Park, August 9, 1807, p.294-295.
[240] Sykes, p.256. (Original emphasis).
[241] Cazenobe, 'Une préromantique méconnue, Mme Cottin', p.185.
[242] Ibid., p.185.
[243] *Le Mercure,* 16 August 1806. See: Brigitte Louichon, 'La critique des romans dans *La Décade* et *Le Mercure* (1794-1820)', *Romantisme,* 111 (2001), 9-28 (p.24).
[244] David Bianciardi, *Sophie Cottin, une romancière oubliée à l'orée du romantisme, (contribution à l'étude de la réception)* (Doctoral Thesis, Université de Metz, 1995), p.696.

I agree that Cottin makes an effort through her portrayal of spatial setting to impart a didactic message to her reader and to reinforce the frustrated feelings of many of her contemporary women, but I do not believe that she is constrained to do so. Chapter 2 will demonstrate how Cottin actively constructs her text to speak directly to her readers and engage them in the debate over women's writing and education.

The late eighteenth- and early ninteenth-century French readership was changing in several ways, therefore, and the ever more numerous readers were seeking: 'un savoir sur le monde – savoir social, savoir psychologique, savoir éthique – qui leur fournisse des réponses et des modèles, qui les rassure, qui leur ouvre d'autres horizons'.[245] Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël provide exactly this: through their employment of natural landscape they reassure oppressed women and open the minds of other readers to the plight of women suffering arranged marriage, criticism because of their choice to write, bereavement or madness. They also open women's minds to how they can share their emotional responses to these sufferings.

Part 7: Methodological Approach

This thesis examines the major female preoccupations featuring in the novels of Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël. It is structured to follow various stages in an adult woman's life, comprising five chapters covering, in turn, marriage, authorship, motherhood, madness and mortality. The chapter introductions examine specific restrictions placed upon women at these junctures in their lives and the reasons why such restrictions existed in post-revolutionary France. Each chapter then conducts an in-depth analysis of several novels to ascertain how they employ nature to highlight female preoccupations. My approach to literary history therefore consists of combining socio-political history with close textual analysis, in order to use both the texts and the socio-historical situation each to further our understanding of the other. For Carpenter's observation regarding Souza applies to all the female novelists under scrutiny here: 'What changes the elegant turn of phrase into a […] feminist message is the political environment in which she was writing'.[246] Staël also illustrates, throughout *Corinne* and *De l'Allemagne,* her 'belief that literary works cannot be separated from the government and institutions, the society and the history of a country'.[247] The events leading up to and taking place throughout the period in which these women's novels were printed

[245] Ibid., p.459.
[246] Carpenter, p.264.
[247] Winegarten, *Mme de Staël,* p.88.

influenced the arguments encoded within them. It is therefore important to examine the novels' 'elegant turns of phrase', the construction of their descriptions, and the plight of their characters whilst considering the socio-historical period in which they were written.

For this reason, no single theory presents itself as an overarching method of unifying women's employment of natural description, and therefore no one theory forms the basis for the analysis conducted in every chapter. Rather, there are several instances where various literary and non-literary frameworks are employed where they develop our understanding of the texts. For example, given the importance throughout this thesis of the socio-historical dimension accompanying both close textual scrutiny and an understanding of characters' psychological reactions to their problematic situations, for the most part the approaches to space in literature proposed by scholars such as Friedman, Lotman, Genette, Ronen and Zoran, while pertinent to certain narratological studies, are less useful here. Nonetheless, where comparison of settings and movement through space becomes crucial to understanding the plight of the heroine, the vocabulary that best allows these aspects to be examined belongs to structuralist theoretical works. Chapter 1 applies Bakhtin's theory of the idyllic chronotope to *Émilie et Alphonse* and *Malvina* to discuss the spaces which engender a love forbidden by society and to contrast them with harsh society itself. Chapter 1 also applies Herman's 'Figure versus Ground' theory of space to *Adèle de Sénange* in order to gain a better perspective of Adèle's physical position and her social and marital roles as she moves through certain natural spaces throughout her life.

Although the question of reception history has been addressed, reader-response theory does not present itself as the best key to unlock the subtleties of the presentation of nature throughout the thesis. Reader-response theorists such as Iser and Fish argue that the reader's own reaction to the text is what attributes meaning to it, and that the reader's interpretation of the text supercedes the structure and form of the text itself and any intentions of the author.[248] Employing such an approach as an overarching method for the present thesis would be counter-productive. Furthermore, certain key concepts in reader-reponse theories are also not useful here. These include the 'hypothetical reader' ('upon whom all possible actualization of the text may be projected'),[249] the 'superreader'

[248] Iser; Stanley Fish, 'How to Recognise a Poem When you See One', *American Criticism in the Poststructuralist Age,* ed. by Jonathan D. Culler and Ira Konigsberg, (Michigan: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1981), pp.102-15.
[249] Iser, p.27.

(who 'because he does not have relations with the 'real' world, […] is able to take […] an objective attitude towards the text),[250] and the 'ideal reader' (as outlined above).

Nonetheless, there is one occasion when reader-response theory proves a useful tool. In *Malvina* and *Corinne,* Cottin and Staël construct a potential 'implied reader' through intertextual references.[251] Chapter 2 shows how these writers' references to the Ossianic myths and landscape permit arguments promoting women's writing and education to be presented, that a reader familiar with Macphersons' poetry would notice much more readily than a reader unfamiliar with it. Cottin and Staël were aware of what readers could bring to a novel. Schlegel argued that Staël supposed the reader of *Corinne* 'capable de lire un roman comme on entre dans un cercle de personnes remarquables où l'observateur perspicace perçoit les rapports les plus subtils tandis qu'un autre moins averti, s'en va comme il est venu'.[252] Cottin was made aware of the power of the reader's ability to read certain notions into a novel. Having written to Mercier after reading his *Tableau de Paris,* Cottin received a reply which stated:

> Ce que vous avez lu dans mes écrits, Madame, vous l'aviez en vous-même. Je vois que vous avez beaucoup d'idées sentimentales, et les vôtres sont venues au-devant des miennes. Il appartient aux âmes sensibles de faire les livres qu'elles lisent.[253]

Bianciardi argues: 'La modernité de tels propos est frappante. […] position remarquable qui traduit bien l'idée selon laquelle la réception s'opère en fonction d'un auteur-modèle reconstitué par le récepteur'.[254] Mercier's letter was written three years before Cottin's first novel was published. It is not inappropriate, therefore, to conclude that, when composing her own novels, Cottin might leave tantalising hints for an implied reader, knowing they would perceive them. The notion of an implied reader is accompanied in Chapter 2 by a consideration of Juvan's theory of spatial intertextuality alongside Schama's notion of potential discourse between landscape and the individuals who experience it.

Chapter 3 examines a mother's landscaping a garden in order to cope with grief and guilt at the loss of a child. Whilst, on the evidence of Krüdener's *Valérie* and Genlis's *Les Mères rivales*, methods of coping with maternal grief and guilt certainly seemed to exist in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the lexicon required to understand and

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[250] Rien T. Segers, *Studies in Semiotics: The Evaluation of Literary Texts* (Leiden: Beugelsdijk Leiden B.V.), p.50.
[251] The notion of the 'implied reader', set out by Iser, 'designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text. No matter who or what he may be, the real reader is always offered a particular role to play, and it is this role that constitutes the implied reader'. Iser, pp.34-35
[252] August Wilhelm Schlegel, 'Une etude critique de *Corinne*', trans. by Axel Blaeschke and Jacques Arnaud, in Société des etudes staëliennes, *Cahiers Staëliens*, 16 juin 1973, pp.57-71 (p.70).
[253] Sébastien Mercier à Mme Cottin, le 16 brumaire An V (6 novembre 1796). Sykes, p.310.
[254] Bianciardi, pp. 287-288.

discuss these methods did not; it is therefore to twentieth-century theories such as those of Field and Volkan that we must turn.[255]

In Chapter 4, which concerns the madness of women, the application of eighteenth and nineteenth-century theories is appropriate. Psychoanalytical theories developed in the wake of the Revolution regarding the treatment of madness are examined in this chapter to show how Cottin engages with them in her novels. However, alongside adding her voice to the debates on how madness should be treated, Cottin also argues that women resort to hysteria as a successful means of protest against the oppression of patriarchal society. Feminist theories which allow the mindset and actions of such women to be unpicked were not fully developed until the twentieth century, by feminists such as Beauvoir and Cixous. It is therefore these which must be considered when analysing the behaviour of Cottin's heroines.

Although near-death experiences such as those seen in Chapter 5 certainly existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, models for analysing them, such as those of Murray, were not elaborated until the twentieth century.[256] It is therefore these models which will be applied in Chapter 5 in assessing the role nature plays in assisting female protagonists to escape the oppression of society through death.

Consequently, whilst each chapter is tied together with a methodological approach involving consideration of socio-political history alongside in-depth textual analysis, each chapter also calls for a different theoretical approach by the very 'nature' of its contents, in all senses of the word. In their discussion of the preoccupations of contemporary woman, the authors employ many different types of landscape, not only in the literal sense of 'wild', 'tamed', 'artificially wild' and 'death related', but also in the manner of their textual construction. Sometimes they are constructed in binary oppositions and require a structuralist approach if they are to be unpicked. Sometimes they are intertextual and require the application of relevant theoretical intertextual and reader-response models if they are to be adequately investigated. Sometimes they are physically moulded to convey messages that ordinary language cannot and consequently require an approach that presupposes an attempt to understand and describe the emotional turmoil

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255 Nigel P. Field, 'Whether to Relinquish or Maintain a Bond with the Deceased', in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice,* ed. by Margaret S. Stroebe, Robert O. Hansson, Henk Schut, and Wolfgang Stroebe (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), pp.113-132; Vamik D. Volkan, *Linking Objects and Linking Phenomena*: *A Study of the Forms, Symptoms, Metapsychology, and Therapy of Complicated Mourning* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1981).

256 Mary Murray, 'Laying Lazarus to Rest: The Place and the Space of the Dead in Explanations of Near Death Experiences', in *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance,* ed. by Avril Maddrell and James D. Sidaway (Surrey, UK; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp.37-54.

that prevents ordinary language from sufficing. On occasion they are symbols of contemporary insane institutions, or of insanity itself, and therefore require a vocabulary appropriate to psychoanalysis if they are to be unravelled. At times they are constructed as spaces of transition between opposing worlds, and thus the application of models which consider such transitions become the most appropriate method of approaching them.

The application of various literary and non-literary theories to help understand the arguments in these women's novels has, therefore, one further undeniable advantage: it allows us to see just how complicated, wide-ranging and carefully crafted these novels are.

Part 8: Socio-Political Historical Contexts

As consideration of socio-political history forms a large part of the present work, a word must be added regarding the various socio-political developments of the period, and the use of the term 'post-revolutionary' in this thesis. Between the outlying dates of the present study, France went from the Absolute Monarchy of the Ancien Régime, to a Constitutional Monarchy (1789-1791), to a Republic (established in 1792), to an Empire (1804-1815). In the Republic the country underwent a constant power struggle, with several political factions seizing control from each other. The period between September 1793 and July 1794 witnessed the Reign of Terror provoked by the conflict between the Girondins and the Jacobins, which resulted in the guillotining of enemies of the Revolution. Following the Terror, the Directory (1795-1799) – also a time of unease and restlessness – and then the Consulate (1799-1804) both preceded the First Empire. The Terror led to the flight of many of the upper classes from France. Women writers and their families suffered and fled: Souza's first husband was guillotined, as was Genlis's husband; Souza fled to Britain and Genlis to both Switzerland and Britain. Cottin and her husband fled first to Surrey and then to Spain in order to escape the threats to their lives and livelihoods. Staël had helped to rescue many aristocratic friends during the Reign of Terror, and became a voluntary *émigrée* in 1793.

The time these women spent abroad influenced their education, their literary output and the reception of their work. Genlis becomes 'one of the earliest French writers to devote extensive room to the figure of the *émigré*',[257] and Souza's *Adèle de*

[257] Katherine Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution* (London: Legenda, 2012), p.115.

Sénange is largely considered to be an *émigré* novel.[258] Furthermore, '[e]migration […] provided some women with an unexpectedly good education'.[259] Souza's *Adèle de Sénange* also profited enormously from her years as an *émigré* amongst a British readership sympathetic to the plight of the French nobles, for it 'benefited from the active promotion by her influential English friends that ensured continued success'.[260] Travel perhaps also influenced the writers' choices to set their novels abroad: Cottin set *Malvina* in Britain, *Amélie Mansfield* in Germany and Austria, and *Mathilde* partly in Britain and mostly in the Holy Land. Souza introduced an English Lord to her novel *Adèle de Sénange* and included a section set in Britain; she also set part of her novel *Eugénie et Mathilde* on the Baltic coast and part of her *Émilie et Alphonse* in the Pyrenees on the border with Spain. Staël set *Corinne* in Scotland and Italy.

During the Terror it was particularly unsafe for women to proclaim their rights. In 1793, 'the Jacobin authorities banned the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women and all other women's political clubs and associations'.[261] Also in 1793, Olympe de Gouges was executed for speaking against the Revolutionary government. If women were to be subversive in this period, it was more expedient to be so in a less overt manner. Genlis's novels, for example, condemn the Reign of Terror through allegory or similarities between the events of their plotlines and the situation in France. Yet even after the Terror, women were still punished for advocating the rights of their sex and for criticising the political status quo. Staël was exiled during the first Empire at the instigation of Napoleon, who was the subject of many of her criticisms, and who was vehemently opposed to women's participation in the public sphere. Being forced to travel again, Staël found herself in contact with several celebrated Romantic writers who influenced her work, including Byron, Goethe, Schiller and Pushkin.[262] As Goodden argues, the fact of her exile also caused her to be even more critical in her writing.[263]

Whilst it is certain that in many respects writing under the Terror in 1794 is not the same as writing in 1804, the year the Code Civil was established, there are nonetheless certain aspects of socio-political history – particularly regarding the subordination of women – which do not change in essentials, though they may change in severity. Therefore, despite the influences of the various political overhauls in France on the lives

[258] Ibid.
[259] Carpenter, p.264.
[260] Ibid., p.46.
[261] McMillan, p.24.
[262] Goodden, *Madame de Staël.*
[263] Ibid.

of women writers, it is not possible to assign a clear agenda (regarding the preoccupations of women) to the woman's novel written in one particular year. Consequently, whilst I will take into account the terms *émigré*, Terror, Directory, Republic and Empire where they are relevant, for the purposes of the present discussion the phrase 'women writers under the first Republic and first Empire' or 'post-revolutionary women writers' will suffice for the majority of cases.

Cottin's *Malvina* and Genlis's *Les Mères rivales* were both published in 1800, and both deal with the struggles of a mother whose child is taken from her, yet it is not possible to mark them out as novels specific to the political happenings of 1800, and therefore in that respect different from Krüdener's *Valérie* (1803) which also deals with a mother's struggle upon losing a child. *Les Mères rivales* and *Valérie* both display mothers resorting to very similar coping techniques. Yet, *Malvina* and *Les Mères rivales* both take very different approaches to the question of the sufferings of early nineteenth-century woman. In fact, Genlis was very critical of Cottin's writing,[264] thus further proving that it is difficult, indeed erroneous, to tie together *Les Mères rivales* and *Malvina* simply because they were published in the same year. Genlis, we imagine, would have been horrified to find her work compared to that of the rival she greatly criticised.

Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* and Souza's *Émilie et Alphonse* were both published in 1799, and though both deal with the drastic consequences faced by a woman when she falls in love with a man forbidden to her, this does not mark these novels out as representative of the final year of the Directory for so doing. Cottin's *Malvina* (1800), *Amélie Mansfield* (1803) and Staël's *Corinne* (1807) also deal with the drastic consequences which arise from succumbing to forbidden love. *Claire d'Albe* and *Corinne* were published eight years apart, one under the Directory and the other under the Empire, three years after the introduction of the Code Civil, and yet both deal with the debate faced by many women in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction over whether they should lead the dutiful lives expected of them or pursue their own happiness to the detriment of their duty.[265] There are, therefore, literary staples which run across the whole period between the dawning of the Revolution and the fall of the first Empire, particularly when women writers are addressing the problems faced by their own sex. These general staples involve discussions of marriage, authorship, motherhood, madness and death.

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[264] See Appendix III.

[265] The duty-happiness debate is described by Margaret Cohen in her introduction to the MLA texts and translations edition of *Claire d'Albe* and will be explored further in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Margaret Cohen, 'Introduction', pp.vii-xxii.

Each new system of government continued the attempt to prevent women from speaking their mind, despite the repeal of the censorship laws in 1789, and women writers (whether living in France, living as *émigrés* under the Terror or as exiles under Napoleon), continued to present the consequences of this repression in their novels. Though some of the novels in the present corpus may have been written almost a decade apart, they are all united by the fact that they engage with the problems faced by women.

CHAPTER 1

Nature, Love and Marriage

> La nature les avait faites nos esclaves; […] la femme est notre propriété, nous ne sommes pas la sienne; car elle nous donne des enfants, et l'homme ne lui en donne pas. Elle est donc sa propriété comme l'arbre à fruit est celle du jardinier.[266]

Part 1: Forbidden Love and Arranged Marriage in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century France

The present chapter will investigate how the novels of post-revolutionary women writers explore women's preoccupations regarding love and marriage. When considering marital injustice in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, we must bear in mind arranged marriages, forbidden marriages and women suffering from a lack of freedom within marriage.

Pre-revolutionary French society was eminently patriarchal, bestowing on women few, if any, juridical or familial rights. Under the Ancien Régime,

> In the traditional marriage the husband and father exercised both legal and actual power over the person and property of his wife and children. He enjoyed management of their property and of the revenue that it produced. The law permitted him to discipline his wife and children, either by physical punishment or by confinement in a correctional institution. […] As his children matured, he decided whether or not they might marry and, if so, how to arrange their marriages so as to help them and the family to realize economic and social goals.[267]

For reasons of finance, inheritance or elevating the family's position within the social hierarchy, a father arranging a child's marriage was normal. Whilst not every enforced marriage was disagreeable, inhibiting an individual's liberty to choose a partner based on love greatly increased the risk of unhappiness. This was particularly the case for the female partner, whose dominating father was often replaced by a dominating husband. Abuse even extended as far as uxoricide, according to le Père Duchesne, who writes circa 1790: 'Comment, foutre, encore une femme assassinée par son mari! Cette mode-là prend bougrement'.[268] He states that three wives had been murdered by their husbands in Paris alone in the preceding six months, and that such behaviour was brought about both by the church's prohibition of divorce and by the very fact that the majority of couples

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[266] Napoléon Bonaparte, *Napoléon: Ses opinions et jugements sur les hommes et sur les choses*, ed. by M. Damas Hinard (Paris: Dufèy, 1838), I, 477-8.
[267] James F. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1980), p.15.
[268] Le Père Duchesne, *L'Indignation du Père Duchesne contre l'indissolubricité du mariage, et sa motion pour le Divorce* (Paris: Tremblay, c.1790), p.1.

had been forced into matrimony in the first place, arguing, 'ce n'est pas l'argent, foutre, qui doit faire les mariages, ce n'est plus l'autorité des pères, c'est l'inclinaison et le goût'.[269] In the wake of the Revolution, others also condemned the legal, ecclesiastical and social arrangements regarding matrimony that had hitherto existed. Less vulgar, but no less disapproving of arranged marriage was the Comte d'Antraigues, who wrote in 1789:

> Qui ne frémirait d'horreur en songeant que c'est cependant chez ce peuple, que l'autorité paternelle dispose, pour sa convenance, du cœur des jeunes gens; que c'est dans ce pays où le sentiment, qui prépare les longues unions, n'est pas même consulté. […] Un père ambitieux vend sa fille pour des honneurs; un père avide en achète une au poids de l'or. […] Ce n'est pas un hyménée, c'est un sacrifice.[270]

The Revolution generated new ideals, constant calls for liberty and an assertion of the rights of mankind. With all this came a new perception of what marriage should entail. The necessity for liberty to choose a partner based on love was foremost in the minds of would-be reformers, as was the desire to rail against the constraints of marriage and the impossibility of divorce. Traer states:

> Freedom of choice and affection were to be the basic elements of the modern marriage. Husband and wife were to be equals, and children more nearly equal to parents and sooner freed from the disabilities of legal minority than were their counterparts under the ancien régime. The modern marriage thus became less a means of aiding the spouses' families to attain economic and social goals than an opportunity for the spouses themselves to find self-fulfilment and happiness.[271]

Women also joined the throng of protestors. Genlis desired, in particular, for the *lettre de cachet* to be abolished. This letter with a royal seal contained orders from the King which could not be appealed. Genlis's objection to the document lay in the power it wielded over women, for, through the *lettre de cachet,* 'a husband could have his erring wife immured without appeal in a convent for the rest of her days'.[272] Genlis was not alone:

> A[nother] set of voices clamored for remaking marriage: the women's cahiers and broadsides and the feminine press. The cahiers genre of 1789-90 encompassed dozens of grievance pamphlets that claimed female authorship and addressed the National Assembly or the king on behalf of women. […] [T]he amelioration of women's position within the family and marriage topped the list of demands.[273]

Desan continues: 'In sum, in the years between 1789 and 1792, the press, popular societies, women's cahiers, petitioners, satirists, divorce pamphleteers, and lay and clerical

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[269] Ibid., pp.4-5
[270] Le Comte d'Antraigues, *Observations sur le Divorce* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1789), pp.11-12.
[271] Traer, p.16.
[272] Winegarten, *Accursed Politics*, p.136.
[273] Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (California: University of California Press, 2006), p.21.

moralists increasingly pushed marital reform into the arena of national debate'.[274] Such pamphleteering demonstrates the contemporary recognition of the need for change, and thus perhaps gives the impression that the coming decades would herald a change for the better for women. This did not prove to be the case.

Whilst the issue of divorce seemed resolved when it was legalised in the early days of the Republic, in 1792, there were still underlying problems. Firstly, although authorised, divorce was not always approved, particularly among staunchly Catholic families. Secondly, in practice, divorce laws were not equal, it being easier for a man to divorce his wife than for a woman to divorce her husband. By the time of the first Empire, this was so concretised that it appeared in writing.[275] According to White, Article 230 of the *Code Civil,* which concerned divorce, 'performed grammatically the dissymmetry of gender in Napoleonic France'.[276] The legalisation of divorce was also not accompanied by further legal rights for those women who remained married. A woman remained inferior to her husband, even to the extent that she was considered his property, as Napoleon himself stressed in the statement which opens this chapter. Article 213 of the *Code Civil* declared: 'Le mari doit protection à sa femme, la femme obéissance à son mari'.[277] Furthermore, 'La femme est obligée d'habiter avec le mari, et de le suivre partout où il juge à propos de résider' (from Article 214).[278] In fact, a married woman had no juridical or political rights whatsoever, as an examination of article 1124 reveals: 'Les incapables de contracter sont les mineurs, les interdits, les femmes mariées, dans les cas exprimés par la loi, et généralement tous ceux auxquels la loi a interdit certains contrats'.[279]

Prospects for married women had not improved, and nor had the situation regarding arranged marriage. Whilst many campaigns exhorted freedom of marital choice, further examination of the 1804 *Code Civil* confirms that patriarchal decisions were nonetheless still to be respected and followed. According to the section entitled *De la puissance paternelle*, all family decisions continued to rest with the father. This applied to choices in children's marriage partners as much as anything else. Any progress put in

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274 Ibid., p.25.
275 It was particularly true in the case of adultery, and also with regard to the possessions to which a spouse would be entitled once divorce proceedings had been concluded. See Articles 229, 230 and 1492 of: *Code civil des Français,* (Paris: Imp. de la République, an XII [1804]).
276 Nicholas White, *French Divorce Fiction from the Revolution to the First World War* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), p.29.
277 *Code civil des Français.*
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.

motion evolved too slowly. Desan provides several reasons for the lack of timely progress:

> The legislators drew the état civil debate out […] not only because they were wary of offending rural religiosity and challenging traditional clerical authority, but also because they knew that to laicize the état civil and define marriage as a voluntary, reciprocal contract opened the floodgates to myriad other issues. […] They [the people] were hardly ready to conceive of marriage as anything other than a sacrament.[280]

In fact, therefore, problems of arranged and forbidden marriage were not only failing to improve in the wake of the Revolution, as time progressed they actually worsened, to the point where owing to the Napoleonic regime's *Code Civil*, Napoleon's personal beliefs, and a general aversion to breaking with long-ingrained tradition, the situation for married women was sufficiently unjust that protests began to emerge: 'Des protestations sporadiques se manifestèrent dès l'application de cette législation "mysogyne" et Fourier, le premier, en 1808, prononça l'expression "émancipation féminine"'.[281]

It is under such a regime that Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël were living, and such a historical context which informed and influenced their writing. It is perhaps little wonder, then, that in the 1790s and at the turn of the nineteenth century arranged and forbidden marriages still occupied the pen of these female novelists, infiltrating novels including Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* (1799), *Malvina* (1800-1801), *Amélie Mansfield* (1802-1803), (and to some extent *Mathilde ou mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades* (1805)), Krüdener's *Valérie* (1803), Genlis's *Adèle et Théodore* (1782), Souza's *Adèle de Sénange* (1794), *Émilie et Alphonse* (1799) and *Eugénie et Mathilde* (1811), and Staël's *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807). This chapter will analyse novels by Cottin and Souza in particular, in order to demonstrate how the depiction both of tamed nature and of nature cultivated to look untamed helps to concretise the presentation of issues of arranged and forbidden marriage encountered by female characters.

Part 2: The Garden Utopian Idyll in Souza's *Émilie et Alphonse* and Cottin's *Malvina*

The eighteenth century produced several kinds of utopian fiction, including texts which describe foreign countries, imaginary countries, futuristic societies, even states governed by animals.[282] The eighteenth-century definition of utopia quoted by Cook states:

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[280] Desan, p.60.
[281] Toubin-Malinas, p. 83.
[282] Malcolm Cook, 'Utopian Fiction of the French Revolution', *Nottingham French Studies,* 45 (2006), 104-113.

> Utopie se dit en général d'Un plan de Gouvernement imaginaire, où tout est parfaitement réglé pour le bonheur commun, comme dans le pays fabuleux d'Utopie décrit dans un livre de Thomas Morus qui porte ce titre.[283]

We should note that the novels of Cottin and Souza do not depict autonomous governments or civilisations, real or imaginary. Nor are their novels traditional utopian narratives, in the sense that the majority of the plotline does not take place within a fictional exotic paradise in the manner of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* or *La Chaumière indienne*, for example. Rather, like Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* – whose garden at Clarens is often analysed as a utopian setting[284] – these women's novels include the description of a garden, a site of tamed nature, which is afforded utopian attributes. Firstly, in these gardens, 'tout est parfaitement réglé pour le bonheur commun'; therefore the gardens fit the contemporary definition of utopia in this respect. Secondly, the gardens' descriptions highlight their 'clôture spatiale', separating them from external society, deemed a necessary quality for a utopian setting by Racault.[285] Thirdly, they are, as is argued in this chapter, presented so that they might be used to critique the problems prevalent within the society inhabited by the authors. Cioranescu defines utopia as 'la description littéraire individualisée d'une société imaginaire, organisée sur des bases qui impliquent une critique sous-jacente de la société réelle',[286] and this is precisely what the utopian tamed gardens and parks of post-revolutionary women's writing achieve. These attributes so crucial to utopias will be analysed more closely in conjunction with an application of Bakhtin's paradigm of the idyllic chronotope, which in turn will highlight precisely how the physical utopian nature of the gardens is conveyed. However, because Souza and Cottin's novels do not display all of the traditional qualities of fictional utopias, in order to avoid confusion between the types of utopian garden featuring in their novels and the traditional utopian society or country with its independent system of idealistic government, I will refer to the gardens in *Emilie et Alphonse* and *Malvina* as 'utopian idylls' or 'utopian gardens' rather than straightforward 'utopias' or 'utopian societies'.

The choice of a garden setting for a utopian idyll is apt for many reasons. Firstly, it calls to mind the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Secondly, owing to the prevailing Rousseauesque Zeitgeist in mid and late eighteenth-century France, escaping the vices of

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[283] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française,* 5e édition, 2 vols (Paris: J.J. Smits, L'An VI de la République [1798]).
[284] James Fleming Jones, *La Nouvelle Héloïse: Rousseau and Utopia* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1977).
[285] Jean-Michel Racault, *L'Utopie narrative en France et en Angleterre 1675-1761* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), p.21.
[286] Alexandre Cioranescu, *L'Avenir du passé: utopie et littérature* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p.22.

urban civilization and pressure in favour of a countryside retreat in which man might live in a gentle pastoral landscape, became a common theme, appearing as frequently in literature as in society. One method of achieving the desired retreat was by creating a garden to which one could escape: 'In novel after novel, the garden appears as the incarnation of longings running counter to the progressive tide of the time, social norms, urban civilization'.[287] Rousseau himself retreated to the Ile Saint-Pierre for several months in 1765, and his heroine, Julie, creates her own utopian garden at Clarens. Julie's 'Elysée',[288] comprises 'une verdure animée et vive, des fleurs éparses de tous côtés, un gazouillement d'eau courante et le chant de mille oiseaux',[289] and provides her with a space of tranquillity, beauty and, more specifically, of safety: 'Ce lieu […] est tellement caché […] qu'on ne l'apperçoit de nulle part […] et il est toujours soigneusement fermé à clé'.[290] The Clarens garden certainly displays the 'clôture spatiale' necessary for protecting the inhabitants from the rest of vice-ridden society, a factor necessary for a utopia, and typical of the tamed, tranquil nature so in vogue. Garden idylls and countryside retreats also began to appear in the fiction of other contemporary writers, such as Baculard d'Arnaud, Loaisel de Tréogate, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the Chevalier de Boufflers, and in the *œuvres* of later authors, including the female novelists of the First Republic and First Empire. These writers drew on Rousseau for inspiration as they provided material for the new tastes of the reading public: 'Les jardins entrent en littérature à ce moment à la fois comme cadres […] mais aussi comme signes de l'appartenance à une nouvelle esthétique'.[291]

Among the main reasons for the general popularity of utopian fiction was a desire to critique and escape the widespread corruption and social and political turmoil in France. Cook states that 'the presentation of a "foreign" reality could, paradoxically, be more persuasive than a critical account of the homeland'.[292] For women writers, the desire to escape and critique French society does not simply involve criticising the political situation, the wave of libertine *mœurs* sweeping the country, or the violence of the Revolution and Terror. In fact in some cases it may involve very little of this type of criticism. Rather, they desired to criticise the oppression of their sex, and the difficulties women faced either within marriage or with regard to choosing a marital partner. Cook's

[287] Gail Finney, 'Garden Paradigms in Nineteenth-Century Fiction', *Comparative Literature*, 36:1 (1984), 20-33 (p.21).
[288] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse,* ed. by René Pomeau (Paris: Garnier, 1988), p.453.
[289] Ibid., p.454.
[290] Ibid., p.453.
[291] Minski, p.92.
[292] Cook, p.104.

statement still stands, however: often more effective than an outright diatribe against France and its ideas is the presentation of an idyll in which 'tout est parfaitement réglé pour le bonheur commun'. Whilst certain women writers, like their male counterparts, did set their utopian idylls in foreign lands (Cottin sets *Malvina*'s utopian garden in Scotland, and Staël sets *Corinne*'s idylls in Italy), the idyll need not be overseas. In *Émilie et Alphonse,* Souza creates a utopian idyll in France; it is simply 'foreign' in that it is set apart (physically, idealistically, even temporally) from ordinary society and its expectations.

The gently tamed natural countryside retreat or garden presented as a utopian idyll works well for addressing issues of love and marriage for several reasons. Firstly it provides the lovers with a hiding place and thus allows a forbidden love to develop secretly. It provides lovers with an escape from those issuing them with orders regarding what they must and must not do apropos of love and marriage. Secondly, the garden permits passion to come to the fore, thus allowing us to witness the emotions engendered in the female protagonist by her forbidden love. The garden as a utopian idyll is appropriate as a scene for encouraging passion because of the Rousseauesque link between nature and sentimental emotion. With the rise of sentimental novels, new importance became attached to a character's situation within space, their perception of space, and most specifically the emotions which space creates within them. Weisgerber argues:

> La sensibilité de Rousseau […] se distingue par l'interpénétration des objets et du sujet qui les perçoit. Ainsi, l'espace de *La Nouvelle Héloïse* révèle un double mouvement: projection du 'moi' dans le monde et, inversement, absorption du monde par le 'moi'. […] [L]e narrateur pénètre résolument dans le tableau qu'il dépeint, imbibant les choses et des sentiments, de ses idées. […] Le décor s'humanise, les objets sont personnifiés, les émotions se muent en formes visibles.[293]

After several decades of Enlightenment rationality, pre-Romantic *sensibilité* engenders a concatenation between nature and the character perceiving it to an extent rarely seen before, certainly not in the immediate past. Moreover, objects in space become viewed for their sentimental value: 'La chose se change en 'signe mémoratif', elle n'est pas vue en soi et pour soi, mais renvoie à des sentiments, à des concepts'.[294] The natural features of a utopian idyll, therefore, are not simply regarded as objects with no intimate or innate value. When they are gazed upon, it is with the ability to perceive that the garden's nature is capable of eliciting or highlighting an emotional response.

[293] Weisgerber, p.141.
[294] Ibid., p.142.

If gazing upon nature supposedly excites emotions, then a garden setting logically provides the necessary opportunity for heightened feelings of love. Indeed, Finney identifies the 'garden as erotic enclave' as the predominant type of garden motif to appear in early nineteenth-century French literature.[295] Finney establishes three possible interpretations of the garden in literature. Alongside the garden as a scene of erotic encounter, she also delineates the 'garden as ethical construct', and the 'garden as a[n] […] image of Eden'.[296] The present discussion will expand upon the first and third of these types of garden – a space of erotic encounter, and an image of Eden – as both are pertinent to the presentation of utopian idylls in post-revolutionary women's writing.

According to Finney,

> the garden as erotic enclave predominates in French fiction. […] [T]he garden appears as a natural retreat from the artificiality of urban culture and its conventions. As the only remnant of nature within a domesticized space, the garden serves here as the setting for the recognition of, and frequently the yielding to, sexual desire, for illicit, most often adulterous encounters.[297]

Whilst, with the exception of *Claire d'Albe,* falling in love in Cottin's and Souza's novels does not always entail an extra-marital affair, often one of the protagonists has nonetheless been 'promised' to a third party by parental agreement, thus rendering the amorous encounter with a stranger an 'affair' by society's standards. Even when no such arranged union has been proposed, the protagonists' love is nevertheless equally illicit, in that it is forbidden by society due to the inappropriate financial or social position of one of the couple, or because their general character is deemed unsuitable. Thus, for the kindling of forbidden love to occur in 'a natural retreat from the artificiality of urban culture and its conventions' (and a consequent retreat from society's contrived obligations) is apt. Furthermore, Finney's statement that the garden is 'the only remnant of nature within a domesticized space' parallels the fact that, for the female protagonist, the garden retreat is often the only remnant of utopia or liberty within a domesticised, oppressive society. Thus, the reaction of a female protagonist who falls in love with a man forbidden to her, is to seek out the garden retreat where she can freely both experience and express her emotions.

In Cottin's *Claire d'Albe*, the heroine actually links her new-found, forbidden amorous emotions with nature, writing: 'Que ce sentiment celeste me tienne lieu de tous

[295] Finney, pp.20-33.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid., p.22.

ceux auxquels j'ai renoncé; qu'il anime la nature; que je le retrouve partout'.[298] She also consummates her forbidden passion in a natural space at the close of the novel, making love to Frédéric 'au bas de son jardin, sous l'ombre des peupliers qui couvrent l'urne de son père'.[299] As we have seen, eighteenth-century French physicians and thinkers, such as Roussel and Rousseau, believed that woman was linked with nature because of her greater propensity towards emotion. *Claire d'Albe* engages with this notion, providing an example both of a woman's sentiment bringing nature to life, and of nature providing the perfect space for a female protagonist to display her passionate, erotic emotion.

In the case of Souza's *Émilie et Alphonse*, Émilie's mother (the Comtesse de Foix) plans for her to marry the duc de Candale. However, soon after their arrival in Compiègne (where Émilie is to be introduced to the Duke) Émilie ventures into the countryside around the estate, and meets Alphonse. The description of the countryside setting to which Émilie retreats highlights the idyllic atmosphere around her:

> [J]e me levai hier matin de très bonne heure, pour me promener dans un bois presque contigu à la maison, mais enfermé dans l'enceinte du parc. Un ruisseau de l'eau la plus vive et la plus limpide y serpente; il est bordé par un joli sentier qui conduit à un rocher naturel, d'où la source s'échappe à travers des groupes de saules pleureurs et d'arbres verts: c'est là que je portais mes pas. Le soleil était depuis fort peu de temps sur l'horizon; la terre, émaillée de fleurs et brillante de la rosée du matin, le silence, la solitude, tout me charmait. Je m'abandonnais à mes rêveries en remontant le ruisseau, et m'arrêtais souvent pour jouir du calme qui m'environnait; je me croyais seule, lorsque j'aperçus aux environs de la source, un jeune homme qui descendait lentement ce même chemin. (*E* pp.6-7)

This landscape is an example of gentle, tamed nature. The *joli sentier* has been arranged to conduct the wanderer to the prettiest parts of the garden: the rocks, willows and source of the stream. Furthermore, as it is 'enfermé dans l'enceinte du parc', it is sufficiently separated from the rest of society for it to be classed as a utopian idyll. The adjectives *limpide*, *naturel* and *verts* highlight the park's idyllic purity, freshness and naturalness, whilst *brillante*, *joli* and *émaillée* underline its beauty and majesty. Coupled with the words 'me charmait', these adjectives indicate that the space is a joyful one, at least for Émilie, whose happiness it reflects. Émilie does not yet recognise the source of her joy, and therefore struggles to express it in words. The natural landscape, however, is capable of conveying her happiness to the reader through its beauty and brilliance. Positive connotations are abundant, highlighting the positive way in which we are encouraged to view the love born in this space. The dawning of newly awakened feelings in Émilie is mirrored in the dawn of the day: the sun has barely risen, dew lies sparkling on the grass

298 Cottin, *Claire d'Albe,* p.43.
299 Ibid., p.145.

and the world is tranquil. Inspired by the scene, when she catches sight of Alphonse and perceives his melancholia, Émilie's emotions are aroused. To begin with, she attributes her feelings to compassion, but her description of him reveals to the reader that she finds him physically attractive:

> [I]l avançait le regard baissé, absorbé dans une mélancolie profonde. […] [M]on aimable sœur imaginera de longues paupières noires couvrant de grands yeux qui ne daignaient pas se lever; des traits d'une beauté et d'une régularité parfaites, dont l'expression triste et douce inspire la pitié; une taille élégante et noble, que la lenteur et l'abandon de sa marche empêchaient d'être trop imposante. (*E* pp.7-8)

A handsome stranger has appeared in Émilie's utopian idyll, one whom society will forbid her to marry, but who can appear to her in his full glory in this garden separated from the expectations of ordinary society.

Bakhtin's paradigm of the idyllic chronotope distinguishes four types of idyll, one of which he identifies as 'the love idyll'.[300] He defines this as follows:

> In the love idyll […] [t]he utterly conventional simplicity of life in the bosom of nature is opposed to social conventions, complexity and the disjunctions of everyday private life; life here is abstracted into a love that is completely sublimated. Beneath the conventional, metaphorical, stylized aspects of such a love one can still dimly perceive the immanent unity of time and the ancient matrices.[301]

In Souza's novel, the social conventions and complexities of everyday life are indeed momentarily forgotten as Émilie gazes upon the beautiful setting and the solitary stranger (who resembles the Romantic-style melancholic hero) wandering within it:

> Je m'oubliais depuis longtemps à cette même place, lorsque, me rappelant tout à coup qu'il devait être tard, je pensai que ma mère m'avait sans doute demandée, et que, pour la première fois peut-être, ce ne serait pas moi qu'elle verrait en s'éveillant. (*E* p.9)

The garden utopia is separated from the rest of society temporally as well as spatially. As Racault states in his definition of utopian idylls, 'la mise à distance spatiale s'accompagnera presque toujours de la mise en place d'une durée autonome'.[302] Indeed, one of the most significant aspects of Bakhtin's idyllic chronotope is the 'blurring of all […] temporal boundaries' which contributes 'to the creation of the cyclic rhythmicalness of time'.[303] Bakhtin speaks of 'the temporal boundaries between individual lives and between various phases of one and the same life' becoming 'less distinct'.[304] This occurs

[300] The remaining three being: the idyll of agricultural labour, the idyll of craft-work and the family idyll. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), pp.224-242.
[301] Ibid., p.226.
[302] Racault, p.182.
[303] Bakhtin, p.225.
[304] Ibid., p.225.

in Souza's novel, as the progression of time loses its importance, and Émilie returns, figuratively, to life's origin: it is the *dawn* of a new day, she finds herself at the *source* of a stream. The scene is, therefore, a perfect love idyll in which Émilie's new-found emotions can grow whilst the time and the requirements of external society are forgotten. Within the idyll, Émilie is protected from society's protests that Alphonse is not a suitable match. Consequently when Émilie returns to the society external to the idyll, and we witness these prejudices, they appear all the more striking. As Cook states, presenting the idyll – a space which lacks the prejudices so frequently seen in real society – is more effective than simply criticising French society itself.

Recalled to herself, Émilie is compelled to return home from the utopian idyll. Soon after her encounter with Alphonse, she is introduced to the duc de Candale. Émilie observes the contrast between the two men when she encounters them in the same room for the first time. Gazing at Alphonse, she remarks: 'Quelle différence de son maintien à celui de monsieur de Candale!' (*E* p.21). Candale strikes her as vain and filled with an arrogant self-importance, embodying all that is wrong with the eighteenth-century French aristocracy. The comtesse desires the union of her daughter with the Duke because he is extremely wealthy and socially superior, yet when Émilie learns of her mother's project, her disgust for Candale is vehemently expressed:

> Monsieur de Candale est l'homme qu'elle a choisi pour gendre, sans savoir si ma préférence justifierait la sienne […]. Monsieur de Candale, si plein de son mérite, si constamment satisfait! […] Non, non, jamais, jamais! […] Mais sûrement ma répugnance pour monsieur de Candale est naturelle, invincible; car jusqu'ici ses manières ne faisaient que me déplaire; à présent que je connais ses projets, il m'est devenu insupportable. (*E* pp.90-1)

The antithesis of Candale, Alphonse is considerate, reserved and generous. He even saves the lives of Émilie and her mother, when a wooden theatre collapses around them, whilst Candale is too occupied issuing orders to pay attention to his future bride.

Émilie's compassion for Alphonse soon blossoms into love, and as she realises this, she desires to return to the idyllic natural park in which she first met him:

> Je n'ai pas pu dormir cette nuit; j'avais été trop émue tour à tour de frayeur et de joie. […] [J]'avoue que j'ai besoin de me retrouver à la place où je l'ai vu pour la première fois; il me semble que là je jouirai mieux, s'il est possible, du bonheur que je lui dois. (*E* pp.43-4)

If Émilie is truly to open herself to her emotional passion, she recognises that she must do so in the utopian idyll, the protective garden that gave rise to the ability to perceive these feelings. Yet, Émilie's mother also realises that her daughter's love for Alphonse was nurtured in the idyllic natural setting. Thus, whilst Émilie wishes to return to the

spot in order to allow her love to increase, the Countess believes that Émilie must be removed from the utopian idyll once and for all, to separate her from Alphonse and to facilitate the forced marriage to Candale: 'Je vais quitter Compiègne, ma chère fille; je crains que le bois, la rivière, le sentier ne rappellent trop à votre sœur l'aimable Alphonse' (*E* p.54). As Carpenter has argued, *Émilie et Alphonse* is a novel which 'emphasises the damage and destructiveness wrought by society and its norms'.[305] Carpenter, like Wolfgang and Stewart, argues that women writers use subtle methods to critique contemporary reality, and here we have a perfect example – an implicit contrast drawn between a gentle utopian garden in which love grows and flourishes and a cruel society (represented by Émilie's mother) which works to prevent the love from developing further. This contrast ultimately encourages the reader to view the world external to the idyll harshly, and, consequently, to critique the real society upon which it is based.

The utopian idyll does not always constitute the first meeting place of forbidden lovers. Occasionally it provides a space of freedom in which early marital bliss can be enjoyed. In Cottin's *Malvina*, Malvina and Edmond marry against the wishes of society, and of Mistriss Birton in particular, a distant relative with whom Malvina lives. Birton had earmarked Edmond for Lady Sumerhill because the latter's family promised Birton a title should the marriage take place. Upon their marriage, the newly-weds retire to the Scottish countryside:

> Malvina, après avoir fait […] mille recommandations de discrétion, monta en voiture avec son époux et sir Charles Weymard, pour se rendre à la campagne que celui-ci leur avait vendue. (*M* IV:37-8)

Discretion is necessary to prevent disapproving society from becoming aware of the marriage until Edmond has managed to secure permission from Fanny's biological father to adopt Fanny with Malvina. Malvina was only permitted to raise the daughter of her deceased best friend if she devoted herself exclusively to the child. She swore herself to celibacy, but even had she not done so, she had been expressly forbidden by Mistress Birton from marrying Edmond. Society must therefore remain ignorant of Malvina's marriage if she is to retain her happiness with Edmond and custody of Fanny. Retreating to the countryside allows Malvina and Edmond the freedom and the necessary secrecy to enjoy their new life.

The chapter which immediately follows the relocation, set in the garden of the couple's new house, is in fact entitled 'Bonheur conjugal'. It describes the situation of the house:

[305] Carpenter, p.49.

> La maison était petite, mais élégante et commode; elle était située au milieu d'une vaste forêt qui rendait son abord difficile, et entourée d'un enclos considérable bordé de haies vives et de larges fosses. (*M* IV:38-9)

Malvina and Edmond's conjugal countryside retreat clearly fulfils the utopian requirements of being cut off from society. In fact, the couple go further than simply retreating from urban life, deliberately seeking aspects of nature most capable of concealing them. They situate themselves at the heart of a forest, in a house which is difficult to approach, hiding amid the vast number of trees, and they surround themselves with tall hedges and wide ditches, natural features specifically designed and tamed in order to conceal them. Cocooned in this naturally protected environment, they enjoy a few days of marital bliss, their emotions highlighted and encouraged by the perfection of the natural landscape. All nature resounds with their happiness and love:

> Malvina se jeta dans les bras de son époux; il la pressa étroitement sur son sein, et tandis que l'amour les unissait si délicieusement, on eût dit que la nature entière cherchait à s'embellir pour eux. Caché dans la feuillée, le rossignol modulait ces cadences touchantes qui semblent partir du cœur et qui vont y mourir; une source d'eau pure, en disputant de murmure avec lui, coulait en filets d'argent sur un tapis d'émeraude; l'astre du jour, en inondant l'occident d'une mer de feu, colorait un ciel d'azur, de nuages d'or et de pourpre; et les premières ombres de la nuit, descendant lentement sur l'univers, luttaient en vain contre les derniers rayons du soleil, tant il semblait que, d'accord avec ces époux, le jour quittât à regret la nature. (*M* IV:41-2)

Nature is steeped in majesty, signalled by the panoply of regal colours 'argent', 'émeraude', 'or', 'azur' and 'pourpre' together with the noun 'astre'. The magnificent polychromy of nature is accentuated by the light of the sunset, drawing the reader into a space replete with the happiness that vivid colours and light connote. Beauty abounds in Cottin's natural setting as nature seeks to 's'embellir' for the lovers. Even the sounds are aptly romantic, with the song of nightingales and the murmur of a stream.[306] The waters of this stream, like those in the stream by which Émilie first meets Alphonse, are pure. Nature is embellished with colour, fertility and romance at the very moment the couple's lives, too, become potentially fertile, and filled with romance and vivacity. In this garden, everything is, in the words of the contemporary definition of utopia 'parfaitement réglé pour le bonheur commun'.

Again, echoing Bakhtin's love idyll, temporal boundaries become indistinct. Although night's shadows are imminently expected, their attempts to penetrate the scene are 'en vain'. Through use of pathetic fallacy – giving the daylight a will of its own, a

[306] Nightingales are not native to Scotland (the setting for *Malvina*). If the mistake is deliberate (or even a careless oversight), it is all the more interesting and pertinent to this analysis, since Cottin chooses to introduce a bird into Scotland which is not usually found there, thus proving that she is attempting to create a utopian idyll, not a reality.

human reluctance to leave this paradise – Cottin ensures that the perfection and happiness provided by the daylight lingers longer than it should, slowing down time, blurring the boundary between day and night, thus underlining that she has created a utopian idyll for her characters' forbidden love.

Despite the suitability of a tamed natural retreat for an amorous encounter, and its ability to nurture the love of the protagonists, such a space rarely endures. According to Finney, 'the escape offered by the garden can only be temporary'.[307] This is the case for Émilie and Malvina. The utopian idyll, like the Garden of Eden, comes to an end and the characters experience a downfall. A happy ending is precluded for them once they have left their Eden. External society ensures that, as punishment for her forbidden love, the heroine either loses any possibility of a union, loses her lover altogether, loses her sanity or loses her life. Thus Cottin and Souza highlight the oppressive power their own society has over women apropos of love and marriage.

Finney states that the garden as image of Eden is 'the last remnant of nature […] in an increasingly artificial and mechanized world. In this regard as in others, the garden as image of Eden is informed by Rousseauesque concepts of nature'.[308] This is appropriate, as in *Émilie et Alphonse* and *Malvina* the garden in which the protagonists walk together is the last space in which happiness occurs, before the characters (re-)enter dominating society. Edmond and Malvina walk in the garden of their new home, knowing that they must part in order for Edmond to seek the permission of Fanny's father to adopt the child with Malvina. The parting should be temporary, resulting in a happy reunion. However, Mistriss Birton discovers that the marriage has taken place, and wreaks her revenge by revealing the truth to Fanny's father, obtaining permission from him to remove the child from Malvina. She tears the child away causing Malvina to lose her mind. When Edmond returns, therefore, there can be no happy ending, as Malvina is insane and dying. On his return, the description of the natural setting around the house reveals a very different atmosphere. The vivid colours, sunlight and beauty with which nature was suffused have all vanished:

> Depuis son départ, les arbres ont perdu leur parure, les fleurs ont disparu, les oiseaux ne chantent plus; un froid piquant a succédé à l'air doux et embaumé qu'on y respirait. Dans son chemin, il aperçoit quelques cyprès religieux, quelques sombres sapins dont les tiges pyramidales conservent un reste de verdure; du haut de leurs sommets le cri du hibou s'est fait entendre; ce son a retenti dans le vaste silence de la nuit, l'écho l'a répété. Edmond frisonne, ses jambes tremblantes se dérobent sous lui; il approche, il est sous les arbres, il heurte une pierre; un rayon de la lune perce

[307] Finney, p.27.
[308] Ibid., p.30.

> le feuillage, et permet à son œil égaré de voir que cette pierre couvre un tombeau; il jette un cri terrible, il tombe; il presse contre son corps cette terre froide et silencieuse. (*M* IV:156-7)

The garden which once provided safety, happiness and space for the expression of passion has been penetrated by despair. Nature no longer postpones the advent of night, or celebrates love and life. Night has descended, and nature is pervaded by motifs reflecting the iciness and eerie silence of death. Cypresses, representative of death in both ancient mythology and Christian symbolism, are present. Confirming the pertinence of the atmosphere, at the very heart of the garden is a tomb. Malvina is not yet in this tomb, but it awaits her. Nature now reflects the death of the couple's union, and Malvina's literal fate.

The heroine of Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* also feels that nature will reflect her own suffering. The situation is slightly different to that of Malvina, because Claire has not yet succumbed to her desire for Frédéric, however, even the knowledge that she desires an adulterous affair is sufficient for her to feel nature degrade around her:

> J'irai lentement errer dans la campagne; là, choisissant des lieux écartés, j'y cueillerai quelques fleurs sauvages et desséchées comme moi, quelques soucis, emblèmes de ma tristesse: je n'y mêlerai aucun feuillage, la verdure est morte dans la nature, comme l'espérance dans mon cœur.[309]

As Bianciardi states, 'De manière très romantique, le paysage se met en accord avec la situation intérieure du sujet, s'identifiant totalement avec celle-ci'.[310]

Souza's Émilie leaves her Edenic paradise because she knows her mother is expecting her. Despite her attempts to return to it and to feel her love once again encouraged by nature, she is physically removed from the countryside retreat at Compiègne, and, once married, never permitted to return to it. Instead, the subsequent occasion on which she meets Alphonse, long after her nuptials, is in the wild mountains of the Pyrenees. The couple can never be united, as they well know. Alphonse feels such acute remorse at having let down both his wife Camille that it is highly doubtful he would ever seek another union at all; Émilie will not be unfaithful to her husband and will not intrude upon Alphonse's grief for his dead wife. However, Émilie's love for Alphonse does not disappear. The natural landscape which the two protagonists now find themselves sharing is not the beautiful, tranquil countryside retreat of the beginning of the novel. Instead nature is harsh and unforgiving, filled with 'passages escarpés' (*E* p.256), a 'sol entièrement aride' (*E* p.377), 'un ciel gris' (*E* p.358) and 'petites pluies

[309] Cottin, *Claire d'Albe,* p.130.
[310] Bianciardi, p.583.

interminables' (*E* p.358). Émilie is convinced that 'cette grande fôret de pins est remplie de revenants et de sorciers' (*E* p.251). Nature has a depressing, dead, even evil aspect to it. Like Émilie's hopes, it has been conquered and destroyed by the society forbidding her love. When Émilie first encountered Alphonse, she perceived his melancholy, but was ignorant of the reasons behind it. His demeanour only made him more attractive to her. However, leaving the utopian idyll of her pre-marriage days has banished all her blissful ignorance, and her attempts to return to Alphonse's side are now accompanied by the harsh realities of his life and hers. She now understands that she can never be with Alphonse, and furthermore, experience has shown her that marriage brings nothing but unhappiness anyway.

