Nohant, les Charmettes, the Parisian park, the Bois de Boulogne, of Boisguilbert, of Sainte-Sévère and of the many other gardens described in Sand’s fiction, this volume leads us through the multiple functions of the garden in the author’s work. The garden — and particularly the wild garden — becomes a space for private reflection and an inspiration for writing (Michèle Hecquet), an initiatory space where the sentimental education of the novel’s hero can take place (Emmanuel Flory), a space for the reinvention of the self and the production of fiction (Damien Zanone). This book, part of the series ‘Révolutions et romantismes’, provides an excellent companion to another volume from the series entitled Ville, campagne et nature dans l’œuvre de George Sand. Between them, they become a necessary reference point for the study of the natural world in Sand’s œuvre, and may persuade those who have not previously worked in this area towards some new directions in research.

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This is an intriguing and occasionally puzzling collection of essays ostensibly aimed, as its subtitle Invitation au monde nervalien pour les jeunes lecteurs suggests, at attracting younger readers to the work of a currently under-researched author. Certainly, several of the authors are recognized as having already contributed to much serious Nerval scholarship, and yet Hisashi Mizuno’s short introduction, addressing young readers of unspecified age, leaves it unclear how each chapter contributes to the volume’s rather hazy objectives, and how their sometimes radically different tones may be reconciled. It is unfortunate that, from the outset, the gently encouraging tone is unintentionally condescending, as Mizuno asks, ‘Aimez-vous la littérature? [...] Nous, nous aimons la littérature et nous sommes passionnés par Nerval, “notre” poète et écrivain, au point de l’appeler parfois Gérard comme un de nos amis’ (p. 5). As such, whereas the recent proliferation of Cambridge Companions to French literature clearly targets a mature undergraduate readership, one is unsure precisely how young the intended reader is here. Jacques Bony’s contribution, for example, takes the form of an imaginary dialogue with his three teenage grandchildren, in which, using his own paperback edition, he explains the narrative intricacies of Sylvie. As an epigraph, the reader is warned, ‘Trop sérieux, s’abstenir!’; but the constant opposition between the sketch of impatient, unsophisticated, popular culture-obsessed teenagers and the grandfather’s laborious didacticism quickly grates — a shame, since the observations which emerge, on narrative complexity, voice, tense, the unstable nature of truth and autofiction, might be useful to a class of collégiens, but the laboured packaging suggests on the contrary an elaborate joke for initiés. Of the twelve contributions, a couple are rather insubstantial, but gradually the chatty, personal tone subsides in favour of some high-quality introductions to a wide variety of Nerval’s output, in which ‘El Desdichado’, Sylvie, Aurélia and Voyage en Orient loom large, but which also includes examples of Nerval’s journalism, with Michel Brix comparing internet hoaxes with similar phenomena in nineteenth-century print media. Some of the weightier contributions are excellent, unafraid of maintaining a scholarly tone; Guy Barthélémy on the encounter with the Other in travel writing; Henri Bonnet on the symbolic opposition between darkness and light; and Françoise Sylvos on the centre-periphery dialectic and social structures from the fonctionnaire to the bohème. Christian Leroy offers sensitive reflections on madness and humorous self-irony, deftly separating autobiography and narrative, and the volume closes with two comparative studies, Fatihah...
Dahmani on time, memory and ‘l’indicible’ in Sylvie, Proust and Luchino Visconti, and Bruno Trismans on suicide, belief, loss and the volcano’s destructive force in Nerval and Emmanuel Roblès’ Le Vésuve (1961). Overall, one feels that, despite this volume’s reductive and caricatural opposition between literature and ‘lesser’ teenage distractions such as the internet, video games and mobile phones, its heart is in the right place; frequently bursting with evangelical zeal for both Nerval and literature itself, it ultimately offers inexperienced readers some useful tools with which to read sensitively, imaginatively and confidently, as well as some fresh insights into Nerval for more confirmed scholars.

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Flaubert’s ‘Tentation’: Remapping Nineteenth-Century French Histories of Religion and Science. By

Compared with Flaubert’s other works, La Tentation de saint Antoine has attracted only select critical attention, despite the fact that he called it the ‘œuvre de toute [s]a vie’. Mary Orr’s new study of the final version of the Tentation, that is, the 1874 published text, adopts a significantly different approach from those taken by earlier critics. There have been sustained psychoanalytic studies (Jeanne Bem, 1979; see FS, XXXVI: 2 (1982), 217), and approaches based largely on genetic criticism (Gothot-Mersch’s extensive critical apparatus to the Folio edition, see FS, XXXIX: 1 (1985), 90–91; or the only other English-language monograph on the subject, Mary Neiland’s 2001 volume, which focuses on situating the Tentation in relation to Flaubert’s other works, see FS, LVI: 3 (2002), 413–14). Orr approaches this text, which has often been seen as drowning under the weight of its own erudition, by tackling that erudition head on in order to situate it in its various intertexts. Indeed, Orr sees earlier approaches to the Tentation as being subject to various manifestations of what she calls ‘critical block’: many focus primarily on the author’s psychology; others, perhaps more perniciously, pursue a very twentieth-century reading of the literature of the nineteenth century as a secular, post-Enlightenment narrative and thus seek to evacuate religious questions. The present volume, on the contrary, situates the Tentation in relation to contemporary nineteenth-century debates on religion as well as science, mapping them over the sectarian conflicts of fourth-century Egypt. Following the approach to Salammbô taken by Anne Green (see FS, XXXVI: 3 (1982), 343–344), Orr thus reads the Tentation as a book about nineteenth-century France. Egyptian institutions of learning in the early centuries A.D. map over contemporary French institutions; the key figure of Hilarión is seen as reflecting various French savants, the confrontation of the Sphinx and the Chimera in the last tableau is startlingly reinterpreted as an echo of the 1830 debate between Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. A characteristic re-reading occasioned by this approach sees the Queen of Sheba no longer as an incarnation of the mediaeval sin of lust (the emphasis on the mediaeval deadly sins is significantly weakened in the last version of the Tentation), but rather as a female ‘Mage’, standing for knowledge and power, who thus forms part of the series of epistemological temptations. She is also described in terms sacrilegiously resonant of nineteenth-century French ‘apparitions’ of the Virgin. This example is suggestive of Orr’s shift of emphasis away from genetic readings of the text and towards grounding in context. The new light shed on the Tentation by her volume is made possible by the impressive breadth and depth of her own reading within what Foucault called Flaubert’s ‘bibliothèque fantastique’. As a result, her volume is not only an invaluable contribution to scholarship on the