



French Romantic Travel Writing: Chateaubriand to Nerval

C. W. Thompson

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In the first half of the nineteenth century most leading French Romantic authors wrote travel books. *French Romantic Travel Writing* is the first study exclusively devoted to surveying the travelogues they produced and the reasons for, and significance of, this trend. Whilst 'the journey' was one of Romanticism's central images, suggesting as it did a dynamic, expanding, and evermore complex world in which artists' lives were increasingly experienced as wanderings and endless quests, the fashion for Romantic travel books was more marked in France than in Germany or England. Chateaubriand, Staël, Stendhal, Nodier, Hugo, Lamartine, Nerval, Gautier, Sand, Custine, Quinet, Mérimée, Dumas, and Tristan all wrote one or more travelogues, including at least four masterpieces-Hugo's *Le Rhin* (1842), Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851), and Stendhal's two *Rome, Naples et Florence* (1817 and 1826). The book explores the reasons for this difference from England and Germany. These include French foreign and cultural policies, as well as the particular needs of Parisian publishers. It puts forward the case for the collective achievement of these Romantic travel books, compared to those of most later writers in nineteenth-century France. A distinctive feature of the survey is its belief in the value of concentrating on the text of these books as published by their authors, as opposed to manuscript and peripheral material.

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