The similarity to Eden, and the likelihood of a downfall is heralded in the description of the utopian idyll itself. If we review the description of the tranquil nature in which the young couple in *Émilie et Alphonse* meet, we notice a play on the image of the serpent: 'Un ruisseau de l'eau la plus vive et la plus limpide y serpente' (*E* pp.6-7). Whilst 'serpente' is employed as a verb to describe the movement of the stream, rather than as a noun to denote the reptile itself, the image is nonetheless present. Like the biblical serpent, harbinger of evil into Genesis' Eden, the expectations and values of external society worm their way into the utopian space, forbidding Émilie's happiness.

In Staël's *Delphine* the protagonists' downfall is similarly heralded in the tamed natural space in which the characters fall in love. According to Louichon, 'Bellerive est, dans *Delphine*, cet entre-deux qui semble préserver les amants de la pression sociale',[311] thus making it a utopian idyll for Delphine and Léonce, in which their love can develop. The problem in *Delphine* is that '[d]ans ce jardin, déjà en soi lieu de compromise entre art et nature, cette fête durant laquelle Delphine est si heureuse n'est que camouflage et artifice'.[312] As Louichon argues, the garden only symbolises the *illusion* of happiness,[313] and therefore it betrays the couple because of its artificiality. Louichon concludes that 'le jardin, lieu d'artifices, n'est qu'un fugitive lieu de délices, comme le sont, de manière générale, parcs et jardins'.[314] Perhaps it is unsurprising, therefore, that the tamed garden idyll is only temporary, because of the very fact that it is tamed, and therefore artificial.

Malvina and Delphine perish and Émilie's happiness is forever destroyed. Mistriss Birton, however, who refuses even to gaze at the countryside – 'Croyez-moi, il vaut

311 Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales,* p.85.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid.

mieux regarder le beau ciel de France et d'Italie en peinture, que celui d'Ecosse en réalité' (*M* I:27) – survives. Through images of natural perfection and destruction, Cottin and Souza appear to tell their reader, then, that the woman who attempts to defy society by seeking out a space of freedom to experience and express emotions of love that society forbids, will always be doomed to suffer society's revenge. On the other hand those who deny nature (Bianciardi even argues that Birton in particular 'figure "l'anti-nature"')[315] and who accept society for what it is, will survive. Finney's argument supports this hypothesis: 'Characters who cling to the subversive erotic garden realm and what it represents perish […]; by the same token, characters who reject the escape offered by the garden in favour of social integration and the status quo survive'.[316] One novel which noticeably breaks this trend, however, is Souza's *Adèle de Sénange*.

Part 3: The *jardin à la française* and the *jardin à l'anglaise* in Souza's *Adèle de Sénange*

Utopian spaces were not the only fashionable natural space in eighteenth-century France. As we have seen in the thesis introduction, the eighteenth century witnessed a metamorphosis in garden taste, with the *jardin à l'anglaise* – the garden cultivated to look free and untamed – replacing the rigidity of the *jardin à la française*. The change in garden taste was echoed in literature. According to Duchesne, writing in 1775, 'La formation des jardins est devenue un objet également intéressant aux artistes et aux littérateurs'.[317] The desire to replace an ordered *jardin à la francaise* with a less structured *jardin à l'anglaise* features heavily in Souza's *Adèle de Sénange*. M. de Sénange reveres his Parisian geometric garden, and protests dramatically at the suggestion of his young wife and the family friend Lord Sydenham to cut it down and replace it with a modern English-style garden. Sydenham and Adèle are granted permission instead to construct a new *jardin à l'anglaise* on an island at Sénange's Neuilly estate. During their creation of this garden Adèle and Sydenham's love for each other grows. However, more significantly, the garden allows Adèle a sense of independence previously denied to her.

According to Pacini, specific aspects of garden design were of particular importance when conveying messages in fiction, for example '[i]mages of felled or pruned trees were of especial use to authors who wanted to address various questions of

[315] Bianciardi, p.693.
[316] Finney, p.22.
[317] Antoine Nicolas Duchesne, *Sur la formation des jardins* (Paris: Pissot, 1779), p.v.

reform'.[318] Pacini addresses the importance of arboreal symbolism to the politics of the eighteenth century, arguing that trees could 'signify both the stability of the ancien régime and the hopes of the new republic'.[319] Expanding on this, Pacini argues that destroying the rigid French-style gardens with their symmetrically arranged trees mirrored the destruction of the rigid old system of government, and replacing the French gardens with the liberating style of the English gardens, with freely growing trees, echoed France's calls for liberty with the installation of a new political system. Pacini cites Souza's work as an example of a literary portrayal of this phenomenon. She states that 'conservative arguments about the importance of respecting (aristocratic) French traditions surfaced in *Adèle de Sénange*',[320] adding:

> Within this text, the author not only denounced the brutality of a radical reforestation project, but also talked in coded fashion about ideal methods of reform. It seems possible that parts of this story were directly inspired by the felling of the trees at Versailles; Souza was closely related to both Marigny and d'Angiviller, the previous and current ministers of the Crown's Building Admninistration.[321]

Not only this, Souza's first husband, the comte de Flahaut, 'administered the king's royal gardens'.[322] It is therefore highly likely that the designing of gardens at Versailles and the designing of gardens in *Adèle de Sénange* are related.

However, it is not only republican freedom which is echoed in the change in garden taste. Chase contends that the passion for the English-style garden also mirrored the desire for freedom in marriage, particularly in the case for women, who continued to experience a lack of freedom both in the choice of whom to marry and within marital life itself:

> The cages, walls and barriers that serve as containment devices for natural elements create tangible images of the limits placed upon women's nature. […]. De Souza uses landscaping and land ownership as a metaphor for women's claim to intellectual creation, and she sees the garden as a representative of a fertile space in which women's creative impulses can find free expression. For Adèle de Sénange, […] enclosed gardens and gilded birdcages present bittersweet images of bondage: the protected life of the convent or the confinement of a loveless marriage. Through the creation of her own garden on an island separate from her husband's estate, Adèle finds a new way to define herself.[323]

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[318] Giulia Pacini, 'A Culture of Trees: The Politics of Pruning and Felling in Late Eighteenth-Century France', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 41:1, (2007), 1-15 (p.4).
[319] Ibid., p.1.
[320] Ibid., p.10. (Original parenthesis.)
[321] Ibid.
[322] Chase, p.80.
[323] Ibid., pp.7-8.

Chase analyses the French-style garden, with particular focus on the image of the birdcage, to highlight how the restrictions of M. de Sénange's rigid *jardin à la française* represent the restrictions of Adèle's married life.

The present discussion focuses on the three most significant natural spaces in Souza's novel – the convent garden, Sénange's tamed, dominated *jardin à la française* and Adèle's *jardin à l'anglaise,* specifically cultivated to appear wild and free – in order to re-examine the situation regarding liberty, confinement, independence and socio-historical reform within Souza's novel. It revisits and draws together Pacini's and Chase's analyses of *Adèle de Sénange.* However whilst Pacini and Chase focus largely on the features of the gardens themselves, I couple this with an analysis of the symbolic horticultural echoes in Adèle's life and actions occurring outside, as well as inside, the gardens. I also demonstrate that, through her presentation of the novel's gardens, Souza offers her reader guidance on how to instigate marriage reform successfully.

At sixteen, Adèle is given in an arranged marriage to seventy-year-old M. de Sénange. Adèle's mother takes on the matchmaking role because Adèle's father is no longer alive to do so. Carpenter elaborates on problematic marital situations for women in Souza's works, stating that Souza

> dissects the state of matrimony and investigates love. She repeatedly probes what it is that makes a man and a woman happy. This is perhaps why her novels fascinated contemporary readers, who were often the survivors of unhappy marriages themselves.[324]

There is even a glimpse of Souza's own life in Adèle. Like her creator, Adèle is raised in a convent, is not in love with her much older husband, and falls for a young British man. Adèle does not enter into an affair with Sydenham, however; she only becomes involved with him after Sénange's death. Although she is forced into a loveless marriage, Adèle does not disobey society's will. Uncomplaining, she yields to the fate laid out for her by others. Indeed, her fate is organised by others to such an extent that she is kept completely in the dark regarding any of the marriage contract details. This was in fact very common:

> [Y]oung women were […] left completely ignorant of the details of their marriage contract. Adèle was told nothing by her mother of the marriage settlement which she knew was signed by the notary. She was present at the reading of the contract but, without any understanding or explanation, it meant little to her.[325]

[324] Carpenter, p.35.
[325] Ibid., p.33.

This further proves how the situation regarding arranged and forbidden marriage was more problematic for wives than for husbands.

Adèle's situation is therefore extremely restrictive, as the disgusted Sydenham declares shortly after meeting her: 'Que de réflexions ne fis-je pas sur ces mariages d'intérêt, où une malheureuse enfant est livrée par la vanité ou la cupidité de ses parents à un homme dont elle ne connaît ni les qualités, ni les défauts' (*AS* p.18). Adèle's restricted life is made clear on numerous further occasions. As it turns out, the marriage Sydenham so deplores may in fact have been the lesser (or certainly the least permanent) of two evils for Adèle. She was confined to a convent 'dès l'âge de deux ans' (*AS* p.6), by an unfeeling mother, who expressed more interest in Adèle's brothers than in the daughter who would never inherit her family's wealth or be given a dowry. Sénange discovers, upon questioning Adèle's mother, the ironically named Madame de Joyeuse, that for these reasons Adèle was to be forced to take the veil permanently. He is deeply affected by Adèle's fate, and decides to take action:

> Je fus révolté de voir une mère disposer aussi durement de sa fille, et la livrer au malheur pour sa vie, uniquement parce qu'elle était peu riche. Cette jeune victime, sacrifiée ainsi par ses parents, ne me sortait pas de l'esprit. (*AS* p.64)

Consequently he suggests to Madame de Joyeuse that he marry the young Adèle, wishing to save her from 'pronançant ces vœux terribles' (*AS* p.66) and from being locked within a convent for the rest of her life. Thus, he says '[m]'étant bien assuré que son cœur n'avait point d'inclination, qu'elle m'aimait comme un père, je me déterminai à la demander en mariage' (*AS* p.66). He is aware that Madame de Joyeuse will only rescind her instructions for her daughter to take religious vows if there is the possibility that Adèle will marry a wealthy aristocrat willing to take her without a dowry. He knows too that although he is much older than Adèle, and in failing health, upon his death his wife will inherit his fortune, and will finally be freed from the restrictions of her family and its expectations, free of the confinement of the cloister, and able to make her own decisions regarding her future: 'je me persuaderais encore qu'un lien qui, naturellement, ne doit pas être long, vaut toujours mieux que le voile et les vœux éternels qui étaient son partage' (*AS* p.67).

Madame de Joyeuse agrees to the marriage, and Adèle passes from one restrictive space (the cloister) into another (the domestic home). Chase has argued that both the convent and Sénange's *jardin à la française* – a key aspect of Adèle's new domestic home – both represent equal restrictions placed upon Adèle. However, the present analysis builds on Chase's argument by examining the situation from two different angles. An

application of the 'figure versus ground' theory and theories regarding the use of motion verbs, shows the garden of the convent cloister and the French-style garden as separate points along a progressive axis, demonstrating how Adèle's independence is somewhat improved with her change in space. I also analyse not how Adèle's lack of freedom is mirrored in the description of the *jardin à la française,* but rather how French-style gardens – both in the novel, and those which really existed in France at the time – are mirrored in Souza's descriptions of Adèle's life.

It is first necessary to examine the space Adèle leaves behind – the convent and its garden – before she encounters the French and English gardens during her marriage, for the depiction of the convent helps us understand Adèle's first steps to freedom. When first introduced to Adèle, we are told that she has been walled up and separated from the world throughout her life (*AS* p.7). In a later episode in the novel, after her marriage, Adèle describes Sénange's visits to the convent whilst she lived there. Sénange brings baskets of fruit and places them 'sur une table près de la grille' (*AS* p.98). When Adèle requests that her fellow nuns be permitted to share the present, the imagery in Souza's description begins to echo that of a gaol:

> [L]a vue des paniers fit bientôt disparaître cet air cérémonieux. Comme il était impossible de les faire entrer par la grille, chacune d'elles passait sa main à travers les barreaux, et prenait, comme elle pouvait, les fruits dont elle avait envie (*AS* p.98).

The nuns stretch their hands through prison-like bars in order to obtain the natural delights of the world beyond.

This imagery is heightened when Sydenham receives a letter from one of the nuns still at the convent. Orphaned and brought up by the nuns, Eugénie finds the prospect of spending the rest of her life in the convent terrifying: 'Le soir en rentrant dans ma cellule, je pensais avec terreur que je n'en sortirais que pour mourir. […] [L]es vœux éternels que je venais de prononcer me firent frémir' (*AS* pp.116-117). However, soon a gap appears in the convent garden wall, and Eugénie begins to visit the garden regularly to gaze out at the nature of the vast world beyond. At this point, the reader witnesses the desperate desire to escape the restricted, prison-like convent from a nun's own perspective:

> [T]out un pan du mur du jardin était tombé. […] [L]a brèche était considérable; et je ne saurais vous rendre le sentiment de joie que j'éprouvai, en revoyant le monde une seconde fois. A cet instant, je ne me sentis plus; je riais, je pleurais tout ensemble. (*AS* p.119)

The 'figure versus ground' theory of space states that a character or object within a text must always be considered in light of its physical situation within, and in relation to, its

surroundings. According to Herman, 'the semantic structure of spatial expressions can be thought of as a dependency relation between two or more entities: a *located object* (or *figure*) and a *reference object* (or *ground*)'.[326] In this particular scene, Eugénie is the located object, and the convent garden her reference ground. Considering the semantic structure of the episode of the convent garden, we are able to understand more about the position of the nuns in relation to their space. The construction of the sentence focuses more on the nun's emotions than on physical description of the space itself, and consequently the reader is permitted a clear view of the effect the reference ground has upon the figures located within it. After informing us that 'la brèche était considérable', the nun moves swiftly on, noting the joy she feels at the sight of it, then adding '[à] cet instant, je ne me sentis plus; je riais, je pleurais tout ensemble' (*AS* p.119). The triple semantic techniques of replacing description of space with description of emotional reaction to the space, the swift build up of verbs expressing this emotion, and separating the verbs with frequent punctuation all serve to give the impression of overwhelming catharsis, bringing Eugénie's previous depression into stark relief.

She feels the need to return to the garden as soon as possible, to gaze through the wall at the nature beyond:

> Le lendemain, dès cinq heures du matin, j'étais dans le jardin; cette brèche donnait dans les champs, et me laissait apercevoir un vaste horizon. Je contemplai le lever du soleil avec ravissement. La petitesse de notre jardin, la hauteur de ses murs, nous empêchent de jouir de ce beau spectacle. (*AS* p.119)

This time, the located figure (Eugénie) is placed in a much wider reference ground, comprising not only the convent garden, but also the natural world beyond it. Contemplating the nature in this wider reference ground provides hope for Eugénie. The large fields extending to a vast horizon contrast sharply with the small convent garden surrounded by high walls (the usual reference ground) to which she is accustomed, and allow her, temporarily, to feel the freedom of spirit granted by such a vast expanse of open space – a feeling which will be experienced by Adèle in her *jardin à l'anglaise*. In addition, the dawn with its beautiful sunrise echoes the awakening of this new-found spiritual freedom within Eugénie. Nature reminds her of what she lacks, and provides an outlet for her emotion.

Nonetheless, only Eugénie's gaze is permitted to wander beyond the garden wall; she herself is still physically bound by the restrictions of her prison, and although she

[326] David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 2002), pp.274-7 (p.274). (Original emphasis.)

decides to 'ne plus quitter le jardin' (*AS* p.120) in order to continue to view the world beyond, it is 'sans oser franchir la ligne où le mur avait marqué la clôture' (*AS* p.120). Spiritually and emotionally, the nun has attained a much wider reference ground, but physically she remains fixed within the reference ground of the garden. Before the wall can be rebuilt, more bricks must be removed, and as the hole is widened, gazing upon an increasing expanse of nature suffices to help her overcome her depression. However, when repair work commences, and the reference ground begins to close in again, the nun's fear and depression return with such violence that she writes:

> [J]'aperçus qu'il y avait une pierre de plus que la veille: on commençait à rebâtir!... Je jetai un cri d'effroi, et cachant ma tête dans mes mains, je courus vers ma cellule, comme si la mort m'eût poursuivie: j'y restai jusqu'au soir, anéantie par la douleur […] Arrachez-moi d'ici, mylord, arrachez-moi d'ici. (*AS* pp.120-121)

Herman's 'figure versus ground' theory is often linked to theories regarding the presentation of verbs of motion, whose importance lies in their power to 'help readers build up representations of an action structure, a pattern of goal-directed actions and counteractions, on the basis of the participants' movements along pathways cutting through space and charted by the sequence of verbs'.[327] Nowhere is Eugénie's goal-direction clearer than in the motion verbs she employs at this point. The repeated imperative 'arrachez-moi' signals her violent desperation to be physically torn from her prison and her torment, whilst simultaneously reminding the reader of her powerlessness: Eugénie (represented by the disjunctive pronoun 'moi') is a direct object here, not the subject of the verb. She is not in control of her 'movements along pathways cutting through space', rather she is entirely dependent on the assistance of others as to how, and even whether, she moves to a new space. It seems that a view of nature and the freedom it affords is required for Eugénie finally to act to escape her prison. Adèle, however, has already been rescued by M. de Sénange, and so, unlike Eugénie, at the point of her release from the convent she does not yet realise the power of nature to liberate the mind. This is what she will learn in her encounters with the *jardin à la française* and the *jardin à l'anglaise*.

What, then, are the restrictions of *jardin à la française* and how do they appear in Adèle's life outside of the garden? Sydenham describes the garden on Sénange's Paris estate thus:

> [C]'est l'ancien genre français dans toute son aridité; du buis, du sable et des arbres taillés. La maison est superbe; mais on la voit tout entière. Elle ressemble à un grand

[327] Ibid., p.282.

> château renfermé entre quatre petites murailles; et ce jardin, qui est immense pour Paris, paraissait horriblement petit pour la maison. (*AS* p.31)

This garden is a clear example of a space of rigidly tamed nature. It echoes Minski's description of the *jardin à la française* and its traditional features of box trees, sanded alleyways and perfectly pruned trees. Even the château dominating the scene reminds us of the descriptions of the real *jardins à la française* that existed in France at this time, which were 'en contrebas du château'.[328] The aridity and restrictions prevalent within the French-style garden infringe upon the liberty of those within it. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the description of the gilded birdcage: 'Adèle voulut savoir si je trouvais sa volière jolie. Je lui répondis qu'elle allait bien avec le reste du jardin. Ce n'était pas en faire un grand éloge, car il est affreux' (*AS* p.31). Sydenham adds that in his own *jardin à l'anglaise*, although he also has many birds, 'les miens seraient malheureux s'ils n'étaient pas en liberté' (*AS* p.32). Chase argues that the aviary

> acts as a metaphor for Adèle's role in marriage. […] In *Adèle de Sénange*, the limitations of marriage visibly constrict the female protagonist. Traditionally a golden birdcage represents a forced marriage, and for Adèle there is little attempt to cover up the restrictions her marriage places upon her under the guise of natural happiness. […] On her marriage day she emerges from the church as elegantly decorated as a gilded birdcage, 'couverte d'argent et de diamants'.[329]

Undoubtedly Adèle's life is as regulated for her as a French garden is geometrically regulated. However, this is not the only occasion when Adèle's finery is appropriate for a French-style garden. If we examine again descriptions of a *jardin à la française* we can see more clearly how descriptions of Adèle after her marriage to Sénange fit with those of a garden in the style of Le Nôtre: both are rigidly tamed. The most famous of the French-style gardens was indeed at Versailles, but Le Nôtre designed the King's garden on the strength of his previous work at Vaux-le-Vicomte, described thus by an eighteenth-century vistor: 'C'était une confusion de si belles choses qu'on ne peut l'exprimer. Ces eaux jaillissantes, ces canaux, ces cascades, ces allées remplies de dames et de courtisans chargés de rubans et de plumes'.[330] The women loaded with ribbons and feathers, signs of riches and luxuriance, who paraded along the pathways were as much a part of the appeal of this style of garden as were the water features, topiary and alleys themselves. As Turner argues, 'Vaux-le-Vicomte is theatrical: a magnificent spectacle to be viewed from the house'.[331] The French-style garden provides the reference ground, or theatrical stage,

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[328] Minski, p.92.
[329] Chase, pp.85-86.
[330] Ehrenfried Kluckert, *Parcs et jardins en Europe de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Potsdam: h.f.ullmann, 2005), p.189.
[331] Turner, p.170.

in which the located objects – both the horticultural features (stage props) and the ornamental parading visitors (the actors) – can be found. It is this description which must be borne in mind when Sydenham meets Adèle at the opera, a similar theatrical spectacle, and declares:

> Je n'ai jamais vu tant de diamants, de fleurs, de plumes, entassées sur la même personne. […] Voilà, disais-je, de bien belles plumes! Vos diamants sont d'une bien belle eau! […] Je lui parlai de sa robe, de ses rubans!' (*AS* pp.20-22).

Adèle is adorned with identical decorations – *rubans* and *plumes* – to those which were customarily on view in the *jardin à la française* according to the guest at Vaux-le-Vicomte. She is even decorated with flowers, as though part of a garden. Moreover, the feathers and flowers are heaped upon her, evoking the image of a bejewelled flowerbed rather than of a woman. The restrictions of the French-style garden therefore accompany Adèle wherever she goes, and, wherever she happens to be, she is on display, 'enchantée de voir et d'être vue' (*AS* p.21), just as the *jardin à la française* was intended to be ostentatiously flaunted. Sydenham even remarks that '[t]oute la magnificence qui entourait Adèle me semblait le prix de son consentement' (*AS* p.22), indicating that her consent to the arranged marriage comes at a price: empty ornaments, the chains tying her to a restricted life and space. Finally, just as Sydenham described the French-style garden as *affreux*, he is similarly struck by Adèle's finery, referring to it as 'l'odieux éclat qui l'environnait' (*AS* p.22). The adornment of Adèle in bad taste, as though she were a feature of the *jardin à la française,* echoes Nichols' statement that '[i]t seemed as though the proprietor was principally desirous of showing the extent of his property, and the gardener his knowledge of geometry, while neither displayed a ray of originality.[332]

On other occasions within the novel, echoes of the regular geometric shapes common to French-style gardens appear in descriptions of Adèle. When Sydenham sees Adèle with her mother, he notes: '*la régularité* de leurs traits les feraient distinguer parmi toutes les femmes' (*AS* p.17).[333] When Adèle dances at the ball held in honour of her husband, she appears at the centre of a geometric shape: 'On fit un cercle autour d'eux pour les voir et les applaudir' (*AS* p.107). Another circular image appears whilst Adèle is in the *jardin à la française.* The research of several cognitive linguists, including Brown, Landau and Jackendoff has given rise to the understanding that 'motion verbs contribute crucial semantic information concerning the participants' *emerging* whereabouts in space –

[332] Nichols, p.221.
[333] My emphasis.

their spatial trajectories over the duration of the event sequence being narrated'.[334] In the *jardin à la française,* we see Adèle's spatial trajectory clearly as she moves in circles, trying to care for and to please her birds, her husband and her guest:

> Pour Adèle, elle fut voir ses oiseaux, leur parler, regarder s'ils avaient à manger; et continuellement, allant à eux, revenant à nous, ne se fixant jamais, elle s'amusa sans cesser de s'occuper de son mari, et même de moi. (*AS* p.31)

The word *continuellement*, in addition to the motion verbs *allant* and *revenant,* and the expression *ne se fixant jamais,* all of which occur immediately one after the other in the sentence, create the impression of a constant circle, Adèle's motion having neither end nor pause. Adèle is rigidly tamed here to cater to everyone's desire but her own. Finally, when Adèle and Sydenham visit the convent hospital, we are presented with another architectural feature of the *jardin à la française:* the straight line. The group of nuns to whom Adèle previously belonged, and whom she now visits, are 'une centaine de pauvres […] tous rangés sur la même ligne' (*AS* p.86). Adèle's married life and previous convent life both seem constantly surrounded, therefore, by images of the geometrically ordered features of the *jardin à la française.*

Souza introduces the *jardin à l'anglaise* into her novel as a stark contrast to the horticultural images previously encountered. When Sydenham informs Adèle of his own English-style garden, she is enchanted by the idea of such a space:

> J'essayai de lui peindre ce parc si sauvage que j'ai dans le pays de Galles: cela nous conduisait à parler de la composition des jardins. Elle m'entendit, et pria son mari de tout changer dans le leur, et d'en planter un autre sur mes dessins. […] [D]ès que je lui eus rappelé les campagnes qu'il avait vues en Angleterre, […] il finit par désirer aussi que toutes ces allées sablées fussent changées en gazons. (*AS* p.32).

The apparent wildness of Sydenham's *jardin à l'anglaise* holds many attractions for Adèle, principally the sense of liberty that it expresses. Her husband agrees to her request to replace their arid, geometrically regulated garden with a freer one, but when he later sees the plans to tear down his trees, he changes his mind:

> Ces arbres, plus vieux que moi encore, et qu'intérieurement je vous sacrifiais avec un peu de peine, l'été, me garantiront du soleil, l'hiver, me préserveront du froid; car à mon âge tout fait mal. Peut-être aussi la nature veut-elle que nos besoins et nos goûts nous rapprochent toujours des objets avec lesquels nous avons vieilli. Ces arbres, mes anciens amis, vous les couperiez! ils me sont nécessaires. (*AS* pp.33-34)

Like Sénange, the trees belong to a bygone age, and if they are destroyed, he feels that he will be too.

[334] Nichols, p.283. (Original emphasis.)

Adèle's heart, however, is set on having an English-style garden because of the freedom that it will bring. Sénange is not cruel, and therefore he agrees that, rather than uprooting the trees in his Parisian garden, she might create a new garden on the island on his country estate at Neuilly: '[I]l y a une île de quarante arpents', he informs her, 'je vous la donne. Vous y changerez, bâtirez, abattrez tant qu'il vous plaira; tandis que moi je garderai cette maison-ci telle qu'elle est' (*AS* p.33). Adèle is delighted to have an island of her own, and cannot wait to commence her alterations: 'Adèle sautait de joie en pensant à son île. Il y aura, disait-elle, des jardins superbes, des grottes fraîches, des arbres épais' (*AS* p.34). Even before venturing there, she talks of her island as a space to be enjoyed by both herself and Sydenham. As she talks of all that she will do on her island, it becomes clear how entwined she and Sydenham are within it: '*Nous* déjeûnerons à dix heures […]; ensuite, *nous* irons dans l'île; à trois heures *nous* dînerons' (*A* p.34).[335] Indeed Adèle and Sydenham do later visit the island alone together, and spend so long in conversation that they forget to return to Sénange at the appointed time.

Adèle's island is much more than a space permitting her to be with the man she loves, however. It does not become a garden of erotic encounter, nor is it even a space in which she expresses her passion for the man of her dreams, as was the case for Malvina and Émilie in their tamed idylls. Upon arriving on her island, Adèle is, in fact, consumed with a different emotion. For the first time in her life she feels a sense of liberation, since her garden will be untamed and permitted to grow and develop as it wishes. As Chase argues, the island garden 'metaphorically depicts separation from others by giving the female protagonist an opportunity for self-expression and independence'.[336] Therefore, when Adèle arrives on the island, we are not presented with a vocabulary of eroticism or love, but with one which concretises Adèle's autonomy and control of her own space: 'Enfin, *elle* a pris possession de son île' (*AS* p.38).[337] The italicisation of the personal pronoun emphasises that Adèle has never before possessed such a liberating space of her own; indeed, eighteenth-century women in general rarely did. The description of Adèle on her island highlights her new-found liberty:

> [E]lle nous quitta, et se mit à courir, sans que ni la voix de son mari, ni la mienne, pussent la faire revenir. Je la voyais à travers les arbres, tantôt se rapprochant du rivage, tantôt rentrant dans les jardins; mais en quelque lieu qu'elle s'arrêtât, c'était toujours pour en chercher un plus loin. (*AS* p.39)

[335] Original emphasis.
[336] Chase, p.95.
[337] Original emphasis.

Whilst in the *jardin à la française* Adèle ran in circles between her husband and her secret love, here in the *jardin à l'anglaise,* Adèle is pictured running away from both men, neither able to rein her in. Adèle is now in control of herself and her space. Furthermore, she is no longer compelled to sit, walk or run in a straight line (as was the case in the convent), nor is she hemmed in at the centre of a circle of society's onlookers (as at the ball). Similarly, she no longer runs between fixed points, she runs hither and thither, and it is almost impossible to keep track of her. Adèle, like the *jardin à l'anglaise* that she will construct on this island, is not subject to rigidity or geometry, but, rather, is free to go wherever she desires. She now moves, not between men, but between points of nature – the *rivage* and the *jardins*. Free nature provides her with the liberty she has never known, and the further it removes her from her responsibilities, the happier she becomes. Adèle is now a located figure in a wider, freer reference ground than that of the *jardin à la française*, and this is reflected in the verbs which characterise her movement: 'Pour Adèle, elle y alla toujours sautant, courant, car sa jeunesse et sa joie ne lui permettaient pas de marcher' (*AS* p.39). We no longer witness her simply *aller* and *revenir* as in the *jardin à la française*. Now the verbs are much more energetic: jumping, running, anything but walking. She is able to experience physically the freedom that Eugénie (and indeed Adèle herself whilst still in the convent) could experience only visually, and this is the reason for such haphazard verbs of motion. It is little wonder that 'la joie brillait dans les yeux d'Adèle' (*AS* p.38).

Let us briefly consider the three gardens simultaneously, in relation to each other, to understand truly the change wrought both in Adèle and in her emotional demeanour by her movement through space. During the course of Adèle's story, her current spatial situation is always relative to her past situation in other spaces. That is, she is more restricted in the convent and its garden than she is later in the rigidly tamed *jardin à la française,* but it is not until she begins to design her *jardin à l'anglaise*, eradicating any impression of tamed nature, that she attains her greatest freedom. Her spatial vicissitudes proceed along a horizontal axis, and as she moves along this axis her emotions change radically. In the first part of the novel Adèle's life is melancholy, and she cries frequently: 'L'extrême douleur de cette jeune personne me touchait et m'étonnait également' (*AS* p.6). It is clear to Sydenham that Adèle fears being forced into a marriage where she does not know what lies in store: 'Les larmes qu'elle répandait en quittant son couvent étaient trop amères pour être toutes de regret; je crains bien que le peur de ce mariage ne les fît aussi couler' (*AS* p.18). When Adèle is not melancholy, she displays disdain or fear. At

the opera, she is troubled by Sydenham's praise of her appearance and talk of her husband's wealth, and replies to Sydenham 'en prenant à son tour l'air du dédain' (*AS* p.22).

As she moves between the two restricted spaces in her life, Adèle's emotions are, then, rarely joyful. Certainly whatever happiness she may gain from her marriage to Sénange appears trivial in comparison with the description of her running with delight when she experiences the independence that creating her own *jardin à l'anglaise* brings. She recognises the difference herself, when she replies to Sénange's offer of the Neuilly island with the words: 'je serai heureuse' (*AS* p.36). Souza makes clear that the change in space provokes the upswing in Adèle's emotions when she informs us that setting foot on the island is all that is needed to lift Adèle's spirits: 'dès qu'elle fut descendue dans son île, sa gaieté revint' (*AS* p.97). Sydenham provides final proof of the change wrought in Adèle when he writes: 'Ce n'est plus madame de Sénange vive, étourdi, magnifique; c'est Adèle, jeune sans être enfant, naïve sans légèreté, généreuse sans ostentation' (*AS* p.60). In entering her English-style garden, Adèle has gained so much independence that she is not only able to leave behind the ostentation of the *jardin à la française*, she is even able to leave behind her married name. She is no longer Mme de Sénange, but simply Adèle.

Adèle's current spatial situation must, therefore, always be viewed in relation to the other fixed points on her spatial axis. Souza expands upon the simple French- versus English-style garden dichotomy by placing complete confinement and complete freedom on a sliding scale. This sliding scale allows us to unpick Souza's final message behind the text regarding the problems of arranged marriage and the problems of reform. For although the *jardin à la française* represents the rigidity of an arranged marriage, upon viewing the wider picture we understand how passing through this space allows Adèle to gain autonomy and happiness.

Adèle de Sénange is original in several respects. Unlike Cottin in *Claire d'Albe, Amélie Mansfield* and *Malvina*, unlike Staël in *Corinne,* and unlike Souza herself in her own later novel *Émilie et Alphonse,* Souza shows the reader in *Adèle de Sénange* that the secret desire of the heart of the eighteenth-century woman forced into an arranged marriage is not necessarily the *marriage contrarié* or the extra-marital affair with a more desirable man. Her secret desire is for the freedom to choose her own destiny, whatever that may be. *Adèle de Sénange* is also unusual because it is one of the few sentimental novels by women writers of this period with a happy ending. The focus on a desire for liberty and the joyful emotions that this grants, as opposed to a desire for forbidden erotic pleasure, is

partly responsible for this happy end. Souza argues that we must not focus on radical revolt against the oppressive situation in which we find ourselves, but rather we must focus on the more fundamental rights to which we should all be entitled. As a result, unlike Émilie and Malvina, Adèle is successful both in accepting society uncomplainingly for what it is and in seeking out a space of freedom (which she will be able to keep forever) to express her emotions. Adèle's natural space of freedom is not one in which she defies society's wishes by openly declaring her love for a man other than her husband. It is one to which she is able to escape to express individual autonomy. In accepting her arranged marriage, and refusing to rebel against it through an adulterous affair, Adèle retains the good opinion of her husband and of society. She is therefore rewarded for her patience: she is not cast out of society like Émilie, Malvina, Amélie, Claire and Corinne. Nor does society wreak its revenge on her for her eventual marriage to Sydenham, as it destroys Malvina for marrying Edmond, Claire for conducting an affair with Frédéric, Amélie for eloping with M. Mansfield, and Corinne for loving Oswald. Rather, on Sénange's death, Adèle receives both his inheritance and his blessing for her future marriage, and so the rest of society must accept her marriage to Sydenham too.

However, Sénange's death is not cause for a celebratory end of the old system or of the *jardin à la française*. On the contrary, Souza continues to remind us of the importance of the old and the new working together towards reform and a better world. On one of the occasions when Adèle and Sydenham take Sénange with them to Adèle's island, the old man states that he would like his tomb to be erected there:

> Hier nous avons été à la pointe de l'île; elle est terminée par une centaine de peupliers, très-rapprochés les uns des autres, et si élevés, qu'il semblent toucher au ciel. Le jour y pénètre à peine; le gazon est d'un vert sombre; la rivière ne s'aperçoit qu'à travers les arbres. Dans cet endroit sauvage on se croit au bout du monde, et il inspire, malgré soi, une tristesse dont monsieur de Sénange ne ressenti que trop l'effet, car il dit à Adèle: *Vous devriez ériger ici un tombeau; bientôt il vous ferait souvenir de moi.*[338] (*AS* p.57)

Adèle later does erect Sénangae's tomb, complete with memorial obelisk, in this spot. It is fitting that Sénange's memorial be in the *jardin à l'anglaise* rather than in his *jardin à la française* amongst his beloved trees, because it serves as a constant reminder of his role in liberating his young wife. Engraved on Sénange's tomb are the words: 'Il ne me répond pas, mais peut-être il m'entend' (*AS* p.175). Adèle hopes that Sénange will hear and understand her thanks and her will to honour both his memory and his kindness. The

[338] Original emphasis.

addition of the old aristocrat's tomb permits the creation of a natural deathscape here, which brings with it the advantage of conflating past, present and future in this English-style garden. The characters stand, in the present, gazing down at the reminder of the past generation wilst contemplating the future that Sénange has permitted them. This thus underscores the argument that past and present, old and new, must stand together if a happy future is to be found. According to *Adèle de Sénange* the answer to a problem is never the destruction of one system, or indeed garden, for the foundation of another, but rather gradual change:

> [T]he novel underscores the violence with which the young architects would have superimposed an English style onto a French garden. Souza stresses the fact that, although alterations may be desirable, they need not be so drastic, nor be implemented so quickly.[339]

Ultimately if a happy ending is to be found and joyful emotion celebrated, we must not attempt to seek it through violent passion, reckless abandon, or wilful defiance of the system already in place. Rather, we should go about it calmly, gently and respectfully, for change is to be ushered in slowly if it is to succeed.

Part 4: Conclusion

In 1777 Restif de la Bretonne argued in his essay *Les Gynographes,* subtitled 'pour mettre les femmes à leur place', that a woman should always be the subordinate of her husband:

> Les femmes obéiront en tout à leurs maris, ne prendront jamais que la seconde place et seront sous leur puissance comme un de leurs enfants; toute l'idée d'égalité sera absolument abolie; le père ou le chef sera le souverain de la maison; de sa volonté seule […] dépendra le mariage de ses filles et de ses garçons.[340]

Throughout the Republic and Empire, despite calls for change generated with the Revolution, women continued to experience this lack of freedom both with regard to choosing a marital partner, and within marriage itself. Writing in an age in which an argument such as Restif's was far from exceptional, Cottin and Souza address precisely these feminine issues in their novels, and in order to do so, both writers employ images of natural landscapes, including rigidly tamed landscapes, gently tamed landscapes, and landscapes designed to be as untamed as possible. Nature – to which their sex has long been linked – becomes the mouthpiece for women writers to critique the marital oppression their sex faced within their own lifetimes. Utopian garden idylls are used to

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[339] Pacini, p.12.

[340] Restif de la Bretonne, *Les Gynographes, ou idées de deux honnêtes-femmes sur un projet de reglement proposé à toute l'Europe: pour mettre les femmes à leur place, et opérer le Bonheur des deux sexes; avec des notes historiques et justificatives, suivies des noms des femmes célèbres* (Paris: Gosse & Pinet; Humblot, 1777), p.92.

illustrate the problem of *mariages contrariés*. French- and English-style gardens, juxtaposed with the convent garden, are used to address the problem of *mariages arrangés*.

Both Cottin and Souza depict natural landscapes for which there was a particular vogue or interest at the time they were writing. Presenting a space with which the reader is familiar and whose attributes the reader will understand without explanation, allows the author to enter into a subtle dialogue with the reader, who understands the meanings encoded within that space. In drawing upon the contemporary vogue for utopia, Cottin and Souza achieve the same end as writers such as Mercier or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: they critique French society. They draw our attention to the oppression of women that was prevalent within their contemporary society and to the consequent melancholy of their sex, both of which are seen starkly in contrast to the freedom and happiness of the utopian idyll. As Racault states, no utopia can stand alone. It always stands in binary opposition to the society which it opposes. 'Il faut signaler enfin' continues Racault 'que le texte utopique, loin de trouver sa finalité dans le tableau de la société imaginaire qu'il décrit, a pour vocation de faire retour au réel dans un mouvement de confrontation qui lui donne son sens'.[341] However, Cottin and Souza not only return their characters to the society external to the utopian idyll so that we might be able to compare the two spaces better, they also actively use the values and expectations of the non-utopian space to destroy the very foundations of the utopian idyll itself. In so doing, they move from merely highlighting, to actually dramatising the oppressive and destructive power society has over love-struck women when their love is forbidden. The fact that they have employed tamed nature to present their arguments is also apt: the female protagonists who discover their love in an area of clearly tamed nature will find that they themselves are ultimately 'tamed' and bent to the will of society.

What can a woman do in the face of such a society, if defying it and seeking a space in which she can express her forbidden love will result in her destruction? Souza's earlier novel, *Adèle de Sénange* provides an answer. Drawing on the contemporary opinions of French and English-style gardens, Souza is able to present both a critique of the restrictions of arranged marriages and the hoped-for freedom that the calls for marriage reform might bring. Simultaneously, Souza's sliding scale of restrictive garden space enables us to see how old and new ideas must work together to create a better future in which women may have more choice in marrying for love.

[341] Racault, p.22.

However, Souza leaves her reader with one final thought. Ironically, this novel, through its subtlety, in many ways defies Restif even more than *Émilie et Alphonse* and *Malvina.* According to Stewart, 'In *Les gynographes*, Restif features marriage and motherhood as the biological and moral destiny of every woman […]. In his version of utopia, good girls are rewarded with husbands and bad girls denied them'.[342] Souza, on the other hand, crafts natural spaces within her novel to argue that a woman's search for autonomy and individual rights is more important than any marriage, happy or unhappy.

[342] Stewart, p.11.

CHAPTER 2

Nature and the Woman Writer

> [C]e n'est point sous le rapport littéraire que je prétends juger les *femmes-auteurs*, mais sous le rapport plus intéressant de la morale. Convient-il bien à une femme dont le devoir le plus sacré est d'être épouse fidèle et mère tendre […] de sortir de cette douce obscurité dont son état lui impose la loi, pour livrer son existence tout entière à un public qui après s'être établi juge de ses écrits, a le droit de devenir juge de ses actions?[343]

Part 1: The Situation for Women Writers in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century France

The Republic and Empire saw an increase in the division of societal roles by gender, and French women faced criticism if they desired to quit the domestic sphere for the public one in order to write and publish. The influential status that aristocratic women had formerly held over politics and foreign affairs had been, so the revolutionaries believed, responsible for many failures of the former system: influential noble women 'were held responsible for the supposed 'effeminacy' of the Old Regime and the emasculation of men, who were seen as subject to female whims and political conniving. Female political participation, it followed, was inevitably self-serving and destructive'.[344] It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the new society reserved power and public decisions for men.

The salons, run by aristocratic women, had also previously enabled women to develop influential social and public roles in the Ancien Régime. However, the salons' power diminished in the years following the Revolution, and so too did much of the cultural influence of the women who ran them:

> [L]'influence culturelle que les femmes de la haute bourgeoisie et de l'aristocratie avaient pu exercer aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles, en particulier dans les salons, va être considérablement diminuée, et même parfois va leur être progressivement ôtée. […] La grande période de la culture salonnière française était, il est vrai, en voie de s'éteindre.[345]

There were several reasons for the decline of the salons, of which the desire to unseat women from positions of importance was only one example. The considerable influence of the press and the distribution of newspapers was another major factor,[346] as was the

[343] Anon., 'Variétés', *Journal des Débats*, 24 ventose an VIII [15 mars 1800], De l'imprimerie de Le Normant, p.3.
[344] Foley, pp.2-3.
[345] Bertrand-Jennings, p.14.
[346] Larnac, p.163.

growth of the male-dominated *café-cercles,* which, as the nineteenth century dawned, began to replace the salons. The decline in women's influential status, both at court and in salons, contributed greatly to the lack of equality that women began to face in the late eighteenth century and would continue to face throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth. Landes calls the nascence of feminism itself a response 'to the fall of the politically influential women of the absolutist court and salon of Old Regime France'.[347]

The obsession with the medical distinctions between the sexes which began to take hold of French eighteenth-century scientists, also had a profound influence on defining women's place. According to Nye:

> Between 1770 and 1830, biologists and doctors were engaged in a kind of bio-ethnography, compiling lists of male and female attributes, identifying […] sexually differentiated pathologies, warning of occupational or professional hazards […], or speculating about male and female contributions to procreation. […] The obsession with maleness and femaleness that drove these writers boils down again and again to fertility.[348]

Medical research comprised investigations to determine bone strength, analyse bodily fluids, and compare reproductive systems. The physicians responsible for these investigations, including Roussel, Cabanis and Virey, concluded that woman was categorically what man was not and man was what woman was not. These two opposites could not overlap, nor should their everyday roles interchange, any more than could their physical distinctions.

Roussel believed that women's bone density, muscle tone and pale skin made them more suited to home-making than to exterior pursuits, and that their internal organs and bone structure rendered them ideally suited to bearing children. Women's comparatively weaker frame and mentality were, he argued, not suited to the world of physical or intellectual work. Cabanis drew almost identical conclusions. Such scientific research played a key role in the subordination of women. Yet this subordination was not simply marital. Rather,

> [the] concerns about sexual difference […] are inextricably interwoven with a host of other anxieties that arose out of changes in the social and familial division of labor, in class relations, and in the workplace. Questions such as who voted and had rights, who worked where in the new industrial economy, who did what in the new household economy, were also sorted out according to the newly emergent, biologically sanctioned plan of sexual difference.[349]

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[347] Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.1.
[348] Robert A. Nye, 'Forum: Biology, Sexuality and Morality in Eighteeth-Century France: Introduction', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35:2 (2002), 235-238 (pp.236-237).
[349] Ibid., p.237.

As Foley states, 'biology now became destiny for women'.[350] They were granted no political or juridical rights, and were expected to undertake no role outside of domestic life. Indeed, the Constitution established in 1791 concretised once and for all the differences in men and women's roles: 'It […] distinguished "active citizens" (able to vote and hold office) from "passive citizens". This distinction excluded […] all women from participation in representative government'.[351] Women were aware of the changes which resulted in their subordination. Staël admits: 'depuis la révolution [sic], les hommes ont pensé qu'il était politiquement et moralement utile de réduire les femmes à la plus absurde médiocrité'.[352]

Following the conclusions drawn by such medical research, one major public sphere activity from which women were expected to refrain was writing and publishing. Even the type of education women received was questioned, in order to discourage them from writing. As Hesse explains:

> Based on these new theories, a full-blown assault was launched […] specifically on *women writers* after the French Revolution. And this new mode of argumentation […] went right to the heart of cultural life itself, questioning the capacity of women for moral self-regulation and their suitability for the production of knowledge through reading and writing. Proponents of the new biology advocated a very limited education for women, tailored narrowly to their maternal role.[353]

Women's desire to continue to write and publish, despite expectations that they should not, led to much controversy. The strength of opinion behind the citation from the *Journal des Débats* at the opening of this chapter, indeed the very appearance at all of the debate over women's writing in such a publication in 1800, substantiates this.

One politician who firmly believed in reserving the world of publishing for men was Joseph de Maistre. He writes to his daughter in 1808 that women must not concern themselves with the public world of writing and publishing because they are incapable of creating great works.[354] In Maistre's mind, the only thing women could, and therefore should, excel at was the domestic role of mother and wife. Restif de la Bretonne also stressed how men and women are marked out for different roles in life, and described how their educations should be correspondingly dissimilar. He argued that women's education should be limited, particularly regarding writing: 'A douze accomplis, les filles riches apprendront la danse, la musique et les autres choses d'agrément, ensuite, à lire, et

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[350] Foley, p.4.
[351] Ibid., p.11. (Original parenthesis.)
[352] Mme de Staël, *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales,* 2 vols (Paris: Maradan, 1800), II, 147.
[353] Hesse, p.132. (Original emphasis.)
[354] Joseph de Maistre, *Lettres et opuscules inédits* (Paris: Vaton, 1851), Letter 42 (1808), p.148.

même les langues, mais non à écrire'.[355] Sylvain Maréchal takes this argument further with his 1801 treatise *Projet d'une loi portant défense d'apprendre à lire aux femmes*.[356] Whilst such a law never came into being, its proposal nonetheless testifies to the seriousness of such beliefs.

The situation regarding women's education in fact worsened in the decades between Restif's and Maréchal's arguments. Whilst even as early as 1791, under the Constitutional Monarchy, the post-revolutionary era was subordinating women by denying them citizenship, at least in this year there had been provision for women's education. However:

> 'By 1799 the flow of projects for the organisation of women's education, that had been almost a torrent to le comité de l'instruction publique in 1791, had completely dried up. Convention deputies […] vocally opposed to women having any role outside the home, let alone equal chances in education, had succeeded in having women's societies closed and women excluded from all public debates.[357]

Under the Terror, '[r]adical women like Olympe de Gouges, Pauline Léon and Claire Lacombe had gone to the guillotine or disappeared into hiding, so that voices in support of women's education were very few in number'.[358] It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that women writers such as Staël, Genlis and Cottin often (at least outwardly) presented their chosen career paths as unsuitable for their sex.

Cottin argues that a woman's first duty is to her husband and family, despite the fact that she was a successful female author. In a letter to her sister-in-law Mme Jauge, Cottin confesses:

> Ne croyez pas pourtant, ma sœur, que je sois partisane des femmes auteurs, tant s'en faut… Il me semble que la nature ne donna un cœur si tendre aux femmes, qu'afin de leur faire attacher tout leur bonheur dans les seuls devoirs d'épouse et de mère […]; que s'il est permis à quelques-unes d'exercer leur plume, ce ne peut être que par exception, et lorsque leur situation les dégage de ces devoirs, qui sont comme la vie du reste de leur sexe.[359]

Yet, in the same letter, she states why she feels it necessary to voice this opinion: 'pour m'excuser à vos yeux, je sentais que j'avais besoin de toutes les circonstances qui peuvent me justifier d'avoir [sic] entré dans cette carrière'.[360] Cottin feels that her friends and family will judge her harshly for entering a profession which society reserved for men.

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[355] Restif de la Bretonne, pp.65-66.
[356] Sylvain Maréchal, *Project d'une loi portant défense d'apprendre à lire aux femmes* (Paris: Massé, 1801).
[357] Carpenter, p.51.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Sykes, p.330.
[360] Ibid.

Did she passionately believe women should not write, then, or did she simply feel compelled to justify her career choice?

Whilst many people were disdainful of women writers, some praised female creativity. Chénier, for example, remarked that 'ce sont des femmes qui figurent avec le plus de distinction parmi les romanciers modernes'.[361] Certainly, despite the many arguments maligning the notion of women writing, the number of women's publications increased post-Revolution, according to Hesse. This still does not mean that the number was great, particularly when compared to the number of male writers: 'While the ranks of published female authors doubled during the Revolutionary period, they rose from only two to four per cent of the total'.[362] Nor does it mean that publication was always smooth; as Slama states, for women writers, 'se faire éditer n'est pas facile'.[363]

In such a society, female authors were skilled at depicting the debate around women's writing. Staël's *Corinne* tackles the issue of talented women possessing influence in the public sphere. The eponymous heroine is an actress, writer, poet and singer, who is unable or refuses to conform to the society into which she wishes to marry, because of her chosen career. The heroine of Cottin's *Malvina* also fails to satisfy the society in which she lives because of her desire for education, to read poetry and mythological novels, to take an interest in the workings of the local forge and hospital, and to befriend a female author. The issue of women's writing comes under scrutiny in volume two when Malvina meets this female author, Mistriss Clare, for the first time, and they discuss whether women should write. Genlis' *La Femme auteur* (1806) depicts a woman writer being shunned by society and her family, even when the profits from publication were used to support those in need.

Part 2: Women and Writing as Reflected in Contemporary Views of Britain and Scotland in *Corinne ou l'Italie* and *Malvina*

Cottin and Staël confront women's preoccupations regarding writing and education through engaging with the northern British natural landscapes chosen as the setting for their novels. The reason for these spaces being attributed such importance is twofold. Firstly, contemporary fashion for the region assured its appearance in popular literature. Secondly, Britain is a relevant spatial setting for the discussion of women's writing due

[361] Marie-Joseph de Chénier, *Tableau historique de l'état et des progrès de la littérature française depuis 1789* (Paris: Ledentu, 1817), p.244.
[362] Foley, p.9.
[363] Béatrice Slama, 'Femmes écrivains', in *Misérable et glorieuse, la femme du XIX^e siècle*, ed. by Jean-Paul Aron (Paris: Fayard, 1980), pp.213-243 (p.217).

both to allegorical suitability and to intertextuality. The dichotomous representation of Britain as both ordered and wild mirrors both the restrictions placed on women and the rebelliousness of the women writers who did not yield to them. Furthermore, Scotland's Ossianic literature, frequently referenced in Staël and Cottin's work, included a female bard.

In the early eighteenth century, Voltaire and Montesquieu had admired Britain's stable political organisation,[364] which was thought to be greatly responsible for the seriousness in routine displayed in British society as a whole. According to McManners, '[o]ne inspiration of the Anglomania which became prevalent in French society […] was an admiration of the gravity of the English, assumed to be connected with their solid constitutional arrangements in government.'[365] According to Carboni, Anglomania continued into late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France, with British fashions becoming popular on the continent.[366] Seeing Paris as a declining city, Suard 'compares contemporary Paris to Rome in the late Empire, and sees only England [Britain] and printing as possible instruments of a regeneration that could not have taken place in Rome'.[367] Furthermore, concerning industry and commerce, the British Industrial Revolution was envied; indeed one of the most famous industrial inventions of the period was the brainchild of a Scotsman: James Watt's steam engine. This admiration did not die with the eighteenth century, the early nineteenth still 'saw a steady procession of French visitors to England and Scotland […] most of these visitors were […] savants mainly interested in the state of British society, its industry, science and commerce'.[368] The factors most noted by French visitors to Britain for many years, then, were its stable political organisation and industry, its social order and its structured routine.

