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Chateaubriand, François-René de. *Œuvres complètes 6-7: Voyage en Amérique, Voyage en Italie, Cinq jours à Clermont, Le Mont-Blanc*. Ed. Béatrice Didier. Presentation and notes by Philippe Antoine. Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 2008. Pp. 873. ISBN 978-2-7453-1691-2

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This annotated collection contains some of the most beautiful pages written by the vicomte François-René de Chateaubriand. The insightful presentation by Philippe Antoine is almost a book unto itself because it is so informative about Chateaubriand and the numerous exploratory trips made by Frenchmen to the United States and Canada between 1776 and 1791 (9-71). Furthermore, some of Chateaubriand's remarks from the "Avertissement" and preface he contributed to his own pre-edition of his complete works are included in this edition of *Voyage en Amérique* (77-137).

In many texts written at different moments, Chateaubriand indicates he wished to go to Canada because he wanted to discover a north-west passage (139). But he never achieved this ambitious project. He does, however, describe the Canadian landscapes, nature, plants, and wildlife (species such as "fouine" [239], and "carcajou" [240]). Most of his *Voyage en Amérique* documents the everyday life of the Native Americans he encountered during his 1791 journey, even though these pages were written around 1826 and first published in 1827 (43). Among many things, Chateaubriand's *Voyage en Amérique* reminds the reader how Aboriginal tribes in Arkansas were attached to the French citizens who lived along the Mississippi River since these regions were parts of Nouvelle France prior to 1763 (215, 559). Other texts retell in epic fashion the emergence of the thirteen colonies as they rejected Great-Britain in the 1770s (373); even the passages related to the "Républiques espagnoles" mention the hatred for the monarchy he witnessed in New Hampshire and Maine (383). Some portions are articles or notes not written by Chateaubriand but either translations or transcripts of sources contemporary to him (415-32, 433-38).

Although these texts are primarily sketches of places and people, his style can nonetheless be sublime, for example in his impressions of a storm in Florida, which provide inimitable dramatic aesthetics:

Le soleil se couvre, les premiers roulements du tonnerre se font entendre; les crocodiles y répondent par un sourd rugissement, comme un tonnerre répond à un autre tonnerre. Une immense colonne de nuages s'étend du nord-est au sud-est; le reste du ciel est d'un cuivre sale, demi-transparent et teint de la foudre. Le désert éclairé d'un jour faux, l'orage suspendu sur nos têtes et près d'éclater, offrent un tableau plein de grandeur. (227)

Such lyrical sentences perfectly illustrate French Romantic style: flamboyant, dramatic, extreme, and sensitive, with a fascination for the turmoil of nature. This unique style was present in *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802), both of which exploited the exotic resonance of the Louisiana territory. The numerous footnotes by Philippe Antoine are instructive, situating how Chateaubriand influenced many other writers. Many comments in footnotes connect these pages with ideas reformulated by an older Chateaubriand in his most celebrated books, *Le Génie du Christianisme* and *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (see footnotes on 213, 218, 219 and 255).

The *Voyage en Amérique* occupies about half of this volume of the *Œuvres complètes* while the remaining three documents are more like notebooks: *Voyage en Italie* is a mix of correspondence and personal notes about Rome, the

Vatican, Napoli, and Pompeii (mainly from the 1827 version). Chateaubriand recollects, for example, meeting the Pope in Rome and being flattered to witness he was reading *Le Génie du Christianisme* (639). *Cinq jours à Clermont* retells a five-day trip in Auvergne in 1805. *Le Mont-Blanc* (1806) is a much more concise notebook of impressions of the Alps seen from near the Swiss border (835).

This hefty volume of Chateaubriand's *Œuvres complètes* 6-7 is not the last of the series (three more volumes have since appeared). Scholars in French Studies, American Studies, and even Canadian Studies will certainly learn from it. In fact, one cannot read these "transatlantic pages" without thinking about Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), another Frenchman who made many fascinating observations about the United States, particularly in his well-known *Democracy in America* (1835). Many comparisons between both observers could be made, especially about how they perceived the birth of the United States.