The existence of *règles*, *ordre*, and *habitudes* which have become unwritten *règles* regarding society and industry is a recurring leitmotif in *Corinne* and *Malvina*. Staël, for example, notes Oswald's observations of Britain upon returning from Italy:

> Dès qu'il eut mis le pied sur la terre d'Angleterre, il fut frappé de l'ordre et de l'aisance, de la richesse et de l'industrie qui s'offraient à ses regards; les penchants, les habitudes, les goûts nés avec lui se réveillèrent avec plus de force que jamais. (*C* pp.447-448)

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[364] Josephine Grieder, *Anglomania in France 1740-1789: Fact, Fiction and Political Discourse* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1985), p.4.
[365] McManners, p.336.
[366] Carboni, p.75.
[367] Ibid., p.86. (Original parenthesis.) Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard was one of the translators and promoters of the Ossianic poems in France.
[368] Andrew Hook, 'The French Taste for Scottish Literary Romanticism', in *Scotland and France in the Enlightenment,* ed. by Deirdre Dawson and Pierre Morère (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), pp.90-107 (p.103).

We see a similar vision of order when Corinne lives with her stepmother in Britain. The house of M. Maclinson, the fiancé intended for Corinne by her stepmother, possesses a very regulated system: '[I]l y avait tant d'ordre dans sa maison, tout s'y faisait si régulièrement, à la même heure et de la même manière, qu'il était impossible à personne d'y rien changer' (*C* p.374). Aspects of everyday life are forbidden to change, in particular regarding women, who must constantly conform to what is expected, 'prêtes à recommencer le lendemain une vie qui ne différait de celle de la veille que par la date de l'almanach. […] Les femmes vieillissaient en faisant toujours la même chose, en restant toujours à la même place' (*C* pp. 368-369).

Having been unable to cope with the pressure exerted on her by society because of such regulations, Corinne later asks: '[E]st-il vrai que le devoir prescrive à tous les caractères des règles semblables?' (C p.366). This question indicates that Corinne will forever be unable to follow such rules, and will therefore never be suitable marriage material for Oswald in their families' eyes. Corinne is a misfit because she is a female writer and artistic genius, a woman who partakes in activities declared unsuitable for her sex. The contemporary fascination with Britain's order and routine, therefore, becomes an allegory for Staël's own homeland, in which women were relegated to the status of second-class citizens, deemed unfit to involve themselves in the public sphere of writing.

Cottin's *Malvina* depicts the ordered nature of Britain to a similar end: to represent the gender ideologies of her homeland, and the consequent effect on women who did not abide by them. Malvina visits the industries and charitable organisations established by her benefactress Mistriss Birton, and is pleasantly struck by their order and well-kept nature: 'Le lendemain, Malvina, accompagnée de sa cousine et de M. Prior, fut visiter l'infirmerie, l'école et la forge […]. Elle fut assez contente de l'ordre et de la propreté qui régnaient dans les divers établissements' (*M* I:39). However, after seeing how Birton's workers are treated and observing the lacuna between their poverty and Birton's comfortable wealth, the order and rules of Birton's establishments appear less congenial. After questioning Birton's methods of running her establishments, Malvina is told: '[J]usqu'à présent tous les étrangers que j'ai conduits ici ne se sont pas cru le droit de suivre leur penchant, ni de déroger aux règles que j'y ai établies sans avoir commencé par obtenir mon aveu' (*M* I:82). Birton frowns upon Malvina for condescending to make friendly conversation with the workers, for in so doing, she has broken the *règles* of social order. Whilst Malvina is not a woman writer, like Corinne, she deviates repeatedly from

established social rules throughout the novel, promoting women's education and befriending a woman writer. Thus, Malvina is also a misfit.

Any novel delineating the situation of female misfits requires a backdrop composed of a society to which the rebellious women cannot adapt. The stereotypical view of ordered Britain proves a more useful setting to Staël and Cottin than France because Britain has something France does not: the wild Scottish natural scenery and the poetry allied it, which form a striking contrast to ordered civilisation. For the fascination with Britain is not entirely accounted for by the country's order and stability. Hook and Carboni attribute much of the Anglomania in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France to a contemporary taste for Scottish landscape and an admiration of Ossian.[369]

In 1760 the Scottish poet Macpherson published an English translation of what he claimed to be original epic verse by the third-century poet Ossian. Despite controversy over the supposedly apocryphal nature of these poems, the text, *Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language*, was instantly successful. Other works in the same cycle followed: *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763), and many shorter poems. They were translated into French almost immediately:

> Le début de l'ossianisme français est à peu près contemporain de la naissance même de l'Ossian anglais. A peine Macpherson a-t-il publié ses *Fragments* que le *London Chronicle* en donne quelques extraits; le journal tombe sous les yeux de Turgot qui, intéressé par une poésie si nouvelle, envoie deux morceaux traduits, et accompagnés de ses propres réflexions, au *Journal Étranger* (1760).[370]

Several partial translations emerged over the next two decades, with the entire Ossianic cycle appearing in 1777 translated by Le Tourneur. The poems were popular both amongst the general public and the famous names of the day. Diderot, for example, 's'extasie, à son ordinaire, devant les *chansons écossaises* qui lui paraissent l'essence même de la poésie'.[371] Napoleon was such a fervent reader of Ossian that he carried a copy whenever he went into battle.[372] Contemporary women writers also regarded the poetry of Ossian highly: Staël, for example, 'was as much an Ossian enthusiast as her archenemy Napoleon'.[373]

The French public's affinity for Ossian can largely be attributed to the poems' exquisite depictions of nature, coupled with the fact that both the type of landscape and the manner of its description were novel. Scotland became revealed to the French as a

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[369] Carboni, pp.74-89; Hook, pp.90-107.
[370] Van Tieghem, 'Ossian en France', p.78.
[371] Ibid., p.79. (Original emphasis.)
[372] Frank George Healey, *The Literary Culture of Napoleon* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1959), pp.127-130.
[373] Carboni, p.85.

land of wildness and melancholy: 'Macpherson opened a world of stormy mountain scenery, full of the grandeur and terror demanded by the new taste for the Sublime'.[374] The setting of the Ossian canon was in keeping with the fashion promoted by Rousseau in the same decade: the desire to return to nature. Ossian 'offre de parfaits modèles',[375] asserts Van Tieghem. Yet these models are not the utopian Arcadias of a valley, meadow or garden. The Ossianic poems provide a very different return to nature: a return to wilderness, to barren, stormy landscapes, dominated by rugged mountains, bracken, mist and snow, resounding with the howling wind. Thus, the dissemination of the Ossianic poems engendered a vogue for a new type of nature which had not previously featured in French eighteenth-century novels: wild nature.

> La découverte d'Ossian aura également une influence sur le regard porté sur la nature. Si Haller, Rousseau et Sassure avaient mis les paysages alpins à la mode et transformé le jugement du public sur la montagne, Ossian acclimatera en France les mers tempétueuses, le vent, les rochers, les landes de bruyère et le brouillard.[376]

Van Tieghem describes in more detail the particular type of wild countryside in the Ossianic poems that appealed to the French nascent Romantic consciousness:

> Son paysage vague et vide, mais émouvant dans sa solitude et sa mélancolie; le spectacle monotone d'une mer orageuse et sombre, d'un ciel gris que parcourent perpétuellement des nuages, de montagnes désertes que recouvre le brouillard ou qu'un pâle soleil du Nord éclaire tristement; ces bruyères, ces rochers, ces torrents, ces chênes solitaires, ces chevreuils errant sur la mousse; ces tombeaux abandonnés, ces ruines de châteaux et de villes jadis prospères: tout cela était absolument nouveau pour la sensibilité européenne, et pour celle de la France en particulier.[377]

One feature which wild nature evokes, and which is important to bear in mind for *Corinne* and *Malvina,* is a preponderance towards the melancholy. Indeed, for some travellers to Scotland, Ossian transformed their visit, bringing alive the melancholy countryside. Without Ossian, Scottish nature was just not the same:

> *Le Mercure* publie une traduction d'un *Voyage en Ecosse:* l'auteur, qui est une dame, écrit d'Oban, en juin 1810, qu'elle veut croire à l'existence d'Ossian, comme à celle de Guillaume Tell, sans quoi 'les montagnes de la Suisse et celles de l'Ecosse perdront' pour elle 'la moitié de leurs charmes'.[378]

As Scotland increased in popularity with travellers and readers, it also grew in popularity with women writers, who portray the northern countryside because of its relevance to their writing. *Corinne* and *Malvina* are two perfect examples of novels which

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[374] Stafford, p.76.
[375] Van Tieghem, 'Ossian en France', p.83.
[376] Minski, p.82.
[377] Van Tieghem, 'Ossian en France', pp.84-85.
[378] P. Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France,* 2 vols (Paris: Rieder & Cie, 1917), II, 25. Van Tieghem quotes from Mme de Berleps, '12 janvier 1811: Fragment de *Caledonia, ou voyage en Ecosse',* in *Mercure de France*, trans. by A. M. Herdez.

draw on well-recognised features of this wild nature and include direct references to the Ossianic stories in order that their authors might heighten the arguments they contribute to the debate over women's writing. The Ossian cycle was already part of intellectual discussion on women's writing in England because of its employment in the meetings of the Bluestockings and its imitation in the works of writers like Catherine Talbot.[379] The Bluestockings, an English society founded by a feminine intellectual elite, had a particular affinity for Ossian:

> [They] began holding eccentric dinner parties, during which guests 'had the feast of shells and drank out of a nautilus shell to the immortal memory of Ossian.' In honour of Ossian, the recently rediscovered Highland bard, Montagu recreated – down to the unconventional stemware – the ceremonial meals of the Highland warriors described by Ossian's self-proclaimed translator […]. Montagu's feasts are just one example of the Bluestockings' passion for Ossian, a passion that crops up repeatedly in their voluminous correspondence.[380]

Ossian enjoyed reverence amongst female intellectuals because of the poems' lack of bias regarding gender roles:

> In many ways, the Ossian poems provided a template for Bluestocking salons, where both sexes debated issues of literary, social, and political interest. […] With the exception of their military exploits, popular heroines from the Ossian poems such as Malvina and Darthula acted remarkably like these first-generation Bluestockings.[381]

Not only did the Ossianic poems show women participating alongside men in feasting, drinking, politics, military campaigns, and intellectual discussions, but they also displayed open-minded tolerance towards female writers and poets:

> The [Ossianic] poems also provided women writers on the Celtic periphery with a role model of a woman patriot poet who celebrates the history of her nation: the female bard, Malvina. […] She is the addressee of many of Ossian's poems and, more importantly, a bard in her own right and Ossian's poetic heiress until her own premature demise.[382]

A set of epic poems which included tales of a female bard could hardly fail to appeal to women publishing in an age which attempted to forbid them from, or condemn them for doing so.

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[379] Catherine Talbot, 'Imitations of Ossian,' in *The Works of the late Mrs. Catherine Talbot* (London: John Rivington, 1780).
[380] JoEllen DeLucia, '"Far Other Times Are These": The Bluestockings in the Time of Ossian', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 27:1 (2008), 39-62 (p.39).
[381] Ibid., pp.39-40.
[382] Leith Davis, 'Malvina's Daughters: Irish Women Poets and the Sign of the Bard', in *Ireland and Romanticism: Publics, Nations and Scenes of Cultural Production*, ed. by Jim Kelly (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp.141-160 (p.142).

Almost every critic to comment upon the love of Ossian in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France alludes to Staël's *De La Littérature,*[383] and its notion that there exist 'deux littéraires tout à fait distinctes, celle qui vient du Midi et celle qui descend du Nord; celle dont Homère est la première source, celle dont Ossian est l'origine'.[384] Some, albeit few, of these critiques also mention Staël's *Corinne* and Cottin's *Malvina*. However, no analysis exists of both these novels in terms of their trio of common themes: depiction of Scottish nature, reference to Ossian and discussion of women's writing. For centuries French male writers had commented upon and imitated the male dominated works of Homer and other ancient writers, yet:

> Using the Ossian poems as evidence, conjectural historians portrayed the Highlands in the time of Ossian as an idyllic space where relative gender equality led to a refined sociability that eliminated the rough treatment of women found in Homer's ancient Greece.[385]

It is understandable, therefore, that Ossian should represent for French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women writers what, for centuries, Homer had represented for men: a flattering vision of their sex and ambitions, and a revered hero to emulate.

Part 3: The Ossianic landscape and the Woman Writer in Cottin's *Malvina*

Like Cottin, Mistriss Clare, the woman writer in *Malvina,* argues that women should only write when they have neither husband nor children to care for:

> [L]e motif de ma conduite […] tient à un secret si important, que le monde entier, que mon père même l'ignore. […] [P]renez bien garde que je ne permets d'écrire qu'à celles qui se trouvent dans ma situation […]. Les épouses, les mères de famille composent la plus grande partie de notre sexe; l'importance de leurs devoirs ne leur laisse pas le temps de s'occuper des ouvrages de l'imagination. (*M* II:84-90)

Yet, confusion emerges in *Malvina* because only four years after the publication of the first edition, a second was printed in which the chapter incorporating the discussion about women's writing was removed. Had Cottin changed her mind about the reasons given? Had the removal of the heated topic been requested? The answer will perhaps never be entirely clear. However, Cottin's publisher, Maradan, certainly did not demand the chapter's removal. On the contrary, Maradan states in a letter to Cottin: 'Madame, votre ouvrage a eu assez de succès pour me décider d'en faire une 2de édition sans

[383] Carboni; Hook; Van Tieghem, 'Ossian en France'; Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France*; Colin Smethurst, *Chateaubriand's Ossian,* in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), pp.126-142.
[384] Staël, *De la literature*, I, 296-297.
[385] DeLucia, pp.46-47.

changements et corrections'.[386] It seems, then, that removing the chapter was Cottin's own decision. This implies that either she no longer felt it necessary to excuse her writing career, or that she no longer believed the reasons she had proffered. Either way, the only reason remaining in the second edition of *Malvina* regarding Mistriss Clare's decision to write is the 'secret si important'.

Mistriss Clare initially refuses to confess this secret second instance suitable for a woman to publish novels. However, she admits towards the end of the novel that she writes in order to raise money to support her sister Louise (*M* III:57-58). Having been abandoned by Edmond Seymour after bearing his illegitimate child, Louise is left penniless and dying. Mistriss Clare's writing provides Louise and her child with a roof over their heads. Interestingly, this roof is a natural one – 'creusée dans la roche et masquée de verdure'[387] – in the midst of the Scottish wilderness. Bianciardi describes the scene thus: 'la nature, protectrice, prend en charge la jeune femme, rejetée hors de la société',[388] and thus we see Mistriss Clare coupled with nature as they both protect Louise. This linking of the woman writer, nature and shelter recurs throughout the novel.

The notion of a woman justifying her writing through charitable necessity was not unique to Cottin's writing. The protagonist in Genlis's *La Femme Auteur*, sells her work in order to provide funds and security for those who need it:

> L'ouvrage, dès le soir même porté chez l'imprimeur, fut imprimé avec une extrême célérité […]; l'édition entière fut enlevée en moins de douze jours: plusieurs personnes bienfaisantes, sachant à quel usage on en destinait le produit, ne se contentèrent pas de donner le prix fixé; un Russe, entre autres, envoya deux cents louis pour un seul exemplaire. Tout cet argent fut porté chez l'avocat des prisonniers, qui s'était chargé du soin de vendre l'ouvrage. Les quatre mille francs étaient complétés; Natalie, heureuse et triomphante, fut délivrer les prisonniers.[389]

Cottin also wrote to support others, in particular her cousin and closest friend Julie Verdier. After Julie and her husband had separated due to the latter's violence, Julie lived with Cottin, and 'dépendait vraisemblablement des secours que Sophie était heureuse de lui accorder'.[390] The theme of a woman writing in order to provide charity recurs, therefore, both in the lives of authors and those of their protagonists. Perhaps such a selfless reason for entering the public sphere was deemed somewhat more admissible to others, or perhaps simply it appeared more acceptable, indeed flattering, to women writers themselves.

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386 Sykes, p.401.
387 Bianciardi, p.693.
388 Ibid.
389 Mme de Genlis, *La Femme auteur* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p.76.
390 Sykes, pp.33-34. Cf. Call, p.47.

Sykes has argued that the presence of the Scottish landscape in Cottin's *Malvina* is a mere backdrop, of no importance to the story: 'l'Ecosse, […] n'est guère pour [*Malvina*] qu'un pays de montagnes escarpées et sauvages, où l'hiver est d'une rigueur extrême. Les descriptions de paysages sont fort rares et toutes conventionnelles'.[391] Pelckmans believes Ossian no more relevant to the plotline than Scotland: 'La note ossianique […] reste à peine moins incidente que ces allusions à la Révolution ou aux intrigues jacobites'.[392] However, Ossian surfaces at particularly intriguing points within the novel, rendering him far from insignificant. My discussion aligns itself with Van Tieghem's statement that 'L'automne et ses vents lugubres, le paysage des landes écossaises, jouent un grand rôle dans le roman'.[393]

The wildness of the Scottish countryside contrasts starkly with the British order and routine in *Malvina*. The *paysage vague et vide*, the *mer orageuse et sombre*, the *ciel gris*, the *montagnes désertes*, the *nuages, brouillard, rochers, bruyères, torrents,* and *chênes solitaires* described by Van Tieghem resurface throughout Cottin's novel from the opening pages. Numerous features of the landscape, and the adjectives which characterise them, present Scotland as barren, remote, wild and cold to the extreme. To avoid confusion, the lengthier ensuing descriptions will be numbered, as they will be referred to later.

Quotation 1:

> [L]es eaux bleuâtres et transparentes du lac s'étendaient au loin, et les vapeurs qui s'élevaient de son sein ne permettaient pas d'apercevoir ses bornes. Sur un de ses côtés, les montagnes, couvertes d'une forêt de noirs sapins, dont les têtes robustes défieraient la fureur des tempêtes, entrecoupées de profonds ravins, du sein desquels de vastes et impétueux torrents se versaient à grand bruit, faisaient un contraste frappant avec le silence qui habitait les montagnes de l'autre rive; celles-ci, encombrées d'énormes blocs de granit, entassés les uns sur les autres, et sans aucun vestige de végétation, offraient à l'œil attristé l'image du chaos et de la destruction. (*M* I:26)

Images of wildness and fury abound in Cottin's juxtaposition of imposing mountains and rocky ravines, of storms and torrents. The forests do not have a cultivated or fresh *verdure* about them, they are black, and entirely enshroud the mountains. The granite stones and boulders are devoid of any vegetation, impressing upon the reader that attempts to civilise and cultivate this land would be futile. Similar pictures recur throughout *Malvina*. Where plant life does exist, it is just as untamed as the rocks.

Quotation 2:

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[391] Sykes, pp.128-129.
[392] Paul Pelckmans, 'L'Ecosse des Romancières', in *Locus in Fabula: La Topique de l'espace dans les fictions françaises d'Ancien Régime*, ed. by Nathalie Ferrand (Louvain: Editions Peeters, 2004), pp.249-259 (p.251).
[393] Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France*, p.24.

> De hautes montagnes s'élevaient de tous côtés, et la voiture s'enforçait dans une gorge sombre et solitaire. […] [E]lle s'avança vers une roche assez élevée d'où pendaient, en festons et en guirlandes, des touffes de ronces et de plantes sauvages. (*M* III:21-23)

Cottin describes only that which grows wild and free.

Nature's untamed liberty is not only apparent from its features, but also from descriptions of its characteristics. Cottin's use of pathetic fallacy in her portrayal of the *fureur des tempêtes* and the *impétueux torrents* is striking. She imbues the Scottish landscape with the human characteristics and emotions necessary to paint it in a wild, impetuous light.

Quotation 3:

> Effrayée de la violence du vent qui faisait craquer ses croisées elle se levait, regardait le temps, et voyait la neige tomber à gros flocons. Elle se figurait qu'il y en avait au moins deux pieds d'épaisseur sur la terre, et que sir Edmond allait y être englouti: les torrents qui mugissaient au loin, lui semblaient des cris plaintifs, et le sinistre croassement des hiboux, des appellations douloureuses. (*M* I:239)

The savage, dominating, snow covered mountains, wild bracken and brambles, howling winds, storms and barren countryside give anything but an impression of order and stability. Indeed, contrary to the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century notion of taming nature by imposing order on it, here the tempest threatens to destroy mankind and its order, with the howling gale battering the castle, and the snow potentially engulfing Edmond. The unfettered wildness of the landscape is the perfect metaphor for the female misfit who, similarly, struggles against society's rules, and it is therefore ideal for the social outcasts Malvina and her friend Mistriss Clare to inhabit. The condemnation of Mistriss Clare and her profession is obvious from the comments of Malvina's hostess:

> [j]'avais appris depuis peu qu'elle se mêle de faire des livres, et cette nouvelle lui a beaucoup nui dans mon opinion, car il me semble qu'une femme qui se jette dans cette carrière, ne sera jamais qu'une pédante ou un bel-esprit.[394] (*M* II:77)

Malvina also transgresses social boundaries and hierarchies, befriending the wild mountain men who work at the forge, and donating to their families when she is explicitly told to ignore them; she promotes women's reading and education; and she develops a close friendship with a female novelist.

There is another reason why the landscape is a fitting metaphor for the heroines struggling against the enforced rules of society. Eighteenth-century *philosophes* admired

[394] Malvina is at first 'à peu près' in agreement with Mistriss Birton, having been educated in a society which does not approve of women writers (*M* II:77). However, upon meeting Mistriss Clare, Malvina is persuaded by the reasons Mistriss Clare gives for writing (*M* II:85-86).

the political, religious and economic liberty of the English (male) population. (Women did not enjoy the same freedom, and in Britain, as in France, they were expected to remain in the domestic sphere.) Muralt noted in 1725 that 'l'Angleterre est un pays de liberté […]: chacun y est ce qu'il a envie d'être'.[395] As a result of this freedom of expression and action, 'le peuple partage le gouvernement sans confusion',[396] as Voltaire remarked. Britain was ordered and stable partly because of this political liberty and freedom of thought, meaning there was no need for political revolution. This liberty, so admired by the French, was believed to be rooted in the country's landscape and climate:

> French travellers […] often viewed the English melancholy as inextricable from the very civic culture they so admired. Linking the 'melancholic disposition' of the English to the foggy climate, Le Blanc reasoned, 'this same tendency to melancholy prevents their ever being content with their fate, and equally renders them enemies to tranquillity and friends to liberty'. […] Montesqueieu argued in *L'Esprit des lois* (1748) that cold climate led the English […] toward constitutional government.[397]

It is ironic that political liberty contributed to creating the social order that ultimately repressed women by dictating the roles they must fulfil and the rules they must obey. However, it is unsurprising that as a consequence of their own oppression, women should turn back to the wild landscape and climate that promote liberty in order to seek the freedom they desired.

Through use of pathetic fallacy, the landscape also reflects the female misfit's emotional reactions to her situation. In the description of the landscape in Quotation 3, four sounds are repeated in immediate succession, all stemming from the weather, the flora and the fauna, and all suggesting pain and melancholy. The torrents *mugissaient*, a verb which suggests the noise one might make when suffering pain or grief. To confirm this suspicion, we are informed that such howlings resemble *cris plaintifs*. The *sinistre croassement des hiboux* adds to the scene's eerie, wild aura, and yet simultaneously again imbues it with a sense of the inconsolable in its resemblance to *appellations douloureuses*.

The phrase *offraient à l'oeil attristé* in Quotation 1 must be noted too. This phrase also appears as the novel opens: 'les arbres dépouillés de leurs feuilles, et le vaste tapis de neige qui couvrait la terre, offraient à l'œil attristé un austère et monotone tableau' (*M* I:9). It both underlines the image of melancholy, and simultaneously suggests that the natural scenery is particularly moving for those already susceptible to despondent

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[395] Béat de Muralt, *Lettres sur les Anglais et les Français* (Berne: Steiger & Cie; Paris: Librairie Le Soudier, 1897), p.2.
[396] Voltaire, 'Lettres philosophiques', in Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire: avec des remarques et des notes historiques, scientifiques et littéraires* (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1827), I, 71 (Lettre IX).
[397] Eric Gidal, 'Civic Melancholy: English Gloom and French Enlightenment', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 37:1 (2003), 23-45 (p.24).

emotions. The landscape, then, is an appropriate metaphor for the female misfit on account of its ability to display melancholia. The female misfit is doomed always to be melancholy if she must suffer others' condemnation. She is doomed also to be lonely, if society rejects her, and this, too, is echoed in Quotation 2, which describes the solitary nature of the gorges. Throughout the novel, Malvina feels alone, and suffers melancholy as a consequence. Firstly this is due to her friend Clara's death; subsequently it is thanks to her treatment at the hands of Mistriss Birton and the latter's friends when Malvina befriends Mistriss Clare; finally she suffers melancholy loneliness when cast out from society altogether because of her marriage and when her daughter is removed from her.

Metaphor is only one technique employed to draw attention to the wild, melancholy nature of Scotland, to the condition of the female misfit, and to the bond between the two. Attributing a human voice to the landscape means that it can speak not only *for* Malvina, but also *to* her. In other words, a discourse is established between the heroine and her *milieu*; natural space replies to Malvina, empathises with her, comforts her, and provides her with a figurative *asile*.

The landscape reassures Malvina that she is not alone, it experiences the same pressures she does. Furthermore, when Malvina is at her most melancholy and in need of comfort, Ossianic myth becomes a recurring topos. According to Schama, the discourse between the landscape and the individuals who experience it can extend far deeper than the simple influence of one upon the other, or the projection of the sentiments of one onto the appearance of the other:

> [I]t should be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.[398]

Established in the Scottish countryside, the Ossianic myths provide rich descriptions of northern Britain's wild natural scenery. Cottin employs the myths to enhance her use of landscape metaphor. As Schama indicates, the presence of vestiges of mythology builds on and extends the author's use of spatial metaphor, with the result of creating a possibility of spatial transcendence through intertextuality. This enables Cottin to establish new links between Ossian, the wild landscape and the woman writer.

Ossian is first referenced in the opening chapter, as Malvina grieves for Clara. She feels alone in the world, and turns to the Ossianic countryside and the bard himself for solace:

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[398] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p.61.

> Malvina voyait avec une sorte d'intérêt cette antique Calédonie, patrie des Bardes, et qui brille encore de l'éclat du nom d'Ossian. Nourrie de cette lecture, il lui semblait voir la forme de son amie à travers les vapeurs qui l'entouraient: le vent sifflait-il dans la bruyère, c'était son ombre qui s'avançait; écoutait-elle le bruit lointain d'un torrent, elle croyait distinguer les gémissements de sa bien-aimée; son imagination malade était remplie des mêmes fantômes qui habitaient jadis le pays qu'elle traversait; son nom même, ce nom porté jadis par la fille d'Ossian, lui semblait un nouveau droit aux prodiges qu'elle espérait. […] [D]ans ce moment sa douleur seule l'égarait. (*M* I:12-13)

Malvina shares the name of Ossian's daughter-in-law, and draws comfort from this, feeling as though the landscape of Ossian understands her and her melancholia better because of it.[399] Moreover, Cottin's choice to name her female protagonist Malvina permits the spatio-temporal gap between the narrative world of Cottin's novel and the mythical world of Ossian to be bridged, bringing them closer together. Cottin's ability to 'muddle the categories' in Schama's words, is further confirmed through comparison of the descriptions in *Malvina* with a passage from the Ossianic cycle itself, for there are striking resemblances. Cottin's Malvina is lamenting the death of her friend, when she imagines Clara's ghostly figure advancing through the mists, as the wind blows through the heather. One of Macpherson's poems, coincidentally entitled *Malvina's Dream*, depicts Malvina lamenting her husband's death. This Malvina, too, imagines her loved one's spectral form advancing through the wind and mist. The following quotation is taken from Le Tourneur's translation of Ossian, the edition most readily available to, and most likely to have been read by Cottin: 'O vents, pourquoi avez-vous quitté les flots du lac? Vos ailes ont agité la cime de ces arbres, et le bruit a fait évanouir la vision. Mais Malvina a vu son amant; sa robe aérienne flottait sur les vents'.[400] The Ossianic Malvina shares emotions identical to those of her French literary namesake, and thus the Ossianic myths are able to make Cottin's Malvina feel less alone.

Ossian appears a second time in Cottin's novel when Malvina is particularly troubled. Malvina feels guilty at distracting Edmond from his supposed fiancée, and worried about accusations of debauchery laid at his door. These concerns are compounded by feelings which she, herself, has for Edmond. Malvina thus proposes a walk in the Ossianic landscape to distract and comfort herself:

> Malvina rougit: la dernière phrase de M. Prior l'avait mise mal à son aise; […] elle se leva […] et retournant à la fenêtre: Monsieur Prior, dit-elle, je crois que, malgré

[399] Macpherson's Malvina is not the daughter of Ossian as Cottin states, but his daughter-in-law.
[400] James Macpherson, *Ossian, Fils de Fingal, Barde du troisième siècle: Poésies galliques,* trans. M. Le Tourneur, 2 vols (Paris: Musier, 1777), II, 155.

> l'excessive rigueur du froid, le soleil est si brillant, qu'il ferait beau au bord du lac; je n'y ai point été encore, et j'ai envie d'y hasarder une petite promenade. (*M* I:222)

On this walk, the landscape that she and the castle's other inhabitants traverse is so very Ossian-like that M. Prior is prompted to quote from one of Macpherson's poems, *Carthon:*

> Les arbres et les rochers, hérissés de glaçons et frappés par les rayons du soleil, brillaient des plus vives couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel; la neige qui couvrait le haut des montagnes, scintillait de feux éclatants, de sorte que les yeux étaient réellement éblouis de l'aspect de la campagne. En admirant les superbes effets de l'astre qui nous éclaire, s'écria monsieur Prior, en les admirant surtout dans ces montagnes, qui ne respectera pas, avec moi, cette sublime invocation dont Ossian les fit retentir jadis?
>
> 'O toi! qui roules au-dessus de nos têtes, rond comme le bouclier de nos pères, d'où partent tes rayons? O soleil! d'où vient ta lumière éternelle? […] Tu te meus seul, ô soleil! […] Tu te réjouis sans cesse dans ta carrière éclatante: lorsque le monde est obscurci par les orages, lorsque le tonnerre roule et que l'éclaire vole, tu sors de la nue dans toute ta beauté, et tu ris de la tempête.' (*M* I:224-226)

Thanks to the references to light and sunshine, the natural landscape becomes imbued with the happiness and security that we associate with light. Just as Malvina perceived through the window that the sun which brightened the day would cheer her mood, so too does Ossian write of the sun gracing the darkest hours. The sun of the Scottish landscape and that of the Ossian poem itself brightens Malvina. Again, the transcendence through space and time to the landscape of myth, permitted by intertextual references provides the female misfit with solace.

The reader familiar with Macpherson's poems will note a further link between Cottin's Ossianic landscape and the provision of comfort and shelter. *Malvina*'s natural scenery echoes very precisely one particular poem in the Ossian cycle, *The Six Bards*. This poem, translated into French as *Scène d'une nuit d'octobre dans le nord de l'Ecosse*, recounts the five bards who arrive at the chief's home, seeking shelter on a bitter and unforgiving night. There are uncanny similarities between Macpherson's and Cottin's descriptions of the landscape:

> J'entends le bruit sourd et confus des vents dans la forêt lointaine; le torrent solitaire murmure tristement, au fond du vallon; la chouette glapissante crie au haut de l'arbre qui est auprès de la tombe des morts. […] [D]eux torrents qui descendent de la montagne, se choquent et se mêlent en mugissant. […] Le vent continue de mugir dans les creux des montagnes, et de siffler dans le gazon des rochers. […] Écoutez comme la grêle tombe; des flocons de neige descendant en silence des nues: la cime des monts blanchit.[401]

[401] Ibid., I, 303-306.

The repeated references to the wind, the torrents, the howling, the mountains and the snow, all recall the characteristics of the wild landscape in Cottin's descriptions in Quotations 1-3. Even the endowing of the scenery with human voices and emotions is echoed: Macpherson's torrents murmur sadly, and the torrents howl and moan as if with pain or anger. Furthermore, the very theme of Macpherson's poem is the search for shelter. Each voice in the poem seeks shelter: the refrain *recevez-moi, sauvez-moi de cette nuit!* resurfaces three times. Cottin's novel echoes the Ossianic poem in which shelter is most notably sought, and her use of Ossianic space and myth in her own work provides her heroine with consolation and shelter when she most needs it.

According to Juvan, 'intertextuality […] remains one of the most powerful means of spatial transgression'.[402] Cottin evokes the extratextual time-space of Ossian and superimposes it onto Malvina's story, thus transgressing spatio-temporal boundaries and establishing a closer relationship between the landscape in her novel, the mythical aspects inherent within that landscape, and the female misfit. Juvan also asserts that '[t]he interplay of spaces and discourses constitutes identities and social relations'.[403] Toying with the boundaries of novelistic space, Cottin establishes discourse between the female misfit and Ossianic Scotland, which consequently helps both the reader and the misfit herself to discover the latter's characteristics and emotions. Through identification with the landscape, Malvina discovers her true self, in contradiction to, rather than in harmony with societal norms.

Yet how is this focus on Ossian and comfort linked with the woman writer? As we have seen, one of the few circumstances in which Cottin advocated women writing was in order to provide charitable assistance or shelter for others. It is no surprise then, that in *Malvina*, an Ossianic landscape is not the only thing to provide Malvina with comfort and shelter. Mistriss Clare reappears throughout the novel as a figure perpetually associated with this type of assistance. Her name often appears in conjunction with the word *asile*: 'je n'ai, dans ce moment, aucun autre asile que la maison de mistriss Clare' (*M* II:205). A bond is thus created between the woman writer and Ossian, owing to the similar roles that the two assume. Malvina approaches Mistriss Clare several times when in need of help. When she is thrown out of Birton's estate and made homeless for declaring her wish to marry Edmond, she turns to Mistriss Clare: 'je n'avais pas le choix

[402] Marko Juvan, 'Spaces of Intertextuality / The Intertextuality of Space', *SDPK,* (2004). Special Issue in English: 'Literature and Space. Spaces of Transgressiveness', <http://sdpk.zrc-sazu.si/PKrevija/2004-Literature&Space.htm#Marko%20Juvan> [accessed 29 May 2012] (article 7 of 12).
[403] Marko Juvan, 'Spaces, Transgressions and Intertextuality', in *Text and Reality,* ed. by Jeff Bernard, Jurij Fikfak and Peter Grzybek (Ljublijana: ZRC Publishing, 2005), pp.43-54 (p.43).

des asiles, et dans la position où je me trouvais, celui que vous m'aviez si obligeamment offert était le seul qui me restât' (*M* II:244-245). When Malvina receives a letter from Fanny's father stating his intention to remove Fanny from Malvina's care, Mistriss Clare provides a shoulder to cry on: 'son courage s'abattit, et fléchissant sous le poids de la douleur, elle tomba sans connaissance entre les bras de Mistriss Clare' (*M* II:259).

Perhaps the most significant time at which Malvina turns to Mistriss Clare occurs as she is dying. She entrusts Fanny to the woman writer, asking her to raise her and care for her:

> Mistriss Clare, que son éducation vous soit confiée; ce devait être l'emploi de ma vie, il m'était bien doux; je n'ai rien de plus précieux à vous laisser pour tout le bien que vous m'avez fait. (*M* IV:232)

The significance of this request lies in the fact that Malvina entrusts both her future world (her adopted child and thus beloved next generation) and also her future voice (the instruction of Fanny) to the woman writer. In the Ossian myths, the bard himself similarly entrusts his own future voice and purpose – singing of the history of his homeland – to Malvina, the female bard. According to Davis, Malvina is Ossian's poetic 'heiress': 'Ossian calls to Malvina: 'Bring me the harp, O maid, that I may touch it when the light of my soul shall arise – Be thou near, to learn the song; and future times shall hear of Ossian".[404] Both the Malvina of the Ossian tales (the female bard) and the 'female bard' of Cottin's novel, Mistriss Clare, hold the future in their hands. Cottin has ensured that her readers are aware of Malvina's name linking her to Ossian's daughter-in-law, and thus she creates a crucial succession: Ossian bequeaths his future to his daughter-in-law, Malvina. Now, Malvina (this time Cottin's Malvina) commits her future to a woman writer: her friend Mistriss Clare. In giving her protagonist the name of Ossian's daughter-in-law, Cottin ensures that oral and written mythic past and tradition, comfort and safety, women's education, and the future are all passed on to women writers. Cottin takes Ossian's legacy (which he himself left with a female bard) and leaves it in the hands of her contemporary female writers, thereby making a strong statement about the importance and power of women's writing.

Further reference is made to Ossian when Birton informs her company that she does not see a reason why women should care, or need, to read. When Malvina requests to borrow a book, she asserts: 'mon usage n'est pas de prêter mes livres aux femmes, qui ordinairement n'en ont aucun soin' (*M* I:55). Birton belongs to a society which

[404] Davis, pp.141-160 (142). Davis quotes from James Macpherson, *Works of Ossian, Son of Fingal*, 2 vols (London: T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt, 1765), I, 147.

condemns women's education and writing. Consequently, she herself does not wish to encourage the education of her sex by lending her books to women. Following this remark, M. Prior, the curate, inquires about Malvina's own reading habits, and in particular whether she is familiar with Ossian. The answer is yes. Following hard on the heels of the condemnation of women's education is the confirmation that Cottin's misfit heroine is well educated and enjoys reading Ossian, the poet associated with female Bluestocking intellectuals and whose poems feature female bards. Nothing could provide starker contrast to Birton's remark.

It is unsurprising that Mistriss Clare supports her sister and Malvina: she is an intelligent and generous woman. However, it might appear odd that asylum should be found in a wild landscape, and that this landscape should consequently reflect the shelter-providing woman writer herself, especially when we have seen it rattle the castle windows and threaten to bury Edmond in snow. However, consideration of point of view sheds light on the argument, and it is here that we begin to see the creation of an implied reader. The landscape is certainly wild and threatening, but only to those who refuse to contemplate it. For those who are willing to gaze upon it and to explore Macpherson's text, the landscape is sublimely beautiful, and does indeed provide shelter. Whilst Malvina enjoys gazing out of her bedroom window at the scenery, Birton refuses to do so, stating: 'Croyez-moi, il vaut mieux regarder le beau ciel de France et d'Italie en peinture, que celui d'Ecosse en réalité' (*M* I:27). It is therefore Malvina who perceives the comfort to be gained from the landscape, and who is able to hear the melancholy in its voice, and discern its empathy. Birton, on the other hand, voluntarily blinds herself to the landscape, and so the torrents and storms threateningly rattle the casements of her castle.

Society further proves its voluntary blindness in the novel by exhibiting a denial to read the poetry of Ossian. Malvina seems truly capable of appreciating the Ossianic poems, because she makes the effort to comprehend the 'original' language. Upon being offered lessons in Erse, 'Malvina accepta cette proposition avec grand plaisir' (*M* I:70). Birton at first reluctantly also agrees to attend the lessons, but never does. Birton's friend, Kitty Melmor, is even more disparaging of Ossian, actively deriding him. On observing M. Prior with a copy of his own translation, she rudely demands: 'Ah! fi! […] comment avez-vous eu le courage d'écrire toutes ces tristes psalmodies?' (*M* I:66-67). She even boorishly interrupts his reply:

> Ne craignez-vous pas?... – Que l'esprit des collines, monté sur un coursier de vapeurs, ne me transperce de sa lance de brouillard? interrompit miss Melmor en

> ricanant. Non, en vérité; et quand le soir viendra, que le vent sifflera dans la forêt, que les météores s'élèveront du sein du lac, et que les dogues hurleront dans la basse-cour, ce ne sera pas de la colère d'Ossian dont je serai effrayée. (*M* I:67-68)

Cottin implies here that only those who fully understand Ossian and who hear him speaking to them through the landscape, can also understand the natural countryside itself, and find solace in it. For both Birton and Melmor the landscape will always be wild and threatening. They represent the social order against which the landscape and the female misfit, struggle to rebel. Thus they are incapable of viewing such rebellion as anything other than misbehaviour which must be repressed, whether this be by replacing the views out of the window with paintings of calmer, more socially acceptable views of France and Italy, by refusing to read Ossian, or by insisting that the female misfit conform to societal norms.

Intertextual references therefore create an implied reader in *Malvina,* making apparent the importance of understanding these references. Kitty Melmor and Mistriss Birton are ignorant of the Ossian poems, a situation against which Cottin clearly warns her reader. In so doing, she implies that the reader familiar with Ossian will comprehend allusions within her text that do not appear at first sight. Cottin confirms this with statements made by Mistriss Birton and Kitty Melmor themselves:

> Miss Kitty, lui dit mistriss Birton avec un peu de hauteur, pour se mêler de juger un pareil ouvrage, il faut être en état d'en sentir les beautés, et en avoir lu plus de quelques pages, avant de se hasarder d'en parler. (*M* I:68)

There is irony in Mistriss Birton's retort. Although she is of course correct, she too has not read Ossian: 'En ce cas, dit Miss Melmor tout bas, en se penchant vers l'oreille de Malvina, elle ferait bien de n'en rien dire' (*M* I:68). If you do not know Ossian, Cottin appears to say, you do not know my novel, and nor do you understand the arguments I contribute to the debate over the woman writer.

Part 4: The Foundation of 'True Liberty' and the Importance of Women's Writing and Education in Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie*

According to Foley:

> *Corinne* was controversial at the time […] because it dealt with the question of female talent and ambition. The heroine Corinne was a woman who challenged social norms and chose life as an author over marriage. […] [The] plot raised questions about women's lives which daughters of the bourgeoisie were advised not to ask.[405]

[405] Foley, p.35.

As a female genius, Corinne is destined to endure the condemnation of others. Her alternate emotional states of suffering and happiness are reflected and inflected by the natural landscapes which surround her.

Corinne's mother was Italian, and her father British, but her true love is for her mother's homeland. When in Italy, she feels that, although she is different, she is loved and respected. The warmth of her reception is mirrored in that of the climate, as the male protagonist, Oswald, notes:

> Un soleil éclatant, un soleil d'Italie frappa ses [Oswald's] premiers regards, et son âme fut pénétrée d'un sentiment d'amour et de reconnaissance pour le ciel qui semblait se manifester par ces beaux rayons. […] [O]n devait couronner le matin même, au Capitole, la femme la plus célèbre de l'Italie, Corinne, poète, écrivain, improvisatrice, et l'une des plus belles personnes de Rome. (*C* p.49)

Although her life does not conform to a woman's expected role, Corinne is happy in Italy. Italian nature encourages the woman writer's genius: her talents flourish in the warmth of the sun. Her situation is very different, however, in her adolescence, spent in England with her father's new wife, Lady Edgermond, and her half sister Lucile. Here a woman's talent is not celebrated. Lady Edgermond argues:

> Il y a des actrices, des musiciens, des artistes enfin pour amuser le monde; mais pour des femmes de notre rang, la seule destinée convenable, c'est de se consacrer à son époux et de bien élever ses enfants […] [C]e pays lui est odieux; [Corinne] ne peut se plier à nos mœurs, à notre vie sévère. (*C* pp. 458-461)

She thus confirms Corinne's status as a misfit for choosing authorship over domestic duties. The descriptions of British order in *Corinne* are similar to those in *Malvina*. Corinne notices the routine and rules of the society to which she is expected to adhere, and remarks: 'l'existence des femmes dans le coin isolé de la terre que j'habitais, était bien insipide' (*C* p.370). The situation for talented women in Britain, therefore, is very different from that in Italy:

> Il y a dans les plus petites villes d'Italie un théâtre, de la musique, des improvisateurs, beaucoup d'enthousiasme pour la poésie et les arts, un beau soleil; enfin, on y sent qu'on vit; mais je l'oubliais tout-à-fait dans la province que j'habitais, et j'aurais pu, ce me semble, envoyer à ma place une poupée légèrement perfectionnée par la mécanique; elle aurait très bien rempli mon emploi dans la société. (*C* p.369)

Corinne explains how a woman who possessed any genius or desire for education soon had it eliminated from her in Britain:

> Il y en avait quelques-unes qui, par la nature et la réflexion, avaient développé leur esprit, et j'avais découvert quelques accents, quelques regards, quelques mots dits à voix basse, qui sortaient de la ligne commune; mais la petite opinion du petit pays, toute-puissante dans son petit cercle, étouffait entièrement ces germes: on aurait eu

> l'air d'une mauvaise tête, d'une femme de vertu douteuse, si l'on s'était livré à parler, à se montrer de quelque manière. (*C* p.370)

The order of British society is not only not conducive to women's writing, it actively discourages it, stifling talented women with its cold reception. In this way, Staël, like Cottin, uses British society within her novel to represent her own nation. The order and regulations stereotypically attached to British society provide the perfect setting against which Staël can situate the story of a talented heroine wishing to break away from such misogynistic oppression.

It is not only the British people and society that are cold, but also the natural landscape and climate. The features of the wild landscape in themselves are similar to Cottin's. The pines enshroud the mountains in *Corinne* as in *Malvina:* 'les sapins couvraient les montagnes toute l'année, comme un noir vêtement' (*C* p.378). Unlike the scenery in *Malvina*, however, the wild natural landscape in *Corinne* does not comfort the female misfit. The landscape is predominantly bleak, dismal and damp, features which are absorbed by the heroine: 'Le temps était humide et froid; je ne pouvais presque jamais sortir sans éprouver une sensation douloureuse' (*C* p.367).

Corinne continually compares the frigid and depressing atmosphere of the British natural landscape with the warmth of that in Italy:

> Chaque jour j'errais dans la campagne, où j'avais coutume d'entendre le soir, en Italie, des airs harmonieux chantés avec des voix si justes, et les cris des corbeaux retentissaient seuls dans les nuages. Le soleil si beau, l'air si suave de mon pays était remplacé par les brouillards; les fruits mûrissaient à peine, je ne voyais point de vignes, les fleurs croissaient languissamment à long intervalle l'une de l'autre. (*C* p.378)

The contrast between the two landscapes is highlighted in both vocabulary and sentence structure. It is unclear whether the Italian nature referred to here is tamed or untamed, however what is certain is that whilst flora and fauna flourish in Italy, fruits, vines and flowers hardly appear in Britain: Britain's is a landscape that, in Corinne's opinion, cannot be tamed. In fact, the British landscape in Staël's novel 'est d'abord et avant tout un paysage sombre'.[406] This is very different from Cottin's novel, where the sun shone brilliantly on Malvina's walk around the lake, and in which the sun of the Ossian poems was quoted.

When Malvina contemplates the British countryside she is at peace with her differences from society. In *Corinne*, instead of mirroring the situation and characteristics of the female misfit, Staël's portrayal of the northern British landscape heightens the

[406] Pelckmans, p.255.

protagonist's impression that she does not belong. Thus, whilst the landscape of Staël's novel certainly takes on a melancholic aspect, like the landscape in *Malvina*, in this case the melancholy it provides is neither comforting nor cathartic. Instead, northern Britain provides a depressing melancholy for Corinne. To compound matters, the further north one travels, the more acute the effect of this melancholy gloom: 'Je m'avançais vers le nord; sensation triste et sombre que j'éprouvais, sans en concevoir bien clairement la cause' (*C* p.362).

Most painful of all for Corinne is the fact that the more depressed she becomes because of this landscape, the more she begins to feel her talent dissipate: '[C]e qui m'affligeait davantage encore, je sentais mon talent se refroidir' (*C* p.371). Just as she is stifled by society, so too is her talent. Rather than echoing the female misfit's situation, by displaying wildness in the face of order, the northern natural landscape in *Corinne* exacerbates it. Nature surrounds her with a cold and unforgiving *milieu*, increases her state of depression, and thus illustrates more clearly for the reader the problems and emotions confronted by women writers of genius. The wilds of the north are as hostile as the people in their attack on her, as Corinne herself notes, 'il y avait dans la nature quelque chose d'hostile' (*C* p.367).

On first reading, the northern landscape in *Malvina* and *Corinne* appears to be employed to different ends. However, the full picture is not this simple, for two reasons. The negative presentation of Britain and the positive presentation of Italy in *Corinne* do not match Staël's original intentions when she first conceived the novel. Nor do they correspond to Staël's presentation of this landscape and its myths elsewhere in her work. Firstly, reconsidering Staël's original intentions for *Corinne* will help us to understand a closer link between the woman writer and the provision of assistance and asylum to the less fortunate, as we see in Cottin's *Malvina*. Secondly, reconsidering *Corinne* alongside Staël's philosophical writing will enable us to form more concrete conclusions about Staël's opinions on how true freedom for a nation can be achieved with the help of the wild northern landscape and Ossian. It will also help us see how women's education is fundamental to the creation of true freedom in Staël's opinion. To achieve these aims, I will examine Bruin's re-interpretation of the novel alongside my own analysis of the novel's depiction of the Ossianic myths and landscape.[407] This will return us to the

[407] Karen de Bruin, 'Melancholy in the Pursuit of Happiness: *Corinne* and the *Femme Supérieure*', in *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society and the Sister Arts,* ed. by Tili Boon Cuillé and Karyna Szmurlo, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013), pp.75-94.

notion of the woman writer holding the voice of the future that Cottin developed in *Malvina*.

On travelling to Italy, Staël noted it to be a country lacking political freedom, whose repressed people suffered under a corrupt and ineffectual government. She viewed the French situation similarly: suffering under the oppression of Napoleon. It was in fact Staël's intention with *Corinne* to compare this negative critique of Italy with the positive aspects that she admired about Britain. Indeed, these negative views creep into *Corinne* throughout the plot. When Oswald returns to Britain he admires the political freedom of his fellow Englishman and the consequent stability of his homeland, whereas he 'pensait à l'Italie pour la plaindre. […] [E]n Italie les institutions et l'état social ne rappelaient, à beaucoup d'égards, que la confusion, la faiblesse et l'ignorance' (*C* p.447). Staël's view of Britain corresponds largely with Oswald's: Staël 'creates a hierarchy of the freest and happiest nations and epochs. In this hierarchy, contemporary England, its regime of political liberty, and its melancholic people rank as superior'.[408] Staël, then, adheres to the views of the Enlightenment thinkers: that, in general, a society of greater political freedom existed in Britain than anywhere else in Europe.

Despite this, when *Corinne* appeared in 1807, the overall impression of Italy and its landscape was positive. This is because Staël's publisher, Nicolle, refused to print the book if the portrayal of Italy was critical. Staël asked her publisher to advance her 20,000 francs in return for the promise of a four-volume manuscript about Italy. Nicolle agreed on account of Staël's bestselling reputation, though later when he realised he knew nothing about the argument of Staël's intended book, he approached her to ask: 'Un mot encore, je vous prie, madame la baronne. J'ai omis de vous demander si le nouveau roman que vous allez me livrer est *pour* ou *contre* l'Italie?'.[409] Staël's reply was clear:

> Contre, Monsieur, contre. Après avoir rendu au beau ciel de l'Italie la justice qui lui est due, après avoir parlé des belles collections de peinture et de sculpture qu'elle possède, indiqué les ruines majestueuses dont tout le monde a parlé, que voulez-vous qu'on dise *pour* l'Italie, ce pays sans mœurs, sans gouvernement, sans police, ce pays où il n'y a plus d'énergie que parmi les brigands qui infestent les grandes routes, où l'esprit de conversation est borné comme la loge au théâtre dans laquelle la société italienne fait et rend ses visites? […] Oui, que dire *pour* un tel pays, Monsieur?[410]

[408] Ibid., p.75.
[409] Ferdinand de Cornot, Baron de Cussy, *Souvenirs du chevalier de Cussy, garde du corps, diplomate et consul général, 1795-1866,* publiés par Le Cte Marc de Germiny, 2 vols (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1909), II, 186. (Original emphasis.)
[410] Ibid., p.186. (Original emphasis.)

Nicolle was horrified, and turned down Staël's manuscript: 'Mais alors, madame la baronne, si votre ouvrage est *contre*, j'ai le regret de vous avouer que je ne puis me charger de le publier'.[411] He had only recently published Creuzé de Lessert's *Voyage en Italie et en Sicile,* which also presented a negative view of Italy, and consequently was not comfortable publishing a second criticism so soon afterwards. He feared this would affect his business, and so informed Staël: 'Il faudrait, madame, que le vôtre fût pour'.[412]

Staël's desperate reaction – 'Mais, monsieur, j'ai besoin de mes 20 000 francs' – is very revealing, for she had specific plans for the money: 'elle avait promis, pour un hôpital qu'on devait élever aux environs de Coppet, une somme de 20 000 francs'.[413] She intended to use the profits to provide financial assistance and physical shelter for those less fortunate. It is this which provokes the radical alteration in her manuscript:

> En échange des 20 000 francs que vous me remettrez, je m'engage à vous livrer, dans les trois mois, le manuscrit de l'ouvrage en quatre volumes que je vais écrire… Et, *puisqu'il le faut*, l'ouvrage sera *pour* et s'appellera *Corinne.*[414]

Staël has more in common with Cottin, then, than it first appears. Cottin presents the woman writer as a provider of aid and shelter, and links her inextricably with the landscape and myths of northern Britain, which also provide Malvina with these much needed comforts. Staël sacrifices the argument she originally intended to make with her book in order that she might use the profits from her writing to provide that same assistance and asylum to those in need. It is somewhat ironic that, in order to do this, her depiction of a landscape which elsewhere is associated with the very provision of aid and shelter had to suffer. For Staël to present an even greater positive, warm atmosphere and landscape in Italy, her depiction of Britain had to provide contrast, and so we lose all sense of the wild north providing comfort to the female misfit. Whilst it is unsurprising to see British aristocratic society in *Corinne* (for example Lady Edgermond, M. Maclinson and Oswald's father) arguing that women should not write (this is after all the same argument we see with Mistriss Birton and Kitty Melmor in *Malvina*), it is definitely odd to see Staël presenting the landscape of northern Britain as a space which stifled artistic talent. She had certainly not presented it as such in *De la littérature*. Knowing the story behind the publication, however, we might reasonably believe that, were we to see the work Staël originally intended, the British landscape might not be presented in this way at all. Analysis of *De la littérature*, along with a reconsideration of Ossianic passages from

411 Ibid., p.187. (Original emphasis.)
412 Ibid., p.187.
413 Ibid., p.186.
414 Ibid., p.187. (Original ellipsis and emphasis.)

Corinne, indicates that she would have portrayed a landscape similar to that in Cottin's novel.

In her treatise *De la littérature,* northern Britain and the Ossianic cycle are connected with melancholy in the same positive, soothing way as in *Malvina.* Staël encourages melancholic emotion in her readers, arguing that the melancholy inspired by wild northern landscapes influences creativity: 'La mélancolie, ce sentiment fécond en ouvrages de génie, semble appartenir presqu'exclusivement aux climats du nord'.[415] If melancholy does indeed, as Staël argues, inspire artistic production, and if *Corinne* had been permitted to echo *De la littérature,* we might have seen the wild northern landscape mirroring the rebellious nature of Corinne, comforting her when society oppressed her, and allowing her to explore her literary talent further.

In *De la littérature,* Staël also discusses how political liberty can be achieved for a nation, and, particularly, how emulating the north can promote this freedom in France. She believed three major aspects were required to attain political liberty: a melancholic disposition; virtuous, self-sacrificing duty towards civic service (the duty expected of you by and for society); and artistic and poetic talent. These three aspects, and their links to wild natural landscapes are crucial to an analysis of Staël's presentation of Ossian in *Corinne,* and to the arguments she makes regarding women's writing and education.

Firstly, the melancholic disposition of the British leads to their political liberty:

> On se demande pourquoi les Anglais qui sont heureux par leur gouvernement et par leurs mœurs, ont une imagination beaucoup plus mélancolique que ne l'était celle des Français? C'est que la liberté et la vertu, ces deux grands résultats de la raison humaine, exigent de la méditation: et la méditation conduit nécessairement à des objets sérieux.[416]

The melancholy which begets this political liberty is rooted in the climate and landscape of the island in exactly the same way as is artistic production:

> Les peuples du nord sont moins occupés des plaisirs que de la douleur; et leur imagination n'en est que plus féconde. Le spectacle de la nature agit fortement sur eux; elle agit, comme elle se montre dans leurs climats, toujours sombre et nébuleuse. Sans doute les diverses circonstances de la vie peuvent varier cette disposition à la mélancolie; mais elle porte seule l'empreinte de l'esprit national.[417]

The second requirement for political liberty is the dedication of oneself to the duty of civil service. Staël argues: 'le pénible et continuel dévouement des emplois civils et des vertus législatives, le sacrifice désintéressé de toute sa via à la chose publique,

[415] Staël, *De la littérature,* I, 294.
[416] Ibid., I, 368.
[417] Ibid., I, 301.

n'appartient qu'à la passion profonde de la liberté'.[418] This, like reflection on serious subjects, is inspired by melancholy: '*civic melancholy* […] remov[es] the individual from vain aspirations and luxurious self-indulgence while simultaneously promoting civic ideals and public engagement'.[419] This argument is reiterated in *Corinne* by Oswald, who, in his descriptions of the origins of British political liberty, couples melancholy with the same virtue and duty towards society. According to Bruin:

> Suggesting that England has succeeded, at least politically, in founding its society upon the universal values of liberty and equality, Oswald cannot overcome his disdain for the lack of gravity and philosophy in Italy. He remains convinced that the English are more virtuous than the Italians because they are more attached to the 'cult of sorrow,' a cult that defines virtue as the resignation of the pain-filled soul to public service.[420]

Finally, because melancholic dispositions naturally beget both artistic talent and the civic duty required for political liberty, and because all three of these aspects flourish in a northern climate and landscape, according to Staël, '[l]a poésie du nord convient beaucoup plus que celle du midi à l'esprit d'un peuple libre'.[421] Even northern poetry itself is therefore suited to the production of political liberty.

However, British liberty was not all-encompassing: whilst Staël admired the political liberty, she recognised the significant lack of social liberty, particularly for women. This lack comes through strongly in *Corinne,* whose eponymous heroine is stifled by British society's objection to her work as a woman writer-performer. Bruin argues that in *Corinne* Staël brings two types of liberty together, therefore, in the two protagonists from their opposing countries: Oswald represents the political liberty and yet also the social rigidity of Britain, and Corinne represents the social freedom and political bondage of Italy. Corinne remarks upon this difference, stating that Italy 'n'est sûrement pas un pays où la liberté subsiste telle que vous l'entendez en Angleterre; mais on y jouit d'une parfaite indépendance sociale' (*C* p.152). She sees this social independence as crucial for women's rights, since without it she could do neither the writing nor the performing she loves. As far as Oswald is concerned, however, duty and civic virtue is more important than social liberty. According to Bruin,

> any society that would give as much social independence to women would be antithetical to a society in which real political freedom can exist, and thus he dismisses the very notion of social independence. Instead, Oswald argues for a society that defines the individual as *be* who obeys all laws and who submits entirely to his duty toward convention and public opinion, even if this definition rejects

[418] Ibid., I, 258-259.
[419] Gidal, p.25. (Original emphasis.)
[420] Bruin, p.82.
[421] Staël, *De la littérature*, I, 301.

> women as both citizens and individuals (thus relegating them entirely to the domestic sphere). Corinne disagrees.[422]

By attributing the political liberty of Britain to Oswald and the social liberty of Italy to Corinne, Staël presents the discussion of true freedom in terms of gender as well as space. The political sphere is male dominant, and it is the male protagonist who argues for its importance. According to Oswald, *because* social liberty results in women's rights, it must be dismissed, for allowing women social freedom would undermine a country's political freedom. As we have seen, many believed that this had been the case in Ancien Régime France.

Neither social nor political liberty is sufficient, by itself, for the creation of a truly free nation. As Bruin states:

> At this stage of the novel, Oswald and Corinne […] do not yet recognize that it is at the conjuncture of personal freedom and political liberty that true freedom can exist. Consequently, neither Corinne nor Oswald yet embodies the liberal thinker that Staël believes should serve as moral compass for a future free French republic.[423]

In the end it is perhaps no bad thing that Staël was forced to present Italy positively, for she turns this to her advantage. She shapes her new manuscript to discuss not only the political liberty of Britain but also the social liberty of women in Italy in order to promote both in her homeland. A true liberal thinker – the moral compass that Staël believes is capable of leading France out of its oppression – will accept that a middle ground, shared between genders, must be sought between political and social independence.

According to Bruin, Staël clarifies in *De la littérature* that a melancholy disposition must actively be sought in all nations desiring political liberty, but:

> [s]he […] does not fully answer the question of how to harness melancholy's philosophical power in order to propagate a cult of freedom in France. It is through her novel *Corinne, or Italy* that Staël presents to her readers for the first time the solution.[424]

This is certainly true. What I find most interesting, however, are the two points in this novel when Staël brings together in harmony the two contrasting definitions of liberty embodied by her protagonists. This is because these instances, when combined, illustrate the importance of women's writing and education for the 'cult of freedom in France' to which Staël aspires. Moreover, because both these instances occur with the aid of

[422] Bruin., p.82. (Original emphasis.)
[423] Ibid., p.87.
[424] Ibid., p.79.

intertextual references to Ossian, we are also permitted to witness how Staël employs the Ossianic myths and their wild natural landscape to contribute to the contemporary debates over women writers.

The first instance where Staël brings political and social liberty together takes place in front of a painting depicting the story of Cairbar, a tale from the Ossian cycle:

> [C]'est le fils de Caïrbar endormi sur la tombe de son père. Il attend depuis trois jours et trois nuits le barde qui doit rendre des honneurs à la mémoire des morts. Ce barde est aperçu dans le lointain, descendant de la montagne; l'ombre du père plane sur les nuages; la campagne est couverte de frimas; les arbres, quoique dépouillés, sont agités par les vents, et leurs branches mortes et leurs feuilles desséchées suivent encore la direction de l'orage. (*C* pp.237-238)

The gloomy, tempestuous atmosphere and wild landscape with its *frimas*, *vents* and *orage*, in which the plant-life is withered and dead, are reflected in the motifs of death, loss and sorrow in the story. This roots the painting clearly in the very imagery and melancholy of the myths of the wild Romantic north, which Staël, amongst others, believed inspired political liberty. However, there is more to the presentation of the political liberty of the north in this painting. In 1955, Spitzer coined the meaning of the term ekphrasis with which literary critics are now most familiar: 'the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art'.[425] Staël's use of ekphrasis is significant in allowing her reader to see her convey the three major components of British political liberty: melancholy; virtuous, self-sacrificing civic duty; and artistic and poetic talent.

By describing the story of Cairbar in a visual medium, Staël relates the painted art form to the poetic one, thus joining the two aesthetic genres of the plastic and the literary. Ekphrasis, from the Greek ἐκ: 'out', and φράζειν: 'speak', literally means to 'speak out' or 'explain'. Staël not only joins two arts forms together by using one to explain the other, she also uses these aesthetic media to join the present, past and future. In doing so, through one of the very techniques which ekphrasis permits, she connects each of the three aspects which combine to form British political liberty to one of these three time periods. Rather than describing the actions of the Ossianic tale through direct narrative, a medium which by its very nature requires movement through time, the subject-matter of Staël's description is in fact motionless: it is a painting. According to Ruth Webb:

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[425] Leo Spitzer, 'The "Ode on a Grecian Urn," or Content vs. Metagrammar', *Comparative Literature*, 7:3 (1955), 203-225 (p.207). According to Webb, 'The revolutionary step of defining ekphrasis as an essentially *poetic* genre, totally divorced from the rhetorical form of ekphrasis, was taken by Leo Spitzer'. See: Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), p.33. (Original emphasis.)

> Instead of designating a dynamic mode of writing thought to have an immediate impact on its audience and whose range of subject-matter could include images of action and movement, *ekphrasis* came to be used of a work of literature in which the movement was found only in the flow of language, whose subject-matter was still, objectified.[426]

Describing a painting of the poem, instead of quoting the poem itself, allows the flow of time to be interrupted. Furthermore, inserting a tomb into a natural setting creates a deathscape at the heart of the wild natural scenery, and the very essence of deathscapes allows time periods to be conflated in the same space. Thus, we do not see the events of the poem unfold in chronological time; rather we are able to visualise them all simultaneously.

In the Cairbar painting, the present is associated with melancholy. The artist paints Cairbar in his present time grieving for his father, surrounded by a similarly grieving landscape. Cairbar thus demonstrates the melancholy disposition necessary for the serious reflection and the 'resignation of the pain-filled soul to civil service' which allow for the creation of political liberty. Virtuous duty to the services expected by the public is connected in the painting with the past. Cairbar's father is deceased, and consequently belongs very much to the past. Nonetheless, his image is still represented in the painting – both by the presence of the tomb and by his ghostly shadow in the clouds – to remind the viewer of the expected, time-honoured duties that Cairbar must perform for his father according to society's rules. In this way, we see a depiction of the sacrifice of personal comfort necessary for the development of political liberty. Cairbar is clearly prepared to sacrifice his personal comfort: he has been waiting for three days and nights in a stormy landscape in order to properly 'rendre des honneurs à la mémoire des morts'. The future also appears in the painting, represented by the bard whose arrival Cairbar is anticipating and who is depicted in the background, making his way down the mountain towards the tomb. The bard represents '[l]a poésie du nord' itself, which 'convient […] à l'esprit d'un peuple libre'.[427] The creative spirit inspired in the northern people by their landscape, and which is the third component contributing to the creation of political liberty, is therefore linked with the future in this painting. We are reminded, here, of *Malvina*, where the Ossianic landscape was used to argue that writing and education belonged to the future.

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[426] Ruth Webb, '*Ekphrasis* ancient and modern: the invention of a genre', *Word and Image*, 15:1 (1999), 7-18 (p.17).
[427] Staël, *De la littérature*, I, 301.

Staël's ekphrasis is crucial to the reader's ability to appreciate the three major concepts which create the political liberty of Britain that Staël, through Oswald, desires to promote. Only by visualising past, present and future at the same time, along with the notions of political liberty that Staël ties to each time period, are we able to understand precisely how the each aspect must interact with the others in order for true political liberty to be achieved. The melancholy of the present in the painting is dependent upon the deaths of the past; the duty required by those who belong to the past rely on those who are still present to perform it; and both the past and the present must await the poetic visions of the future in order to come together. In the same way, in British society each factor is dependent upon the other for the creation of a free spirit. We must note, too, how past, present and future are each linked to an aspect of the landscape in Staël's ekphrasis, reminding us how the landscape itself contributes to the promotion of all those aspects which combine to form political liberty. Cairbar and the present are linked with the countryside and the trees, devastated by the storms just as Cairbar himself is devastated by the power of his grief; the future, and the bard who represents it, are linked to the mountain which brings him closer, both in space and time, to Cairbar and the present; and the past is visualised as part of the clouds in the sky, looking down upon both present and future. Thus, the fusion of two types of Romantic nature – the untamed northern landscape and a natural deathscape – coupled with the use of ekphrasis, assist in the presentation of Staël's arguments.

Yet how is Staël's ekphrasis relevant for understanding the social liberty for women that she wishes to promote? Corinne's experience of the northern landscape has thus far caused her talent to wane. However, now, in front of this portrait which so vividly portrays the wild, Ossianic north, Corinne finds her artistic temperament kindled:

> Corinne prit sa harpe, et devant ce tableau elle se mit à chanter les romances écossaises dont les simples notes semblent accompagner le bruit du vent qui gémit dans les vallées. Elle chanta les adieux d'un guerrier en quittant sa patrie et sa maîtresse […]. Oswald ne résista point à l'émotion qui l'oppressait, et l'un et l'autre s'abandonnèrent sans contrainte à leurs larmes. (*C* p.238)

Corinne's artistic production is not stifled by the wild northern landscape now, but in fact accompanies it. No longer threatened by the groaning winds in the valleys, she now complements them. No longer bitter at the melancholy she previously felt in Britain, she now gives herself over to it, knowing that melancholy inspired by the views of a northern landscape does promote artistic talent. In front of a painting which portrays the very values of the political liberty which leads to the social oppression of the woman of genius, Corinne now finds that she is able to use that genius – born from her social

independence – to enchant Oswald, the embodiment of political independence. The two forms of liberty are intertwined fully for the first time.

The full significance of the result of these two types of liberty coming together through Ossianic myth is realised at the close of the novel, when Corinne is dying. As Bruin argues, by this point, Corinne has sacrificed her love of Oswald to the knowledge that he must carry out his duty to society in marrying Lucile: 'L'innocence de Lucile, sa jeunesse, sa pureté exaltaient son imagination, et elle était, un moment du moins, fière de s'immoler pour qu'Oswald fût en paix avec son pays, avec sa famille, avec lui-même' (*C* p.504). Through love, Corinne has finally learned the importance of the sacrifices which must be made for political liberty. She knows too, though, that her talent and work have been an important part of her life. In order to obtain true freedom before she dies, Corinne must therefore unite her acknowledgement of the importance of political liberty with a re-assertion of the importance of social liberty. She achieves this in two ways. She acknowledges in her last improvisation: 'Malheureuse! mon génie […] se fait sentir seulement par la force de ma douleur […] des muses fatales, l'amour et le malheur, ont inspiré mes derniers chants' (*C* p.583). Social liberty allows her to perform these songs, but they are now inspired by the melancholy of the politically free north, which she has fully experienced because of her sacrifice. Having acknowledged this, and knowing that she will soon die, Corinne then teaches the Scottish ballads she performed in front of the Cairbar painting to Oswald and Lucile's daughter Juliette, thus underlining her belief in the importance of women's right to social independence and to perform:

> Juliette alors exécuta sur sa harpe un air écossais, que Corinne avait fait entendre à lord Nelvil à Tivoli, en présence d'un tableau d'Ossian. […] Quand Juliette eut fini, son père la prit sur ses genoux, et lui dit: – La dame qui demeure sur le bord de l'Arno vous a donc appris à jouer ainsi? – Oui, répondit Juliette […] elle m'a fait promettre de vous répéter cet air tous les ans, un certain jour, le dix-sept de novembre, je crois. (*C* p.576)

The same Scottish songs therefore appear at another moment which joins both political and social liberty. According to Bruin, it is at this conjuncture of the two opposing types of liberty that we find true liberty. Corinne has recognised the importance of these songs (and of the landscape which inspired them) in the creation of true freedom, and imparts this knowledge to Juliette. Furthermore, by having Corinne teach these Scottish songs to Juliette and not to Oswald, Staël underlines the importance of women's writing and education for the foundation of true liberty, indeed for the future in general. The role Ossian and his land play in Staël's arguments is also highlighted.

Firstly, let us examine Staël's arguments regarding the importance of women's writing. Juliette, as a child, represents the future. In teaching Juliette, Corinne passes her woman writer's voice on to the future generation. The future, Staël continually tells us through her references to Ossianic myth (including the bard in the Cairbar painting), lies in poetry and creativity inspired by a melancholic landscape. In the case of *Corinne,* it is in the *woman's* poetic voice and creativity that the future lies. Corinne ensures this because, by requesting that Juliette perform the Scottish songs that she has taught her every year on the same date, she thus acquires immortality for her woman writer's voice.

Secondly, let us consider the arguments Staël makes about women's education. The fact that Corinne teaches the songs which harmonise political and social liberty to a girl, makes clear that Corinne (and, through her, Staël) believes the education of women is necessary to the foundation of true liberty. Bruin confirms this argument, when she states that 'Corinne's new-found sense of sacrifice leads her to devote herself to the moral education of future generations of women, represented by the education that she provides to her niece Juliette'.[428] As Staël herself writes in her chapter 'Des femmes qui cultivent les lettres' in *De la littérature,* the secret of establishing relationships which are both social and political relies on equality in education between men and women:

> Eclairer, instruire, perfectionner les femmes comme les hommes, les nations comme les individus, c'est encore le meilleur secret pour tous les buts raisonnables, pour toutes les relations sociales et politiques auxquelles on veut assurer un fondement durable.[429]

According to *De la littérature,* women's education is important to the creation of true liberty, and *Corinne* supports this by ensuring that the Scottish songs which conjoin the elements necessary for true liberty are passed on through the education of women.

Part 5: Conclusion

The path was not smooth for women writers in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France. Whilst some critics praised women's novels, many not only condemned women writers, but actually went so far as to argue that women should be banned from writing, or even from reading. As a result, we find female authors, in their correspondence and novels, justifying their decision to write. This highlights a key difference between the uses to which female writers put their income and those to which the famous male writers of the day put their income. Whilst male authors write in order

[428] Bruin, p.87.
[429] Staël, *De la littérature,* II, 152.

to amass a fortune (later in the century Balzac and Dumas became very rich indeed) the woman writer publishes in order to provide financial assistance and physical shelter for others. Cottin justifies both her own and Mistriss Clare's writing this way, and Staël actually reverses the original intentions of *Corinne* because of this. Presenting women's writing as a beneficial activity for society is therefore crucial to their work, and helps underline the argument that women should be allowed to write. But the arguments encoded within the landscape and intertextual references go deeper. Northern Britain is not an irrelevant backdrop, and description of the wild natural landscape is not gratuitous. Rather they articulate concerns which are crucial to the narrative and arguments which are vital to understanding Staël and Cottin's opinions on the debate over women's writing.

There is an obvious link between the woman writer, or female misfit, and the Scottish landscape in *Malvina,* due to the fact that wild, melancholy nature provides a metaphor for the woman's rebellion and melancholy. Similarly, the bleak landscape of Scotland in *Corinne* appropriately exacerbates the depressed woman's condition. In this way, Staël and Cottin use wild nature to highlight the issues faced by the woman writer of their day: her social exclusion and her consequent melancholic or rebellious reactions. However, neither novel stops here. *Malvina* and *Corinne* are both crafted in order to leave the reader with the image of the woman writer's voice remaining immortal, and with the image of the education of future generations lying in the hands of the woman writer. Staël even goes one step further, arguing with *Corinne* that educating women alongside men will bring about the foundation of a true liberty for all. All these arguments strongly challenge the prevailing patriarchal discourse of the society in which Cottin and Staël lived, for they not only promote women's writing and education, they also portray the woman writer in a very powerful light.

Yet each argument is encoded though the novelists' employment of intertextual references to Ossian and the Ossianic landscape, an appropriate intertextual choice because of the poems' gender egalitarianism. My analysis of both novels contends that intertextual references establish a subtle dialogue between the writers and an implied reader. Understanding Cottin and Staël's defence of the woman writer relies on appreciation of the Ossianic myths, and consequently not all readers will perceive it. Indeed many scholars have, in dismissing the landscape, missed some of the more subtle arguments. However, the proof of these arguments' importance is evident: Cottin ensures that the reader is aware of the significance of the Ossian references by stating as

much when comparing Malvina's appreciation of the myths and landscape to others' dismissal of them. Similarly, in order to promote liberty from the repression of the Napoleonic regime in her homeland, Staël 'deemed it necessary to try to foster a culture of melancholy in France similar to that in England',[430] and she argues in *De la littérature* that the melancholy emotions 'causées par les poésies ossianiques, peuvent se reproduire dans toutes les nations, parce que leurs moyens d'émouvoir sont tous pris dans la nature'.[431] Staël makes it clear, therefore, that only when the public is aware of the Ossianic cycle and landscape will they be able to exhibit to the emotions necessary for the creation of a truly free nation. In the same way, in *Corinne*, it is only through appreciating the Ossianic landscape and its melancholia that the conjoining of political and social liberty are permitted, and only the conveying of the Ossianic songs of the wild north secure the future for the woman writer's voice and women's education, both so crucial in the foundation of true liberty. The descriptions of Ossianic landscape are therefore crucial to the contributions Staël and Cottin make to the debate over women's writing and education.

[430] Bruin, p.77.
[431] Staël, *De la littérature,* I, 303.

CHAPTER 3

Mother Nature and Motherhood

> C'est à toi que je m'adresse, tendre et prévoyante mère, qui sus t'écarter de la grande route, et garantir l'arbrisseau naissant du choc des opinions humaines! Cultive, arrose la jeune plante avant qu'elle meure; ses fruits feront un jour tes délices. Forme de bonne heure une enceinte autour de l'âme de ton enfant; un autre en peut marquer le circuit, mais toi seule y dois poser la barrière.[432]

Part 1: Changes in the View of Motherhood

This chapter analyses novels by Genlis and Krüdener in order to understand how these authors portray the problems of infant mortality and child abandonment. It also shows how the mothers in these women's novels who fall short of the motherhood ideal attempt to convey their intense emotional turmoil through moulding and taming the natural world. Before we undertake this analysis, however, we must examine how a mother's role changed in the eighteenth century.

The end of the eighteenth century in France called for mothers to adopt a loving, caring attitude towards their child. Prior to this, certainly amongst the higher echelons of society, a state of indifference and negligence had existed towards children, for motherhood was not the primary concern of an upper-class woman. As Darrow affirms in her analysis of pre-Revolutionary France:

> [T]he ideal noblewoman was the perfect courtier. Her sphere of activity was the court rather than the household, and her family obligations were dynastic and political rather than conjugal and affective. She was expected to support her husband and her children […] by using her influence in their behalf at court, by making her counsel, her connections, and her financial resources available to their interests; but she was not expected to be intimate with them or to provide emotional support.[433]

Fear was one of the principal reasons for parental indifference towards children. The belief that children were self-centred and immoral was spread largely through the church, as expressed in sermons of the period. In the last decade of the seventeenth century, Houdry, for example, preached on the vice of children: '[C]omment est-ce que la plupart des chrétiens aiment leurs enfants? […] [I]ls excusent leur défauts, ils dissimulent leur vices et ne les élèvent enfin que pour le monde et non pour Dieu'.[434] Bossuet's early

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[432] Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Education*, II, 399-400.
[433] Margaret H. Darrow, 'French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity, 1750-1850', *Feminist Studies*, 5:1 (1979), 41-65 (p.44).
[434] Vincent Houdry, 'Sermon 24: Du soin des enfants' (1696), in Élisabeth Badinter, *L'Amour en plus: Histoire de l'amour maternal (XVII^e^-XX^e^ siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p.60.

eighteenth-century sermons equally denigrated the figure of the child, arguing: 'L'enfance est la vie d'une bête'.[435] The church's view of children's depravity derived from the notion that infants were 'born steeped in original sin',[436] and that as a consequence,

> their tendency to greedy self-indulgence and outright iniquity had to be corrected by parents and educators who would force them to conform to proper (and adult) ways of behaving. Children betrayed beastly tendencies in a number of ways, from crawling on the ground like animals to greedily sucking away their mother's milk.[437]

If not a source of fear, a child was often simply too great an inconvenience in the lives of families:

> Tout d'abord ils le regardent 'comme un embarras et une charge', par l'attention continuelle qu'il demande et qui ne laisse aucune tranquillité à la mère ni le jour ni la nuit, par ses cris qui troublent le sommeil de ses parents.[438]

Whether from indifference, inconvenience or fear, it became the norm for infants to be sent to nurses for the first years of their lives. This was common practice in all echelons of urban society:

> [C]'est au XVIIIe siècle que la mise en nourrice s'étend dans toutes les couches de la société urbaine. Des plus pauvres aux riches, dans les petites ou les grandes villes, le départ des enfants en nourrice est un phénomène généralisé.[439]

In fact, the statistics were shocking; even in 1780, the *lieutenant de police,* Lenoir, remarked that only about one thousand in every twenty-one thousand children born in Paris every year were nursed by their mothers.[440]

Towards the second half of the eighteenth century, however, certain catalysts began to revise the way motherhood was perceived, and, consequently, the attitudes of mothers themselves. According to Popiel: 'Historians often point to the later eighteenth century as the moment of the "invention" of the domestic mother'.[441] In the 1760s the need for a new type of mother became evident. As Badinter states: 'C'est Rousseau, avec la publication de l'*Émile* en 1762, qui cristallise les idées nouvelles et donne le véritable coup d'envoi à la famille moderne, c'est-à-dire à la famille fondée sur l'amour maternel'.[442] According to Rousseau, not until man was 'civilised' did he begin to exhibit

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435 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, 'Fragment sur la brièveté de la vie et le néant de l'homme', in Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Œuvres*, 43 vols (Versailles: J.A. Lebel, 1816), XII, 704.
436 Popiel, p.5.
437 Ibid.
438 Roger Mercier, *L'Enfant dans la Société du XVIIIe siècle (Avant Émile)* (Dakar: Université Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1961), p.40.
439 Élisabeth Badinter, *L'Amour en plus: Histoire de l'amour maternal (XVII*e*-XX*e *siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p.69.
440 Ibid., p.19.
441 Popiel, p.4.
442 Badinter, *L'Amour en plus,* p.55.

the vices with which society was riddled. Whilst French society had previously argued in favour of the civilisation of children in order to rid them of original sin, Rousseau reasoned that '[c]ivilizing' children actually meant that they would grow up to be jealous, competitive and antisocial.[443] Far from improving the morals of children, imparting to them the customs of civilisation exacerbated the problems that had frightened the parents of previous decades and centuries.

Assuming that the education of mankind in the way of civilisation was responsible for the world's evils, if such evils were to be eradicated, then one must start with the re-education of the young. As Popiel observes, Rousseau argued that 'children were not by nature beastly but instead were capable of rational thought and good actions if they were removed from the constraints placed upon them by society and nurtured by a domestic mother'.[444] It is at this point that the maternal figure enters the picture, as the first point of education for all children. At her knee that they should learn morals, self-control and how to live according to nature, rather than the corrupt ways of civilisation. Mothers were to become acutely important in family life; therefore it would be necessary for the mother figure to change, as society could no longer accept an indifferent mother.

In *Émile ou de l'éducation* Rousseau outlined guidelines for mothering, arguing that mothers must breastfeed their own children, cease to place children in the care of nurses, and allow freedom for children to move and play. Breastfeeding children and keeping them at home promoted the creation of a bond of love and trust between mother and child. This bond would encourage a mother to educate her child, and the child to heed its mother's words. According to Rousseau, from the first moment of breastfeeding, society would change for the better.[445] Also, as breastfeeding restored to mothers an activity which nature itself had intended them to undertake, the education of children in the ways of nature began at birth.

The situation did not change overnight. Rather, Rousseau's arguments became absorbed into the consciousness of the French public and reflected in the art and literature of the day towards the end of the century. According to Darrow:

> Although Rousseau's ideas about motherhood and breastfeeding achieved a certain vogue among noblewomen at the end of the *ancien régime*, in practice their experiments rarely went deeper than play acting à la Marie-Antoinette's rustic *hameau*. The adoption of domesticity by noblewomen was not the result of a gradual

[443] Popiel, p.5.
[444] Ibid., p.5.
[445] Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Education*, II, 406.

> drift throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but was accomplished within one generation, during the French Revolution.[446]

It took the Revolution, and a desire to create a new regime, to concretise the alterations which Rousseau had advocated.

A peaceful, ordered society in which both genders had their place, and in which morals and sensibility were taught to children early on, seemed to form the perfect contrast to the turmoil of the Revolution and the inequalities of the Ancien Régime. The need for self-control was foremost in the minds of those desiring a Republic which would eclipse the old regime in terms of liberty and peace, and replace the violent riots of the Revolution. The late eighteenth-century reader of Rousseau saw the latter's analysis of a woman's role 'as an integral part of his emphasis on the need for virtuous action and the creation of individuals for a new society'.[447] When both self-control and sensibility finally became imperative, as opposed to simply desirable, then the concept of the mother as primary educator was finally put into practice.

Amongst the many requirements for a successful Republic, the need to reduce infant mortality rates was critical. According to Blayo's demographic research: 'La moitié des enfants mouraient avant 10.5 ans dans les décennies précédent la Révolution'.[448] Masuy-Stroobant and Poulain inform us that:

> La perte d'un enfant, jadis considérée comme 'normale' devient progressivement inacceptable, du moins dans les classes sociales les plus favorisées. Néanmoins, faute de moyens de lutte appropriés, le risque de mortalité infantile reste élevé: pour l'ensemble de la France, il s'élève à 297% pour la décennie 1740-1749 et à 278% entre 1780 et 1789.[449]

To lower these statistics, it became an additional imperative for a mother to feed and nurse her own child. This would prevent deaths from malnutrition or from unsuitable or even infected milk. Maternal care would additionally ensure fewer deaths from negligent or unhygienic conditions.[450]

Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century and the turn of the nineteenth, the role of motherhood had been transformed. The mother was henceforth responsible for instilling moral virtue in the population, and was a vital part of the necessary population

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[446] Darrow, p.42.
[447] Popiel, p.2.
[448] Yves Blayo, 'La mortalité en France de 1740 à 1829', *Population*, 1 (1975), 123-142 (p.133).
[449] Geneviève Masuy-Stroobant and Michel Poulain, 'La variation spatiale et temporelle du déclin de la mortalité infantile dans nos régions', *Espace, populations, societies*, 1 (1983), 67-73.
[450] Such deaths had often occurred at the hands of wet nurses. See Emmanuel Le Roy-Ladurie, 'L'allaitement mercenaire en France au XVIIIe siècle', *Communications*, 31 (1979), 15-21 (p.15).

growth. Mothers took on this important role wholeheartedly, viewing it as one to be performed with great love and care.

Part 2: Changes in Art and Literature, and the Importance of the Image of Nature

Literature frequently echoed society's attitudes, and so the mothers who appeared in early eighteenth-century fiction reflected the indifference exhibited in society itself:

> En cherchant, dans les documents historiques et littéraires, la substance et la qualité des rapports entre la mère et son enfant, nous avons constaté soit de l'indifférence, soit des recommandations de froideur, et en apparence du désintérêt pour le bébé qui vient de naître.[451]

According to Mann, despite a mother's role in the reproduction of the population:

> lorsqu'on s'approche de la littérature, on s'étonne de la façon dont les poètes et les écrivains ont représenté cet aspect si important de la vie féminine, car la mère est un personnage qui reste étrangement en marge de la littérature pendant plusieurs siècles.[452]

In the early eighteenth century and previously, then, there existed no literary descriptions of doting mothers; no desire on the part of fictional women, just like their extra-fictional counterparts, to breastfeed their children; little or no analysis of mother-child relationships, or of the personal significance of being a mother. In fact:

> La présence de la mère dans les chefs-dœuvre de la première moitié du dix-huitième siècle est, en général, assez rare. Les auteurs de cette époque semblent exploiter très volontiers le thème de l'orphelin, souvent banal et mélodramatique, qui leur sert à rendre le personnage plus pathétique.[453]

Often when a mother was absent from literature, it was due to death in childbirth. Thus, in fairy tales, novels and drama alike, literary matriarchs were often stepmothers, who were the very opposite of caring mothers. However, as the century wore on,

> [t]he promotion of these new ideas – the idea of childhood as a unique phase of human growth and that of the family as an intimate and harmonious social unit – became a major activity, a veritable cause, of Enlightenment writers. In novels, on the stage and in educational, medical and philosophical treatises, the new ideals of the happy and healthy family were dramatized and explained.[454]

Thus, from the 1760s onwards we see a growing body of fiction in which the mother not only appears, but in which she plays a vital role. Primary amongst these works were sentimental novels, such as *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, whose eponymous heroine is depicted as the perfect mother. Surrounded by nature in an Elysian garden, Julie nurses

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[451] Badinter, *L'Amour en plus,* p.85.
[452] Maria Mann, *La Mère dans la literature française 1678-1831* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p.10.
[453] Ibid., pp.10-11.
[454] Carol Duncan, 'Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art', *The Art Bulletin*, 55:4 (1973), 570-583 (p.577).

and educates her children, lavishing them with maternal affection. Indeed she so adores her children that she dies to save one of them from drowning.

Towards the end of the century, as mothers' attitudes changed, motherhood was portrayed even more frequently in fiction, and '[b]y 1789 the theme of "Republican motherhood" had become a literary staple'.[455] Many female novelists, inspired by Rousseau, displayed the image of the new mother in their work. Several women writers composed novels, plays, short stories and treatises about what a good mother should be, advising their contemporaries, as well as future generations, on how to raise children.[456] Chief amongst these women writers was Genlis, whose novels often deal with the themes of motherhood and education.

The natural setting for Rousseau's *Julie* is significant, because for eighteenth-century thinkers, '[t]he relations between mother and child were especially interesting, since they seemed of all kin relations the most deeply embedded in nature'.[457] Indeed, the link between mothers and Mother Nature became central to the new motherhood ideal, thus reinforcing the belief in a woman-nature connection. Rousseau established clear links between motherhood and nature throughout his works. This is evident in the epigraph to this chapter, in which Rousseau employs horticultural vocabulary, arguing that a mother should both *cultiver* and *arroser* her children, to allow them to blossom. In so doing, he creates a metaphor in which the mother appears either as a gardener asked to fashion the natural landscape represented by the child, or as Mother Nature herself, cultivating the shrubs which grow from her. In the twelfth book of *Les Confessions*, Rousseau again conjoins the figure of nature and that of the mother: 'O nature! ô ma mère! me voici sous ta seule garde; il n'y a point ici d'homme adroit et fourbe qui s'interpose entre toi et moi'.[458] The image of the mother and that of nature are clearly bound here. Consequently, when the public turned their attention to Rousseau's work and his promotion of the new maternal ideal, the bond between the mother figure and nature would permeate strongly into their consciousness.

It became common for mothers to be painted with their children in a natural setting. Moreau le jeune's *Les Délices de la maternité* (1777), for example, depicts a mother and father sitting in a verdant park, surrounded by their children. Fragonard's similarly titled *Les Délices maternelles* portrays a mother surrounded by blossoming nature, pushing

[455] McMillan, p.13.
[456] Isabelle Brouard-Arends, *Vies et images maternelles dans la literature française du 18e siècle. Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991), p.329.
[457] Jordanova, p.210.
[458] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, (Paris: Charpentier, 1862), Partie II, Livre XII (1765), p.637.

her infant amid the plants of a rustic setting, with a wheelbarrow strikingly replacing the child's *landau*. These types of depictions became popular, indeed '[y]oung rustic mothers, their nursing breasts virtuously exposed, became a staple of the printseller'.[459] Constance Mayer's 1810 painting *L'Heureuse mère* shows this very image: a young mother happily cradling a sleeping baby, her 'breasts virtuously exposed', in a woodland setting; trees tower above the young woman who sits on a grassy mound amid wild flowers.[460]

Just as in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century art, when nature appears in French women's literary fiction of the same period, it does not do so lightly. In the 1780s, 1790s and early 1800s, Genlis, Krüdener, and Cottin imitate Rousseau in displaying the new, loving mother in their novels and coupling this notion with aspects of the natural world. Much has been written on how the novels of women writers at this time portray loving mothers who breastfeed their children, and how these novels advise women to be good mothers.[461] However, there is little critical literature on the relationship between the description of nature and motherhood in these novels.[462] This is somewhat surprising, given that scholars have discussed images of nature and motherhood in Rousseau's *Julie* and Bernardin's *Paul et Virginie*.[463]

In particular, however, there exists almost no critical analysis of the ways in which nature can be used to discuss the problems that women now faced in their roles as doting mothers. The very creation of a new motherhood ideal raises the immediate question of what happened to those women who were unable to fulfil this role as expected, either because their child died or because they were forced to give up the child on account of its being born out of wedlock. Whilst neither infant mortality nor child abandonment were new to France, the fact that the mother's role had become more caring meant that maternal grief became more pronounced. Parts 3 and 4 of this chapter will examine the image so prevalent in its epigraph: that of the mother as fashioner and cultivator of natural landscape. It will be argued that in Krüdener's *Valérie,* and in Genlis's *Les Mères rivales,* mothers who have lost or abandoned children are depicted as landscape gardeners who mould nature to re-establish communication with their lost child and to convey to the outside world linguistically inexpressible emotions of loss. The

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459 Duncan, p.583.

460 See Appendix IV for a reproduction of Mayer's *L'Heureuse mère.*

461 Brouard-Arends; Robb; Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Carol L. Sherman, *The Family Crucible in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Burlington, VT; Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005).

462 The one exception is Chase's *Mother Nature and the Nature of Woman*. Even this dissertation, however, refers solely to one novel by Cottin and one by Souza, and discusses the portrayal of women in general with regard to nature. Very little of the work is actually dedicated to a discussion of motherhood.

463 Jordanova; Kadish; Mann; Popiel; Sherman; Walker.

type of nature considered in this chapter will therefore be 'tamed nature': tamed by the mothers themselves. In the case of the grieving mother in *Valérie*, the natural setting will also fit the category of a 'natural deathscape', as the garden is created around the child's tomb. The chapter will explore three aspects of 'garden language', as outlined by McIntosh:

> First, there is the form of the garden as a whole. This includes the lines traced by the perimeter and internal divisions. […] The second basic ingredient of the language consists of the objects that are created or placed in the garden or the existing landscape features to which specific meanings are attached. These might be natural or man-made hills, rivers, ponds, caves […]. Such features might also include fountains, statues, reliefs, topiary hedges, labyrinths, pavilions and gazebos. The third ingredient of the language relates to the plants in the garden and the meanings they are given. A plant has of course a large number of different meanings and associations depending on the region and culture. Its meaning can be shaped by physical characteristics, such as colour, shape or chemical properties.[464]

These aspects of garden language will be taken into account in order to comprehend fully the ways in which nature can be employed to enable communication. Considering this alongside modern theories of bereavement, which provide both relevant vocabulary and models to analyse parental grief, will enable this chapter to ascertain the coping techniques employed by mothers who have lost or abandoned children.

Part 3: The Grieving Mother as Landscape Gardener in Krüdener's *Valérie*

Constance Mayer also painted a picture entitled *La Mère infortunée*,[465] which was intended to be displayed alongside *L'Heureuse mère* at the Salon of 1810. The two paintings illustrated two very opposite maternal emotions. *L'Heureuse mère* depicts the happiness of a mother holding and nursing a sleeping infant. The child of *La Mère infortunée*, however, is sleeping in a very different sense. As in *L'Heureuse mère*, mother and child are surrounded by nature, in a shadowy woodland setting. This time, however, the mother's gaze is fixed on the tomb, covered by nature, in which the infant is interred. What this second painting suggests, in its title as well as its composition, is not that the *mère infortunée* is a bad or indifferent mother, but rather that she would have conformed to the new ideal had her child not died. She experiences emotional tenderness towards her child, but her ability to convey this directly to the infant has been removed.

Despite attempts to curb the infant mortality rate in the late eighteenth century, the issue was still present. Although the number of deaths per 1000 births had fallen from

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[464] Christopher McIntosh, *Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic and Meaning* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2005), p.3.
[465] See Appendix IV for a reproduction of this image.

592 in the 1740s to 361 in the 1820s, and although the new motherhood role may well have influenced this, nonetheless, in the 1820s there still remained a 36.1% likelihood that a child would not survive to its first birthday.[466] In 1803, when Krüdener's *Valérie* was published, under the first Empire, there was a striking 41.8% likelihood of losing a baby.[467] However, now that mothers were no longer distanced emotionally from their child, when they lost a baby they would undergo a significantly greater sense of grief than mothers in previous generations. It is this intense grief that we see in Mayer's painting, and which also begins to appear in literature.

Krüdener's *Valérie* provides an abundantly clear example of this. The eponymous protagonist is the image of the ideal, loving mother advocated during the final decades of the eighteenth century:

> [J]'ai vu la sensible Valérie, mille fois plus belle, plus touchante que jamais, répandre sur son fils les plus douces larmes, me le montrer éveillé, endormi, me demander si j'avais remarqué tous ses traits, pressentir qu'il aurait le sourire de son père, et ne jamais se lasser de l'admirer et de le caresser. (*V* p.90)

Yet Valérie's son, Adolphe, dies shortly after his birth, leaving his mother broken-hearted:

> Hélas! quelque temps après, ces mêmes yeux ont répandu les larmes de deuil et de la douleur la plus amère: le jeune Adolphe n'a vécu que quelques instants, et sa mère le pleure tous les jours. (*V* p.90)

As the child was born whilst the family was travelling in Venice, Valérie is unable to take him home for burial. She therefore buries him on the island of Lido, in grounds belonging to a convent.

As the mother-child relationship has been cut short by death, the distraught mother constructs a small garden around his tomb, which she visits as often as she can whilst the family is in Venice. She elects to bury Adolphe in an area of natural beauty, thus maintaining the connection between mother, child and nature established during the period. Valerie chooses particular aspects of nature to highlight both her love for the child and her sense of loss.

Following Valérie's design, family friend Gustave plants foliage symbolically connected to the rituals of funerals, death or grief: 'j'ai planté des saules d'Amérique et des roses blanches auprès du tombeau d'Adolphe' (*V* p.93). McIntosh argues that '[t]he third ingredient of [garden] language relates to the plants in the garden and the meanings

[466] Blayo, pp.138-139.
[467] Ibid.

they are given'.[468] The planting of willows and white roses are significant, because their symbolic meanings allow Valérie to communicate to her child, through natural language, her love and grief for him. The willow, according to botanical symbolism, is traditionally associated with resonance and harmony.[469] As a loving mother, Valérie desires her son to be buried in a space which will allow him to repose in peace. Furthermore, according to Hageneder, the Biblical reference to willow trees in Psalm 137 'caused generations of European poets to interpret the willow as a symbol of mourning and despair'.[470] The psalmist writes 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof'.[471] The willow in this psalm is associated with the grief and suffering of the Jewish people at the loss of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. In later western literature, therefore, it makes frequent appearances in cemeteries, or in gardens of mourning, such as that which Valérie has constructed for her dead son. The weeping willow cries for the dead, as the mother for her child, and as the Jewish people for their home. Valérie concretises the image of weeping in our mind, drawing explicit links between grief and the willow tree as she describes 'ce saule si triste, inclinant sa tête, comme s'il sentait ma douleur' (*V* p.106). The willow in the garden designed by Valérie is planted for its ability to sympathise with her grief, and thus to communicate to others who neither share nor understand her pain the emotions that she finds impossible to explain in words. The connection between the willow and sadness was well known in the early nineteenth century. In 1819 de La Tour published her *Le Langage des fleurs*, which includes a glossary of a large number of plant meanings. The 'Saule de Babylone (ou pleureur)' signifies melancholia, according to de La Tour.[472] Even in the pagan religion of antiquity, the willow held associations with the world of the dead:

> Belili, the Sumerian goddess of love, the mood and the underworld, resided in willow trees, springs and wells. In ancient Greece, Persephone had a grove of aged willows, and the priestess Circe guarded a willow grove dedicated to Hecate, the goddess of death and transition.[473]

Belili, Persephone and Hecate were all pagan female divinities associated with the underworld, and each had links to the willow tree, making it a very clear symbol of death

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[468] McIntosh, p.3.
[469] Fred Hagenender, *The Meaning of Trees: Botany, History, Healing, Lore* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005), p.181.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Psalms 137. 1-2, *The Bible,* Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.716.
[472] Charlotte de La Tour, *Le Langage des fleurs* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1858), p.304.
[473] Hagenender, p.180.

and the afterlife. As a triple representative of death, of transition to the afterlife, and of the grief of those left behind, it is a highly appropriate natural image for Valérie to plant by the side of her child's grave.

The white rose traditionally signifies innocence and purity, and Valérie certainly associates her child very starkly with innocence, not with the original sin with which it was believed, during the Ancien Régime, that children were tainted. She re-iterates the image of innocence when she has carved on Adolphe's tombstone the words: '*Ici dort Adolphe de M…, du double sommeil de l'innocence et de la mort'* (*V* p.107). In addition, the rose is traditionally associated with love, which Valérie also wishes to communicate to Adolphe, and also with rebirth, 'because of the semantic kinship between the Latin words *rosa* (rose) and *ros*, meaning "dew" or "rain"'.[474] The third desire that Valérie wishes to communicate with the rose, then, is that her son be reborn to eternal life. Chevalier and Gheerbrant explain that '[i]t was because they were a symbol of regeneration that, in Classical antiquity, the custom was established of placing roses upon graves'.[475] Genlis, who, in her *La Botanique historique et littéraire,* describes various appearances of the rose as a symbol in mythology and history, writes of roses being placed specifically on the coffins of children: 'En Pologne, on couvre de roses le cercueil d'un enfant; et quand son convoi passe dans les rues, on jette des fenêtres une multitude de roses'.[476]

The willow and roses permit both a continuing relationship between Valérie and Adolphe, and also the communication of intense maternal grief. However, not only do objects in the natural world play an important part with regard to symbolism of death and grief, the seasons of the natural world also come into play, showing how nature's time, as well as space, communicate Valérie's emotions. Valérie knows that the roses will only be visible for a small portion of the year, and does not wish her son's grave to be unadorned in the winter months. She therefore asks Gustave to plant another type of shrub in addition, to ensure the perpetual presence of flowers on the grave:

> Je vous envoie aussi de jeunes arbustes que j'ai trouvés dans la Villa-Médicis, qui viennent des îles du sud, et fleurissent plus tard que ceux que nous avons déjà: en les couvrant avec précaution l'hiver, ils ne périront pas, et nous aurons encore des fleurs quand les autres seront tombées. (*V* p.107)

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[474] See entry 'Rose', in Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994).
[475] Ibid.
[476] Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis, *La Botanique historique et littératire: suivie d'une nouvelle intituée* Les fleurs, ou les artistes (Paris: Maradan, 1810), I, 161.

Whilst Valérie is happy for the natural world to be associated with the afterlife, she is not willing for nature to present a physical image of decay to the spectator, thereby reflecting the decaying corpse beneath it. By ensuring the presence of flowers even in winter months, Valérie prevents harsh winter from becoming the harbinger of yet more death to the island. Taming the landscape in this way permits the natural time in the garden of the dead son to be transcended, even cheated. There is a further example of this cheating of time. The visits to the graveside take place in October, an apt time to visit, since nature itself begins to die in Autumn, the season associated with the 'Mythos of Tragedy', according to Frye.[477] However, unusually, the time, season and climate are confused:

> La journée était encore fort chaude, quoique nous fussions déjà à la fin d'octobre. […] Nous écartâmes des branches touffues d'ébéniers qui avaient fleuri encore une fois dans cette automne [sic], et quelques branches de saule et d'accacia. (*V* pp.93-94)

Late October is as hot as mid-summer, so much so that when Valérie and Gustave reach the site of the infant's burial, the heat has caused autumn to slow down, staving off the death of nature, and allowing one final floral blossom. The gravesite of the child is almost idyllic in its ability to 'cheat' the death of nature. Bakhtin models the interdependent relationship between time and space as follows:

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally 'time-space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. […] In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history.[478]

As noted in Chapter 1, in his discussion of the chronotope as it appears in fictive utopias, Bakhtin highlights the 'special relationship that time has to space in the idyll'.[479] Idyllic settings permit the time-space barrier to be broken down. In the case of the idyll in *Valérie*, natural spatial features are employed to transcend time gaps to the point where they no longer exist. This involves what Bakhtin terms a 'unity of place'.[480] In his paradigm this spatial unity refers to the enduring of one idyllic space over generations, allowing no change to take place during the passing of time. No change in nature seems to occur in the immediate vicinity of the child's grave. No matter what the season of the year, whether it be the season of birth (spring), life (summer), dying (autumn) or death (winter), the child's tomb is never without blossoming flora. Therefore we have a further

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[477] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).
[478] Bakhtin, p.84.
[479] Ibid., p.225.
[480] Ibid., p.225.

example (as in *Corinne*'s Cairbar episode) of a natural deathscape, a tomb at the heart of nature, which allows time to be transcended. Here, the transcendence permits Valérie to create an eternal idyll for the child to rest in, to replace the idyll she would have given him in life. Thus the mother-child bond is strengthened thanks to the natural features of the gravesite, as is the mother's ability to communicate her feelings to the child.

The fact that Valérie chooses to bury her son on an island is also significant. Studies on mourning have identified the bereaved party as often experiencing 'a feeling of increased emotional distance from other people'.[481] Klaus and Kennell summarise this sentiment with the words of one grieving mother who states: 'I felt I was on an island by myself'.[482] In burying her son on an island, Valérie achieves two things. Firstly, because the island is apart from the rest of the world, it becomes easier to believe in its existence as an idyll. Secondly, Valérie ensures she can literally cut herself off from the rest of society – those who neither share nor understand her pain – when she visits the grave. The island physically embodies her feeling of emotional distance, and allows her time and space to come to terms with the death of her son. The sea surrounding the island forms a perfect natural barrier, preventing anyone else from getting in, and, in addition, the gravesite itself is situated in the walled *enceinte* of a convent, whose gate is locked and which is only accessible to those who possess a key. Valérie wishes to visit the gravesite as often as possible whilst still in Venice, and so informs one of the nuns: 'Ma sœur, vous devriez remettre une clef à un de mes gondoliers; je vous donnerai trop souvent la peine d'ouvrir cette porte' (*V* p.93).

Whilst Valérie feels separated from the rest of the world, she exhibits a need for attachment to the child itself. Asking for the key to the gates because she intends to visit so often provides the first clue to Valérie's need to be physically close to Adolphe. This need for physical attachment to a deceased loved one displays a normal reaction to loss. Twentieth-century psycho-analytical work conducted by Bowlby has identified that humans exhibit a natural tendency towards 'attachment behaviour'.[483] Whilst Bowlby focuses on the child's attachment to its mother, bereavement theorists use Bowlby's analysis as a basis for understanding the grieving process in any kind of close relationship. Therefore a mother's need for continued attachment to her child is equally

[481] Marshall H. Klaus and John H. Kennell, *Maternal-Infant Bonding* (Saint Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1976), p.211.
[482] Ibid., p.212.
[483] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 2 vols (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1969).

as important as the child's for its mother. When a mother loses a child, the need to maintain attachment can no longer be physically satisfied, and, as Archer states:

> Separation reactions, therefore, are indicative of strong motivations to regain contact with an attachment figure. They are common to humans and nonhumans, to adults and to children. Thus, a core reaction – termed *separation distress* – occurs whenever an animal, child, or adult human is separated from its attachment figure.[484]

According to Bowlby, children express their distress at early separation from their mothers by crying, sometimes until contact is regained. If distress occurs at temporary separation, severe distress occurs when regaining contact has been rendered impossible. In this instance, modern bereavement therapy has concluded that maintaining a sense of attachment with the deceased, although literally regaining contact is impossible, forms 'an integral part of successful adaptation to the death of a loved one'.[485] This process is known as *continuing bonds*.[486] Continuing bonds allow the bereaved to process the death and to begin to move on with life, whilst recognising that the deceased has been internalised within them. In the case of coming to terms with parental bereavement, '[t]he end of grief is not severing the bond with the dead child, but integrating the child into the parent's life […] in a different way than when the child was alive'.[487] This contrasts directly with theories expounded in the early twentieth century, in particularly those of Freud, who actively advocated in his 1917 seminal work *Mourning and Melancholia*, that the griever relinquish their bond with the deceased loved one in order to be able to move on.[488] Nowadays a fundamental part of bereavement therapy is learning to distinguish what must be relinquished and what can be continued.[489] As Valérie attempts to establish several continuing bonds with her child, it is the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century theories which help us to understand both her psychological state and her consequent moulding of nature.

Valérie tries to be as physically and emotionally close to her child in his death as she was, if only momentarily, while he lived. Her need to visit the garden gravesite

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484 John Archer, 'Theories of Grief: Past, Present, and Future Persepectives', in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice,* ed. by Margaret S. Stroebe, Robert O. Hansson, Henk Schut, and Wolfgang Stroebe (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), pp.45-65 (p.48).
485 Field, p.113.
486 Field, pp.113-132; Celia Hindmarch, *On the Death of a Child* (Abingdon, Oxon: Radcliffe Medical Press, 2000); Dennis Klass, *The Spiritual Lives of Bereaved Parents* (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, 1999); D. Klass, P. Silverman, and S. Nickman, ed., *Continuing Bonds: New underatsnings of grief* (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1996).
487 Klass, p.87.
488 Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), pp.152-170. (Original work published in 1917.)
489 Field, p.116.

indicates this, certainly, but so too does the fact that she designs the garden herself. Her presence at the gravesite ensures physical proximity, as does the direction of her gaze: 'Valérie fixa ses regards sur la tombe d'Adolphe' (*V* p.95). The image of Valérie gazing mournfully upon the tomb of her child surrounded by nature appears very similar to Mayer's picture of *La Mère infortunée*, who stands gazing upon a similar tomb, in a similar setting, in similar circumstances. Valérie gains emotional proximity through permitting herself to go through the 'nesting process' that could not be completed during the child's life. She creates a space in which the maternal-child bond is strong. Ordinarily this would involve making the nursery ready for the child, but in place of this, Valérie prepares the garden and tomb, using nature itself to create a gift, and thus to communicate love to her son.

Although the garden allows proximity on both a physical and a metaphysical level, Valérie does not live permanently in Venice. Consequently, when the family leaves, she must find another way to maintain a continuing bond with Adolphe. The new continuing bond is a painting. Valérie decides to take advantage of the fact that her husband wants a portrait of her, and commissions the painting to be of herself in the graveside garden. She writes to Gustave:

> Mon mari désirait longtemps avoir mon portrait, fait par la fameuse Angelica, et j'ai pensé qu'un tableau tel que j'en avais l'idée pouvait réunir nos deux projets. Ma pensée a merveilleusement réussi; jugez-en vous-même. N'est-ce pas Valérie, telle qu'elle était assise si souvent à Lido, la mer se brisant dans le lointain, comme sur la côte où je jouais mon enfance; le ciel vaporeux; les nuages roses du soir, dans lesquels je croyais voir la jeune âme de mon fils; cette pierre qui couvre ses formes charmantes, maintenant, hélas! décomposées; et ce saule si triste, inclinant sa tête, comme s'il sentait ma douleur; et ces grappes de cytise, qui caressent en tombant la pierre de la mort. (*V* p.106)

A material object now enables the continuing bond to be established between Valérie and her son, and provides her with an outlet for her grief.

Developing a theory related to behaviour patterns in certain mourners, Volkan has noted that often a material object which the deceased owned, or which represents them in some way, is sought and used to establish a link between deceased and bereaved:

> I have found that patients […] typically select an inanimate object – a symbolic bridge (or link) to the representation of the dead person – to use in a magical way. I have called these objects 'linking objects' and phenomena used in a similar way 'linking phenomena'. Such objects mainly provide a locus for externalized contact between aspects of the mourner's self-representation and aspects of the representation of the deceased. The mourner sees them as containing elements of himself and of the one he has lost. By using this linking object, the mourner can keep alive the illusion that he has the power […] to return the dead person to life

> […]; that is, he has the illusion of absolute control over the psychological meeting ground that is afforded by the linking object or linking phenomena.[490]

This is the role of Valérie's painting: to provide a locus for continued contact between bereaved parent and deceased child, a psychological meeting place. The painting has one advantage over the gravesite: it is portable. It can be removed from the wall and taken wherever Valérie travels, giving her a permanent, tangible link to her son. The painting also has one distinct disadvantage, however, in comparison to the real garden: now the continuing bond is two levels removed from the child itself. Valérie cannot have the child because he is dead. She can no longer visit the natural deathscape in which the child is buried because she has left Venice. She now must content herself with an image of the garden, as she does not even possess an image of her son himself. Valérie surmounts this disadvantage by having her own image inserted into the painting of the garden. Instead of allowing her husband to commission an ordinary portrait of her, and privately asking the painter to also create a picture of the gravesite of her child, Valérie fuses the two images together.

A general linking object, according to Volkan, allows the mourner to externalise their mourning. It contains an element of the deceased, in that it either belonged to them, or reminds the bereaved of some aspect of their appearance or personality. It also contains a part of the bereaved person's own self, in that they are able to hold it, and to pour some of their feelings towards the deceased into it. The object provides a focal point, therefore, in which both deceased and bereaved are able to 'meet'. As Volkan states, the linking object 'stands symbolically for aspects of both self- and object representations […]. It functions as an external meeting ground for these representations, permitting the illusion of reunion to be kept alive'.[491] Valérie's painting is an intriguing example of a linking object, since the representations of both deceased and mourner are not figurative, they are literal. Normally a linking object, according to Volkan, symbolically stands for both the mourner's self and the deceased's representation. However, in the painting, Valérie has herself physically placed within the garden next to her child's tomb. In so doing she not only makes the linking object symbolically stand for her representation of her 'self' as a bereaved mother trying to gain contact with a lost child, but she actually ensures that the linking object includes a real, visual representation of her 'self': her own painted image. In this way the painting itself acts as a continuing bond in that when she looks at it she will bring herself closer to the

[490] Volkan, p.20.
[491] Ibid., p.118.

child. However, the image of Valérie within the painting in fact creates a continuing bond within a continuing bond, because she has maintained the physical proximity between living mother and dead son by ensuring her constant presence within the object itself, juxtaposed with that of the dead child's tomb. Valérie now is not only similar to the figure in Constance Mayer's painting *La Mère infortunée*, she could easily have been that mother.

As well as a visual representation of the self and the deceased, Valérie's painting of the natural deathscape also physically reproduces a visual version of Volkan's 'psychological meeting ground', thus allowing the distance between the worlds of the living and the dead to be crossed. Mother and child are permitted to meet in the natural space of the graveside garden, with the result that Valérie is now able to communicate to Adolphe through nature, where literal messages are impossible. Just as in the real garden itself, willows appear in the painting, a symbol to convey to the child Valérie's grief at his loss. She even allows Mother Nature to assume the roles she herself could not fulfil. The laburnum tree and its flowers literally caress the grave, as the mother herself would wish to caress the living child. Furthermore, Valérie imagines she sees the image of her son's soul in the clouds, echoing her hopes that her child has attained everlasting life in Heaven. Again, this shows aspects of nature providing a home for Adolphe in a way that his mother cannot. Volkan argues that linking objects have a 'role in keeping the mourning process in a "frozen" state, while at the same time keeping the patient "protected" from full-blown depression and/or suicide'.[492] This is what the painting achieves for Valérie. It keeps her bond with the child alive, allows her mourning to be expressed visually for those who cannot comprehend, provides a place where mother and child are forever together, and protects her from the full onslaught of depression.

Garden design, it seems, plays an important part in the expression of maternal grief. Physically moulding the landscape, and speaking through the language of gardens, enables communication both from mother to child, and also from the mother to those in the outside world who do not understand her grief. Communication takes place within nature in a way that it could not elsewhere, and communication takes place via nature when words alone do not suffice.

[492] Ibid., p.355.

Part 4: Nature and the Abandoned Child in Genlis's *Les Mères rivales ou la calomnie*

A further example of an interrupted mother-child relationship exists in cases of child abandonment. This, like infant mortality, was another persistent problem in the late-eighteenth century. Mercier states:

> Le nombre des enfants trouvés recueillis dans les hôpitaux est considérable dans tous les pays, surtout dans les grandes villes, et ne cesse d'augmenter au cours de tout le XVIIIe siècle. A Paris, les registres de la Maison de la Couche donnent des chiffres en progression constante.[493]

Mercier provides statistics regarding the number of children abandoned in Paris from 1680 up to the Revolution. The number drops slightly after the peak of 7,676 abandonments out of 18,713 births in 1772, but by 1790 the number of foundlings is still recorded at 5,842,[494] and in 1793 the number still reached 4,230, according to Delasselle.[495] Child abandonment began to fall steadily throughout the nineteenth century, but during the early decades of the 1800s, the number of foundlings continued to be strikingly high: 'Dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle, il semble que 4 ou 5 enfants naturels sur 10 sont abandonnés'.[496] This is surprising, as it does not seem to fit with the image of the new, loving mother, though there are three likely reasons why foundlings remained so numerous. Firstly, a child's family may have been killed during the Terror. Secondly, many families were still poor, and may have found it necessary to hand a child to the foundlings' hospices to ensure its survival. Finally, if a child were born illegitimately, often a mother suffered pressure to renounce it for the sake of family honour.

Presumably for the very reason that it was so common, child abandonment features in novels penned by contemporary women. However, given that women were now encouraged to love their children, and that most women took up this new role enthusiastically, it is unsurprising to see that when a mother was forced to give up her child, then she, like the grieving mother, would suffer. As literature began to show images of the loving mother grieving for the loss of her dead child, so too did it show images of sorrow and guilt on the part of women who had to give up their children.

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493 Mercier, *L'Enfant dans la Société du XVIIIe siècle,* p.56.
494 Ibid.
495 Claude Delasselle, 'Les enfants abandonées de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris: l'année 1793', *Enfance abandonnée et société en Europe, XIVe-XXe siècle. Actes du colloque international de Rome (30 et 31 janvier 1987)*, (Publications de l'École française de Rome), 140:1 (1991), 503-512 (p.503).
496 Monique Maksud and Alfred Nizard, 'Enfants trouvés, reconnus, légitimés: Les Statistiques de la filiation en France, aux XIXe et XXe siècles', *Population,* 6 (1977), 1159-1220 (p.1165).

Genlis's *Les Mères rivales* is one example of such a novel. Rosalba, the comtesse de Rosmond, gives birth out of wedlock and, following family pressure, gives her child to Pauline, the marquise d'Erneville. Rosalba attempts to atone, in several ways, throughout the rest of her life for having abandoned her motherly duties. Firstly, she vows never to marry, instead deciding to help another woman, Agnès, who is in a similar situation, but who lacks money to support herself. Rosalba takes Agnès into her home, an act which provides her with an ally, but which does little to assuage her sorrow and remorse. Rosalba therefore decides to create an allegorical garden in which the visitor will be offered sage counsel and shown the path to moral virtue, salvation and happiness: the things that she wishes she could achieve herself, but believes she has failed to. The creation of the garden helps, but does not entirely resolve her problems. Rosalba therefore seeks to reinsert herself into the life of her daughter, Léocadie, to communicate with her, and to become the mother that she has never been. This attempt is somewhat successful, in that it gives Rosalba brief maternal happiness. However, she is forever aware that Léocadie loves Pauline as a mother equally, if not more. Consequently, Rosalba's feelings of guilt and sorrow persist. Her final attempt at retribution involves taking the veil. She hopes that dedicating her life to God will atone for her mistakes, and for the problems and emotional turmoil she has caused Léocadie, Pauline, and the latter's husband, the marquis d'Erneville. Each of Rosalba's endeavours to atone exhibits one of the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. She is charitable in providing Agnès with a home; faith is exhibited upon her ultimate decision to take the veil; and hope is experienced in both the creation of the garden and the attempts to communicate with Léocadie. The present discussion will demonstrate how Rosalba moulds the natural landscape to attempt to renew contact with Léocadie, to deal with her own emotions of sorrow and guilt, and to atone for the abandonment.

Like Valérie's garden, that of Rosalba also comprises tamed nature: flora that she arranges and plants to convey meaning. '[A] garden', we are told by McIntosh, 'can convey meaning in the same way that a building can',[497] but how does the comtesse create meaning in her allegorical garden? Mosser and Teyssot argue that 'the garden always has two roles, and it is as inseparable from its utilitarian function as it is from its aesthetic or ideal function'.[498] The comtesse's personal emotions are coupled with

[497] McIntosh, p.1.
[498] Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot, 'Introduction: The Architecture of the Garden and Architecture in the Garden', in *The History of Garden Design: The Western Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present Day,* ed. by Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1991), pp.11-23 (p.11).

doctrines of Christian virtue as they pervade both the visually aesthetic features of the garden – such as the flowers, trees, and picturesque view – and the utilitarian aspects within the garden, for example the paths and signposts. Most often, personal emotions are exhibited in the horticultural aesthetic features, whilst doctrines of Christian virtue are exhibited through the paths and signposts.

Upon a visit to the comtesse's estate, the vicomte de St. Méran is given a tour of the garden by the hostess. He subsequently describes it in a letter to his and Pauline's friend M. du Resnel, so that the latter will be able to acquaint Pauline with a marvellous horticultural allegory of virtue. In his description, he takes the reader on the same tour of the garden that he himself experiences. The full description is too lengthy to include here, but as visitors to the garden (and indeed the reader) are intended to walk through it from beginning to end in order to appreciate the full effect, the description is provided in its entirety in Appendix V.

Rosalba designs her allegorical garden to represent *La Vie humaine*. Consequently, the first feature encountered is a representation of childhood. The *pavilion de l'Enfance* contains frescos and statues of happy children playing, and immediately outside the *pavilion de l'Enfance* we encounter flowers and natural greenery intended to symbolise the innocence of infancy. We are shown 'une longue allée, tapissée d'un gazon émaillé de fleurs; de superbes vases d'albâtre posés au pied de tous les arbres, ne contiennent que des lys, symboles de l'innocence' (*LMR* II:311). She wants the innocence and virtue innate in the young to be fixed in her visitors' minds when they come to the later parts of the garden and discover that this virtue and innocence can either be upheld or ruined on entering adulthood.

The comtesse's Christian name represents another floral metaphor for innocence: Rosalba, from the Latin *rosa*, meaning 'rose' and *alba*, signifying 'white'. Before inheriting her title, the comtesse was known only as Rosalba or Rose, signifying that as a child she was pure and innocent, qualities symbolised by the white rose. It was only later in life that she began avidly reading libertine novels, and became involved with friends who led her astray, both of which caused her to lose that innocence. At roughly the same time as she begins to keep the company of people of whom her family do not approve, her grandmother, unaware of Rosalba's conduct or of her later affair and pregnancy, decides that her Christian name should be altered: 'Ma grand-mère trouvant que le nom de *Rose*, mon nom de baptême, manquait de noblesse et d'élégance, me donna celui d'*Uranie*, ce qui ne me parut qu'une idée bien simple, car depuis longtemps les flatteurs qui

entouraient la duchesse, me comparaient aux Muses' (*LMR* IV:174). At the very point in her life when her virtue begins to dissipate, Rosalba's family replace the name signifying innocence with one suited to the fact that she draws attention from men flattering and flirting with her.

The visitor to the garden arrives next at a fork in the path marked by 'une statue de la Vérité' (*LMR* II:311), upon which is engraved a warning which informs the visitor that they must select which path to take. We are advised to choose carefully, for '[l]'un est celui de la sagesse, et l'autre est celui de l'erreur' (*LMR* II:312). It could not be plainer that the comtesse advises the visitor to heed the warning she herself ignored, and not to select the path she followed. The tour takes us briefly down *la route de l'Erreur* to see what features the garden displays there, before forcing us to retrace our steps and pursue the virtuous path. In description reminiscent of Biblical scripture, upon first glance the *route de l'Erreur* appears to be the easier path; it seems less rocky and difficult, and in places displays attractive features. However this cursory first impression is deceitful; underneath, the path's true nature is rocky, dangerous and damning:

> L'entrée de *la route d'Erreur* est décorée d'un élégant portique en treillage, recouvert de chèvrefeuille. Cette route est tortueuse, mais unie et facile; on y voit des deux côtés des caisses remplies de fleurs, qui ne cachent qu'à moitié des buissons *d'épines*, des orties et des plantes véritables productions du terrein [sic]. (*LMR* II:312)[499]

At the end of this path lies a labyrinth, at the centre of which stands the cypress, long associated with cemeteries. The meaning could not be plainer: if you stray down the path of Error, you will lose your way in the labyrinth, where you will meet death.

From the moment that the visitor is presented with the choice of paths, the description of the allegorical garden and our tour through it bear striking resemblances to Bunyan's similarly allegorical story *The Pilgrim's Progress.*[500] The religious intertextual references are significant: they show Rosalba attempting to achieve salvation and assuage her guilty emotions through atonement. Seeking redemption from his burden of sin,

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[499] Original emphasis.

[500] At first it may seem unusual that Genlis, a Catholic, should engage intertextually with a Protestant writer like Bunyan. However, at the end of her 1782 novel *Adèle et Théodore* Genlis compiles a list of everything Adèle has read between the ages of six and twenty-two, in which is included another seventeenth century English Protestant text: John Milton's *Paradise Lost.* See: Mme de Genlis, *Adèle et Théodore, ou Lettres sur l'éducation, contenant tous les principes relatifs aux trois differents plans d'éducation, des princes, des jeunes personnes, et des hommes,* 3 vols (Paris: Chez M. Lambert et F. J. Baudouin, 1782), III, 419. Genlis even has several English characters in *Adèle et Théodore* exclaiming 'que la Paradis perdu est le plus beau poème qui existe dans aucune langue vivante', Ibid., III, 24. Genlis did encourage the reading of such material, therefore. This, coupled with Genlis's renown as an Anglophile who spent much time in Britain in the early 1790s, and the striking similarities between her descriptions of the allegorical garden in *Les Mères rivales* and parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* suggests both that Genlis was aware of Bunyan's text and that she engaged with it deliberately.

Bunyan's protagonist, Christian, journeys from his home in 'the City of Destruction' to the 'Celestial City', Mount Zion. Similarly, after being shown the *route de l'Erreur,* both the comtesse and the visitor to her garden must undertake a journey from the point of error to the pinnacle of virtue and paradise which is to be found at the end of the garden. Following the *route de la Vertu*, we notice that, in contrast to the path of Error, this road appears hard, but soon becomes easier: 'On entre d'abord dans une allée droite, mais étroite et raboteuse; on voit devant soi un chemin très-escarpé… mais à mesure qu'on avance, la route s'embellit. On arrive dans une plaine riante, entrecoupée de ruisseaux' (*LMR* II:314).[501] The adjectives 'droite' and 'étroite' emphasise the moral nature of the path as well as its physical appearance. These predicates contrast sharply with the 'route tortueuse' which constitutes the path of Error, and the twisted labyrinth which appears at its end. In Bunyan's tale, when Christian asks of Good Will, 'Is there no turnings nor windings, by which a stranger may lose the way?', he receives the reply, 'Yes, there are many ways […] and they are crooked, and wide; but thus thou may'st distinguish the right from the wrong, that only being the straight and narrow'.[502] In the 1772 translation of the text, this response was rendered in French as follows:

> Oui, il y en a plusieurs […] mais ils sont tortueux et larges; ce qui vous fera distinguer le bon du mauvais, c'est que le bon est le seul qui soit étroit, et en droite ligne.[503]

Genlis's description of the comtesse's allegorical garden echoes Bunyan's text very firmly, therefore. The straight and narrow road, which, as Bunyan constantly reminds us, leads to the rewards of everlasting life in paradise, is the road that Rosalba wishes she had pursued from the beginning, and which she has since been trying to rediscover. The paths, therefore – utilitarian and practical features of the garden (in that they allow the reader to follow a course through it) – are associated with the doctrines of Christian moral virtue.

The comtesse exercises her own experience to guide the visitor, and to dissuade them from making her immoral mistakes. Throughout our tour, the garden implies that an individual should neither give way to licentious behaviour nor abandon a child. Rosalba's advice appears in the form of verses on the plinths of statues. The statue of Truth near the cypress in the labyrinth, for example, bears the inscription:

> Tu peux encore retourner en arrière!

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[501] Original ellipsis.
[502] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Penguin, 1987), p.27.
[503] John Bunyan, *Le Pélerinage d'un nommé Chrétien, écrit sous l'allégorie d'un songe,* trans. anon (Paris: Frères Estienne, 1772), p.35.

> Tu peux encore poursuivre une heureuse carrière
> […]
> On passe de l'erreur au crime
> En osant le franchir; dans un affreux abyme
> Un pas de plus va te précipiter.
> Là, tu me reverras, mais pour t'épouvanter. (*LMR* II:313)

The opening two lines act as a physical signpost offering directions to the wanderer; thus, again, a pragmatic feature within the garden communicates a moral message. The anaphora in these two lines ('Tu peux encore') reminds the visitor, however, that in real life such signposts can only offer counsel, and cannot force us down the righteous route. The expression 'on passe de l'erreur au crime' informs those familiar with Rosalba's history that whilst she committed a grave error in succumbing to her adolescent passions and enjoying extra-marital sexual relations with a married man, this was not her most guilty sin. The crime, the abandonment of her child, that she moved on to in the wake of the error, was her true sin, and the true cause of her remorse and sorrow. The comtesse thus moulds the landscape to suit the tale she wishes to tell. The garden has been tamed to the point where its features in fact become the mouthpiece of its creator.

Describing the intentions and achievements of garden design throughout history, Mosser and Teyssot state:

> The garden is […] intended to fulfil private needs for peace and seclusion and at the same time to provide for the common good. […] The garden is an external expression of an interior world, a setting for meditation under an open sky and for the revelation of secrets to those worthy of hearing them.[504]

This is exactly what Rosalba's garden achieves. Firstly, it provides space for peace and seclusion from the outside world, space in which she can reflect upon her personal emotions and attempt to deal with them. Secondly, however, it simultaneously provides for the common good. Mosser and Teyssot's remark refers to public gardens constructed to allow the 'common man' to experience the bounty provided by the natural world. However, Rosalba not only makes provision for the emotional wellbeing of visitors to her garden, she 'provides for the common good' in the sense that she attempts to improve the morals of society through the garden's construction. The garden is intended to teach as well as to heal. Thirdly, Rosalba's garden is indeed an expression of her interior world, and a method for the 'revelations of secrets', in that it displays both her private emotion and her sins.

The journey continues, and the visitor is encouraged to ascend

[504] Mosser and Teyssot, p.11.

> une haute montagne qui paraît couverte de rochers et de ronces!... Fortifié par *l'Espérance,* on se décide courageusement à la gravir: on n'y trouve d'abord aucun sentier battu; il faut marcher péniblement, à travers les épines, sur les roches glissantes… mais bientôt les rochers disparaissent, la montagne s'aplanit, la verdure et les fleurs se reproduisent, et la perspective surtout s'embellit… On monte, on s'élève toujours, par un chemin doux, agréable, qui n'a rien de fatiguant… on aperçoit dans le lointain une foule d'objets ravissants!… Enfin on parvient au sommet de cette longue montagne.[505] (*LMR* II:314-315)

Bunyan's Christian must climb the 'Hill of Difficulty' on his path to salvation.[506] The path up Rosalba's hill is similarly steep and difficult. The garden's path of virtue, like its real counterpart, is not smooth; the visitor must undergo severe toil before the path begins to show rewards. However, the path ends atop a mountain where rest is granted to the visitor upon another statue-signpost, which states: 'Après les travaux le repos' (*LMR* II:315). The mountain also offers a glorious vantage point upon the course taken to arrive there: 'On découvre de là des cascades, des fleurs, des buissons de lauriers qui étaient masqués de l'autre côté par des roches effrayantes!' (*LMR* II:315-316). Again, a parallel can be drawn with Bunyan. The image of a mountain top as a vantage and rest point in Rosalba's garden is akin to the image of the summit of the 'Delectable Mountains': '[S]o they went up the mountains to behold the gardens, and orchards, the vineyards, and fountains of water, where they also drank, and washed themselves, and did freely eat of the vineyards'.[507] However, although the visitor rests on the mountain, it is not Mount Zion. We have not yet reached the end of the journey and the Heaven which awaits if we continue alone the route of virtue.

Mindful that Rosalba has designed her garden to mirror *La Vie humaine,* in order to arrive in allegorical paradise, the reader must pass through allegorical death, just as Bunyan's protagonist walks through the 'Valley of the Shadow of Death', before arriving at Mount Zion. The final spaces encountered in the garden bring us full circle, from birth and the *pavilion de l'Enfance,* through to death and eternal awakening. Therefore the penultimate space in the garden presents a visual representation of eternal repose and slumber. For this representation, the comtesse has chosen the Cave of Sleep from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[508] Genlis's Cave of Sleep is alike in almost every particular to that of Ovid. Yet, unlike the references to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the Ovidian references highlight, not a

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[505] Original ellipses.
[506] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p.39.
[507] Ibid., p.104.
[508] Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is also on Adèle's reading list at the end of *Adèle et Théodore*. See Dow, *Adelaide and Théodore*, p.516, n.12. In fact, in addition, *L'Instruction sur les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* by Ragois is one of the works Adèle copies out by hand. See Genlis, *Adèle et Théodore,* III, 413. Genlis was clearly very familiar with Ovid's text.

call to Christian virtue as a means of expiating the sins of the past, but rather an attempt to suppress the private emotion felt at having lost a child through one's own actions. As such, these Ovidian intertextual references become less associated with utilitarian features in the garden and more with the aesthetic. Indeed, the classical intertext perhaps appeals more to the comtesse's poetic nature than to her religious one. She did, after all, first seduce the Marquis d'Erneville whilst dressed as the hunting goddess Diana, firing arrows with messages attached.

The garden's cave, *l'antre de Morphée,* is described thus:

> Cette grotte charmante, entourée de pavots et de roses, est située dans une île ravissante par la beauté des ombrages et des eaux; après avoir passé sur un pont d'une légèreté et d'une élégance remarquables, on découvre la grotte; l'intérieur en est tapissé de mousse, elle est remplie de plantes odoriférantes qui exhalent les plus doux parfums; un ruisseau qui la traverse tombant mollement sur du gazon, semble, par son agréable murmure, inviter au repos. (*LMR* II:316)

The murmuring of the stream, embodied in the alliteration on the letters 'm' and 'l' coupled with the sibilant 's' sounds, echoes precisely the same onomatopoeia in Ovid's Latin description of the same stream, in front of the same cave. In both cases, the effect created is lulling and soporific:

> muta quies habitat; saxo tamen exit ab imo
> rivus aquae Lethes, per quem cum murmure labens
> invitat somnum crepitantibus unda lapillis.[509]

Lulling a child to sleep is a maternal action Rosalba never achieved. She now wishes herself to sleep in order to forget. The stream appearing in both texts is Lethe, river of forgetfulness. Rosalba hopes that as she crosses it, she will forget her pain and leave behind all memories of her sorrowful crime.

The poppies in the cave in the comtesse's garden also feature in the Ovid, and recall the sedative effects of opium:

> ante fores antri fecunda papavera florent
> innumeraeque herbae, quarum de lacte soporem
> Nox legit et spargit per opacas umida terras.[510]

This, too, is an attempt on the part of the comtesse to deal with her emotional turmoil, by dulling her senses. She hints, through the mouthpiece of her garden, that in fact only in the eternal slumber of death will she be able to find the peace and self-forgiveness that she desires after committing the crime of giving up a child. Thus, the Cave of Sleep does

[509] Ovid, *Metamorphoses XI,* ed. by G. M. H. Murphy, (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1979), p.36. 'Hushed rest lives there; however, from the bottom of the rock the stream of Lethe's water pours forth; through which the gliding wave invites sleep with the murmuring of its rustling pebbles'. (Translation my own.)
[510] Ibid., p.36. 'Before the mouth of the cave fertile poppies bloom, and innumerable herbs, from whose juice damp Night gathers and sprinkles sleep through the dark world'. (Translation my own.)

not represent Mosser and Teyssot's notion of 'providing for the common good' which is seen so pointedly in the uphill struggle along the allegorical path of virtue. Rather Ovid's cave adheres to Mosser and Teyssot's second imperative of a garden: the 'external expression of an interior world'. The garden is therefore aesthetic as much as pragmatic; Rosalba specifically landscapes it to express personal emotion juxtaposed with Christian doctrine.

The final stop on Rosalba's tour is paradise itself – the Zion of Bunyan's tale, or the Elysium of antiquity – which can only be seen after passing through the Cave of Sleep. We are told: 'Par de-là de cette île, tout le reste du jardin offre un véritable *Elysée*, où le goût, l'art et la nature ont rassemblé tout ce qu'on peut imaginer de plus charmant et de plus varié' (*LMR* II:317).[511] Now we have come full circle in the allegorical garden, but we are only permitted eternal life if we have followed the path of moral virtue. Genlis compares the two mothers, Pauline and Rosalba, throughout the novel, and it is evident that she wishes to counsel her readers against renouncing motherhood. Perhaps Genlis was addressing the many mothers still abandoning their children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. If so, Genlis creates a mouthpiece for her own thoughts through her novel, just as Rosalba creates a mouthpiece for her words and emotions through her garden.

The garden is linked to hope for Rosalba, because in designing it, she is eventually able to communicate with her daughter. After St. Méran describes the allegorical garden to Resnel and Pauline, Pauline is so struck by the description that she informs Léocadie of it. Léocadie, unaware that the garden's creator is in fact her biological mother, is enraptured at the thought of such a place, and asks for a detailed plan of the garden so that she may construct a model. Thus, unintentionally, the manipulation of the landscape to create a garden which would help the comtesse deal with her emotions at having abandoned her child, in fact permits communication from mother to daughter. However, the discourse permitted is one-way: Léocadie receives the plan for the garden, but does not send a missive in return to Rosalba. Rosalba, therefore, employs a new method of communicating through nature to open a two-way discourse.

On several occasions the comtesse picks a rose and sends it to Léocadie with a message attached. On the first occasion, Léocadie is walking in the countryside, and stops by a river bank:

[511] Original emphasis.

> Au bout de quelques minutes, jetant les yeux sur la rivière qui coulait à mes pieds, j'aperçus la plus jolie chose du monde; c'était la plus belle rose que j'aie vue, qui flottait sur la surface de l'eau, et qui, entraînée par le courant, se dirigeait doucement vers moi. […] Quelle fut ma surprise en voyant sur la grosse branche un petit morceau de vélin attaché avec une soie, et sur lequel ces mots étaient écrits: *A Léocadie!* J'examinai la fleur d'une beauté toute nouvelle pour moi: c'était une rose mousseuse. (*LMR* III:267)[512]

The *rose mousseuse* was believed to convey love in the language of flowers, according to de La Tour.[513] Indeed, the rose had been connected with love even in the Middle Ages, when *Le Roman de la rose* described and discussed the Art of Love. It is fitting, therefore, that this flower be employed to transmit messages by the mother wishing to communicate love to her daughter. Moreover, as we have seen, the rose is tied to Rosalba through her Christian name, and is consequently the perfect aspect of nature to communicate her voice. Léocadie does sense something maternal about the rose, perhaps because of its long-standing representation of love – though she attributes the gift to Pauline, rather than to her birth mother (*LMR* III:268). The rose also represents, as noted earlier, regeneration and rebirth, as if Rosalba wishes her daughter to be 'reborn' in order that she might have a second chance at fulfilling her maternal role.

The following day, Léocadie returns to the river and again finds a rose floating towards her. 'Cette rose éclatante', she says 'était plus épanouie, plus fraîche, plus belle encore que celle de la veille' (*LMR* III:268). The rose's ability to grow in beauty and magnificence indicates the build towards the climax which will occur when mother and daughter eventually meet. On the third occasion Léocadie ventures towards the river, a messenger offers her 'une superbe branche de *roses mousseuses*' (*LMR* III:270).[514] Again, we see the natural imagery amplifying (this time in number rather than beauty) as we near the climax. Léocadie inquires whether the roses have been sent by her mother, and receives the response: 'Oui, […] *mais par celle à qui vous devez le jour!*' (*LMR* III:270-271).[515] On this occasion, the roses are accompanied by a letter proving all that we suspect regarding Rosalba's emotions. She begs Léocadie to meet her, reasoning 'O procure cet instant de bonheur à l'infortunée qui, depuis quinze ans, n'a connu de l'amour maternel que les inquiétudes et les douleurs qu'il peut causer!' (*LMR* III:264). Léocadie is requested to go to a certain tree, in the hollow of which, Rosalba will be concealed.

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[512] Original emphasis.
[513] De La Tour, p.303.
[514] Original emphasis.
[515] Original emphasis.

When Léocadie arrives at the tree, the reader witnesses the dénouement of the mother-daughter correspondence:

> Ne sachant point si ma mère était arrivée déjà, je suivis ses ordres, je passai du côté du banc, et je m'arrêtai là, en m'appuyant sur l'arbre; j'avais un tel battement de cœur, qu'il m'était impossible de proférer une parole […]. J'écoutais avec autant d'attention que de saisissement, lorsque j'entendis distinctement soupirer!... Je tombai à genoux, j'étendis les bras pour embrasser cet arbre cher et sacré! Un ruisseau de larmes inondait mon visage: O ma mère, m'écriai-je, mon âme entière est attachée sur cette écorce!... A ces mots, ma mère ne répondit que par des sanglots et des gémissements. Ce que je sentis alors est inexprimable; […] mes bras se détachèrent de l'arbre chéri que je pressais contre mon sein, mes yeux se fermèrent, et je m'évanouis. (*LMR* III:275-276)

Natural elements now permit Léocadie to contact her birth mother in return. As secrecy must be maintained to protect Rosalba's identity, she remains hidden in the hollow of the tree. Léocadie therefore embraces the tree and addresses both it and her mother concurrently. She pours out her love towards the tree, exclaiming that her soul is attached to the bark. The tree is a powerful symbol with regard to the concept of roots and identity. Léocadie has never known her genuine family tree, and on the first opportunity that arises for her to speak to her birth mother, she is literally permitted to return to the roots of her family. The tree, the mother, the family and the roots of her existence all become fused as one. When she embraces the tree, she embraces her identity, and accepts who she truly is. Such emotion proves too great, and she collapses. Upon regaining consciousness, she discovers that her mother is holding her. In this way, the incident at the 'family tree' also enables physical contact to be established between mother and child.

The rose and the tree are significant aspects of the natural world employed by Genlis to establish a connection, not only emotionally, but also verbally between mother and daughter. As we saw in the opening to this chapter, McIntosh's 'third ingredient of the language [of gardens] relates to the plants in the garden and the meanings they are given'. Elements of nature in Genlis's novel not only have their own language, they actually have a language superlative to that of the characters. Nature enables the communication of emotions and feelings which may otherwise have had to remain unspoken. The discourse established through natural objects causes Rosalba to hope that the situation between mother and daughter can be resolved. Indeed the two characters do obtain a close bond after this meeting.

However, re-establishing contact with Léocadie will not resolve the fact that the child already has, and loves wholeheartedly, another mother. In paradoxical irony, the tree which permits discourse between Léocadie and her birth mother, is in fact a tree

which has been linked with Pauline throughout the novel. The tree was christened 'L'arbre de Pauline' (*LMR* I:183) when the latter was a child herself, and subsequently became Léocadie's tree when Pauline adopted the baby girl: 'Léocadie s'est emparée de mon vieux chêne', says Pauline. 'Elle soutient qu'il est à elle, et depuis cette usurpation il s'appelle l'*arbre de Léocadie'* (*LMR* II:227).[516] The reconciliatory image of mother and daughter embracing at the point of symbolic natural 'roots' is therefore fraught with maternal complications, a factor which echoes Léocadie's association of the first rose with Pauline, not Rosalba. In placing herself inside 'L'arbre de Pauline', Rosalba has in fact been attempting to displace both a mother figure which already existed, and a mother-daughter relationship which was already positive. Rosalba finally realises that in order for Léocadie to be happy, she must be left to continue in the manner in which she grew up: with Pauline as her mother. The only possibility left to Rosalba is to attempt to atone through Faith, and to confine herself in a convent, endeavouring to achieve spiritual salvation rather than earthly happiness.

Part 5: Conclusion

Genlis and Krüdener both capture the Rousseauesque Zeitgeist regarding motherhood through their portrayal of the natural world. However, they expand upon Rousseau's ideas, as well as echoing them. They do not limit themselves solely to presenting links between the mother figure and idyllic nature. They explore these links in specific and unusual ways, and, in so doing, they bring to light some of the problems regarding motherhood that were still extant in their contemporary world, particularly the problems of infant mortality and child abandonment.

In Chapters 1 and 2 the problems women face are mirrored in or provided by the natural landscape either *tel quel* (the wild nature of Chapter 2) or as it has been designed by someone else (the tamed nature of Chapter 1). In Chapter 3, however, the natural landscape does not address problems faced during motherhood until the mother in question has tamed and sculpted it.[517] The mother figure assumes the role of a landscape gardener, and in so doing discovers the ability to communicate via nature. Furthermore, in landscaping their gardens, Valérie and Rosalba do not employ only one type of 'garden language'. They engage with the language of flowers which was popular at the turn of the

[516] Original emphasis.

[517] One might argue this was also the case for Souza's Adèle, who creates an English-style garden on her island. However, the island provides her with a space for her desired freedom even before the garden is constructed. Simply being there is enough for Adèle to resolve her desperate desire for freedom.

nineteenth century, as the publication of de La Tour's *Le Langage des fleurs* attests; their gardens, both utilitarian and aesthetic, prove to be perfect examples for an application of modern paradigms of garden language such as those set out by McIntosh; and they engage with historical symbolism from several different eras, including ancient, mediaeval, early modern and contemporary. Genlis interacts with different types of intertext from different eras depending on the function she wishes to attribute to specific areas of her garden: the Ovidian references become associated with aesthetics and inner emotion, whilst English Protestant (and Biblical) intertextual references are associated with utilitarian features of her garden and with didacticism. Krüdener, on the other hand, engages with Biblical imagery, in particular willow trees, in order to express inner emotion rather than doctrinal messages.

It is the combination of all the aspects of garden language uncovered here and of several intertextual references employed in varying manners that enables mothers to achieve the two forms of communication desired: the messages of love to the child and the messages of grief to the outside world. However, we can go beyond this, for this chapter has proved that not only are features of the natural world used as a means of achieving communication, but that in fact communication can take place via nature where ordinary language does not suffice. Nature is therefore often the only means of permitting otherwise impossible communication, as Genlis herself argued.

CHAPTER 4

Nature and Madness

> Une remarque essentielle, c'est qu'il se trouve moins de fous furieux dans les Hôpitaux et les pensions de Paris, que de folles furieuses. […] Je conclus en conséquence que, par rapport à la construction des Hôpitaux, il faut y préparer plus de logements pour les femmes, que pour les hommes.[518]

For the Romantics in France, as in Britain, '[t]he victimized madwoman became almost a cult figure.[519] Many analyses draw on Victorian studies of insanity to discuss portrayed links between women and madness in the English nineteenth-century novel.[520] Yet, surprisingly little exists documenting either the novelistic portrayal of madness as a feminine concept in early nineteenth-century French fiction, or the links that this portrayal may share with French attitudes towards insanity at the time. Through an analysis of Cottin's *Malvina* and *Mathilde,* this chapter fills a small part of this void. Specifially, it analyses how Cottin uses spaces of the natural world to portray madness as a female response to oppressive male-dominated society, and how she contributes to the discussions of the era regarding how madness should be treated.

Madness often features in the novels of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century female writers which discuss women's oppression. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, madness and methods of treating madness were growing concerns, especially regarding women, who were more likely to be pathologised and therefore confined on account of madness than men. Madness and incarceration themselves, then, can be added to our list of the problems that women faced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, alongside arranged marriages, confinement to the domestic sphere and failure to uphold the motherhood ideal. Secondly, however, madness (and incarceration) is not only a problem in its own right, it is also a direct consequence of the oppression, rejection or grief that women faced in other areas of their lives. We can argue either that madness is an inevitable result of the depression caused by the problems which precede it, or – and this will form the main angle of the present chapter – we can

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[518] Jacques-René Tenon, *Mémoires sur les hôpitaux de Paris* (Paris: L'Imprimerie de PH.-D. Pierres, 1788), pp.219-220.
[519] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p.10.
[520] Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Sandra M. Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979); R. A. Houston, 'Madness and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Social History*, 27:3 (2002), 309-326.

argue that madness is used as a form of active feminine protest against the dominant, patriarchal society which provokes a woman's unhappiness.

Part 1: Changes in the Treatment of the Insane

In the late eighteenth century the perception of madness underwent radical reviews, resulting in a re-evaluation of the purpose of institutions and the practices employed therein. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tolerance of certain groups amongst the lower echelons of society, including the poor, the criminal and the insane, had waned dramatically. The Enlightenment period, with its focus on reason and rationality, encouraged the ostracisation of those who did not conform to the norms of the social order.[521] The spaces that social outcasts inhabited were constructed to hide them physically from view, as much as to exclude them socially, and as such, the 'houses of confinement were located in the periphery […]. Madness, indigence, and crime were reduced to a single category and expelled from the visual horizon'.[522]

Hiding these outcasts, however, did not suffice, and more severe methods of treatment were employed: institutions were developed into houses of punishment and correction. The methods and tools of punishment are detailed in article twelve of the edict of 1656 which founded the Hôpital général, and which is cited by Foucault in his seminal work on the history of madness. They included gallows, irons, prisons, dungeons within the hospital, and many other forms of detention and chastisement: '[L]'Hôpital général est un étrange pouvoir que le roi établit entre la police et la justice, aux limites de la loi: le tiers ordre de la répression'.[523] The need to ostracise and the desire to punish the mad arose out of a double-headed fear: the public saw insanity as 'a danger to be contained and neutralized',[524] and they feared that mental illness was on the increase: 'On craint qu'ils [les fous] n'engorgent le pays'.[525]

The advent of the Revolution witnessed a historic change in public consciousness regarding the mad. The political freedom called for by the Revolution would bring to a close the age of confinement:

> France and Britain were the early leaders in the field [of psychiatry], and in both countries events occurred in the late eighteenth century that focused attention on the issues of madness. […] In France […] the crisis that focused attention on

[521] José Monleón, *A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.29.
[522] Ibid. p.25.
[523] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p.61.
[524] Yannick Ripa, *Women and Madness: The Incarceration of Women in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.12.
[525] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie,* p.78.

> insanity – and opened a career to the outsider Pinel – was more thoroughgoing and profound: the French Revolution, which seemed at first to promise liberation for all those, including beggars, vagabonds, and the insane, who had been caught up in what Michel Foucault has referred to as the 'great confinement.' A few believed, if only briefly, that creating a new world free from oppression would end all causes of insanity.[526]

Freedom from oppression would certainly lead to the physical liberation of the insane, but it was thought that such freedom might also liberate them mentally. Doctors and legislators alike shared similar beliefs, calling for the liberation of the state, the people, and in particular the imprisoned. Foucault talks of the 'espace social dont rêvait la Révolution', saying:

> Il y a donc convergence spontanée, et profondément enracinée, entre les exigences de *l'idéologie politique* et celle de la *technologie médicale*. D'un seul mouvement, médecins et hommes d'État réclament en un vocabulaire différent, mais pour des raisons essentiellement identiques, la suppression de tout ce qui peut faire obstacle à la constitution de ce nouvel espace.[527]

Article ten of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* itself, passed by the *Assemblée nationale constituente* in 1789, forbade unfair imprisonment, stating: 'Nul ne doit être accusé, arrêté, ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites'.[528] This resulted in the release of the old and poor who had been imprisoned for the sole purpose of removing them from the streets. Confinement still applied, however, to criminals and to the mad, for society did not yet know what approach to undertake to control them. They were aware that many of those condemned as insane presented a danger to themselves and society, and that it would be irresponsible to allow them to live at large with the general population. For the insane there was no easily definable alternative to confinement, therefore, and for some time it was unsure how madness should be classified or treated:

> Elle [la folie] a surtout embarrassé le législateur, qui ne pouvant manquer de sanctionner la fin de l'internement, ne savait plus en quel point de l'espace social la situer – prison, hôpital ou assistance familiale. Les mesures prises immédiatement avant ou après le début de la Révolution reflètent cette indécision.[529]

Discussions over how to handle the insane culminated in science taking precedence in the treatment of madness where law and punishment had previously dominated. Madness, at the end of the eighteenth century and the turn of the nineteenth,

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[526] Jill Harsin, 'Gender, Class, and Madness in Nineteenth Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 17:4 (1992), 1048-1070 (pp.1049-1050).
[527] Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: PUF, 1963), p.37.
[528] *La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen avec des Considérants de l'Assemblée Nationale 1789 et de la Convention Nationale 1793* (Lyon: Dépôt Général, 1880), p.10.
[529] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie,* p.440.

became a topic for medical study. Thus, the close of the Ancien Régime saw the beginnings of a desire to care for and cure the mentally ill, a state of affairs which had certainly not existed previously:

> Two of the fundamental bases of the profession in the nineteenth century – the notion that the insane might be 'curable,' and the idea of the hospital, or asylum, as a *machine à guérir* – had been put forward in the last years of the ancien regime, whose administrators had devoted two wards of the Hôtel Dieu to the curable insane.[530]

Finding the balance between the new ideas and the previous state of affairs was not simple. Madness constantly struggled to find a place in society, somewhere between criminality and malady, between contempt and sympathy, between imprisonment and hospitalisation. Even as the Revolution dawned, prisons for the mad were still being designed. Men such as Brissot and Musquinet created geometric, rigid, and cruel designs to confine those they considered to be 'perturbateurs du repos public'.[531] Yet simultaneously, others were arguing that madness was to be pitied. If the Revolution had taught people that the public needed to be liberated, but it was too dangerous to return the insane to the streets, the least that could be done was to provide a caring atmosphere in which they might be detained. Foucault declares:

> Il faut donc trouver une voie moyenne entre le devoir d'assistance que prescrit une pitié abstraite, et les craintes légitimes que suscite une épouvante réellement éprouvée; ce sera tout naturellement une assistance *intra muros*, un secours apporté au terme de cette distance que prescrit l'horreur, une pitié qui se déploiera dans l'espace ménagé depuis plus d'un siècle par l'internement et laissé vide par lui.[532]

The term 'une assistance *intra muros'* proves a useful lens through which to read the creation of symbolic natural asylums in Cottin's novels.

In the Revolutionary decade, physicians such as Pinel began to visit prisons employed as houses of correction. This was a key moment in the birth of French psychiatric history. Fervently believing that the mad should be treated as ill patients, not criminals, and that madness should be studied and cured, rather than hidden or violently punished, Pinel even 'rejected the label *fou* in favor of the more scientific *aliéné'*.[533] His philosophies on the treatment of the mad have become further celebrated through his legendary 'freeing of the insane' in 1793. Pinel is said to have personally liberated the mad prisoners of Bicêtre and La Salpêtrière from their chains, thus abrogating

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[530] Harsin, p.1053. (Original emphasis.)
[531] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie,* p.449.
[532] Ibid., pp.452-453.
[533] Jann Matlock, 'Doubling out of the Crazy House: Gender, Autobiography, and the Insane Asylum System in Nineteenth-Century France', *Representations*, 34 (1991), 166-195 (p.188, Footnote 1).

confinement and suffering, and even curing patients in the process. Artistic licence has embellished Pinel's story, and a myth has arisen projecting him as a saviour figure. What Pinel did and did not achieve, however, is not the subject of this chapter. What I aim to establish here, is that an undeniable change in perception arose at the time of Pinel's work, and that this change in perception surfaces clearly in Cottin's novels when she writes about madness and associates it with natural space.

Part 2: The 'Female Malady'

Also surfacing in Cottin's writing is the portrayal of madness as a product of oppressive male-dominated society, and, as a result, the characters in her novels who suffer insanity are female. There is a reason for this. A further alteration in the way madness was viewed at this time made the subject especially relevant for women writers: 'in nineteenth-century England and France madness was constructed as a "female malady"'.[534]

The number of women incarcerated on the grounds of mental illness was significantly higher than the number of men. This, it should be noted, remained the case no matter what political faction controlled the country between 1789 and 1815, and indeed continued to be the case throughout the rest of the nineteenth century as well. The gender imbalance in asylums was commented upon in 1788 when Tenon published data from the records of all the Paris hospitals, providing a table (reproduced in Appendix VI) detailing the numbers of mad men and women confined to each hospital. According to Tenon's statistics, the number of imprisoned insane men totals 531, whilst the number of mad women totals 800. Tenon's own conclusions were that insanity is more common among women, and that consequently more space must be provided for women in mental institutions, as the quotation which opens this chapter illustrates. These recommendations must undoubtedly have been put into practice, because 'by the late nineteenth century [women] represented the majority of those incarcerated in asylums'.[535] Tenon's results show clearly that the women's asylum La Salpêtrière was the largest of all the institutions and the one in which the most women were confined. La Salpêtrière was created in the seventeenth century to remove the poor, ill, unwanted, mad and criminal public from view. It functioned as prison, workhouse and lunatic asylum for women; however, its infamous reputation is, above all, for the latter purpose. Not all of the 4,000 beds at La Salpêtrière were occupied by madwomen, but from

[534] Jane E. Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies*, 20:3 (1994), 507-535 (p.507).
[535] Harsin, p.1051.

Tenon's statistics, it seems that almost a quarter were, and this number increased in subsequent decades. Later in the nineteenth century, the hospice was housing more than a thousand insane women; indeed 'the burden of the 800 to 1,400 madwomen it housed from 1836 to 1860 was to overshadow the hospital's other roles'.[536]

The reason for this imbalance in numbers was that women were thought to be more susceptible to insanity than men. The term and the diagnosis of hysteria had existed, and been associated with women, even in the ancient world: the words hysteria and hysterectomy share the same root, both deriving from the Greek word for uterus: ὑστέρα. It had been believed, since the time of the Greeks, that hysteria was caused by the womb wandering through the body. However, even though the term was not new, hysteria was to assume a fundamental role in issues of women's health throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The disease came to be, in fact, 'the most commonly diagnosed "female malady"' of the age.[537] Furthermore, 'at the end of the eighteenth century the link between the womb and madness became established as scientific "fact", which, as Michel Foucault notes, resulted in "the entire female body" being "riddled" by "a perpetual possibility of hysteria"'.[538]

The supposed link between hysteric madness and the female body was discussed by many scientists. In his medical texts, Louyer-Villermay defined hysteria as follows: 'L'hystérie est une affection de l'utérus, et, comme toutes les maladies de cet organe, elle ne peut être observée que chez les femmes'.[539] Specifically, physicians in both Britain and France believed that menstruation affected a woman's mental status: 'Everybody of the least experience must be sensible of the influence of menstruation on the operations of the mind'.[540] Yet they simultaneously held the belief that '[m]ental derangement frequently occurs in young females from amenorrhea'.[541] This link between feminine biology and mental instability went unchallenged for decades, even centuries. Ironically, another factor thought to contribute to women's susceptibility to insanity was the very restriction that society placed upon them: 'The French psychiatrist Philippe Pinel agreed that hysteria was the product of a restrictive and rigid bourgeois family life'.[542] Forbidden from participating in the public sphere, and confined to a life of very

536 Ripa, p.9.
537 Jane M. Ussher, *The Madness of Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p.8.
538 Ibid., p.18.
539 Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay, *Traité des maladies nerveuses, ou vapeurs et particulièrement de l'hystérie et de l'hypocondrie* (Paris: Méquignon, 1816), p.11.
540 George Man Burrows, *Commentaries on Insanity* (London: Underwood, 1828), p.146.
541 John Millar, *Hints on Insanity* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1861), p.32.
542 Ussher, p.23.

little, women appeared more susceptible to madness, having no outlet for their 'nervous energy'. The oppression of women resulting in their turning to madness is reflected very clearly in Cottin's novels, as will be outlined below.

Art and literature were also used to transmit the image of madness as female into the public consciousness. According to Kromm:

> [W]hen asylum statistics first confirmed the perception that female inmates were likely to outnumber their male counterparts, figures of madwomen, from Victorian lovestruck, melancholic maidens to the theatrically agitate inmates of the Salpêtrière, already dominated the cultural field in representations of madness.[543]

The public, in both Britain and France, not only became accustomed to seeing images of madwomen, they were in fact continually exposed to the very personification of madness as a female figure. According to Showalter:

> [T]he dialectic of reason and unreason took on specifically sexual meaning, and […] the symbolic gender of the insane person shifted from male to female. For the Augustans, the cultural imagery of the lunatic was male. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the most famous representations of madness were the two manacled male nudes sculpted by Caius Gabriel Cibber for the gates of Bethlem Hospital, then in Moorfields. […] In the course of the century, however, the appealing madwoman gradually displaced the repulsive madman, both as the prototype of the confined lunatic and as a cultural icon. […] By 1815, Cibber's male statues had been hidden away from public view behind curtains that were drawn aside only by special request. These disturbing images of wild, dark, naked men had been replaced by poetic, artistic, and theatrical images of a youthful, beautiful female insanity.[544]

Across the Channel, the French painter Géricault was asked by Dr Georget, a member of staff at La Salpêtrière, to depict the mentally ill. He painted a series of ten portraits of lunatics between 1821 and 1822. One of the most famous of the five surviving paintings is the painting of the madwoman, *La Monomane de l'envie.*[545] Later in the nineteenth century, artistic portraits and theatrical portrayals of Ophelia, Shakespeare's 'document in madness', [546] took France by storm. Madeleine LeMaire famously painted the Shakespearian heroine, as did Eugène Delacroix, and, on the Paris stage, Harriet Smithson's mad Ophelia became a sensation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the French cast a retrospective glance at the 1780s and 1790s, and argued that this was the definitive moment at which the stereotypical personification of madness as a feminine form arose. This is perhaps

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[543] Kromm, p.507.
[544] Showalter, *The Female Malady,* pp.8-10.
[545] Margaret Miller, 'Géricault's Paintings of the Insane', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 4:3-4 (1941-1942), 151-163 (p.151).
[546] A description provided by Laertes in: William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Library of Shakespeare* (London: Midpoint Press, 2005), II (Tragedies), p.133.

typified in the famous 1876 painting *Pinel délivrant les aliénés à la Salpêtrière en 1795*, by Robert-Fleury. This painting portrays the stereotype which had been gaining precedence since Pinel's own time: rationality and control were male, whilst female madness was disheveled, disorientated, wild, even erotic. The female figures in the painting exhibit no control over events, or over themselves; they sit huddled in a corner, lean seemingly senseless against a wall, kiss the hand of the man who has unbound them from their chains, or stand puppet-like supported by a male attendant whilst he removes their irons. Their clothes are untidy, loose, or simply falling away. The woman on the right is missing a shoe; the female in the centre is depicted with her dress falling from her shoulders. In opposition, the men are neatly and elaborately dressed in coats, jackets, lace neckcloths and rings, showing no part of their figure exposed. Such representations of female hysteria were not exclusive to the visual arts; they also appeared in literature. In an age accustomed to arguing that women were more vulnerable to madness than men, many literary heroines' deaths were often attributed to hysterical madness, to which they were susceptible on account of their extreme emotional behaviour:

> Le monde romanesque du début du XIX^{e} siècle foisonne de décès qui ne se laissent pas réduire à des causes physiques. Comme il s'agit le plus souvent de jeunes femmes, on pourrait en conclure que les romans en question se réfèrent, le plus souvent implicitement, au modèle de l'hystérie.[547]

It is in such a climate that Cottin was writing, and it is thus unsurprising that when madness appears in her novels it is associated strongly with this feminine stereotype.

The personification of madness as a female figure has permeated into, and been thoroughly analysed by literary criticism, feminist psychology, and in particular feminist theory, all of which

> call attention to the existence of a fundamental alliance between 'woman' and 'madness'. They have shown how women, within our dualistic systems of language and representation, are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature and the body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind. They have analysed and illuminated a cultural tradition that represents 'woman' *as* madness, and that uses images of the female body, as in the Pinel painting, to stand for irrationality in general.[548]

The references to silence and nature made in this statement are particularly intriguing, as both are key to understanding the discussion about feminine madness generated in Cottin's novels.

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[547] Anne Amend-Söchting, 'La Mélancolie dans *Corinne',* in *Madame de Staël,* Corinne ou l'Italie, *'l'âme se mêle à tout',* ed. by José-Luis Diaz (Paris: Sedes, 1999), pp.101-110 (p.107).
[548] Showalter, *The Female Malady,* pp.3-4. (Original emphasis). C.f.: Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy', *Diacritics,* 5 (1975), 2-12.

This chapter has two principal focuses. Firstly, Cottin draws her readers' attention to the fact that madness was a significant problem for women of her contemporary era on account of the rejection and repression they suffered from patriarchal society. A significant reason for the madness of female characters is the silence enforced upon them. It should be noted here that women are not necessarily silent by virtue of their being feminine; on the contrary, women have often been stereotyped throughout the ages as garrulous and gossips. Even in the *Encyclopédie*, 'several contributors remark upon woman's proclivity to talk'.[549] However, when society represses their voice and refuses to hear their complaints, Cottin's heroines descend into madness as a result, most often as a conscious rebellion. Hysteria becomes a method for her heroines to communicate their opinions and feelings at their enforced situation in the only way they can, a communication facilitated by the natural world. Simultaneously, however, Part 3 also investigates Cottin's engagement with the contemporary debate over how the mad should be treated. Again, nature is employed to highlight the arguments Cottin makes in contribution to this debate. She employs two different types of natural space as symbolic replacements for the conventional madhouse: the tamed nature of a domestic garden to represent the insitutions of post-revolutionary society, and the wild nature of the desert to represent the institutions of the Ancien Régime. The different method of treating insane patients in each of these natural areas is striking.

Part 3: The Madwoman and the Natural Asylum in Cottin's *Malvina* and *Mathilde, ou mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades*

Martin introduces *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* by saying:

> This book is about a myth of women's madness […]. The myth tells a simple tale: the woman is left or found alone, a widow, a bereaved mother, a deserted wife or a jilted lover. Her mind is vulnerable to the disturbances caused by an obsession with past happiness or promises, perhaps an excessive desire for the lost object of her love. In some cases this disturbance leads to insanity and eventually even death. In others it leads to physical illness, fever or derangement.[550]

Such depressive circumstances have also been noted by modern medics and psychologists as a significant cause of deteriorating mental health and even death: 'In late 1999, the National Institute of Mental Health sent out a medical bulletin entitled

[549] Terry Smiley Dock, *Woman in the* Encyclopédie*: A Compendium* (Potomac, MD: Studia Humanitatis, 1983), p.86.
[550] Philip W. Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Sussex: The Harvester Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p.1.

"Depression Can Break Your Heart'".[551] This had even been perceived in the nineteenth century when, based on his own observations of patients, the physician Briquet argued: 'On ne devient hystérique qu'après avoir souffert'.[552] This notion was clearly perceived by Cottin, whose characters Malvina and Agnès reflect the situation of many real mad and melancholic women of early nineteenth-century France. Both have been abandoned by their lover, feel powerless against the oppression of the society in which they live, suffer shock and loss, and believe that they are failures. This combination leads to depression and then to madness, and, in Malvina's case, also to death.

Agnès features in Cottin's *Mathilde*, a historical novel set during the crusades. Agnès is a Christian princess of Jerusalem, but falls in love with the Islamic warrior Malek Adhel. She is cast out of Christian society for joining Malek Adhel's harem as one of his wives, and is constantly reminded that she will suffer eternal damnation for abandoning her God: 'le fruit de votre crime demeurera éternellement dans ce monde et dans l'autre, et […] vous gémirez sans fin dans ces lieux terribles où le pardon n'entra jamais' (*Mat* I:345). Unfortunately for Agnès, when the English princess Mathilde arrives in the Holy Land, Malek Adhel's passion turns from his harem to Mathilde alone, with whom he falls deeply in love. Agnès struggles to deal with the rejection. She attempts to declare her feelings for him throughout the novel, but each time she is spurned. Agnès develops a violent hatred for Mathilde and a desire for revenge. She attempts to kill her, but is thwarted by the Christian soldiers sent to protect the English princess. She then tries to reason with Malek Adhel one final time, but is dismissed without the opportunity to speak to him. Driven mad by her unrequited love, by her failure to kill her rival, and by being continually shunned by Christian society, Agnès loses her mind and lives out the rest of her days as a madwoman in the desert.

Agnès is a perfect example of Martin's description of the woman left alone, a jilted lover whose 'mind is vulnerable to the disturbances caused by an obsession with past happiness or promises, perhaps an excessive desire for the lost object of her love'. Such obsession and excessive desire is clear in her language when she exclaims: '[S]i tu savais quelle félicité je goûtais à oublier près de lui ma patrie, ma famille, mes crimes et mon Dieu même!' (*Mat* I:274). In her love for Malek Adhel, Agnès is prepared to abandon the three staple loyalties expected of her: her family, her country and her God. When the archbishop advises Agnès to ask Heaven for mercy, her reply suggests the direction in

[551] James J. Lynch, *A Cry Unheard: New Insights into the Consequences of Loneliness* (Baltimore, MD: Bancroft Press, 2000), p.84.
[552] P. Briquet, *Traité Clinique et thérapeutique de l'hystérie* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière et fils, 1859), p.190.

which her obsession will take her: 'Que parlez-vous du ciel? s'écria Agnès égarée; qu'est-ce que le ciel sans Malek Adhel?' (*Mat* I:274). The adjective *égarée*, meaning 'disorientated' or 'lost' announces that Agnès's mind has already begun to wander and that she is already succumbing to fits of madness.

Agnès's behaviour also indicates the desperation and depression she feels at her rejection:

> Déjà les premières ombres de la nuit commençaient à envelopper le bosquet d'orangers, et donnaient à la nature cette teinte de mélancolie […]. Bientôt ils virent paraître à l'entrée du bocage une esclave qui semblait désirer et craindre de s'approcher […] l'inconnue se précipita la face contre terre, avec de tels gémissements, qu'on eût cru son cœur près de briser. (*Mat* I:273)

This is the first time we are introduced to Agnès, and our first impression of her is given within a natural setting which reflects her despair and melancholia. The very final image of Agnès at the end of the novel is also presented amid a natural setting, though one which is very different in appearance to the orange grove. Where the latter is an area of nature tamed and cultivated by mankind, the former is a barren wilderness which assumes an even greater symbolic meaning in conveying Agnès's problematic situation and state of mind. Agnès clearly fits the psychological profile described by Martin: her loss, powerlessness, depression, and unrequited love all reduce her to a state of mental depravity. We are even warned in advance that Agnès would actually welcome madness and the oblivion that it would bring:

> [L]a douleur de sa honte s'accroissait par le souvenir de sa célébrité, et cette nécessité irrévocable qui la liait à sa pensée et la forçait à vivre avec elle-même, la jetait dans des accès de désespoir, auprès desquels la folie et la mort eussent été de grands biens. (*Mat* I:283).

Cottin's Malvina also fits Martin's mould. Malvina's depression and feeling of failure is brought on by her lover's rejection and society's oppression, like that of Agnès, but also by traumatic experience. Anderson describes 'the link between trauma and its common representation or manifestation as madness'.[553] Trauma certainly exacerbates the deterioration of Malvina's mental health. Upon the death of Malvina's best friend Clara, Malvina swears to raise Clara's daughter Fanny, and to dedicate herself wholly to the child, forsaking marriage in order to do so. When Malvina then falls in love with Edmond, a man of whom her immediate entourage do not approve, Malvina is forbidden from marrying him. She defies convention and society, however, by allowing Edmond to persuade her into marriage. As a result, Mistriss Birton writes to Fanny's

[553] Sarah Anderson, *Readings of Trauma, Madness and the Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.3.

biological father, Lord Sheridan, stating that Malvina has broken her promise to Clara and recommending that Fanny should be removed from Malvina's care and entrusted to herself, Mistriss Birton, instead. The decision rests with the patriarch, Fanny's father, who agrees to Birton's proposal. After his marriage to Malvina, Edmond sets out to meet Lord Sheridan in order to persuade him that Malvina is the best woman to care for Fanny and that the child adores her. He obtains permission for Malvina to keep Fanny, however, he is too late. He delayed too long after the marriage to make the journey, and he delayed even longer in London, allowing himself to be seduced by another woman. Consequently he does not return in time to prevent Fanny's removal. While Edmond is away, leaving Malvina unprotected, Fanny is torn from her adoptive mother.

Laplanche and Pontalis identify trauma as '[un] événement de la vie du sujet qui se définit par son intensité, l'incapacité où se trouve le sujet d'y répondre adéquatement, le bouleversement et les effets pathogènes durables qu'il provoque dans l'organisation psychique'.[554] We witness the intensity of the traumatic event which contributes to Malvina's madness in the violent removal of the person Malvina loves most in the world. Unable to respond adequately, Malvina resorts to desperate, panicked measures, including throwing herself in front of the wheels of Birton's carriage. Her pleas are ineffectual: she is deprived of the right to contest the decision to remove Fanny. The upheaval caused by enforced separation destroys Malvina's reason for living, and the fact that there are lasting effects on the psychological organisation of the subject is proved when Malvina becomes insane.

On the same day, Malvina receives a letter informing her of her husband's infidelity. The combination of a forbidden marriage, being cast out from society, her husband's betrayal, and in particular the traumatic separation from her daughter, coupled with her guilt at having failed in her motherly duty, causes Malvina to lose her reason. In her last moments of sanity the description focuses upon her despair, her guilt, and the oncoming madness:

> [E]lle posa la main sur son cœur: – Le coup est porté, dit-elle, et mon sort est rempli; je l'ai bien mérité. – Mistriss Clare, effrayée de sa résignation, s'approche, lui parle, l'embrasse: elle ne répond pas; ses joues sont pâles et glacées, son regard fixe et égaré. (*M* IV:119)

The word *égaré* describes Malvina as it did Agnès. Malvina has a wild and disorientated look in her eye, indicating the beginning of the madness into which she will now rapidly

[554] Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), p.499.

fall. Malvina is both the bereaved mother and deserted wife mentioned by Martin, and her descent into insanity is, therefore, unsurprising.

Darwinian psychiatry argues that if a woman transgressed her roles or disobeyed the will of patriarchal society, as indeed both Malvina and Agnès do, then the madness to which she is doomed is in fact inevitable: 'Mental breakdown […] would come when women defied their "nature"'.[555] However, the Darwinian argument, and indeed Martin's notion of how women come to suffer from madness passively as the result of depression, are not the only models applicable to Malvina and Agnès. We can also argue that both women resort to madness as a form of feminine protest. Showalter states:

> For a feminist analysis, we have to turn the question around. Instead of asking if rebellion was mental pathology, we must ask whether mental pathology was supressed rebellion. […] Was hysteria […] a mode of protest for women deprived of other social or intellectual outlets or expressive options?[556]

Similarly, Cixous argues in *La Jeune Née* that hysteria is the 'nuclear example of women's power to protest'.[557] Hysteria is the only action left to Agnès and Malvina, when all else has been denied them and when they have been subdued into silence. It provides them with a means of protesting against the situation into which they have been forced and of protesting against the male-dominant society responsible, because hysteria restores to them a method of communicating their suffering. After analysing how this is the case for Agnès and Malvina, it will be shown that these women seek and find both protest and voice at the heart of the natural world.

Agnès's desire to rebel against patriarchal society is apparant through her violent language: 'J'ai désiré *l'anéantissement* de l'empire du Christ, parce qu'il peut s'élever contre celui de mon amant; j'ai désiré voir cet amant régner seul sur tous les rois et les mondes *enchaînés*; j'allais le suivre à l'armée […] *lever l'épée* contre mon propre sang, et le Dieu de mes pères' (*Mat* I:286).[558] Each staple of her society of origin – family, country and religion – has a male figure at the pinnacle of the hierarchy: father, king and God. Agnès wishes to raise her sword and fight against each of these ultimate representatives of male authority. She does indeed take up her sword in protest, and, in so doing, attempts to escape the oppressive womanly role in which she has always been unhappy by trying to enter the masculine world of hand to hand combat. She dresses as a male warrior and

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[555] Showalter, *The Female Malady,* p.123.
[556] Ibid., p.147.
[557] Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Née,* trans. by Betsy Wing (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), p.154. See also: Elaine Showalter, 'Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender', in *Hysteria Before Freud,* ed. by Sander L. Gilman (California: University of California Press, 1993), p.332.
[558] My emphases.

attacks the Christians in order to kill Mathilde. Agnès is so brutal in her combat, so convincing in her attire that the Christian soldiers take her for a man without question, and are shocked when they discover the truth:

> [J]amais la victoire n'a fait attendre Montmorency: son ennemi est renversé, il lève le bras, il va lui ôter la vie. 'Frappe, Montmorency, s'écrie d'une voix sourde le guerrier vaincu; enfonce ton poignard dans le sein d'une femme.' A ce nom, le héros français s'arrête, il doute de ce qu'il entend, car la force qu'on vient de lui opposer est celle d'un soldat. (*Mat* III:26)

Agnès was cast out of patriarchal Christian society for undertaking the feminine role of a wife because she chose a Muslim man for a husband; she has been unhappy in that role as a wife because her lover rejected her. She therefore tries to protest against the woman's position by leaving it behind and performing the male gender. Butler states: 'gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing'.[559] Agnès's choice of deed certainly defines her new gendered role. Her protest is also literal, however, as the masculine deed she chooses to undertake in order to perform that gender, is battle. According to Butler, '[t]hat the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'.[560] Agnès seeks to be recognised in her manly role as a warrior where she has merely been cast aside in her role as a woman, as though she had no ontological status: she certainly was not a 'being' to be respected until she performed her masculine actions. Performing as a male warrior gains her a respect she has not known as a woman, but this performance neither lasts, nor ultimately succeeds in resolving her problems. Despite her convincing performance, she is defeated in combat, and once the fighting – the action defining her new gender role – has ceased, Agnès must identify herself as a woman to Montmorency in order to save herself. Her failure to uphold a combative male agency eventually results in her employment of the only other option to protest available to her: having returned to the feminine world, she employs feminine hysteria in order to protest through madness.

Before turning to insanity, however, she attempts one final time to plead with Malek Adhel, hoping that she might be once again recognised by him as a wife. It is significant that Agnès's final attempt to escape her oppressive and depressing situation is through words, as '[a]ccording to feminists-of-difference such as Gatens, Irigaray, and

[559] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.34.
[560] Ibid., p.185.

Cixous, hysteria is a last resort when other avenues of communication have failed'.[561] Malek Ahdel refuses to listen to her pleas, and turns her away without seeing her. Thus, Agnès is silenced, and is left with only madness as a method of protest and a means of communicating that protest: '[E]lle a suivi Malek Adhel à Césarée, mais Malek Adhel refusa de la voir […] ses forces ne résistèrent point à tant de fatigues, de chagrins et d'affronts. Sa tête s'aliéna' (*Mat* IV:78). She becomes the stereotypical madwoman, rolling deranged on the floor, her hair wild and dishevelled, beating her breasts and crying curses to those not present.

Madness as a form of feminine protest, and as a means of restoring a silenced voice in order for that protest to take place is as true for Malvina as it is for Agnès. Before losing her reason, Malvina makes every attempt to persuade Birton not to take Fanny away. She begs frantically, screaming repeatedly, before finally throwing herself in front of Birton's carriage, to prevent her from leaving with the child:

> Non, je ne te quitterai pas, lui cria Malvina en se jetant sous les roues de la voiture; ils m'écraseront, les barbares! avant de t'enlever à ta mère. – Faites retirer madame, dit froidement mistriss Birton aux gens qui l'entouraient; vous voyez bien qu'elle perd l'esprit. […] Faites retirer madame, répéta mistriss Birton avec une voix tremblante de colère […]. Malvina s'apercevant qu'on se préparait à l'éloigner de force, se lève, tombe aux pieds de mistriss Birton, et s'écrie: – Au nom du ciel! au nom de l'humanité! au nom de votre propre repos! ne m'ôtez pas mon enfant! je ne survivrai pas à sa perte. Voulez-vous avoir ma mort à vous reprocher? voulez-vous que mon sang crie éternellement contre vous? (*M* IV:179-180)

The desperation in Malvina's voice, emphasised by the exclamations, imperatives and rhetorical questions is outweighed by the cold, simple repetition of Birton's words. Malvina's voice, like that of Agnès, falls on deaf ears: 'Birton, sur le visage de laquelle se peignait ce que la colère et l'effroi ont de plus hideux, se hâta de s'éloigner' (*M* IV:181). Her efforts at ordinary communication have, therefore, failed. As there is no longer any concrete or legal means by which Malvina might protest against her situation – rejected wife, failed mother and social outcast – she protests against reality instead, becoming insane. Madness provides the only method left in which she can make the world see and understand her pain. Contrasting acutely with the loud and violent communication in the scene where Fanny is torn from her, linguistic communication henceforth fails Malvina, who is often characterised during her madness as silent: 'Affreux silence! oh! qu'est donc devenue ma Malvina? […] tout est changé, elle n'a plus rien à me dire' (*M* IV:185). The only way in which Malvina can now communicate is through her hysterical behaviour.

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[561] Megan Jennaway, *Sisters and Lovers: Women and Desire in Bali* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p.28.

Cottin's madwomen, therefore, conform both to the nineteenth-century stereotype of madness as feminine, and to the notions proffered by Cixous, Showalter and other feminist scholars of the woman resorting to madness as a form of protest. However, what Cottin achieves which is highly original for a writer of her day is to employ the natural world to help us to understand the hysterical protests that Malvina and Agnès make, and to understand how madness can be used as a means of communication when their voices have been silenced.

The first description of the natural world that we see in *Malvina* immediately after the heroine goes mad is very dark. Edmond returns home to find that the nature in the garden in which Malvina wanders has significantly altered:

> Depuis son départ, les arbres ont perdu leur parure, les fleurs ont disparu, les oiseaux ne chantent plus; un froid piquant a succédé à l'air doux et embaumé qu'on y respirait. Dans son chemin, il aperçoit quelques cyprès religieux, quelques sombres sapins dont les tiges pyramidales conservent un reste de verdure; du haut de leurs sommets le cri du hibou s'est fait entendre; ce son a retenti dans le vaste silence de la nuit, l'écho l'a répété. (*M* IV:156-157)

Malvina wishes to convey the pain she experiences. Because she is unable to bring the outside world into her mind, Malvina chooses to inhabit an outside world that represents her state of mind. In her insanity she therefore chooses to inhabit a natural world which allows her depression to become manifest in its coldness and darkness. In this way, when anyone seeks her, they too will be able to experience the darkness of her despair, for the garden becomes a mouthpiece for the voice of her insanity. This is made further apparent when Malvina's voice emanates from the natural world itself: 'une voix douce et faible […] semble sortir du bosquet' (*M* IV:158). The contrast in the garden between the vast silence of the natural world and the echoing dull cries of the nocturnal owl are further symbolic representations of the silence enforced upon Malvina and the repeated cries she makes to be heard in the dark space of her insanity.

Similarly, in *Mathilde*, the cries of the madwoman are heard through the aid of the natural world. The archbishop 'fut interrompu […] par cette infortunée, qui, d'une voix aiguë et déchirante, faisait retentir les airs du nom de Malek-Adhel' (*Mat* IV:71). The air itself echoes again and again Agnès's desperate cries for her lover and her accusations against him; she uses the air around her to make others repeatedly aware of her pain. Furthermore, each time Agnès's mad voice is mentioned, it is coupled with reference to the desert in which she lies. It is when she is 'étendue sur le sable' that she 'ne cessait de répéter "Malek-Adhel!"' (*Mat* IV:71), and when Mathilde recognises to whom the voice belongs, Agnès is 'couchée sur la poussière et […] se meurtrissait le sein en poussant de

lugubres mugissements' (*Mat* IV:70). Her desert floor resembles that of a padded cell, and thus the natural wilderness reminds us that Agnès's voice is now only heard through her madness.

Malvina's garden contains a stereotypical image of insanity. Every occasion when this garden is presented to the reader after Malvina has lost her mind occurs in moonlight. The moon is an aspect of nature long associated with insanity, as the etymology of the word 'lunacy' bears witness. At the full moon, insanity supposedly presents itself at its full strength. Whilst this connection between the moon and madness is not exclusive to the eighteenth century, it should be noted that during the studies of insanity made throughout the Republic and Empire, experiments were conducted into whether or not the moon actually did influence madness. In 1791, Dr Joseph Daquin concluded: 'd'après les observations rédigées sur mon journal, il est très certain et très prouvé, que la folie est une maladie, sur laquelle la lune exerce une influence constante et réelle'.[562] The moon's connection to insanity had therefore become both an increasing subject of scientific study, and, at least in the minds of the psychiatric physicians of post-revolutionary society, proven fact. The moon is also associated with women and their menstrual cycle, and as has earlier been noted from a reading of the medical treatises of the late eighteenth century, menstruation, too, was thought to be one of the principal causes of hysteria. The moon is a doubly appropriate natural image here, therefore, embodying, as it does, both madness and femininity.

The moon, hitting the dishevelled Malvina from directly above, causes Edmond to perceive how much his wife has altered: 'la lune frappe à-plomb sur son visage, et […] Edmond fixe sa femme chérie et aperçoit tous ses traits altérés par la main du malheur' (*M* IV:162). However the moon is also employed here to draw our attention to the coldness and violence of the society which has forced Malvina into insanity. This is achieved through the play on words created by 'frappe à-plomb'. The violence appears owing to the use of the verb *frapper;* the coldness comes from *à-plomb*. The expression 'un soleil de plomb' is idiomatic in French, indicating an intense sun whose heat weighs down like lead upon those beneath it. 'Une lune qui frappe à-plomb', can be interpreted therefore as a moon whose coldness (this passage takes place on a wintry night in Scotland) and ability to encourage insane behaviour both beat down so hard upon Malvina that they oppress her. Through his contemplation of the garden in which

[562] Joseph Daquin, *La philosophie de la folie, ou Essai philosophique sur le traitement des personnes attaquées de folie* (Paris: Libraire Née de la Rochelle, 1792), p.85.

Malvina is now housed, Edmond is able to understand, therefore, the forces which have brought her there. Silenced, Malvina cannot express her state of mind to him through words, and so features of the natural landscape achieve this communication for her.

Cottin's description of nature ultimately also helps the reader to understand the situations of her two madwomen in terms of her own contemporary society. Through her portrayals of nature, Cottin adds her voice to the debate over what the purpose of insane asylums should be. With regard to the new perception of madness which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, Khalfa states: 'Madness, which has been alienated by society, is now defined as psychological alienation, an alienation of the self from itself and the space of confinement a space where the self can gather itself again'.[563] Malvina has certainly become alienated from her own self in Cottin's text. She admits as much to Edmond, saying 'je ne suis plus Malvina' (*M* IV:158). Similarly, regarding Agnès's insanity, the words 'sa tête s'aliéna' in lieu of a simple 'elle est devenue folle', create the image of a self becoming alienated from itself. The very meaning of *aliéner* evokes this image, but so too does the reflexive construction. Malvina's and Agnes's situations, therefore, fit precisely with the new perceptions of madness as 'an alienation of the self from itself'. Yet do we also see the space of confinement become a space where the self can gather itself again?

The simple answer to this question is yes in Malvina's case, and no in that of Agnès. However, to understand why this is the case, we must briefly return to Foucault's definition of the new conceptions in the late 1700s and early 1800s of what a mental asylum must constitute:

> Il faut donc trouver une voie moyenne entre le devoir d'assistance que prescrit une pitié abstraite, et les craintes légitimes que suscite une épouvante réellement éprouvée; ce sera tout naturellement une assistance *intra muros*, un secours apporté au terme de cette distance que prescrit l'horreur, une pitié qui se déploiera dans l'espace ménagé depuis plus d'un siècle par l'internement et laissé vide par lui.[564]

The new institution would be an asylum in both senses of the word: a space of confinement where the mad could safely be detained at a distance from the rest of society for the latter's protection, and a space of shelter in which the mad might be cared for and receive medical treatment. This conclusion was reached by two of the most notable medical names of the day, Colombier and Doublet, who, upon examination of

[563] Jean Khalfa, 'Introduction', in Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.xv-xvi (p.xviii).
[564] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, pp.452-453.

the institutions of confinement, correction and cruelty which still existed in pre-Revolutionary France, argued:

> Mais quelqu'avantageux que paraissent ces établissements, ils ne soulagent que la crainte publique et ils ne peuvent satisfaire la pitié qui réclame non seulement la sûreté, mais encore des soins et des traitements qui sont généralement négligés, et au défaut desquels la démence des uns est perpétuée, tandis qu'on pourrait la guérir; et celle des autres augmentée, tandis qu'on pourrait la diminuer.[565]

These two men influenced the minds of the psychologists and physicians working under the Republic and Empire, and played a large role in the modernising of insane institutions.

In *Malvina,* the tamed nature of the garden replaces the conventional madhouse in both its goals: confinement and treatment. The garden's function as a space of confinement is clearly visible in the imagery employed to describe it when Edmond returns home:

> [I]l arrive, il aperçoit le mur du jardin, il s'arrête devant la petite porte dérobée dont il n'a pas perdu la clef, et, pendant que sa voiture fait le tour pour entrer dans les cours de la maison, il entre dans l'enclos. (*M* IV:156-157)

The initial aspect to meet Edmond's gaze is the wall surrounding the garden and not the garden itself, which is hidden from view. In this wall is a door to the prisoner's 'cell', a door which is *dérobée* and therefore difficult to find, and which must, like a prison cell, be opened with a key. Furthermore, the garden, once entered, is described as an *enclos.* Its inhabitant, Malvina, is therefore to be prevented from leaving. The sombre nature of the trees and the reference to their trunks and great height, create the image of the bars of a cell, or cage, adding the final touch to the impression of the garden as an imprisoning mental institution.

When Edmond first encounters Malvina's insanity in this horticultural prison, he discovers to his dismay that she has lost so much of her mind that she no longer recognises him:

> O Malvina! reconnais-moi par pitié! je suis Edmond, ton Edmond, ton époux, qui revient pour ne plus te quitter! – Malvina s'assit sur une pierre, et le regardant avec un souris amer: Pourquoi criez-vous ainsi, je suis Edmond? je suis Edmond? (*M* IV:159)

Edmond hopes that reversing the two situations that first provoked the madness (his leaving, and Fanny being torn away) will cure Malvina. He reiterates that he is by her side

[565] Jean Colombier and François Doublet, *Instruction sur la manière de gouverner les Insensés, et de travailler à leur guérison dans les Asyles qui leur sont destinés,* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1785), Taken from the online digitisation of the text which can be found at: <http://du.laurens.free.fr/auteurs/Colomb_Doublet-Gouvern_insens.htm> [accessed 2 May 2013].

and brings Fanny back, reasoning that 'peut-être la vue de Fanny, en calmant sa conscience, réveillera sa raison' (*M* IV:168). However, neither of these attempts to cure the madwoman is successful. Whilst Malvina does at least recognise Fanny, the child is sensible of her mother's altered mental status, and asks 'pourquoi ne me caresses-tu pas comme autrefois?' (*M* IV:214). Malvina does not realise that Edmond has returned at all.

The doctor summoned to treat Malvina then alights upon an idea: he decides to stage Edmond's return afresh, and that this false return must take place in the garden which Malvina has so frequently visited in her insanity. As Foucault states, the cure, like the confinement, must take place *intra muros:* in this case within the garden walls. The doctor informs Malvina that Edmond has returned and is awaiting her arrival, he then leads Malvina into the garden to meet Edmond, in the hope that this will cure her:

> [V]ous l'allez revoir: des méchants avaient emmené votre enfant et votre époux, tous deux vous sont rendus; voici Fanny près de vous, et Edmond est dans le jardin […]; il vous attend […]. Edmond ayant compris l'intention du docteur, sortit doucement de la chambre sans être vu de Malvina. […] [E]lle approchait […] à l'entrée du bosquet […]. A ce moment la lune, au haut d'un ciel pur, éclairait tous les objets de ses rayons vifs et argentés: […] Malvina fait un pas vers le bosquet; il [Edmond] en sort, elle le voit, le reconnaît, et s'écrie, en se précipitant dans ses bras: - Oh! c'est lui! c'est bien lui! mes yeux ne me trompent point, et mon Edmond est revenu. (*M* IV:217-223)

Unfortunately Malvina does not long survive this, as her insanity and illness have weakened her body. However, in the immediate present, the garden has become a space of healing, employed successfully by the physician to treat the patient. Where other attempts to heal Malvina failed, her sanity is briefly restored in the healing space of the garden-asylum. The reference to the moon is again significant here. Whilst the moon is indeed a symbol of insanity, paradoxically it also, as is seen in the above quotation, has the power to *éclairer*. The moon casts its light on both Edmond and the garden and, in so doing, it symbolically enlightens Malvina as to the truth. Malvina's cure is made all the more vivid by the change in tense. The use of the *passé simple* and *imparfait* is replaced with employment of the present as Malvina enters the healing space of the garden and recognises her husband. The movement from past to present reflects the movement of Malvina's mind from distant obscurity to present reality. She no longer protests against reality through madness. The enumeration of verbs, combined with the shortening of the number of words between the commas as the sentence progresses both serve to highlight the speed with which the action takes place, and the speed of Malvina's thoughts now that her mind has been restored.

Casting a light upon the truth was considered acutely important in healing the mad: 'L'internement doit donc être espace de vérité tout autant qu'espace de contrainte, et ne doit être celui-ci que pour être celui-là'.[566] Creating the space of confinement was necessary in order that the truth about madness, and about the individual suffering insanity, could be revealed therein. This is precisely the function of Cottin's garden in *Malvina*. In Britain the same philosophy for curing the insane existed as in France. Opened in 1796, the Retreat, founded by the English expert on mental illness William Tuke, was established in order both to confine and heal the mad. It had five steps in the procedure to curing the insane, of which the fifth stated:

> C'est parce qu'elle ramène la folie à une vérité qui est à la fois vérité de la folie et vérité de l'homme, à une nature qui est nature de la maladie et nature sereine du monde, que la *Retraite* reçoit son pouvoir de guérir.[567]

The new type of asylum was, in itself, thought to bring the insane back to the truth of the natural world. Cottin's choice of a natural space to heal the mad is therefore significant, for in *Malvina* the natural world itself recalls truth to the mind of the madwoman. Not only is a garden, filled with nature, the space of healing, but the moon – an aspect of nature – is the tool employed to reveal the truth so crucial to the healing process.

One might ask whether Cottin was aware of the theories of the new type of asylum or of the methods used to cure the mad. Cuillé, in her monograph on musical tableaux in texts of the eighteenth century, talks of Cottin's'awareness of the increasingly widespread use of music in mysticism and medical science to contest the hold that sickness, death, madness, and the forces of the occult exercised over the soul of the listener'.[568] Cuillé believes Cottin was aware of the contemporary medical opinion that music could be used in treating insanity. Indeed in *Malvina* musical interludes, songs and flutes assist in the treatment of the heroine by providing palliative care. Yet, Cuillé's reference to Cottin's knowledge of the use of music in medicine simultaneously draws our attention to the writer's awareness of the situation regarding the contemporary views of mental alienation. If Cottin were sensible of the use of music in medical science to contest the forces of madness, then it follows that she must have been aware of the work of medical science with regard to madness at all, including the changes in perceptions of madness and its treatment, within her own lifetime.

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[566] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, p.456.
[567] Ibid., p.496.
[568] Cuillé, p.147.

In her later novel, *Mathilde,* Cottin employs a second natural lunatic asylum to house the character of Agnès. Whilst sharing certain properties with the natural asylum of *Malvina,* the overriding image of the natural asylum in *Mathilde* is very different. When the archbishop, to whose care Mathilde has been entrusted, learns that the latter has fallen in love with Malek Adhel, just like Agnès, he wishes to warn Mathilde against abandoning her religious vows to marry the Saracen. The archbishop therefore conducts Mathilde to Agnès's new abode in order to show her the result of abandoning your family, your countrymen and your God: '[J]e veux', he says, 'que vous mesuriez vous-même la profondeur de l'abîme où les passions peuvent entraîner, et quel châtiment Dieu réserve aux coupables qui y tombent' (*Mat* IV:69). The *abîme*, and the notion of 'falling' are on the one hand symbolic, referring to the depths of the depression and depravity to which Agnès has sunk. However, issuing from the mouth of a fervent Catholic, the word *abîme* also serves as a metonym for Hell. This image becomes stronger over the course of the subsequent pages of the novel.

The first hint that the depraved Agnès inhabits a lower level than the sane characters of the novel appears when Mathilde and the archbishop must descend to a place below that in which they stand in order to reach her: '[J]e désirerais qu'avant de rentrer à Ptolémaïs, votre altesse voulût descendre avec moi dans une de ces cabanes placées au pied de la colline' (*Mat* IV:68). As Mathilde and the archbishop reach the foot of the hill, Cottin describes the place which Agnès inhabits in her insanity:

> A peu de distance de la cabane il mit pied à terre avec la princesse, et il la conduisit dans un enclos entouré d'une haie de citronniers sauvages; au milieu était une chétive demeure, où tout respirait la tristesse et la misère. […] Ils s'avancèrent vers un sombre enfoncement que quelques roches formaient à l'extrémité de l'enclos, et qu'ombrageaient quelques sapins épars: tout a coup Mathilde crut entendre des cris, sa poitrine se serra, il lui semblait que cette voix ne lui était pas inconnue; bientôt elle aperçut une femme pâle, échevelée, couchée sur la poussière, et qui se meurtrissait le sein en poussant de lugubres mugissements. 'O mon père! s'écria la vierge en se pressant contre le bras de l'archevêque, je la reconnais; c'est elle! c'est Agnès!' (*Mat* IV:69-70).

The space in which the madwoman is confined echoes Malvina's garden in its resemblance to a prison. As before, the reader is informed that Agnès is kept in an *enclos* in order to prevent escape. In this case, the *enclos* is surrounded by a hedge of wild trees. Note that this *enclos* is a wild one, and not one created by man himself, as was the garden and its protective wall in *Malvina.* The fact that the trees are wild is in itself significant. Their wildness mirrors the wild, mental depravity of the prisoner confined within them. Her savage nature becomes clear when we see her beating her breasts and moaning, and is highlighted by the predicate *échevelée*, describing her dishevelled appearance. The second

line of trees which stands at the entrance to the cave, coupled with the first line of trees which surrounds the *enclos,* both serve as representations of the bars of the madwoman's prison, as in *Malvina.*

However, in one significant respect, Agnès's institution is very different from Malvina's. Agnès does not live in the poor, meagre cabin. Agnès's habitation is in fact a prison within the prison of the *enclos:* a hollow beneath several rocks. Cottin extends the image of the prison further than in *Malvina*, and in so doing, she implies reference to the ultimate prison and abyss: Hell. The hollow, rocky recess in which Agnès lives is dark and ominous, as is born out by the words *sombre* and *ombrageaient.* The picture painted by Cottin in this description reminds the reader of the cave at the gateway to Hell through which Virgil's Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the Underworld. The *enclos* is not enough for Agnès, as it was for Malvina. Agnès must be punished for her sins, for abandoning the patriarchal authorities of her forefathers, her king and specifically her God. She must therefore be held in a more threatening, savage gaol, one which recalls her assumed final destination. This image is reinforced twice in the discussion which follows our first sighting of Agnès in her insanity. Firstly, the old woman employed to watch over Agnès states: 'quand la nuit vient, c'est un train, un vacarme…. on dirait que tous les démons sont après elle' (*Mat* IV:76).[569] Agnès's wild natural prison is so infernal that even the demonic spirits are able to visit her in it. Secondly, when the archbishop hears Agnès wildly cursing the absent Malek Adhel, demanding to see him 'rouler dans ce gouffre sans fond' (*Mat* IV:72), he informs Mathilde that 'les vengeances de Dieu ne sont point aveugles; […] elle verra son ravisseur plongé dans un abîme de tourments éternels, dont elle sera éternellement le témoin' (*Mat* IV:72). Her hollow, rocky cave is therefore the beginning of her descent into the bowels of the Earth. The madness which precedes her eventual death (for although the reader does not witness Agnès die, she never regains her sanity) takes place in an antechamber to the Hell which she will enter when dead.

Some care is introduced into Agnès's natural madhouse, as it was into that of Malvina. The archbishop does execute his Christian duty of care to the less fortunate by employing an old woman to watch Agnès, requesting that 'quelle que soit la peine qu'elle vous donne, et les soins qu'exige son état, n'en négligez aucun; veillez sur elle' (*Mat* IV:76). A doctor is also summoned to see Agnès in the hope that he will be able to affect a cure: 'le médecin que votre charité a envoyé ici n'en espère presque rien; cependant il vient tous les jours' (*Mat* IV:76). However, the care which is given to Agnès in her

[569] Orignal ellipses.

natural madhouse is but little compared with the references to punishment and torture. We have already noted the word *châtiment* (*Mat* IV:69), and Mathilde is similarly later told by the archbishop, 'Vous connaissez tout le crime, il faut que vous connaissiez toute la punition, et de quelle terrible manière l'Éternel sait venger ses lois outragées' (*Mat* IV:71). For the archbishop, Agnès's madness is punishment and vengeance from God for her sacrilegious behaviour, and consequently her imprisonment and her demons are, though pitiable, all merited and self-inflicted. In lieu of nature providing the light of truth which enlightens her mind, nature provides for Agnès the padded cell in which she is permitted to flail wildly, throwing herself to the floor. The padding on the cell walls of an ordinary institutional building is replaced by the natural dust and sand of the desert in this prison created by nature. This triple image of punishment, imprisonment and demonic torture results in Agnès's prison greatly recalling the madhouses and institutions of the Ancien Régime. It evokes images of Hell and chastisement more than care and treatment. In this respect the tortuous natural space to which Agnès is confined is very different to Malvina's asylum-garden, and this, perhaps, ultimately provides the reason why Agnès does not recover from her mental derangement.

Part 4: Conclusion

Cottin engages with the feminine stereotypes of insanity developed and investigated in her contemporary society, including the belief in the moon's influence over women's biology and their consequent susceptibility to madness, the stereotypical portrayal of the disheveled madwoman with wild hair and clothes in tatters, and the belief that an inability to control emotion (a womanly flaw) provoked hysteria. She couples her exploration of these stereotypes with a portrayal of the oppressed woman desiring to protest against the patriarchal society dominating her. Nature plays a vital role in our understanding of the hysteria displayed by the rebelling characters in Cottin's novels, for it provides them with a symbolic natural asylum in place of a conventional madhouse, a space which mirrors their state of mind, a space which contains the power they no longer possess, and which consequently enables their protest. Nature therefore becomes a space to be reclaimed by women in their madness, a space to which they can safely retreat and which will restore to them the voice that patriarchal society has removed.

Comparing Cottin's novels permits the reader to understand the opinions she offers regarding the types of institutions which existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the types of treatment available. She highlights the new type of institution

– in which madwomen were cared for and in which an attempt to cure them was made – as a much more successful institution than those of the Ancien Régime, which only served to compound the problems of the oppression that provoked insanity. Aptly, Cottin presents the tortuous natural asylum representative of the Ancien Régime at the heart of harsh, wild nature, whilst the curative asylum representative of Pinel's era is to be found amid a natural space tamed by mankind. Presenting tamed versus wild nature here adds to Cottin's argument: if mankind tames the space in which the madwoman is housed, as Pinel attempted to do, then recovery is possible; if savage punishment is employed within the prison, then this will only exacerbate the patient's madness.

CHAPTER 5

Nature and Female Mortality

> [J]'ai des accès de tristesse noire […]. Je ne puis exprimer l'espèce de malaise qui me poursuit, mon bon ami, je voudrais bien finir d'exister; non, il n'est point d'instant dans la journée où je ne reçusse la mort avec volupté.[570]

Part 1: Death, Women and Nature in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

Having examined how nature contributes to discussions which arise at several crucial junctures in women's lives throughout this thesis, it is appropriate for the final chapter to examine how nature contributes to our understanding of the end of a woman's life cycle. Death, like madness, is exclusive neither to women nor to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it is a crucial point of analysis for this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, at this time philosophers, artists and writers began to express an increasing fascination with mortality, which in turn influenced the way in which the public began to contemplate death. Women and nature were images (in novels and paintings alike) frequently associated with this new fascination with death. Secondly, death, like madness, occurs for the female protagonists of novels of this period as a result of the problems faced throughout their lives, and is most often sought and found at the heart of nature. The events which typically befall the Romantic hero, according to Pasco, are also appropriate for the Romantic heroine, particularly the heroines of women's novels between 1789 and 1815:

> When they fail to establish a comforting religious faith, they concoct vague ideals and eventually decide to settle for the love of a woman (or man) who for one reason or another is inappropriate and unavailable. […] When reality fails to measure up to their hopes, they fall prey to melancholy. When reason betrays them, they turn to imagination and dreams. Frequently they come to yearn for death.[571]

The initial stages that befall the Romantic hero were true for the heroines of the novels analysed in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Chapter 4 illustrated that resorting to madness is one way of protesting against the problems which provoke such melancholy: the characters turn to illusion in order to protest against reality when all else fails. However, for those characters who, like Cottin's Amélie Mansfield and Staël's Delphine, do not become insane; or for those who, like Staël's Corinne, only suffer an extremely brief delusion,

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[570] Mme Cottin to M. Gramagnac, April 1795. Arnelle, pp.93-94.
[571] Allan H. Pasco, *Sick Heroes: French Society and Literature in the Romantic Age, 1750-1850* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997) pp.7-8.

another solution must be sought: escape through death. Given the melancholia these women experience throughout their lives, a yearning for death is not unexpected. Indeed, even their creators sometimes experienced it, as can be seen in the quotation which opens this chapter, taken from Cottin's correspondence. Staël even composed a treatise entitled *Réflexions sur le suicide* in 1813. Many women writers' heroines allow themselves to waste away because of their unrequited love, their inability to fit into society, their feeling of personal failure, and their melancholic state. This is typified by the character of Corinne. Others, like Amélie Mansfield, choose to end their lives in a more dramatic fashion: by suicide.[572] In its analysis of the deaths of these two heroines, this chapter illustrates how Cottin and Staël employ descriptions of natural deathscapes both to announce the fact that death is the only escape possible for the heroines, and to dramatise their deaths by physically allowing this escape to take place.

It is first necessary to understand both the changing perceptions of death occurring at the time Cottin and Staël were writing, and the fact that an increasing fascination with death was to be enjoyed amid a natural deathscape. In the opening decades of the 1700s, '[p]hilosophes ou simplement gens de goût […] sont d'accord sur un point: cesser de se crisper sur la mort et d'en faire la méditation de toute une vie'.[573] Death may have been inevitable, but this did not mean that it must be dwelt upon: 'If there is a general inference to be drawn from a study of attitudes to death in eighteenth-century France, it is that people are concerned essentially with living, and not dying'.[574] Voltaire was well aware of the aversion to contemplating death within his contemporary society, and comments scornfully thereupon in his *Lettres philosophiques,* aguing that '[o]n ne peut pas dire qu'un homme supporte la mort aisément ou malaisément, quand il n'y pense point du tout. Qui ne se sent rien ne supporte rien'.[575]

Even the Goncourts, in the 1860s, comment upon the desire to avoid thoughts of death in the previous century. They argue that women in particular refused to dwell upon death, instead enjoying life to the full; thus, when death came, it crept up unexpectedly:

> [C]'est un hôte bien imprévu que la Mort au dix-huitième siècle. La vie n'a guère le temps d'y penser; et le tourbillon du monde, le bruit des fêtes, l'enivrement du mouvement, l'étourdissement, l'enchantement du moment, la distraction du jour, la jouissance absolue et presque unique du présent, en effacent l'image et presque la

[572] Many heroines who do not die find a method of removing themselves from the world, which ultimately amounts to a death of sorts: Rosalba and Mathilde enter convents, shutting themselves away, and preparing, through prayer and repentance, for death.
[573] Michel Vovelle, *La Mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p.394.
[574] McManners, p.438.
[575] Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques* (Amsterdam: E. Lucas, 1734), Lettre XV, Comment XLVI, p.372.

> conscience dans l'âme de la femme. […] Au dix-huitième siècle, la mort paraît absente et n'est point attendue.[576]

According to the Goncourts, the decay associated with death was a particularly negative concept for women:

> Dans tout le siècle, la femme renvoie loin d'elle cette idée de sa fin. […] Cet éloignement de la mort se retrouve partout, dans tout ce qu'a écrite la femme. La pourriture effraye son élégance. L'ordure lui fait peur dans le néant.[577]

Coupled with the notion of avoiding contemplation of death was the notion of trying to avoid it completely. Essays such as Deparcieux's *Essai sur les probabilities de la durée de la vie humaine* were published with ideas to promote longevity.[578] Amateurs and non-medical experts offering advice on reaching old age, such as Chomel, Delisle de Sales and Erlach advocated certain lifestyles if longevity was to be achieved.[579]

Yet, this is not the whole story. As the Enlightenment's focus on reason and rationality began to be considered increasingly arid, and the counter-current of *sensibilité* emerged, concerned with experiencing and displaying emotions, this affected the public's views on mortality. For whilst some continued resolutely to show nothing but impartiality in the face of death, others began to revel in emotion, shedding tears over the dead as much as possible. In fact, '[l]'insensibilité réelle ou de façade n'est sans doute pas la forme qui prédomine en ce temps'.[580] From the 1750s and 1760s onwards, contemplation of death became increasingly common, and became linked with the century's new experiences, in particular, melancholia:

> The eighteenth century had invented a new pleasure – or rather, had brought secrets of the subconscious up to the conscious mind for aesthetic analysis. Sorrow was found to have a hypnotic attraction, and there were sophisticated delights to be discovered in melancholy. At one end of the scale was the *frisson* which comes over us at the sight of a terrifying landscape, at the other the perverse savouring of tales of cruelty; between are all the nuances of emotion which we feel at the thought of death and its exigencies, at the sight of its ceremonies and monuments.[581]

This new pleasure was particularly experienced in the reading of sentimental literature, in which the presence of death becomes very pronounced:

> Est-ce naïveté que de faire remarquer que si, dans la littérature, l'ode funèbre, ou le 'Tombeau', comme on disait, recule par rapport au siècle précédent, la mort pénètre peut-être de façon plus insistante, parce que moins académique, les pensées de ceux qui lisent, par l'essor du roman, cet engouement nouveau du siècle. […] Le roman

[576] Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *La femme au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1862), p.458.
[577] Ibid., p.458.
[578] Antoine Deparcieux, *Essai sur les probabilities de la durée de la vie humaine* (Paris: Frères Guerin, 1746).
[579] McManners, p.113.
[580] Vovelle, p.443.
[581] McManners, p.334.

> du XVIIIe siècle va donner à la mort du héros, et plus souvent encore de l'héroïne, un impact et la valeur d'un modèle que l'on suit.[582]

In fact, death began to be associated with sublimity and beauty. Speaking of a 'douceur narcotique', Ariès describes the early decades of the nineteenth century as a time which drew a veritable pleasure from the notion of death and dying. He cites Caroly de Gaïx, Chateaubriand and a village curate, all of whom indicate that death was now to be rejoiced in rather than avoided:

> 'Nous sommes au temps des belles morts, écrivait dans son Journal, en 1825, Caroly de Gaïx; celle de Madame de Villeneuve a été sublime'. Sublime, le mot se trouve naturellement chez Chateaubriand: 'les traits paternels avaient pris au cercueil quelque chose de sublime'. Aussi la mythologie du temps affectait-elle de reconnaître dans la mort un havre désiré et longtemps attendu. […] 'Réjouissez-vous, mon enfant, vous allez mourir'. Ainsi parlait le curé d'un petit village près de Castres.[583]

Death was viewed anew, therefore, as the eighteenth century progressed and the nineteenth began. According to Ariès, during the nineteenth century 'l'homme des sociétés occidentales tend à donner à la mort un sens nouveau. Il l'exalte, la dramatise, la veut impressionnante et accaparante'.[584] As a result of this, we begin to see

> [t]he dramatization of the death-bed scene, the cult of the dead national hero, and the increasing medicalization of death as it taken from the home and into the hospital. Literature and art reflect this evolution: the Romantics found inspiration in death as a mystical communion with the eternal, and the early nineteenth century was thus 'le temps des belles morts […] des morts sublimes'.[585]

The notion of rejoicing in sublime death found its way into women's novels as well, whose heroines actively seek death and rejoice in the escape from oppressive society that it brings.

Simultaneously, the fact that the French public actively extended cemeteries and sought out deathscapes to contemplate mortality (as shown in the thesis introduction) is also mirrored in the same literature whose plotlines result in the demise of characters. Tombs, ruins and coffins appeared in Romantic and gothic novels, both of which were growing in popularity.[586] As Monglond states: 'La poésie des ruines se lie naturellement à celle des tombeaux',[587] with the result that '[l]es romans multiplient les scènes nocturnes

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582 Vovelle, p.445.
583 Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), p.403.
584 Philippe Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident: du Moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), p.51.
585 Harkness, Downing, Stephens and Unwin, 'Introduction', pp.10-11.
586 André Monglond, *Le Préromantisme français,* 2 vols (Rennes: Presses des Imprimeries réunies, 1965), I; Roland Mortier, *La Poétique des ruines en France: ses origines, ses variations de la Renaissance à Victor Hugo*, (Genève: Droz, 1974).
587 Monglond, p.154.

dans les cimetières'.[588] One of the reasons for this increase was the influence of the English and their growing taste for macabre and melancholic literature, an influence which 'avait la première renouvelé chez nous la poésie de la mort'.[589] Furthermore, following the violent events and deaths of the Revolution, it was understandable that images of death should also increase in literature published at this time:

> Venue la Révolution, le tragique de tant de morts, la violation des sépultures, le scandale d'inhumations bâclées et, chez les émigrés, la suprême angoisse d'un dernier gîte de hasard sur une terre étrangère, réveillent le sentiment de la terre et des morts.[590]

Literature also began to include imagery of natural deathscapes to correspond with the fashion in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society for seeking out areas of nature in which death might be contemplated. Often, where tombs and ruins appeared in fiction, they did so amid natural scenery. It is this that we see clearly in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* and Chateaubriand's *Atala*; the male protagonists in both these novels bury their lovers at the heart of the natural world. As the century progresses, nature's role in the deaths of heroines becomes increasingly apparent. Either there are significant links between the natural world and the lifeless corpse of the heroine, or nature itself has a hand in the woman's death. It is the harshness of the climate and landscape to which Manon succumbs. Julie dies after jumping into water to save the life of her child. Virginie perishes in the sea, during a shipwreck. By the time we reach Atala in 1802, the heroine's body is encircled by nature as she lies on the grass, surrounded by mountains and with flowers in her hair. Natural deathscapes are also seen in the work of women writers, as we have seen: Krüdener's Valérie places her child's tomb in an island garden and then landscapes this garden to her wishes, and Souza's Adèle de Sénange buries her husband in her *jardin à l'anglaise*. However, it is women writers' use of nature to highlight both the death of the heroine herself and the untenable situation which provokes that death which will form the focus of this chapter. In this respect we should remember that the natural deathscapes which appear in the novels fall into one of two catergories. As already outlined in the overall introduction to this thesis, they include

[588] Ibid., p.156.
[589] Ibid., p.154. Cf. Vovelle, p.477.
[590] Monglond, p.158. The effect that the death and violence of the Revolution produced on literature did not only involve the increasing appearance of fear and images of mortality. Astbury discusses the many types of literature inflected by the traumas of the Revolution, including pastoral novels, émigré novels, chivalric novels, and moral tales. Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution*.

both the calm, tranquil nature of Ermenonville and the 'harsh and haunting beauties of Nature' whose sublimity inspired melancholic and fearful *frissons.*[591]

The actual deaths which occur in the fiction published throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are most often those of the heroines, not the heroes: 'Even after the appearance of *Werther,* death seems to strike the female character more readily than the male'.[592] Thomas notes that Montesquieu's Roxane, Prévost's Manon, Voltaire's Mlle de St. Yves, Laclos' Mme de Tourvel, Rousseau's Julie and Bernardin's Virginie all perish in novels published during the eighteenth century.[593] Similarly, Rogers cites Staël's Corinne, Constant's Ellénore, Sand's Valentine, Stendhal's Madame de Rênal, Sainte-Beuve's Madame de Couaën and several of Balzac's female protagonists as frequent examples of dying heroines in the 1800s.[594] Bertrand-Jennings in fact comments on how unusual Genlis's *Mademoiselle de Clermont* (1802) was in terminating the life of the hero rather than that of the heroine.[595] As the century progressed an increasing number of female heroines were being described in death, so that by the end of the eighteenth century, images of deathbed scenes and of the lifeless corpse of the female figure were frequently portrayed. Whilst the bodies of Manon, Roxane and even Julie are not presented at all (their deaths may be described, but their corpses are not), in later decades Bernardin's Virginie and Chateaubriand's Atala are described in death in much more detail. With the obvious exception of those in Gothic tales, such as Regnault-Warin's *La Caverne de Strozzi*, the dead females were presented as both beautiful and tranquil in death, not as cold and decaying. The view of the dead female body was also very common in visual art. Bronfen states that, '[t]he pictorial representation of dead women became so prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European culture that by the middle of the latter century this topos was already dangerously hovering on the periphery of cliché'.[596] The paintings which portrayed a woman's death often did so through images of nature. Two engravings of Atala's burial, for example, appeared in 1831, both

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591 McManners, p.334-335.

592 Godelieve Mercken-Spaas, 'Death and the Romantic Heroine: Chateaubriand and de Staël', in *Pre-text, Text, Context: Essays on Nineteenth-Century French Literature,* ed. by Robert L. Mitchell (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp.79-86 (p.79).

593 Ruth P. Thomas, 'The Death of an Ideal: Female Suicides in the Eighteenth-Century French Novel', in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Samia I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp.321-331.

594 Thomas and Rogers argue that these heroines give up on life after what they have endured, and that their deaths are thus 'self-willed'. Rogers, p.246; Thomas, p.321.

595 Bertrand-Jennings, p.49.

596 Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.3.

portraying the dead heroine about to be entombed by her lover, and in each case surrounded by a detailed depiction of the natural countryside of North America.[597]

There are several reasons for the high number of deaths of literary heroines. Firstly, in Tenon's descriptions of the hospitals in Paris in the 1780s, he confirms:

> On a été surpris, en rédigeant le premier Rapport sur les Hôpitaux (page 67), de la mortalité à l'Hospice Saint-Sulpice: elle est comme 1 à 6 ½, et la plus forte connue après celle de l'Hôtel-Dieu, qui est d'1 à 4 ½; on a cherché à se rendre raison de la cause de cette mortalité à cet Hospice: on l'a attribuée à la gravité des maladies qu'on y traite; à ce qu'on y reçoit plus de femmes que d'hommes, et que la mortalité des femmes est plus grande que celle des hommes'.[598]

If it was known that the mortality of women in the Paris hospitals was greater than that of men, it is not surprising that this should also play out in the century's novels. There is, however, a stronger reason to explain why the deaths of fictional women outnumber those of men, and it is this reason which will be explored throughout the rest of this chapter. Female protagonists of this era, like their extra-fictional counterparts, were frequently faced with irreconcilable choices. One example of such a choice is presented by Thomas who argues that women were trapped in an untenable situation, subject to an impossible feminine ideal comprising both virtuous angel and sexual object: 'At the same time, she must be virgin and whore. […] Chastity is required, promiscuity rewarded'.[599] A second example of a woman's irreconcilable choice is that discussed by Cohen: the choice between personal happiness or duty to family and society.[600] According to Thomas, 'beset by conflicting voices, the woman finds her position untenable'.[601] In the case of the choice between angel and whore, either the woman falls from grace, desiring to please masculine society as a sexual object, and wishes to die upon realising her fall, or she is so virtuous that she is compelled to die because she is too good for the world. The heroines analysed in Thomas's article are the constructs of male authors, and all perish in novels published in pre-revolutionary France. Thomas argues that 'in murdering their heroines, they were, wittingly or not, re-enacting the social drama taking place on a larger stage in the eighteenth century'.[602] However, Thomas's notion of an untenable position leading to death proves equally true for the heroines of the novels of post-revolutionary society. Post-revolution, the heroines of women's novels (particularly of those published

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[597] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala,* (Paris: Lordereau, 1831). Available online at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b67003969/f3.item>; <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b67003969/f4.item>
[598] Tenon, p.56.
[599] Thomas, pp.322-323.
[600] Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel.*
[601] Thomas, p.323.
[602] Ibid., p.330.

under the Empire), including Staël's Corinne and Cottin's Amélie are faced with the duty-happiness debate: should a woman break free from the constraints of society to pursue her own happiness and be punished by society for doing so, or should she conform to the dutiful domestic tasks and marriage expected of her and remain forever unfulfilled.[603] This concept of a duty-happiness debate being central to sentimental and early Romantic fiction is underlined by Cohen who argues that '[i]n representing individual happiness in tension with collective welfare, sentimental novels give poetic expression to a central preoccupation of Enlightenment liberalism'.[604] Caught between the requirements of social duty and the desire for personal contentment, Amélie and Corinne find, ultimately, that death is the only way out.

It could be argued that such dilemmas are not unique to eighteenth-century women, and that women's position has been irreconcilable for centuries. Indeed, Beauvoir argues:

> Voilà donc pourquoi la femme a un double et décevant visage: elle est tout ce que l'homme appelle et tout ce qu'il n'atteint pas […]. Seulement elle est Tout sur le mode de l'inessentiel: elle est tout l'*Autre*. Et, en tant qu'autre, elle est aussi autre qu'elle-même, autre que ce qui est attendu d'elle.[605]

It is this 'otherness' which makes a happy ending impossible, because of the woman's inability to fulfil two extremes at the same time. This dilemma comes to the fore in the eighteenth century (and consequently in its novels), an era which famously attempts to force women into the pigeonhole of domestic virtue, and yet which is replete with sexual *libertinage*. As Thomas states, the literary deaths are necessarily feminine, because it was the woman upon whom the pressure of an ideal was forced: 'The victim is necessarily a woman, for eighteenth-century society defines social relationships in terms of the erotic yet, at the same time, distrusts passion and demands that marriage be based on a more stable and rational foundation'. [606] Female protagonists of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French novels die, essentially, as a product of the socio-historical era in which their novels are produced, and the demands that this era makes on women.

Amélie and Corinne desire to be with a lover forbidden to them by society. Corinne also desires, against the will of society, to pursue a career instead of a life of domesticity. Amélie is a mother, but in her pursuit of a man forbidden to her, she leaves

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[603] The heroine in Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* also finds herself in an untenable situation. Claire is a married woman who has fallen in love with Frédéric, a young relation from her husband's family. She struggles against her passions throughout the novel, finally yielding to her sexual desire, and swiftly afterwards perishing from illness provoked by guilt.
[604] Cohen, 'Introduction'.
[605] Beauvoir, I, 277-278. (Original emphasis).
[606] Thomas, p.329.

her beloved child behind, to be cared for by her first husband's uncle. Both women yearn to protest and break free from the bonds of a demanding, oppressive society. However, they find that in protesting they bring calamity upon themselves. They cannot be happy fulfilling their societal duty, but nor are they permitted happiness upon breaking free from society. As a consequence, they are placed in an untenable situation, doomed to melancholy. They seek death because no other route is left open to them, and they ultimately rejoice in death as it brings them escape from oppression and melancholia. Thomas argues that the women who die in eighteenth-century novels either commit suicide or will their own deaths because of the untenable situation into which they have been forced. This is also true of Amélie and Corinne. Whilst Amélie may, like Roxane, be the only one to die by her own hand, Corinne nonetheless contemplates suicide, and ultimately allows herself to waste away, willing her own death. Parts 2 and 3 of this chapter illustrate how for Amélie and Corinne, as for Julie, Virginie and Manon before them, nature plays a significant role in their deaths. However in an era where the prevailing deathscape had now become a natural one, the part played by nature in easing the ailing woman along her escape route is much greater.

Part 2: Feminine Mortality and the Natural Deathscape in Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie*

'Mme de Staël's novels are concerned with the sufferings of woman in a cold, frivolous, egotistical society',[607] declares Winegarten. *Corinne* provides a prime example of such suffering. The eponymous heroine first attempts to live in British society and to conform to its rules. She finds it difficult to do so, however, as she is constantly unhappy at having to suppress her talent for writing and acting. When faced with British society's condemnation of her and her chosen profession, she must decide whether to pursue her own happiness and continue to write, or to conform to society's imposed duty and give up her career. She refuses to comply with society, leaving Britain for Italy to pursue her career. However, Corinne's attempts to break free from the demands of society result only in further unhappiness, since her refusal to comply with its demands means that society will condemn her happiness in love. Corinne falls for the British-born Oswald, but later realises that his family reject her as a possible wife because of her refusal to follow the domestic rules imposed on women. Corinne is unhappy both when attempting to live in society, and when ostracised from that society because it

[607] Winegarten, *Mme de Staël,* p.85.

consequently forbids her the man she loves (Oswald will not deviate from society's will). Caught in an untenable and melancholic situation, unable to live without her talent or her lover, she quietly wastes away.

A description of the natural world is employed in Staël's novel to signpost the path to death by announcing that dying is the only escape available. Nature is associated with the announcement of death from early on in the novel, as Corinne conducts Oswald on a guided tour of the sites in and around Rome. Whilst touring the countryside around the city, the heroine admits that she believes nature has the ability to communicate messages to the beholder:

> Ne trouvez-vous pas, dit Corinne en contemplant avec Oswald la campagne dont ils étaient environnés, que la nature en Italie fait plus rêver que partout ailleurs? On dirait qu'elle est ici plus en relation avec l'homme, et que le créateur s'en sert comme d'un langage entre la créature et lui. (*C* p.141)

Oswald's reply leads the couple's conversation and contemplation on to the specific message that nature will be employed to announce: the death of Corinne:

> Sans doute, reprit Oswald […]. Vous me révélez les pensées et les émotions que les objets extérieurs peuvent faire naître. […] Mais cette magie de l'univers que vous m'apprenez à connaître ne m'offrira jamais rien de plus beau que votre regard, de plus touchant que votre voix. Puisse ce sentiment que je vous inspire aujourd'hui durer autant que ma vie, dit Corinne, ou du moins puisse ma vie ne pas durer plus que lui! (*C* p.141).

Corinne actively confesses not only that she will die, but that she would actually wish to die, were she no longer able to inspire in Oswald a feeling of beauty and love at her touch and voice. Later in the novel, when society rejects Corinne in favour of another wife for Oswald, she is granted this wish.

Immediately following this declaration that nature has the power to communicate messages, the reader is presented with an image of the natural world replete with sarcophagi, the deathscape to which the eighteenth-century French public had become so accustomed. On visiting the vast gardens of the Villa Borghese, the two lovers notice that '[u]ne réunion incroyable de statues, de vases, de sarcophages antiques, se mêlent avec la fraîcheur de la jeune nature du sud' (*C* p.142). A garden deathscape including tombs, ruins and coffins holds a poignant significance for the story of Corinne. The young lovers' tour of Italy is continually interrupted by images of death, just as the young, fertile nature of southern Europe is peppered with sarcophagi. 'Tombs', states MacArthur, 'are concrete embodiments of a promise by the living to remember the dead

person',[608] however, they also remind the living of their own mortality. The *memento mori* in the natural deathscape around Rome remind Corinne of the death which awaits her.

Finally, in order to underline further the message that nature conveys in this tour of the Roman countryside, Staël draws the reader's attention to the bad air which infects the city's natural surroundings:

> [Q]uand on demande pourquoi ce séjour ravissant n'est-il pas habité, l'on vous répond que le mauvais air (*la cattiva aria*) ne permet pas d'y vivre pendant l'été. […] [S]ans doute l'absence d'arbres dans la campagne autour de la ville est une des causes de l'insalubrité de l'air […]. Maintenant des forêts sans nombre ont été abattues; pourrait-il en effet exister de nos jours des lieux assez sanctifiés pour que l'avidité s'abstînt de les dévaster? Le mauvais air est le fléau des habitants de Rome, et menace la ville d'une entière dépopulation; mais il ajoute peut-être encore à l'effet que produisent les superbes jardins qu'on voit dans l'enceinte de Rome. L'influence maligne ne se fait sentir par aucun signe extérieur; vous respirez un air qui semble pur et qui est très-agréable; la terre est riante et fertile; une fraîcheur délicieuse vous repose le soir des chaleurs brûlantes du jour; et tout cela, c'est la mort! (*C* pp.142-143).

In this natural deathscape, nature itself is dying. Whilst Corinne and Oswald are happy together in the present, enjoying each others' company, their mutual love and their tour of nature, the happiness which seems to reign in the air all around them is ephemeral, even misleading. For it will be snatched away and destroyed by society, just as the greed of Roman society destroys the trees. They breathe not the air of peace and contentment, but the poisonous air of death. Again, a natural deathscape foreshadows the fate of the heroine, undermining the few moments of happiness she can grasp, and signposting the morbid path that will be inevitable. The couple are very aware of this:

> J'aime, disait Oswald à Corinne, ce danger mystérieux, invisible, ce danger sous la forme des impressions les plus douces. Si la mort n'est, comme je le crois, qu'un appel à une existence plus heureuse, pourquoi le parfum des fleurs, l'ombrage des beaux arbres, le souffle rafraîchissant du soir ne seraient-ils pas chargés de nous en apporter la nouvelle? (*C* p.143).

Death will not only bring Corinne a happier existence in terms of transporting her to eternal paradise, it will in fact bring her the only possible happiness available to her. All happiness is snatched away from her on earth due to British society (her father's homeland) forbidding both her talent and her lover. The 'existence plus heureuse' does not only represent heavenly paradise for Corinne, but also, perhaps more strongly, it represents simple escape from her untenable melancholy on earth. It is nature which signposts this escape, as the words 'apporter la nouvelle' signify.

[608] MacArthur, p.106.

The way in which the natural deathscape announces the future in these passages is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand we are presented with an image of a noxious *mauvais air* and a *danger mystérieux* seeping subtly through the world, masquerading under the smiling, fertile earth and the delicious coolness of the evening, and poisoning the happiness of the couple. The words *menace* and *danger* are particularly striking, highlighting that Corinne and Oswald are constantly threatened by an ever-present undercurrent of death, just as Rome is threatened by the poisonous air which surrounds it. However, nature covers this threat with a surface appearance of calm and peace. The image of nature which brings the fatal news is gentle and kindly: it is the perfume of flowers, the shade of beautiful trees and a refreshing breeze which predicts Corinne's fate. The nature which announces death does so in a beautiful way, guiding the lovers to a realisation of the happiness to be found in death, and which, for Corinne, cannot be found in life. Thus, although the heroine's happiness is endangered, nature endeavours to soothe the fears which such a threat may arouse in an otherwise hostile environment.

The second step on Corinne's journey to death – the allaying of her fears – takes place during a near-death experience enabled by nature. This near-death experience permits Corinne to contemplate the 'other side', an imagined physical place commonly employed to describe life after death. Murray states that 'relationships between the living and the dead have been spatialised in modern western society',[609] arguing that academic discourse articulates 'an "imagined geography" of the living and the dead'.[610] This is certainly true in Staël's novel. The following analysis will investigate one particularly strong example of the spatialised worlds of the living and dead, in which they are imagined to occupy the two opposing banks of the same river. This river, at the heart of the natural landscape of Scotland, permits the two imagined geographies of living and dead to come into closest contact.

Hidden in the shadows, Corinne spies upon Oswald and his intended bride Lucile at a ball on Oswald's estate. She then wanders through the natural scenery on his land until she comes to a river. Gazing upon this river, she contemplates suicide. Although this contemplation is not a literal near-death experience, in that Corinne does not throw herself into the waters and almost drown, the serious consideration of ending her life suffices for her to gain a window onto the afterlife. Contemplation of the other side is a frequent occurrence as a result of a near-death experience:

[609] Murray, p.37.
[610] Ibid.

> [N]ear death experience testimonies, as resurrect narratives, connect the world of the living with the world of the dead in a way that both confirms and confounds the boundaries between the living and the dead. Boundaries between the living and the dead, normally held in by rituals of separation, are transgressed as they are upheld in the resurrective narrative of the near death experience.[611]

It is common, therefore, for the boundary between the world of the living and that of the dead to begin to break down without disintegrating completely (as it would in the case of actual death). The barrier is weakened just enough to permit the view of the other world.

This is precisely what befalls Corinne upon her visit to Oswald's estate. In this natural setting, the worlds of the living and dead are juxtaposed and the boundary between the two begins to dissolve. This permits Corinne a privileged 'window' on to the afterlife, and thus turns the scene into a natural deathscape. Amid nature, the boundary between living and dead appears to be at its weakest, and the relationship at its strongest.

> Le château était placé sur une hauteur, au pied de laquelle coulait une rivière. Il y avait beaucoup d'arbres sur l'un des bords, mais l'autre n'offrait que des rochers arides et couverts de bruyère. Corinne en marchant se trouva près de la rivière; elle entendit là tout à la fois la musique de la fête et le murmure des eaux. La lueur des lampions du bal se réfléchissait d'en haut jusqu'au milieu des ondes, tandis que le pâle reflet de la lune éclairait seul les campagnes désertes de l'autre rive. On eût dit que dans ces lieux, comme dans la tragédie de Hamlet, les ombres erraient autour du palais où se donnaient les festins. L'infortunée Corinne, seule, abandonnée, n'avait qu'un pas à faire pour se plonger dans l'éternel oubli. – Ah ! s'écria-t-elle, si demain, lorsqu'il se promènera sur ces bords […] ses pas triomphants heurtaient contre les restes de celle qu'une fois pourtant il a aimée, n'aurait-il pas une émotion qui me vénérait, une douleur qui ressemblerait à ce que je souffre? (*C* p.499)

There are several points to note regarding this experience and the role of nature in creating it. Firstly, the contrast between the oppressive society which brings Corinne to the point of destruction and the natural world which provides hope that life will continue beyond that destruction is achieved through the comparison of two lights and two sounds. At the river's edge, Corinne hears behind her the sounds of society (the noise of the ball), and in front of her the sound of nature (the murmuring of water). Society, at her back, pushes her forwards towards destruction, whilst nature draws her onwards towards the afterlife. Similarly, the lamplight illuminating the ball is reflected in the water, and the natural light of the moon lights up the *autre rive*. The lights indicate the same progression. It is the untenable situation brought about by the ideals of society which brings Corinne to the side of the river, and so it is the light of society which illuminates the river, focusing Corinne's attention on the possibility of suicide. The natural lunar

[611] Ibid.

light, however, highlights the distant shore: the other world of an afterlife. Staël's use of light to illuminate the other side is stereotypical. According to Murray, the feeling of 'moving […] toward bright lights' is a frequent aspect of near-death experience narrative.[612] The light which illuminates the possibility of an afterlife is provided by a feature of the natural world: the moon. The moon is, of course, itself only a dead light source, a mere reflection of the light of the sun, and so is an appropriate light to guide the way to the world of the dead.

Secondly, we must consider the importance of the river itself. According to Murray, '[t]he near death experience seems to take place in liminal 'other worldly' space. It is a space […] that appears to lie somewhat betwixt and between the land of the living and the land of the dead'.[613] Corinne gazes across the river to the other side as she might gaze through a window to the space beyond. Without the river to act as mediator, the near-death experience would not occur, and Corinne would not visualise that something may exist for her beyond death. The river is, moreover, a motif long associated with the liminal space between the living and the dead, and its presence here confirms the setting as a deathscape. Crossing water in order to attain the other side is a recurrent theme in both northern and southern ancient legend. Norse mythology believed in crossing the sea in order to attain the shores of the afterlife. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the river Styx was believed to constitute the means of traversing to the world of the dead. The ancients could only reach the Elysian fields by paying the ferryman, Charon, to carry them across this river. This same natural feature appears in Staël's novel as the liminal space in which Corinne is able to stand and gaze onto the figurative other side. The river's *autre rive* is a deserted countryside space, reminiscent of ancient Hades, in which the shades of ghosts wander as they do in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The river provides the gateway to the afterlife, therefore, and consequently the glimpse of hope that there is something yet to come.

Nature has a triple significance for Corinne's experience of the other side, therefore. It permits the near-death experience in that it allows her to contemplate drowning herself in a river. It also provides the natural liminal space, the mediator, between the lands of living and dead at which one must arrive if one is to view what is on the other side. Finally, it permits that liminal space to be visually traversed by providing natural light to illuminate what lies beyond the here and now. At the heart of

612 Ibid. p.38.
613 Ibid., p.39.

the natural world, the frontier between the spaces of the living and the dead is broken down, and the features of that natural world illustrate that there is a possibility of life after death. Nature thus brings comfort in the death that society has ordered.

However, the afterlife can appear only if Corinne does *not* commit suicide, for Corinne is Catholic and so considers suicide a sin. Were she to die by her own hand, she would not be able to attain the other side that nature has promised: her sin would damn her soul eternally. She therefore decides to allow herself to waste away from her unrequited love instead. Her decision not to traverse the border between the worlds at this point renders her encounter a 'near-death' and not 'actual death' experience. Her fears are allayed, but she will not die yet.

Nature reappears at the ultimate step on Corinne's inevitable mortal path: her death itself. In fact, nature again works to break down the boundaries between the worlds of the living and dead at the very moment of her passing, allowing her to cross from this world to the next. Here again, nature also reinforces the cruelty of the society which has forced Corinne to this point. As Corinne expires on her deathbed, she takes Oswald's hand and draws his attention to the clouds and the moon:

> Elle leva ses regards vers le ciel, et vit la lune qui se couvrait du même nuage qu'elle avait fait remarquer à lord Nelvil quand ils s'arrêtèrent sur le bord de la mer en allant à Naples. Alors elle le lui montra de sa main mourante, et son dernier soupir fit retomber cette main. (*C* p.586).

Corinne's final act as she lies moribund is to turn both Oswald's and the reader's attention towards a particular feature of nature. As with the natural deathscapes we have seen in other chapters, that which appears at the moment of Corinne's passing also allows time and space to become confused, transporting us back to Naples to an event which occurred earlier in the lives of Corinne and Oswald. The moon and cloud to which she refers come from a passage earlier in the novel, when Corinne and Oswald stop by the seashore in Terracina. The two lovers wander through the countryside, enjoying each other's company and declaring their love. However, as the day closes, Corinne turns her gaze to the Heavens, where she sees an omen which informs her that her love will be condemned. She tells Oswald:

> La lune que je contemplais s'est couverte d'un nuage, et l'aspect de ce nuage était funeste. J'ai toujours trouvé que le ciel avait une impression, tantôt paternelle, tantôt irritée, et je vous le dis, Oswald, ce soir il condamnait notre amour. (*C* p.289).

Again, nature reminds the reader of the harsh condemnation of society, just as when Corinne stands by the shore of the river. The Heavens, Corinne believes, display both a paternal and an angry sense. They indicate that, from beyond the grave, both Oswald's

father and her own express serious concerns and displeasure at the couple's union. The deceased paternal figures cast a shadow over the light of the lovers' happiness, just as the cloud casts a shadow over the moon. Aspects of the natural world, here the cloudy sky and the moon, permit the barrier between the world of the living and the world of the dead to become porous, thus giving rise to visions of deceased family members which would otherwise be impossible. Corinne, in contemplating the visions of the dead that nature has permitted, reads and comprehends both that her love is forbidden by society and that the dead will call her to them as a result of her unrequited love. This vision only applies to the female protagonist, however. Oswald is shut out from the expressive communication with nature. When Oswald declares that he does not believe in the vision, Corinne replies, 'Eh bien, tant mieux, si vous n'êtes pas compris dans ce présage […]; en effet, il se peut que ce ciel orageux n'ait menacé que moi' (*C* p.290). The fact that the self-same aspect of the natural world breaks down the same barrier between the geographies of the living and dead at the moment of Corinne's passing, permitting this identical vision to reappear, is highly significant, therefore. For it confirms that the barrier is indeed broken down by the natural world in order that Corinne may be called to join the world of the dead already inhabited by her father and Oswald's.

In Staël's novel, the untenable situation common to women (because of the pressures of misogynistic society) provokes the female protagonist's death, 're-enacting' as Thomas states, 'the social drama taking place on a larger stage in the eighteenth century'.[614] However, in order both to dramatise the death of the woman and to reinforce the notion of its inevitability, Staël's novel shows nature providing three types of deathscape. A natural landscape replete with *memento mori* and images of ecological devastation is endowed with the power of communication, announcing to Corinne that society's oppression means that the only way forward for her will be to die. When that society brings Corinne to the edge of death, nature then also provides a window onto the space of the dead, allowing her to contemplate the possibility of an afterlife, thus allaying any fears she may have about meeting her doom. Finally, nature entirely breaks down the barrier between the spaces of the living and the dead in order to admit Corinne through to the other side as she expires. In this final deathscape, nature reappears at the moment of the heroine's passing to convince the reader one final time, that the untenable situation is the catalyst for her death.

[614] Thomas, p.330.

Part 3: Water and the *Bosquet*: Natural Deathscapes in Cottin's *Amélie Mansfield*

'Amélie's story is one of an angry woman who attempts to isolate herself from patriarchal society, only to be drawn back into it with disastrous results', says Call.[615] Thus, Amélie's fate resembles Corinne's. In attempting to break free from society's constraints, Amélie exacerbates her future situation. Like Corinne, therefore, Amélie finds that the path to death is precipitated by an untenable situation forced upon her by oppressive society. In Cottin's novel it is not stifling British society with its rules against writing which oppress the heroine, however. The oppression comes from German aristocratic society, and its rules against marrying outside one's social class. The untenable situation is even underlined for Amélie by her brother Albert, who declares: '[N]e pense jamais qu'ayant été moins sage, tu eusses été plus heureuse: par une faiblesse, une femme accroît ses maux et n'en évite aucun' (*AM* III:128).

Amélie was betrothed from birth to her cousin Ernest de Woldemar, for reasons of family fortune. Ernest is a violent and capricious youth, however, and Amélie refuses, despite pressure from Ernest's family, to marry him. In order to break free from the constraint of aristocratic society, she elopes with M. Mansfield, a poet far beneath her social status. As a result of this marriage, Amélie is cast out from her family, in particular by Ernest's mother. Several years later, Ernest, masquerading under the name Henry Semler, seduces Amélie (now a young widow). Ignorant of his true identity, she falls deeply in love, but when she learns who her lover is, Amélie fears her family's retribution, which indeed comes to pass. Mme de Woldemar will not permit her son to associate with, let alone marry, the woman who brought disgrace upon the family. Amélie also allows herself to be drawn further and further away from her son as she falls in love with Ernest; through jealousy, Ernest desires to separate Amélie from the child born from her first marriage. Amélie fails in her role as a mother, and is caught in an untenable situation because of oppressive society: torn between her desire to free herself from aristocratic tyranny and the need for the approval of that society for her love. The only escape for Amélie, as for Corinne, is death, and so she throws herself headlong into the Danube.

Three types of natural deathscape appear within *Amélie Mansfield,* each with a similar function to those in Staël's *Corinne*. Firstly, *Amélie Mansfield* contains several instances in which aspects of the natural world announce the heroine's death. These announcements, however, are not usually made to the heroine herself, but to other

[615] Call, p.87.

characters or to the reader. Nature announces the female protagonist's unhappy end to the reader, for example, when Amélie's personal grove on the Woldemar estate is destroyed. When Amélie was born, a tree was planted in her honour in an area which became known as 'le bosquet d'Amélie'. As Amélie grew, she nurtured this natural space, planting flowers around the tree, thus ensuring that her growth and her flourishing were mirrored in those of the grove:

> La lune éclairait tous les objets: j'ai aperçu le bosquet que ma tante nommait autrefois le bosquet d'Amélie. Tu sais qu'elle y avait fait planter un tilleul le jour de ma naissance: les petits lilas dont je l'avais entouré moi-même, il y a six ans, étaient maintenant hauts, épais et couverts de fleurs. (*AM* I:103-104)

When Amélie disgraces the family, Mme de Woldemar commands that this grove be torn down. However, the servants at Woldemar secretly refuse. Amélie was kind to them and they loved her too much to see her effaced from the family altogether: 'Madame la baronne avait bien donné l'ordre qu'on l'arrachât; mais comme elle ne vient jamais se promener de ce côté, nous avons cru pouvoir le conserver' (*AM* I:104). Although Amélie is cast out upon her first marriage to M. Mansfield, she does not perish. Just as the grove has been allowed to survive, so too does the woman linked to it. Thus Amélie survives her first confrontation with the duty-happiness debate.

However, Mme de Woldemar later discovers the continued existence of *le bosquet d'Amélie* and, infuriated, again orders its destruction. She is so determined to have this grove destroyed that when the servant who concealed its existence from her refuses once again to tear it down, she dismisses him from her staff, despite years of loyal service:

> 'Quoi! malgré mes ordres, ce bosquet subsiste encore! […] [V]ous voyez les reproches que j'ai à vous faire, et que, si je vous traitais comme vous le méritez, je vous chasserais à l'instant même: cependant, en considération de vos longs services, de votre âge et de votre famille, je puis vous faire grâce, pourvu que, devant moi, à la tête de ces ouvriers que je vois là-bas, vous abattiez sur-le-champ cet odieux bosquet'. Le bon homme se mit à pleurer. 'Faut-il donc sortir de cette maison où je croyais mourir? – Vous hésitez, Guillaume? […] Mon fils, m'a-t-elle dit, avec une agitation qui lui permettait à peine de parler, si vous comptez ma vie pour quelque chose, ôtez de devant mes yeux, cet homme qui ose m'outrager au point de conserver une pareille affection à l'opprobre de notre maison'. (*AM* III:179-182)

Although the reader never witnesses the destruction of Amélie's *bosquet*, Mme de Woldemar's extreme reactions and insistence that the grove be destroyed in front of her can leave the reader in no doubt that once its protector (the servant Guillaume) has gone, it will be eradicated from the face of the Woldemar estate. Indeed, when Amélie later returns to Woldemar to search for Ernest, no mention is made of the grove, despite her spending some time in the grounds. We can conclude from this that the heroine is so strongly tied to the natural world that when the grove, the representation of herself in

nature, dies, so will she. Amélie, therefore, does not survive a second altercation with society and with the duty-happiness debate. The death of the natural grove prefigures the death of the woman for whom it was planted.

The motif of water also prefigures Amélie's death on a separate occasion, announcing the heroine's fatal future to Ernest, in a moment of hallucination whilst he is ill with fever:

> [I]l me semblait que toute cette eau s'était formée des larmes d'Amélie… Un frisson m'a saisi… cette eau était glacée, glacée comme la mort. Je vois bien qu'Amélie n'existe plus, me disais-je, et je sentais remonter vers mon cœur quelque chose qui le serrait en le perçant. (*AM* IV:6-7).[616]

The image of the water originating from Amélie's tears is clearly an illusion, yet one which accurately informs him of Amélie's fate, quite literally, for she will meet her death in water. Ernest knows, even in his delirious state, that once he reveals his true identity to Amélie and she is faced with the retribution of society, that the situation will destroy her. The water presents an image of Amélie as already dead: it becomes her tears, which are as icy as though belonging to a corpse.

Nature in *Amélie Mansfield* also provides a near-death experience allaying the heroine's fears of death. The experience created is somewhat different from that in Staël's novel in terms of presentation: the natural deathscape which permits a near-death experience in *Amélie Mansfield* is a harsh and savage one, not the tranquil deathscape of *Corinne*. Nonetheless both types of deathscape still permit the heroine to contemplate the peace she would experience upon death, and to contrast this with the turmoil she experiences in life.

Amélie, accompanied by Ernest, visits a grotto in the Swiss mountains. She hurries towards a waterfall by the grotto specifically in order to hide her disquiet at Ernest's declarations of love and simultaneous reminders of obstacles to their union. She is thus brought to the space of her near-death experience in much the same manner as Corinne: by the obstacles created by an oppressive society. On arriving at the grotto, Amélie comes perilously close to plunging to a violent death over the waterfall:

> Je marchais très vite; je suis arrivée la première, et pour mieux voir l'effet du torrent qui bouillonne entre deux roches vives taillées à pic, je me suis appuyée le corps en avant sur le tronc d'un vieux pin posé sur deux pieux pour servir de balustrade. Il était pourri sans doute: M. Semler, l'ayant vu s'ébranler, s'est élancé vers moi, m'a saisie par le milieu du corps, et m'a arrachée à une mort certaine, car l'arbre est tombé au même instant avec fracas dans le gouffre. (*AM* II:167-168)

[616] Original ellipses.

The imminent threat of death in this scene is stressed by the description of the natural world. The waterfall is not merely a cascade of water, but a frothing torrent crashing down a sheer rock face. The danger is therefore clear: Amélie would undoubtedly have died, had she fallen.

The border between life and death is created in this instance by the pine tree. As Murray notes:

> The border is commonly perceived as a point of no return. Here, the near death traveller may be told, or decide for themselves, that they cannot proceed any further – effectively they do not have the required passport – and must return to their earthly space.[617]

In this instance, it is not nature which informs Amélie that she cannot progress any further along the path to death. The barrier provided by nature to prevent death in fact crumbles away, leaving the way to death clear. Ernest decides that Amélie must not yet leave the earthly realm. This is significant, because it soon transpires that Amélie would have been more grateful to the natural landscape for claiming her life, than she is to Ernest for saving it. Immediately after this incident, she declares: '[U]ne prompte mort m'eût épargné bien des douleurs, et le sort que je prévois me la fera regretter souvent' (*AM* II:169). The near-death experience, made possible by the violence of nature, allows Amélie to comprehend fully what would happen if she were to perish: she would suffer no longer. The natural world thus permits Amélie to contemplate with equanimity the possibility of death. 'The near death experience', states Murray, 'appears to have transformative effects in terms of inner psychological space',[618] and this is undoubtedly the case for Amélie, who from this point on not only has no fear of death, but rather positively welcomes it: '[J]e n'ai pas peur des tombeaux; tout ce qui est insensible et mort me fait envie; je voudrais être cette pierre insensible, ce monument glacé, cette ruine qui s'écroule' (*AM* IV:130-131). A lack of fear of death after a near-death experience is a common reaction:

> Once back in the world of the living, many, if not most, of these other worldly travellers report profound psychological or spiritual changes affecting their sense of themselves and their personal inner space. Those experiencing [near death experiences] often say that they have lost their fear of death.[619]

Amélie has lost her fear because she now understands what nature has attempted to show her: that death is the only path which will solve her pain and problems, the only

[617] Murray, p.40.
[618] Ibid.
[619] Ibid.

escape from the untenable situation that society has forced upon her, the only solution that will bring peace.

The final type of deathscape which appears in Cottin's novel to dramatise the inevitable death of the protagonist, brought about by oppressive society, is created by the river Danube. Amélie employs this feature of the natural landscape to enable her death itself. Like the Scottish river in Staël's *Corinne,* the Viennese river in Cottin's *Amélie Mansfield* is employed as a Stygian liminal space between the worlds of the living and dead. It is significant that the boundary between the two worlds is, once again, an aspect of nature, proving that the female protagonist can only obtain death in a space of nature.

> [I]l arrive sur le bord du Danube; il appelle Amélie: nulle voix ne répond: c'est le silence de la mort […]; il croit apercevoir un corps lutter contre l'onde; il se jette, plonge avec lui sous les eaux, le saisit: c'était elle. (*AM* IV:149-150).

Ernest knows, even before arriving at the part of the river in which Amélie is sinking beneath the current, that this is a space of death, because it returns no sound. The silence of the dead surrounds the river, thus proving that the Danube in this instance provides the means of transition across to the world of the dead. Ernest then perceives Amélie's figure amid the waves and attempts to save her as he did from the perilous waterfall. Although he rescues her from the water in time to prevent her drowning, he does not save her from death, for her fall into the river provokes serious illness which proves fatal.

The peace promised by the natural world is in the end obtained. Through grief, Ernest himself perishes moments after Amélie, and thus the lovers are permitted happiness together in the eternal realm. Albeit a macabre scene, the presentation of Amélie's corpse in her coffin, entwined with that of Ernest, proves to the reader that the heroine has achieved comfort in her eventual death, and that she has finally escaped the oppression of society. Both her countenance and that of Ernest display tranquil serenity, and the blissful peace which death has brought them: 'Une sorte de sérénité paraissait répandue sur leurs traits, comme s'ils eussent encore senti le bonheur d'être ensemble' (*AM* IV:283). The death which the natural elements and landscape announced as the only possible escape, therefore, has, as promised, proved blissful in its arrival.

There are echoes in *Amélie Mansfield* of Staël's *Delphine,* published only one year previously. Both heroines commit suicide in the first editions of the novels due to their impossible situation. Delphine, unlike Amélie does not drown herself. She takes poison just as her lover is about to be executed. In both cases, the authors succumb to their religious conscience when editing the second edition of these novels, and although their heroines do still die, it is not by their own hand. Amélie's death is still enabled by the

Danube, however, as it is on the banks of the river that she collapses and falls fatally ill. In the second edition of *Delphine,* the heroine dies of melancholy. In both novels, the hero and heroine are reunited postmortem. Indeed, Léonce and Delphine are reunited in a natural deathscape: 'M. de Serbellane rendit à ses amis les derniers devoirs. Il les réunit dans un tombeau qu'il fit élever sur les bords d'une rivière, au milieu des peupliers'.[620] We should note, again, the presence of the river, the stereotypical liminal space between the realms of the living and dead. Although nature does not enable the deaths of Léonce and Delphine as it enables that of Amélie, they nonetheless lie, in death, at the heart of nature.

Part 4: Conclusion

In combining Thomas' notion of the 'untenable situation' with an understanding of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French views of savage and tranquil deathscapes, this chapter has identified three steps along the path to dying which the female protagonists of *Corinne* and *Amélie Mansfield* take. Natural deathscapes play a significant part in each stage: firstly, announcing that death represents the only escape from an untenable situation; secondly, providing a near-death experience which calms the heroines; finally, reappearing to break down the boundary between the realms of the living and dead entirely, permitting the heroine to enter the world of the dead.

In the heart of the natural world, the borders between the worlds of the living and dead become porous. In the case of Amélie, the contemplation of the afterlife takes place amid the harsh and savage nature of a torrential cascade, whereas Corinne meditates on death in a more tranquil space. The fact that these contrasting types of nature can be employed to the same end proves that both spaces fashionable for contemplation of death in the decade in which these novels were written – the savage and the peaceful – did indeed serve as apt backdrops for the 'temps des belles morts'.

Amend-Söchting states, with regard to *Corinne*, that

> Lorsque Corinne commence à se laisser aller à sa faiblesse, parfois à sa folie, cette résignation s'engage très vite sur le chemin d'une mort romantique – voire même poétique – qui, selon Mme de Staël, marque la décadence inévitable du génie des femmes aussi longtemps que la société met des obstacles à la libre éclosion de leurs talents.[621]

This argument is equally applicable to *Amélie Mansfield:* when society places obstacles in the way of a woman's career choice, her choice of marital partner, or her motherhood,

[620] Mme de Staël, *Delphine* (Paris: Charpentier, 1851), p.638.
[621] Amend-Söchting, p.110.

death becomes the only escape. The fact that oppressive society has forced these women to the brink of death is highlighted in Cottin's and Staël's novels through the descriptions of nature employed therein. The river in *Corinne* reflects the lights of the society ball behind the heroine, Ernest's avowal of love for Amélie and constant reminders of the obstacles to that love force Amélie to rush towards the waterfall.

Two death-related natural motifs reappear throughout the novels. The first is that of water, which, according to Schama, is a motif associated with both life and death. This dual image owes its origins to the ancients, who associated the river Nile both with fertility and plenty, but also with the cult of Osiris, the god of the underworld and the dead. Therefore, 'with Seneca, Pliny, Plutarch, Strabo, and Diodorus, an entire genre of Nile literature – a rich slurry of myth, topography, and history – inaugurated the Western cult of the fertile, fatal river'.[622] The rivers, cascades and waters which appear in *Corinne* and *Amélie Mansfield* are, therefore, clear indications that the heroines are on the correct path towards death, but also that there will be a future life awaiting them on the other side. Whilst society is guilty of killing the heroine, therefore, nature provides the peaceful afterlife.

The second recurring motif is that of ecological destruction. According to Merchant, '[t]he ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother links women's history with the history of the environment and ecological change'.[623] It is highly appropriate therefore, that the ecological destruction of the *bosquet d'Amélie* should announce the heroine's death. The *mauvais air* which seeps death into the surroundings of Rome in *Corinne* is provoked by the ecological devastation of the forests. This ecological devastation stems from mankind's greed and assumed superiority over the natural world. In the same way, the destruction of the heroine is provoked by the assumed superiority of her society. Amélie's grove and Corinne's Roman landscape are prime examples of ties between women and nature, and of the devastation that can befall a woman if society lays waste to nature. Matthews states that '[t]he unit of survival is an organism-in-its-environment. If the environment fails to survive, so does the individual'.[624] This is true of the heroines studied in this chapter. A further in-depth study of these heroine's ecological sites and their destruction, coupled with an investigation of other novels of the

[622] Schama, p.255.
[623] Carolyn Merchant, *Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1990), p.xx.
[624] Freya Matthews, *The Ecological Self* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.74.

same period would provide a valuable addition to the burgeoning area of literary academic research that is Ecocriticism.

The previous chapters of this thesis have illustrated how, through the problematic situations faced by their female protagonists, female authors writing under the Republic and the Empire articulate the difficulties facing real women on the wider socio-historical front in France. More specifically, these chapters have proved how nature reflects and embodies both these problematic situations and the consequent pain which women suffer on account of them. The final chapter has demonstrated that in addition to possessing the ability to dramatise the problematic situations themselves, nature also has the power to highlight the inevitable result of, and only escape route from, those problems: the death of the female protagonist.

THESIS CONCLUSION

Il est vrai, dit-elle, que la nature a tout fait, mais sous ma direction.[625]

This thesis has shown how women writers in France during the First Republic and the First Empire depict natural landscapes in their novels to expose and comment on the socio-political problems faced by women in the years following the Revolution. In so doing, it sheds new light on the bestselling authors of the time: Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël. Until now, the few scholars who have commented on these writers have dismissed the importance of nature in their novels. Louichon argues, for example, that for Cottin, Duras, Gay, Genlis, Krüdener, Staël and Souza, with the possible exception of Krüdener, '[l]a place de la nature n'y est jamais signifiante'.[626] In overlooking the natural settings in the works of female novelists, scholars have also failed to notice that an insight into women writers' presentation of nature brings a new dimension to our appreciation of their position as critics of their contemporary society. This thesis rectifies this omission.

Throughout late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France, marriage, women's writing, motherhood, madness and death all come under scrutiny. As society discussed these issues in the wake of the Revolution, glimpses of new possibilities gradually emerged. Yet, all too often these glimmers of hope were thwarted, and women found that the problems they faced remained unresolved. Demands for marital reform went unheeded; society refused to alter its traditional views on arranged and forbidden marriages, leaving women's marital fate still subject to the decisions of the family, rather than to love. Women were increasingly criticised for writing and publishing, as French thinkers, politicians and medics argued repeatedly for women's confinement to the domestic sphere. Additionally, although the new motherhood ideal accorded a crucial role to women in the development of society's education and morals, emotional difficulties arose for those women who were unable to live up to the new expectations if they lost their child. And although madness was now treated, rather than punished, women now found themselves more likely to be pathologised and incarcerated on account of insanity than men. Because of the problems women faced in all these areas, it is perhaps unsurprising that, as society turned increasingly towards contemplation of death as peaceful, even desirable, there was an increase in the portrayal of dead heroines

[625] Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse,* p.454.
[626] Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales,* p.292.

in literature and art, heroines who use death as an escape from the oppression faced in their lives. The Revolution's calls for liberty achieved little for the freedom of women, who continued to be subordinated:

> On a pu remarquer que les droits des femmes ont décliné à certaines époques, précisément aux moments cruciaux où les hommes en acquéraient d'autres. La Révolution de 1789, et surtout les années qui suivirent, constituent une instance exemplaire de ce curieux phénomène.[627]

The female novelists writing in this period portray the problems faced by oppressed women as a result of such thwarted possibilities, in order to critique the contemporary society in which they lived. As Slama argues, 'Pour les femmes écrivains et plus précisément dans leurs romans […], l'écriture est protestation, témoignage contre l'enfermement féminine, cri de révolte contre la condition féminine'.[628]

Also coming under scrutiny in the late eighteenth century was nature. The public's perception of the natural world radically altered. Rousseau became the progenitor of a return to nature in both society and fiction, encouraging the population to escape the vices of civilisation in order to wander into the natural world for the purposes of untrammelled contemplation. His *promenades* at the heart of nature led to freedom and also to contentment:

> [I]n the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,* Rousseau presumes to discover within himself an image, or scene, or sentiment of nature truer than that which science could ever achieve. Intuition enables him to imagine 'natural man' wandering solitary through the great primeval forests of the earth, living a simple, innocent, and, most importantly, *happy* life.[629]

As sentimental novelists, Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël were all inspired by Rousseau.[630] They were ardent admirers of his novels, moved by the *sensibilité* displayed within them, by the virtue and emotions of Julie and particularly by his representation of nature. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that nature should become a thematic concern in their own texts. However, this does not mean to say that women writers treated the return to nature in their novels in the same way as Rousseau did. For women writers, the natural world becomes the perfect novelistic setting in which to discuss the preoccupations of their sex. This is because woman's supposed link to nature was the very reason given for her subordination:

> [W]oman was not merely subjected to strict norms; her very nature was accorded a precisely defined place in the anthropological system. Out of this process arose the

[627] Bertrand-Jennings, p.11.
[628] Slama, p.222.
[629] Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.128. (Original emphasis).
[630] Call; Chase; Popiel; Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel.*

> paradox that the very concept of nature, which when applied to the human individual signified emancipation, was enlisted to exclude woman from this emancipation.[631]

The argument that a woman's biological, social and psychological links to the natural world made her more suited to domestic than public life was advocated by scientists, statesmen and philosophers alike, and particularly by Rousseau. Whilst nature had been raised from a position of inferiority to one of superiority, women, despite their supposed inextricable link to the natural world, remained inferior.

It is precisely because a woman's supposed link to nature was used to subordinate her that Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël's use of nature in their novels is highly intriguing: when women writers depict natural landscapes in their novels (whether tamed, wild, cultivated to look untamed, or adapted to incorporate images of death), it is with a view to building on and simultaneously challenging Rousseau. They offer a more polemical presentation of nature in their novels. For Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël, nature is the lynchpin for constructing the complexities of their engagement with the ideas of the period relating to women and their place in society.

Chapter 1 has demonstrated firstly how popular imagery of the tamed nature of utopian idylls is harnessed to highlight the problems of *mariages contrariés,* through allowing Souza and Cottin to critique the real society with which these idylls are contrasted. Secondly, it has demonstrated how, in order to criticise the restriction of *mariages arrangés,* prison-like convent gardens and rigidly tamed French-style gardens are depicted alongside the untamed nature of English-style gardens. The application of Herman's structuralist model of Figure versus Ground theory has revealed that Souza portrays a linear progression through these spaces, whereby the heroine's success in one space is dependent on having moved through the previous one. Thus Souza proves that, if marital reform is to be successfully sought in post-revolutionary France, old and new attitudes must work together.

Chapter 2 has shown how Cottin and Staël draw on the Scottish countryside to highlight the melancholy experienced by the woman writer and social misfit. The wild nature of the landscape is a suitable metaphorical setting for the rebelliousness of the female social misfit, contrasting with the tamed landscapes of Chapter 1 which were a suitable setting in which to present the woman forced to do society's bidding. Chapter 2 also illustrated that in both *Malvina* and *Corinne,* through intertextual references to the

[631] Steinbrügge, p.105.

Ossianic landscape, its wild nature and gender egalitarianism, Cottin and Staël construct an implied reader to whom they impart subtle, yet convincing, arguments about the crucial role of women's writing and women's education, thus adding their voice to the contemporary debates on the subject.

Chapter 3 portrayed grieving and guilt-ridden mothers who, when ordinary language does not suffice, physically tame and landscape the natural world in order to use the language of plants and gardens to convey their painful reactions to being unable to live up to the ideal expected of them. Simultaneously, this chapter's application of models of bereavement behavior developed by modern grief theorists allows us to analyse, retrospectively, the literary representations of the reactions to eighteenth and nineteenth-century socio-historical problems faced by women in their role as mothers.

Chapter 4 saw women protesting against their oppressive situation through madness with the aid of the natural world, and wandering, *égarées*, into nature to rediscover their suppressed voice. It also showed Cottin using the wild nature of the desert to represent the tortuous old institutions of punishment and the tamed nature of a domestic garden to represent the new, caring space of treatment. Cottin contributes to contemporary debates over the confinement of madwomen by demonstrating how the latter space works to cure the mad patient, but the former only compounds the illness.

Finally, Chapter 5 explored death as the only escape for the woman suffering an untenable situation forced on her by oppressive society. This escape is brought about with the aid of a natural deathscape. The deathscape of a near-death experience, according to Murray, confuses time and space, allowing the barrier between the worlds of the living and dead to be broken down. Deathscapes, in their socio-historical capacity as one of the newly fashionable natural spaces for the French public, enable time and space to be sufficiently confused for the public to meditate simultaneously on the past, present and future of civilisation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the paintings of Hubert Robert. Minski states that 'méditation sur le monde deviant méditation sur soi-même', and that contemplating the world in ruins directs that meditation towards a melancholy reflection on the self: 'Le regard sur la ruine permet la réflexivité mélancolique'.[632] Meditation on the general, therefore, gives way to meditation on the particular. The play on time and space permitted by the deathscapes which feature in women's literature allows a similar chain reaction. However, in the case of women writers, the argument procedes in the opposite direction. In encouraging the reader of

[632] Minski, p.93.

Corinne, Amélie Mansfield to meditate on the inescapable fatal end of a particular female protagonist, Staël and Cottin in fact encourage us to broaden our melancholy meditations to the fate of their contemporary woman in general, trapped in an oppressive situation from which death seems the only escape.

Therefore, the methodology employed throughout – conjoining close textual analysis, consideration of the socio-political historical context and the application of various modern theories as tools for understanding the woman's plight – has enabled this thesis to use both the corpus of novels and the socio-historical situation each to further our understanding of the other. It has also enabled us to see how women writers can often be subversively critical without writing vehement verbal attacks on the socio-political status quo.

This thesis has also shown that the natural world provides solace, escape and a voice for the socially alienated female protagonist. Yet this phenomenon is not simply about passive women being given what they need. Just as certain protagonists landscape their gardens to empower themselves, the women writers craft natural story-worlds to actively reclaim the voice denied to them on the socio-political stage. They instrumentalise nature to expose, and ultimately challenge the unfairness that women face. This is a clear feminine redeployment of that nature which allegedly confines and subordinates women in eighteenth-century thought. Howells argues: 'In the eighteenth century […] the source of the self becomes Nature',[633] and this is certainly true of women writers. Rather than allowing the position of their sex vis-à-vis nature to be defined for them, Cottin, Genlis, Krüdener, Souza and Staël move towards defining, for themselves, their sex's relationship with nature. The symbolic language of Mother Nature becomes their mother tongue, and the natural landscape the platform from which they speak. In this way, using natural space as a stage for their voice, women writers of the First Republic and First Empire show that they look outwards in order to protest, and in so doing provoke society to look inwards.

It is important to remember that whilst these five women writers were all aware of each others' work, they were not always in harmony with each other. Whilst Genlis praised Krüdener, describing her as 'une personne extraordinaire et intéressante',[634] she was much less kind towards Cottin and Staël. Genlis in fact conspired against Staël,

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[633] Howells, *Regressive Fictions,* p.1.

[634] Mme de Genlis, 'Mémoires de madame la comtesse de Genlis', in Mme de Genlis, *Œuvres complètes de madame la comtesse de Genlis; Histoire, mémoires et romans historiques,* 12 vols (Bruxelles: P.J. de Mat, 1828), VIII, 30.

about whom Winock states: 'les malveillances de ses ennemis, parmi lesquels se distingue Mme de Genlis, sa rivale, trouvent aisément l'oreille de Bonaparte'.[635] Genlis heavily criticised Cottin's *Malvina* and *Claire d'Albe.* Similarly, 'Souza intensely disliked Genlis whom she accused of lies and ingratitude'.[636] The similar uses to which these women writers put nature in their novels was not the result, therefore, of the collective decision of a sisterhood of solidarity. Rather it was the result of several women working independently and finding they had similar recourse to the natural landscape in order to convey their controversial messages in a subtle and nuanced way. This makes their re-appropriation of natural space all the more intriguing.

This thesis opened with a quotation from Mornet stating that in the eighteenth century, 'le sentiment de la nature […] a mérité d'entrer dans l'histoire sociale comme dans l'histoire littéraire'.[637] It is not enough to say, certainly with regard to women's writing, that in this period nature simply enters into social and literary history. In entering literary history, it critiques social history. Building on Rousseau's aesthetic portrayals of nature as a space of contemplation, freedom and happiness, women writers engage with these self-same images in order to challenge the revered philosopher's condemnation of their own sex; for the return to nature offered by women writers turns out to be very different to Rousseau's return to nature. In the end, for these women, representation of the natural world becomes a method of producing subtle critical commentary, a fact which is somewhat paradoxical in itself; for an *escape* into nature on the part of female protagonists becomes a means by which their creators *confront* the everyday reality faced by women in the turbulent socio-historical era following the Revolution.

[635] Winock, p.213.
[636] Stewart, p.200.
[637] Mornet, p.217.

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The Women Writers' Database
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APPENDIX I – Synopses of Primary Texts

Mme de Souza, *Adèle de Sénange* (1794)

Souza's first novel, *Adèle de Sénange*, tells the story of a sixteen-year-old French girl, who has been educated in a convent after being placed there by her mother. Adèle's mother, Mme de Joyeuse, wanted her out of the way of the family, and as there was no dowry for the girl to be married. The novel is epistolary, and is composed of letters sent by the English Lord Sydenham to his friend Henri. At the opening of the novel, Sydenham meets Adèle for the first time when he assists her after her carriage accidentally overturns. Several days later, Sydenham witnesses Adèle emerging from a church after her wedding. He initially believes that the young man walking beside her is her husband, however he soon discovers that this was Adèle's brother, and in fact her husband was the seventy-year-old man being supported (because of his gout) as he walked behind her. Sydenham is outraged that such a young girl could be forced into an arranged marriage with a man so much her senior. Sydenham spends time with Adèle and her husband Sénange, first in the latter's Parisian residence, and later on his Neuilly estate in the country. Upon getting to know the old man, Sydenham learns that Sénange's marriage to Adèle was in fact an act of kindness, to save her from spending the rest of her life in the cloister. Mme de Joyeuse agreed to the marriage because Sénange was willing to take her daughter without a dowry, and because he was a wealthy aristocrat. Adèle, Sénange and Sydenham spend time in the French-style garden on the Parisian estate, with Sydenham and Adèle trying to persuade Sénange to allow them to tear it down and replace it with a more modern, English-style garden. Sénange initially agrees, but later changes his mind, granting them permission instead to design an English garden on an island at his Neuilly estate. Whilst spending time together and particularly whilst drawing up the plans for an English garden, Sydenham falls in love with Adèle, and Adèle with him. However they do not enter into an extra marital affair. Adèle is fond of and grateful to her husband, and she spends her time caring for him until his death, less than a year after their marriage. After Sénange's death, his avaricious relatives arrive, hoping to inherit his money, and Adèle's mother tries to arrange a second marriage for her daughter with a cousin, M. de Mortagne. However, Sénange leaves Adèle as his heir, securing her future financially, and gives his blessing to her future happiness. Both of these acts enable Adèle to marry Sydenham.

Mme de Souza, *Émilie et Alphonse* (1799)

Émilie et Alphonse is an epistolary novel. The story comprises, in the main part, letters sent by Émilie (Mademoiselle de Foix) to her childhood friend Mademoiselle d'Astey. However several letters from Émilie's mother (the Comtesse de Foix) to her older daughter, la Marquise d'Astey, and some correspondence from the Chevalier de Fiesque (a family friend who falls for Émilie) to a female friend are included as well.

Émilie and her mother arrive in the town of Compiègne. On the second day after her arrival, whilst walking in the beautiful, scenic natural countryside, Emilie notices a melancholy wanderer: Alphonse. She falls in love with him from a distance, and dwells upon him when she returns to the house. Unfortunately, however, the comtesse has selected the duc de Candale as a future husband for Émilie. The duke is a man filled with his own self-importance, and, considering himself utterly perfect, will allow nothing to spoil society's view of him as such. He desires a wife, but only to be seen to complete the image of his overall perfection. He is the very embodiment of vanity, amour-propre and pride. Upon meeting him, Émilie dislikes him intensely. Her mother, however, thinks only of the glory of her family, and of bettering her family's position in society by arranging a marriage between Emilie and Candale. The potential happiness, or lack thereof, of her daughter in marriage is of no consequence. Émilie and her mother argue vehemently over the proposed marriage, but the comtesse soon becomes severely ill. As she sees her mother's health deteriorate, Émilie resolves that, despite her hatred for Candale, she will endure the marriage if her mother desperately desires it. As the comtesse lies on her deathbed, both her will and Émilie's marriage contract are read. The wedding is concluded, and Émilie's fate is sealed. Confirming Émilie's fears precisely, Candale proves cold and angry towards her in their marriage. A mutual friend, the comte de Fiesque, who is in love with Émilie, decides that he wishes to seduce her with the help of Mme d'Artigue. Whilst Émilie is never unfaithful to her husband, Mme d'Artigue's trick succeeds in arousing Candale's jealousy. She obtains a role for Emilie in a comedy which is due to be played at home in front of friends, and in which Fiesque plays Émilie's lover. Candale sees Fiesque enter the library with Émilie and persuades Mme d'Artigue to stroll past the window with him. They witness Fiesque and Émilie rehearsing, and Candale believes the two of them to be conducting an affair. Wishing to distance himself from anything which might cast a shadow over his perfection, Candale challenges Fiesque to a duel, and banishes his wife to a property he owns in the Pyrenees.

Émilie spends her days there helping the locals, who live in dire poverty. Whilst on one of her frequent walks in the rugged, wild mountains, she comes across a child lying in the entrance to a cave. She then notices Alphonse in the shadows of the same cave. The two begin to spend time together, and Émilie learns the reason for Alphonse's melancholy: an ill-fated union, forbidden by his family, with his cousin Camille. Camille has died, believing Alphonse also to have loved Eléonore, a woman whose family he had been staying with, whom his father wished him to marry, and who, moreover, was in love with Alphonse. Camille has left Alphonse with a daughter. Émilie comforts Alphonse, who believes he has done wrong by both Eléonore and Camille, and knows he has disappointed his father. As Émilie attempts to convince Alphonse to go to his father to apologise for his errors, for the sake of his daughter, Candale enters, and hearing the word 'daughter', believes that Émilie has again been unfaithful to him. There is a second duel. Candale is killed, and Alphonse mortally wounded. As Alphonse lies dying he begs Émilie to take his daughter to Eléonore, which she promises to do.

Mme de Genlis, ***Les Mères rivales,*** **1800**

This story narrates, through a series of letters, the history of three generations of the Erneville family. The comtesse d'Erneville and the Mme d'Orgeval are best friends, and are both pregnant at the same time. The comtesse's baby dies during childbirth, though she is not made aware of the fact by the attending physician, due to her own illness. Upon being informed that the knowledge of the child's death will probably kill her friend, Mme d'Orgeval decides to substitute her own baby (a boy named Albert) for the dead child. The comtesse nurses the baby as her own, and is only informed of the truth when she recovers. By this point Mme d'Orgeval is pregnant again, and so she grants the comtesse's request that the latter be allowed to continue to raise Albert as her own son. A few years later the comtesse gives birth to a daughter, Pauline. Pauline and Albert are raised as sister and adopted brother, on the family's countryside estate, and enjoy playing together outside amid the natural landscape. It is the wish of both of their birth mothers that they should marry when they become older, and indeed they do; they become the marquis and marquise d'Erneville. Albert, however, spends much time away from home, and on one of his journeys, he is seduced by a young sixteen-year-old girl who appears to him in the guise of the goddess Diana. He and the young girl make love in a woodland glade, before he confesses to her that he is not a free man, and is in fact married to the marquise d'Erneville.

The young 'Diana' figure is Rosalba, the future comtesse de Rosmond. She becomes pregnant outside of wedlock at sixteen after this libertine amorous and adventurous encounter. Upon discovering her condition, Rosalba initially panics and makes plans to give the child up, knowing she cannot possibly care for it herself. She decides, however, that the woman who will raise her child must be the perfect mother. She hears stories of the marquis d'Erneville's wife, Pauline, and how she is the image of the perfect, angelic mother who dotes upon her children. The local poor even leave their foundlings by the gate of Pauline's residence. Pauline is everything that Rosalba has failed to be. Therefore, impressed above all, by Pauline's virtue, Rosalba decides that Pauline must be the one to raise the baby. When the child is born, Rosalba experiences a surge of maternal emotion towards her baby daughter, whom she names Léocadie, and resolves to keep her. Yet, under family pressure to renounce Léocadie, owing to the child's having been born out of wedlock and having been fathered by a man married to someone else, Rosalba yields. The baby is delivered to Pauline, and is brought up unaware of her adoption until the day of her first communion, when she is thirteen years old. Whilst Pauline raises and educates Léocadie, loving her as if she were her own, Rosalba inherits the family's title that would have been denied to her if her 'crime' had been admitted to the world, and becomes the comtesse de Rosmond. She spends the rest of her life, however, trying to atone for the mistakes of seducing a married man, bearing his child, and, most significantly of all, abandoning her duties as a mother and giving her child away to another woman.

The comtesse attempts to atone in several ways. Firstly, she vows never to marry or to involve herself with another man, and instead decides to give aid and shelter to another woman, Agnès, who finds herself in a very similar situation to the comtesse, but who is without money to support herself. The comtesse takes Angès into her home, an act which provides her with an ally, but which does little to assuage her feelings of sorrow and two-fold remorse. The comtesse thus decides to create an allegorical garden in which the visitor will be shown the path to moral virtue, salvation and happiness: all the things that the comtesse wishes she could achieve, but has failed to. The creation of the garden helps, but does not entirely resolve her problems. Therefore, the comtesse makes a third attempt at atonement. She seeks to reinsert herself into the life of Léocadie, and tries to become the mother that she has never been. This attempt is somewhat successful, in that it gives the comtesse happiness in her role as a mother. However, she is forever all too aware that Léocadie loves Pauline as a mother equally,

indeed if not more than the comtesse herself. Consequently, whilst the comtesse is happy to have a renewed relationship with her daughter, her feelings of guilt and sorrow at what she has done still persist. Her final attempt at retribution involves confining herself within the walls of a convent and taking the veil. She hopes that dedicating her life to God will atone for the mistakes she made in her own life, and for the problems, confusion and emotional turmoil she has caused Léocadie, the marquis d'Erneville, and the latter's wife Pauline. Before taking the veil, the comtesse de Rosmond admits publicly to being Léocadie's birth mother. She does so because Pauline is held under suspicion by many of the family's surrounding society, who believe that Pauline herself was guilty of an affair and that she lied about finding Léocadie in a wardrobe. Even Albert, who is unaware that Léocadie is his own daughter, suspects Pauline of being unfaithful to him. It is only at the end of the novel, when Rosalba confesses the truth, that Albert realises that not only has he falsely accused his wife for over sixteen years, but that he himself is the guilty party.

Mme Cottin, *Malvina* (1800/1801)

Malvina relates the story of the eponymous heroine's struggle between duty and internal happiness. Malvina, who never loved her husband, is widowed in her early twenties. She is French, but goes to live in England with her best friend Clara and the latter's husband Lord Sheridan. Clara becomes ill after a few years, however, and on her deathbed she urges Malvina to adopt her daughter Fanny and to assume responsibility for the child's education. Lord Sheridan agrees to this, after Malvina promises to remain celibate in order to dedicate her life to Fanny's upbringing. After Clara's death, Malvina is offered refuge by a distant relative, Mistriss Birton, who lives in a wild and remote mountainous region of Scotland. Mistriss Birton, it transpires, is egotistical and power-hungry, reveling in the power she has over the local people, school and forge. Malvina spends her time reading and taking lessons in Erse from M. Prior, the curate, so that she will be able to appreciate better the Ossian poems that she loves. She also enjoys walking in the Scottish countryside, or gazing out of her window at it, because it reminds her of the Ossianic stories, and because it suits her feeling of melancholy.

Before long, Malvina meets Birton's nephew Edmond Seymour and falls in love with him. However, Edmond will only receive his inheritance from Mistriss Birton if he marries Lady Sumerhill, whose family have promised Birton a title should the marriage take place. Malvina does not wish to act on her love, as she has sworn to devote her life

to Fanny. Edmond falls in love with Malvina, however, and on promising to gain the approval of Fanny's father to allow him to adopt the child with Malvina, he persuades her to marry him. Whilst Edmond is away, Mistriss Birton wreaks her revenge, having already persuaded Fanny's father of Malvina's evils and having offered herself as a much better educator for the young girl. With Lord Sheridan's permission, she tears Fanny away from Malvina. This, coupled with the fact that Malvina receives a letter on the very same day informing her that her husband has been seduced by another woman in London, causes Malvina to lose her mind. Edmond returns to discover that his wife is mad and no longer recognises him. The doctor is able to restore Malvina's sanity very briefly by staging Edmond's return afresh in the garden of the house. However, Malvina's body has been weakened by her suffering and her mental illness, and she soon dies.

Mme Cottin, *Amélie Mansfield* (1802/1803)

Amélie Mansfield is an epistolary novel. Amélie de Lunebourg is born into an extremely wealthy, aristocratic German family. She has been betrothed since childhood to her cousin Ernest, owing to the fact that her grandfather, the Count of Woldemar, made a will declaring that his grandson Ernest would inherit his fortune if he married Amélie. The Count had been afraid of family members marrying partners unworthy of the family title and money. In order for the family to make the future marriage easier, Amélie and Ernest are raised together. However, Ernest is a violent, dominating and capricious youth and succeeds only in provoking Amélie's disgust and hatred. Amélie swears she will not marry Ernest, falling in love instead with Mansfield, a commoner and poet. According to Call, 'Amélie's portrayal [in a letter to her brother] of marriage as nothing more than the biding together "of an ingrate and a victim" may very well reflect Cottin's own bitterness about arranged marriages'.[638] Despite her family's insistence upon her marrying Ernest, Amélie allows herself to be persuaded by Mansfield to elope with him. The Woldemar family, particularly Amélie's aunt, Ernest's mother, are outraged and denounce her for dishonouring both them and the family name. Amélie and Mansfield are not married long before the latter begins to tire of his new wife and commences a series of affairs. He is killed in a duel over another woman, leaving Amélie a twenty-two-year-old widow with an infant son.

[638] Call, p.89.

Even after Mansfield's death, Mme de Woldemar refuses to associate with her niece, and forbids the rest of the family from doing so as well, arguing that Amélie has brought any hardships she suffers upon herself. Amélie's only remaining family support comes from her brother Albert and his fiancée; however, they are powerless to overturn the will of Mme de Woldemar, and persuade her to let Amélie return. This places Amélie in a difficult position, until her late husband's uncle, M. Grandson, offers to make her his heir if she will come to live with him in the Swiss Alps. Amélie accepts with pleasure, and spends her time happily wandering in the mountain countryside, or helping to rescue travellers who have become lost or have got into difficulty. On one such occasion, she helps to rescue a man who calls himself Henri de Semler. Semler is, however, none other than Amélie's cousin Ernest, though Amélie does not recognise him. In spending time with Amélie, Ernest's temperament changes and he falls deeply in love with her. He thus plans to make her fall in love with him. This, he successfully achieves, and, still believing him to be Semler, Amélie falls for Ernest.

Meanwhile, Mme de Woldemar has been growing increasingly impatient whilst her son has been away, and writes demanding his return, informing him that if he has made an unsuitable match, it will kill her. Throughout the majority of the four volume novel, Ernest is too afraid to confess the truth of his love for Amélie because his mother continues to display an unnatural and disproportionate hatred towards her niece. However, the secret is finally revealed after Mme de Woldemar discovers Ernest talking to Amélie's picture. She is outraged, but Ernest insists that he wishes to marry his cousin anyway. This causes Mme de Woldemar to fall ill, and through her illness she persuades Ernest to cede to her will and to renounce Amélie. Ernest attempts to stab himself, an act which shocks Mme de Woldemar into giving her consent to the marriage, but only if Ernest still insists on it after spending several months in Vienna.

By this point Amélie has discovered that Semler is in fact Ernest, and flees her home in the Swiss mountains to search for him, leaving her infant son to be taken care of by her first husband's uncle. Pregnant with Ernest's child, she makes her way to Vienna, where she observes him with another woman, and mistakenly believes that he has decided to marry someone else. She attempts suicide by throwing herself into the Danube, and although Ernest arrives in time to prevent her from drowning, he cannot save her from the fever which ensues as a result of her suicide attempt in the river. Amélie dies, along with her unborn child, and her death is soon followed by that of Ernest. The two lovers are laid out in the same coffin, entwined and serene in death.

As Cottin grew increasingly religious towards the end of her short life, she revised the ending of *Amélie Mansfield*. In a second edition of the novel, she portrayed Amélie going to the river in order to commit suicide but changing her mind through her religious fears of endangering her soul and offending God. Amélie still contracts a fever, however, when she faints by the side of the river, and the rest of the story continues in the same manner as the first edition.

Mme de Krüdener, *Valérie* (1803)

Krüdener's novel tells of a young Swede by the name of Gustave, whose father has passed away and who finds himself travelling through Europe. Gustave has always been a Romantic-style, melancholic wanderer, preferring to meander through the natural world reading poetry rather than to engage himself with public affairs or business.

The novel is epistolary, made up of the letters Gustave sends to his friend Ernest, who remains in Sweden whilst Gustave himself journeys through Vienna and on to Italy. Gustave travels with friends of his father's: a comte and his seventeen-year-old wife Valérie, who is twenty years the comte's junior. The comte and comtesse act as a surrogate family for the young Gustave; he considers the former as a father figure, and, at first, he refers to Valérie as his sister. However, Gustave soon begins to kindle a passion for Valérie, and it is not long before he has fallen desperately in love with her. Gustave struggles against his feelings in each of his letters to Ernest, knowing that Valérie is married to another man, a man, moreover, whom he initially deeply respects.

One of the reasons Valérie appears so perfect to Gustave involves her attitude towards her role as a mother. She adores and dotes upon her baby son, Adolphe, who is born whilst the family is staying in Venice. Adolphe dies, however, very soon after his birth, leaving Valérie distraught. The young grieving mother has her son buried on the island of Lido, within the walls of a convent, and designs a small garden space around the child's tomb, in which she asks Gustave to plant several flowers and shrubs of her own choice.

The more time Gustave spends with Valérie, the more deeply in love he begins to fall. The more Gustave falls for Valérie, the more he begins to hate the comte, particularly when he sees that the latter frequently behaves in a cold manner towards his young wife. Gustave begins to suffer insanity, partially because of his sexual frustration, partially because of his lack of any political, economic or social power to provide for himself, and partially because of his desire to protest against the patriarchal society in

which he finds himself. He removes himself from the family, seeking out the wilds of nature, lodging in a small house over looking the convent at la Chartreuse de B. He becomes increasingly ill in mind and body, and eventually dies, with the count (now fully cognisant of Gustave's feelings) by his side. It transpires at the end of the novel, when several of Gustave's mother's diary entries are discovered, that Gustave had created an image of the ideal woman in his mind when he was an adolescent, an image which reminded him of his mother, and which he invented during his long walks in the natural countryside. It is this ideal female image that he projects onto Valérie.

Mme Cottin, ***Mathilde, ou mémoires tirés de l'histoire des croisades*** **(1805)**

This novel relates the story of the sixteen-year-old English princess and sister of Richard the Lionheart, Mathilde, who has grown up in a convent and is destined to become a nun. Before she takes holy orders, however, she declares a wish to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She travels there with King Richard, his troops and his queen. Before their arrival in the Holy Land, the queen and Mathilde are captured by Malek Adhel, brother of the celebrated jihad leader Saladin, and his Saracen forces. Malek Adhel is famous throughout the Holy Land, both among the Saracens and the Christians, as an incomparable military force, and as a captivating Islamic Adonis. He conducts Mathilde and Queen Bérengère to his palace in Egypt, where he immediately begins to develop a deep-seated love for Mathilde. Although she is initially shocked and disgusted by Malek Adhel's feelings, over the course of the novel Mathilde begins to realise that she returns his love.

Mathilde asks Malek Adhel for permission to undertake a pilgrimage to a ruin in the Egyptian desert; she is granted permission to do this and journeys to visit the hermit who lives at the sacred site. As she is making her confession to this hermit, Malek Adhel himself arrives, just in time to defeat and drive away thieves that attack the camp. He has pursued Mathilde across the desert, and now carries her away to safety. Mathilde thus finds herself alone with Malek Adhel in the desert, in a vulnerable position. She resists physical passion on account of her deeply religious nature, and the Saracen expresses a desire to get to know the God who has aroused such strength in Mathilde. Mathilde is overjoyed at this, and prays that God will help Malek Adhel find his way to becoming a Christian. Simultaneously, she swears to God that she will love no other man than Malek Adhel, promising herself to the latter. This 'marriage of words' is not consummated,

Mathilde will not allow physical consummation of the marriage until the archbishop has officially wed them.

Previous to Mathilde's arrival in the Holy Land, however, Malek Adhel had also attracted the love of another European woman, Agnès. Malek Adhel did not return Agnès's love, but he did nonetheless admit her to his Harem, and allow her to live there as one of his wives. As a consequence of this, Agnès was cast out of Christian society because she dared to reject her God for a Muslim, and because she debased herself by allowing herself to become part of a Harem. When Malek Adhel falls in love with Mathilde, and forsakes his other wives for her alone, Agnès is rejected. She discovers Malek Adhel's love for the English princess and decides, in a passionate frenzy, to eliminate her rival. She attacks the band of soldiers with whom Mathilde is travelling, in a desperate attempt to kill Mathilde. However, Mathilde is protected by the Christian troops.

When Mathilde arrives safely back at her brother's camp, she informs Richard of the vow that she and Malek Adhel made in the desert. Richard is shocked and disgusted and henceforth insists that, if Mathilde has decided against taking holy orders, she will be forced to marry the Christian warrior, and friend of Richard, Lusignan. When the archbishop learns of Mathilde's love for a Muslim, he takes her to visit Agnès, who has now lost her sanity completely, and lives as a madwoman in a desert cave, a symbolic insane asylum at the heart of the natural world. Mathilde witnesses Agnès rolling and flailing on the sand, and is informed that Agnès is pursued by demons.

Meanwhile, the Christians attack Ascalon, held by the Saracens, and Malek Adhel and Lusignan are given an opportunity to fight to the death. Both are mortally wounded in the battle, Lusignan dying almost immediately, and Malek Adhel holding off only long enough for Mathilde to be informed and for her to set out with the archbishop in order to find the man she loves. Before he dies, Malek Adhel converts to Christianity; the archbishop baptises him and then joins the lovers' hands, pronouncing them husband and wife. Mathilde passes the rest of her days in a convent in the Holy Land, grieving, but yet happy in the thought that her husband has been saved and that she will see him again.

Mme de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807)

Staël's novel tells the story of Corinne, a talented Italian musician and actress with a mysterious past, and Oswald (Lord Nelvil), a Scottish noble in mourning for his late

father. The story begins with Oswald's journey from Scotland to Italy, following his father's death. In Rome he meets Corinne, who proceeds to give Oswald a tour of the city and its surroundings, encompassing the sites of Classical antiquity and contemporary art, literature and religion. As Corinne shows her country to Oswald, the two characters begin to fall in love. They travel together from Rome down through central Italy to Naples, where they walk together through the countryside and ascend Vesuvius. During the section of the novel set in Naples and on Vesuvius, first Oswald and then Corinne reveal the mysteries of their pasts to each other. Oswald, it transpires, had fallen for a French woman, whilst visiting her country several years previously. His relationship with this woman, Mme d'Arbigny, displeased and disappointed his father, whose patriarchal authority (particularly apropos of his son's marriage) is constantly reinforced throughout the novel. Oswald is tricked into remaining with Mme d'Arbigny, despite his father's constant calls for him to return home, as d'Arbigny has told Oswald that she is carrying his child. When Oswald finally learns the truth and returns to Scotland, he discovers that his father has died in the interim. Oswald also discovers that his father went to his grave believing that his wishes were defied by his son, and believing that his son married an unsuitable woman. The senior Lord Nelvil's death obviously deprives Oswald of the chance of ever apprising him of the truth. Oswald is deeply affected by guilt at this turn of events, and swears on his father's grave that when he eventually does marry, it will be to a woman who would meet with his father's approval. When the mystery of Corinne's life is finally revealed, it transpires that she is half-English, the half-sister of Lucile Edgermond, whom Oswald's father had marked out for him as a future bride, after deciding specifically against Corinne. Corinne greatly fears that, when she reveals the truth of her past to him, Oswald will end their relationship, despite his love for her, because of his desire to keep his promise to his father. Indeed, afraid of going against his father's wishes, Oswald returns to Scotland to ascertain the reasons why his father rejected Corinne as a suitable wife for his son. Upon his return, Oswald marries Lucile. The couple mutually respect each other, though their marriage is never passionate. Corinne sets out to follow Oswald to Scotland, but on hearing that he is to marry her sister, she does not meet with him; instead she returns to Italy where her health declines. Finally, on learning of Corinne's visit, Oswald revisits Italy with his wife where he finds Corinne dying of her unrequited love.

APPENDIX II – Publication History

Cottin

Cottin's works were reprinted several times and went through numerous editions.[639] *Malvina* was first published in 1800[640] and was then reprinted in 1801. The years 1805 and 1809 witnessed the publication of second and third revised editions. The novel was reprinted in 1811, and twice in 1820. Furthermore, according to the *Bibliographie de la littérature française du dix-neuvième siècle*, all of Cottin's five major novels were reprinted in several editions of her *Œuvres complètes* in 1817, 1818, 1820, 1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1844 and 1847. Martin, Mylne and Frautschi provide further detail on the publication of Cottin's *Œuvres complètes,* asserting that two editions appeared in 1818, produced by separate publishers, and seven editions appeared in 1820, also published by different publishers.

Genlis

The first edition of Genlis's *Adèle et Théodore* 'sold out before any announcements had appeared in the press, and a total of twenty-nine editions appeared between 1782 and 1810'.[641] Her *Veillées du château, ou cours de morale à l'usage des enfants* 'sold out in eight days'.[642] Genlis's *Les Mères rivales* first appeared in 1800, and Martin, Mylne and Frautschi cite five entries for publications of the novel in this year alone. Further reprints and new editions appeared in 1801, 1808, 1813 and 1819.

Krüdener

The exact number of editions of *Valérie* is difficult to ascertain. Data in the *Bibliographie de la littérature française du dix-neuvième siècle* shows that *Valérie* was first published in 1803 and underwent several subsequent editions in 1855, 1878, 1884 and 1898. However, this data only provides us with part of the picture. The online version of the *Catalogue générale des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque nationale,* furnishes results beyond the editions mentioned above. In the case of *Valérie* the online catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale Française

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639 See: Angus Martin, Vivienne Mylne and Richard Frautschi, *Bibliographie du genre romanesque français (1751-1800),* (London: Mansell; Paris: France Expansion, 1977).

640 Martin, Mylne and Frautschi include a note by the side of this date, stating 'B et Q donnent la date de 1801 pour la première édition. Selon Sykes, magré la date de la page de titre, l'ouvrage n'a paru qu'en 1801'. It is likely that, as the novel is in four volumes, the first of these was published in 1800 and subsequent volumes appeared in the ensuing months, in 1801.

641 Gillian Dow, 'Introduction', in Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, *Adelaide and Theodore, or Letters on Education,* ed. and trans. by Gillian Dow (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), pp.ix-xx (p.xvii).

642 Jensen, p.106.

reveals that the BNF holds copies of two 1804 publications (printed by two separate publishers – the first by Levrault, Schoel et Cie, and the second by Henrichs). The Levrault, Schoel et Cie copy held in the Bibliothèque Nationale however, was already the 3rd edition of the novel. The BNF also holds 2 editions of *Valérie* from 1878 and one edition from each of the following dates: 1837, 1840, 1846, 1851, 1855, 1884, and 1898. Even this does not complete the search for editions, as the *Catalogue générale* in the BNF provides references for only those works which the library holds. To complicate the matter further, for example, the online *Women Writers'* Database states that there were 3 editions of *Valérie* published in 1803 alone.[643] What is certain, however, is that the novel was reprinted many times, thus proving its popularity: 'Julie de Krüdener's *Valérie*, first published in 1803, continued to be re-issued right through the century, the last edition appearing in 1898'.[644]

Souza

According to Martin, Mylne and Frautschi, *Adèle de Sénange* was first published in London in 1794, by a French publisher. A separate publication appeared in France in the very same year. The years 1796, 1797, 1798, 1801, 1808 saw further editions of this novel in France, and it appeared again in Souza's *Œuvres complètes* in 1821-22. *Émilie et Alphonse,* which first appeared in 1799, received less critical acclaim than *Adèle de Sénange*, though a new edition of this novel appeared in 1805. It was also reprinted in the *Œuvres complètes* of 1821-22, however, 'it went through several editions before its inclusion in Madame de Souza's complete works'.[645]

Staël

Corinne was reprinted throughout the nineteenth century, and the Bibliothèque Nationale holds copies published in 1807 (2 editions), 1812, 1818, 1819 (2 editions), 1827, 1836, 1837 (3 editions), 1838, 1839, 1841 (2 editions), 1843, 1844, 1845, 1847, 1851 (2 editions), 1851, 1853 (2 editions), 1860, 1861, 1862, 1865 (2 editions), 1867, 1869, and 1871.

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643 See: *Catalogue générale des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque nationale* <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/jsp/recherchemots_simple.jsp?nouvelleRecherche=O&nouveaute=O&host=catalogue> [accessed 2 October 2013] and the Women Writers' Database: <http://neww.huygens.knaw.nl/works/show/1027> [accessed 2 October 2013].
644 Finch, p.2.
645 Carpenter, p.78.

APPENDIX III – Contemporary Reactions to Women Writers (Especially in the Press)

Women writers attracted many comments, both positive and negative, from their contemporaries. This included comments from each other, from other famous names of the day, from the reading public in general, and, in particular, from the press. In the case of Cottin, despite occasional criticism for the lack of *vraisemblance* in her texts,[646] her work had a profound effect on an admiring readership, particularly on account of her ability to elicit a reader's emotions. The *Journal des Débats* wrote of *Amélie Mansfield:* 'l'auteur possède à un degré éminent le don d'émouvoir, de disposer de l'âme du lecteur et de lui laisser une impression profonde'.[647] Similarly, Fiévée, in the *Mercure de France*, praised *Mathilde* for its portrayal of heroism and love, and its ability to draw the tears of the reader.[648] It was also praised for displaying 'tant de talent' in *Le spectateur français au XIXème siècle.*[649] Cottin's positive reception is also attested to by the creation of musical adaptations of her novels. In 1803, the *Journal des Débats* announced that *Malvina* had been set to music: '*Romance de Malvina*, musique et accompagnement de piano ou harpe, dédiée à Mme Cottin, auteur du roman, par Auguste Marque, amateur'.[650] *Mathilde*, too, was set to music; in 1805, the *Gazette de France* announced: '*Six romances*, dont les sujets tirés de *Mathilde*, roman de Mme Cottin, paroles de M. Desprades, mises en musique avec accompagnement de forte-piano'.[651] After Cottin's death, Constant wrote of her: 'De toutes les femmes, c'était celle qui décrivait avec le plus de chaleur le bonheur de deux amants, dans toute son étendue: et ce talent donnait à ses ouvrages un caractère particulier'.[652]

Souza's talent managed to placate even Napoleon's hatred of women writers: 'Napoleon's regard for Madame de Souza's writing and sense of humour was striking. He was well known to have little admiration for independence in women, and expelled from France authors who advocated women's rights or representation in politics',[653] yet he read Souza's work eagerly.

Krüdener's *Valérie* also received positive comments:

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646 *Décade Philosophique,* Edition of 30 pluviôse an IX. See: Sykes, p.246.
647 Sykes, p.247.
648 Letter from Mme Cottin to Mme Verdier, 12 août 1805. See: Sykes, p.395.
649 *Le spectateur français au XIXème siècle, ou variétés morales, politiques et littéraires,* 12 vols (Paris: A la Libraire de la Société typographique, 1805-1812 [Saint-Michel et Beaucé, 1810]), VIII, 236.
650 Sykes, p.247.
651 Ibid., p.250.
652 Ibid., p.250.
653 Carpenter, pp.19-20.

> Effectivement, la critique fut très favorable. Dans un article […] inséré au *Mercure de France de 10 décembre 1803,* Michaud comparait l'ouvrage au livre IV de *l'Enéide* et à *Werther.* Il félicitait l'auteur de la pureté et de la douceur de sa morale, ainsi que la délicatesse de ses sentiments.[654]

The comparisons with famous literary works did not stop there. In the *Journal des Débats* Bernardin de Saint-Pierre praised the sentiment and spirit of the novel, alongside 'l'emploi des mots et des images', arguing that '[t]ous ces sujets sont peints avec des couleurs naïves, mélancoliques et quelquefois brûlantes, qui auraient fait honneur au pinceau de Sterne et d'Young'.[655] Krüdener herself was responsible for some of the hue and cry around her novel. She 'publicized her novel by creating demand for objects that did not exist yet',[656] objects such as 'des écharpes, […] des chapeaux, des plumes, des guirlandes, des rubans *à la Valérie*',[657] and found that '[c]onsumer demand eventually triggered these objects' manufacture'.[658]

Genlis's readers praised her for her ability to present society as it was, including its problems: 'Madame de Genlis est incontestablement une femme de beaucoup d'esprit qui a très bien observé les mœurs, les habitudes, et surtout les manières extérieures du grand monde où elle a passé une partie de sa vie; elle a quelquefois excellé à rendre les tracasseries […] de la société'.[659] We know that some of the problems Genlis presented regarded the issues faced by women in society: 'Dans les réflexions préliminaires qui servent de préface à l'ouvrage intitulé *De l'Influence des Femmes*, madame de Genlis accuse le manque d'instruction et les conditions sociales de ne pas être propices à l'éclosion de talents féminins'.[660] If both Genlis's portrayal of the problems and annoyances of society have been remarked upon, and if the lot of women featured frequently in her writing, as it did, it is not unreasonable to deduce that that her readers understood the arguments she made in her novels with regard to the preoccupations of her sex.

Staël's *Corinne* was highly praised by contemporaries such as Schlegel, Constant, Sismondi and Meister, who wrote for the French journal *Le Publiciste*,[661] though *Corinne* also received criticism for its bold representation of talented women, as will be examined below. The female readership of the day greatly appreciated *Corinne* too, and indeed drew

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654 Ley, *Madame de Krüdener et son temps 1764-1824,* p.167.
655 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, in the *Journal des Débats* of 15 December 1803. See: Ley and Gaulmier*,* p.168.
656 Stephanie M. Hilger, *Women Write Back: Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture, 1790-1805* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009), p.122.
657 Charles Eynard, *Vie de Madame de Krüdener,* 2 vols (Paris: Cherbuliez, 1849), I, 136-137.
658 Hilger, p.122.
659 Auger, p.22.
660 Alice M. Laborde, *L'Œuvre de Madame de Genlis* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1966), p.104.
661 See: *Le Publiciste,* 12 mai 1807, in Benjamin Constant, *Recueil d'articles, 1795-1817* (Genève: Droz, 1978), pp.84-88, and Winock, p.302.

comfort from the novel. Staël was kindly in reply to such women, though seemed afraid of drawing them into the criticism she herself had received:

> Henry Crabb Robinson reports her firm, kindly words to a country girl she met in London, a fevered enthusiast whose brain had been turned by reading *Delphine* and *Corinne* and who wanted to travel with her as her attendant and amanuensis: "You may think it is an enviable lot to travel all over Europe, and see all that is most beautiful and distinguished in the world; but the joys of home are more solid; domestic life affords more permanent happiness than any that fame can give. You have a father – I have none. You have a home – I was made to travel because I was driven from mine. Be content with your lot; if you knew mine, you would not desire it".[662]

Positive critiques often appeared amongst foreign responses too; thus proving that the hardships undergone by the principle characters were savoured and the novels enjoyed irrespective of the nationality of the reader. Carpenter asserts, with regard to Souza's *Adèle de Sénange*, that: 'No other novel written in French by a female author generated such a level of interest in Britain until Madame de Staël's *Corinne'*.[663] This latter novel was received with considerable critical acclaim in Britain: Lady Elizabeth Foster (widow of John Thomas Foster, and future duchess of Devonshire), for example, 'avait écrit de Londres […] sur le plaisir qu'elle avait eu de à lire *Corinne*',[664] and Sir James Mackintosh wrote: 'I swallow *Corinne* slowly, that I may taste every drop. I prolong my enjoyment, and really dread the termination'.[665] The popularity of Genlis's work in Britain has been well documented by Dow.[666] Regarding Cottin, Bianciardi writes: 'Que l'influence de Sophie se soit exercée par-delà les frontières de sa patrie n'a rien de surprenant dans la mesure où ses œuvres furent abondamment traduites et diffusées dans les pays étrangers, en particulier en Espagne et en Italie'.[667] The success of Krüdener's *Valérie* abroad is reported by Hilger, who cites Sophie von La Roche, a very successful German speaking author: 'I regret having given *Valérie* […] to the Princess Isenburg […] because there has never ever been anything more beautiful'.[668]

Where there was criticism of women writers, it was mostly directed at the fact that they were writing and publishing in the first place, or that powerful, talented female

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662 Goodden, *Madame de Staël,* pp.23-24.
663 Carpenter, p.46.
664 Madame de Staël, *Correspondence Générale,* ed. by Béatrice W. Jasinski, 11 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1985), IV, 288, note 2. See also M. de Pange, *Le Plus beau de toutes les fêtes, La correspondence inedited de Madame de Staël et d'Elisabeth Hervey, duchesse de Devonshire* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), pp.37-38.
665 Sir James Mackintosh, *Memoirs,* ed. by Robert James Mackintosh, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), I, 406.
666 Gillian Dow, 'The British reception of Madame de Genlis's writings for children: plays and tales of instruction and delight'; Gillian Dow, 'Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis and the French Historical Novel in Romantic Britain', *Women's Writing,* 19:3 (2012), 273-292.
667 Bianciardi, p.63.
668 Quoted in Hilger, pp.128-129.

characters who wished to quit the domestic sphere appeared as the subjects of their novels. This particularly applied to Staël's *Delphine* and *Corinne*, for the reviews of Staël's work clearly reinforce what was deemed natural and unnatural for women. As stated in the *Gazette de France:* 'Une femme qui se distingue par d'autres qualités que celles de son sexe contrarie les principes d'ordre général',[669] a comment which could equally well apply to the author herself or to either of her two heroines. For one reviewer of *Corinne*, writing in the *Journal de l'Empire,* 'les héros sont insensés, hors nature',[670] since both Oswald and Corinne step outside acceptable gender roles. For another writer, in the *Mercure de France*, it is Staël herself who deserves the criticism for overstepping boundaries, that is, for entering the public sphere and leaving the private one: 'nous dirions que le pouvoir des femmes est déterminé par certaines convenances; nous blâmerions, et par cela même, madame de Staël de s'être placée au-delà des convenances ou des devoirs de son sexe'.[671] Genlis suffered similar insults, which in fact provoked her to be even more outspoken:

> Fueled by resentment over her own expereince in 1782 and 1783, Genlis used the success of her books to get the last word. In refusing to be censored and humiliated, she found her own voice in characterizing the plight of the exceptional woman.[672]

Just as these women were often praised by their own sex, they also found themselves condemned by their own sex. Cottin drafted a letter to Staël in which she stated 'je pourrai vous faire beaucoup de bien en vous faisant un récit fidèle de ce qu'on dit de vous […] vous vous formez une idée fausse de votre réputation'.[673] Whether Staël received the letter or not is unknown; however it is certain that she commented on Cottin's work too, writing to Suard in 1805 that Cottin's *Mathilde* 'est du marivaudage capucien,[674] une imitation effacée d'*Atala;* entre nous, cela ne vaut rien'.[675] Cottin, in fact, came under a deal of criticism from other women, particularly for her first book. Whilst (Staël's comments aside) there was more praise for the novelist's morally upstanding heroines, such as Mathilde and Élisabeth, criticism often tended to be directed at the less acceptable moral paths pursued by female characters, particularly in her first novel, *Claire*

669 Balayé, *Madame de Staël: Écrire, lutter, vivre*, p.251.
670 Ibid., p.246. According to Balayé, other reviewers from the *Gazette de France,* the *Journal du Commerce* and the *Décade* were of the same opinion.
671 Alfred de L***, 'Sur Madame de Staël', *Mercure de France et chronique de Paris, journal de littérature, des sciences et arts*, 1 (1819), p.402.
672 Schroder, p.381.
673 Madame de Staël, 'Le Léman et l'Italie, 19 mai 1804 – 9 novembre 1805', in Madame de Staël, *Correspondence Générale,* ed. by Béatrice W. Jasinski, 11 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1985), V, 638, note 6.
674 An adjective coined by Staël herself here, according to Jasinski. See: Jasinski, p.639, note 2.
675 Madame de Staël, *Correspondence Générale,* p.639.

d'Albe. According to Stewart, 'In a letter of 1803 to Benjamin Constant, Julie Talma criticized Cottin's work for its representations of frantic, immoderate passion'.[676] It was this immoderate passion which Genlis also found so unpalatable. She dedicated the last article of her treatise *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française* to a discussion of Cottin's works, and described *Claire d'Albe* as: 'à tous égards un mauvais ouvrage, sans intérêt, sans imagination, sans vraisemblance et d'une immoralité révoltante'.[677] She had also earlier criticised *Malvina:* 'Le succès énorme des romans de Mme Cottin ne pouvait pas manquer d'être désagréable à l'ombrageuse Mme de Genlis qui, quelques mois après la publication de *Malvina,* lança sa première attaque'.[678]

[676] Stewart, p.172.
[677] Mme de Genlis, *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française, comme protectrices des lettres et comme auteurs, ou Précis de l'histoire des femmes françaises les plus célèbres* (Paris: Maradan, 1811), p.346.
[678] Sykes, p.225.

APPENDIX IV – Images: Constance Mayer, *L'Heureuse mère* and *La Mère infortunée*

The images of *L'Heureuse mère* and *La Mère infortunée* can be viewed in the hardbound copy of this thesis in the University of St Andrews Library. They cannot be displayed here due to the permanent embargo of the two reproductions in the electronic copy of the thesis, as requested by the Réunion des musées nationaux in Paris.

Appendix V – The Decription of the Comtesse de Rosmond's Allegorical Garden in Mme de Genlis, *Les Mères Rivales, ou la Calomnie,* 4 vols (Paris: Librairie de Du Pont, an IX [1800])

Taken from: Lettre LXVII, Du vicomte de St. Méran à monsieur du Resnel. De la M**, le 17 septembre, pp.310-318.
(All ellipses and emphases original.)

En attendant le diner, la comtesse nous conduisit dans les jardins, disposés et composés dramatiquement, et représentant *la Vie humaine*. En sortant du château, on traverse une vaste pelouse, au bout de laquelle on trouve *le pavillon de l'Enfance*. C'est un grand salon d'une forme élégante, peint à fresque en grisaille, et dont les ornements, les statues et les peintures représentent des groupes d'enfants, et tous les jeux de cet âge charmant. Après ce pavillon, on entre dans une longue allée, tapissée d'un gazon émaillé de fleurs ; de superbe vases d'albâtre posés au pied de tous les arbres, ne contiennent que des lys, symboles de l'innocence. A droite et à gauche de l'allée, dans des enfoncements formant des espèces de bosquets, sont placés différents jeux, doux amusements de l'adolescence : des jeux de quilles, de boule, une escarpolette, et au milieu de l'allée est un grand bassin ; c'est un bain à la grecque, revêtu de marbre blanc, et rempli d'une eau transparente, image de la pureté. Au bout de cette allée, on se trouve vis-à-vis de deux chemins différents, l'un à droite, et l'autre à gauche. Une statue de la Vérité, posée entre ces deux chemins, semble inviter, par son geste, à prendre la première route. Sur le piédestal de la statue on lit les vers suivants :

Toi qui sors de l'adolescence,
O toi qui possèdes encore
Le seul véritable trésor,
La paisible et douce innocence,
Ici tu dois mûrement réfléchir !
Tu vois ces deux sentiers, entr'eux il faut choisir.
L'un est celui de la sagesse,
Et l'autre est celui de l'erreur.
Ah ! pour faire un bon choix, crains surtout ta faiblesse,
Laisse-moi te guider, je conduis au bonheur.

L'entrée de *la route de l'Erreur* est décorée d'un élégant portique en treillage, recouvert de chevre-feuille. Cette route est tortueuse, mais unie et facile ; on y voit des deux côtés des caisses remplies de fleurs, qui ne cachent qu'à moitié des buissons *d'épines*, des orties et des plantes véritables productions du terrain… Après avoir fait environ deux cents pas, on entend distinctement le mugissement de la mer ! … et l'on découvre les débris du palais *de l'Inconstance*. Ce ne sont point des ruines ; on voit que c'est le caprice, et non la main du temps, qui a renversé une partie de cet édifice : ce qui en reste est dan le goût le plus moderne ; l'architecture offre un mélange bizarre de différents genres ; sur une des grosses pierres neuves dispersées sur le sable léger qui servait de fondement au palais, on lit ces mots effrayants : *Détruire pour changer !*... Près de là on aperçoit une espèce de borne, une petite colonne tronquée, placée devant un massif très-touffu, qui représente un labyrinthe et qui paraît rempli de roses, mais au milieu duquel s'élève tristement un grand cyprès !... La statue de la Vérité se retrouve auprès de cette borne, et sur son socle on lit ces vers :

Tu peux encore retourner en arrière !...

Tu peux encore poursuivre une heureuse carrière
Dans les sentiers de la vertu :
Mais à ce point fatal, qui diffère, est perdu.
On passe de l'erreur au crime
En osant le franchir ; dans un affreux abyme
Un pas de plus va te précipiter.
Là, tu me reverras, mais pour t'épouvanter.

La comtesse a pensé, avec raison, qu'il fallait n'offrir *qu'en récit* la route du vice et du crime ; aussi ne pénètre-t-on point dans le redoutable labyrinthe ; on est forcé de céder à la voix *de la Vérité* ; on revient sur ses pas, et l'on va chercher la route *de la Vertu*. Cette partie de jardin est infiniment plus étendu que la précédente, parce que l'allégorie s'y trouve tout entière.

On entre d'abord dans une allée droite, mais étroite et raboteuse ; on voit devant soi un chemin très-escarpé… mais à mesure qu'on avance, la route s'embellit. On arrive dans une plaine riante, entrecoupée de ruisseaux ; après l'avoir parcourue, on se trouve dans *le temple de l'Espérance* ; c'est une grande rotonde qui ne reçoit le jour que par l'ouverture de sa coupole, qui laisse voir le ciel à découvert.[679] Un beau morceau de sculpture fait tout l'ornement de ce temple ; c'est *l'Espérance*, non sur un piédestal, mais s'élevant du sein d'un amas de nuages, et soutenant la Vertu en lui montrant le ciel ! … A quelques pas de là, on aperçoit une haute montagne qui paraît couverte de rochers et de ronces !... Fortifié par *l'Espérance*, on se décide courageusement à la gravir : on n'y trouve d'abord aucun sentier battu ; il faut marcher péniblement, à travers les épines, sur des roches glissantes… mais bientôt les rochers disparaissent, la montagne s'aplanit, la verdure et les fleurs se reproduisent, et la perspective surtout s'embellit… On monte, on s'élève toujours, par un chemin doux, agréable, qui n'a rien de fatigant… on aperçoit dans le lointain une foule d'objets ravissants !... Enfin on parvient au sommet de cette longue montagne ; et là, le premier objet qui frappe les regards, c'est la statue de la Vertu, représentée sous l'emblème de la Force ; c'est Hercule assis, appuyé sur sa massue, avec l'ancienne devise grecque : *Après les travaux le repos*… Sur l'autel de la Vertu, entouré de lauriers et posé sur une touffe d'immortelles, on lit l'inscription suivante :

De tes heureux travaux, de ta persévérance,
Ah ! la plus douce récompense
Que la vertu puisse t'offrir,
Est de t'en retracer le touchant souvenir ;
Tourne les yeux et regarde en arrière,
Contemple la noble carrière
Qu'avec tant de succès tu viens de parcourir !

En effet, en se retournant, on voit toute la route par laquelle on vient de passer ; ce coup-d'œil est enchanteur de ce côté ; il est disposé et décoré de manière que les objets qui avaient paru les plus tristes en gravissant la montagne, paraissent sous ce point de vue les plus agréables. On découvre de là des cascades, des fleurs, des buissons de lauriers qui étaient masqués de l'autre côté par des roches effrayantes !... *De l'autel de la Vertu* un sentier de gazon conduit *au temple de la Paix*. En sortant de ce temple, on se trouve sous une épaisse voûte de feuillages qui mène à *l'antre de Morphée*. Cette grotte charmante, entourée de pavots et de roses, est située dans une île ravissante par la beauté des ombrages et des eaux ; après avoir passé sur un pont d'une légèreté et d'une élégance

[679] Mme de Genlis adds a footnote here as follows: 'Comme celle du Panthéon à Rome'.

remarquables, on découvre la grotte ; l'intérieur en est tapissé de mousse, elle est remplie de plantes odoriférantes qui exhalent les plus doux parfums ; un ruisseau qui la traverse, tombant mollement sur du gazon, semble, par son agréable murmure, inviter au repos. Sur l'entrée de la caverne, on lit cette inscription :

Parmi les fleurs et la verdure,
C'est ici qu'on jouit d'un paisible sommeil :
C'est la vertu qui le procure,
C'est elle aussi qui nous assure
Le plus délicieux réveil !

Par de-là cette île, tout le reste du jardin offre un véritable *Elysée*, où le goût, l'art et la nature ont rassemblé tout ce qu'on peut imaginer de plus charmant et de plus varié.

J'ai oublié de vous dire une chose qui ne laisse rien à désirer pour la justesse de l'allégorie générale ; c'est que la longue route de la vertu est toujours coupée par de petits sentiers tortueux de traverse, qui tous conduisent *au chemin de l'Erreur*.

Outre ce parc ingénieux et moral, la comtesse, de l'autre côté du château, a fait des potagers, un verger, une pépinière, dans lesquels elle a tiré le plus heureux parti de la mythologie et des usages champêtres suivis par les anciens. Ceci demanderait une trop longue description, et vous plairait moins que le jardin allégorique, qu'on ne peut comparer, pour l'intérêt, qu'à celui d'Erneville, comme on ne peut comparer que *deux femmes*, quand on a pu les connaître l'une et l'autre : *Pauline* et *la comtesse de Rosmond !*

APPENDIX VI – Table 1:

État des fous furieux, des folles furieuses, des imbéciles, des épileptiques renfermés dans les Maisons de force et les Hôpitaux de Paris.[680]

	Fous furieux	Folles furieuses	Hommes imbéciles	Femmes imbéciles	Hommes épileptiques	Femmes épileptiques
A l'Hôpital de la Salpêtrière		150		150		300
A Bicêtre	92		138		15	
A la Maison des Frères de la Charité à Charenton	1		77		4	
Aux Petites-Maisons	22	22				
Dans les Pensions du faub. S.-Jacques						
Pension du St Massé, à Montrouge		2	16	2		
Pension du St Bardot, rue neuve Sainte-Geneviève			5	4		
Pension de la veuve Rolland, route de Villejuif			4	8		
Pension de la Dlle Laignel, cul-de-sac des Vignes				36		
Pension du St des Guerrois, rue vieille Notre-Dame				17		
Pension du St Teinon, rue Copeau			5	1		
Dans les Pensions du faub. ES.-Antoine						
Pension de la dame de Saint-Colombe, rue de Picpus			28			
Pension de St Esquiros, rue du chemin-verd			12	5	2	
Pension de la veuve Bouqueon, au petit Charonne		3	10	10		
Pension du St Picquenot, au petit Bercy	2		15	16		
Pension de la dame veuve Marcel, au petit Bercy	1		5	1		
Pension du St Bertaux, au petit Bercy	3		2	1		
Couvent des Religieux Picpus			3			

[680] Reproduced from: Tenon, p.218.

Pension du St Cornillieaux, à Charonne			1	1		
Dans les Pensions du quartier Montmartre						
Maison de S. Lazare, faub. S. Denis				17		
Pension de la Dlle Douay, rue de Bellefonds		5		15		
Pension du St Huguet, rue des Martyrs				6	3	
A l'Hôtel-Dieu	42	32				
TOTAL	163	214	346	286	22	300